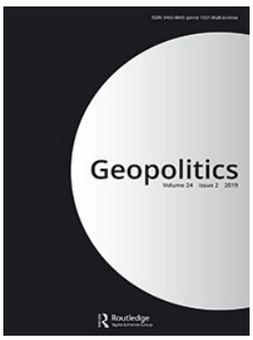

Geopolitics

ISSN: 1465-0045 (Print) 1557-3028 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fgeo20

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To cite this article: Chiara Loschi & Alessandra Russo (2020): Whose Enemy at the Gates? Border Management in the Context of EU Crisis Response in Libya and Ukraine, Geopolitics, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2020.1716739

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1716739

Published online: 23 Jan 2020.

GEOPOLITICS
https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1716739

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Whose Enemy at the Gates? Border Management in the Context of EU Crisis Response in Libya and Ukraine

Chiara Loschi [a] and Alessandra Russo [b,c]

[a]Centre for European Integration Research, IPW, University of Vienna, Austria; [b]School of International Studies & Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Trento, Italy; [c]Sciences Po Bordeaux, France

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses uses and misuses of EU border management models and strategies in the framework of crisis response interventions in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods. It focuses especially on Libya and Ukraine, cases which dramatically stand out as *the* conflicts at the gates of Europe. The deployment of border management instruments appears to follow different trajectories in the two countries, diverging in terms of both design and implementation. By relying on collaborative research materials resulting from extensive fieldwork, the paper argues that the differentiation of EU's interventions across the ENP countries can be explained as the result of growing political and institutional fragmentation in the EU, the replacement of the "transformative power"-mantra with new stabilization templates and weak strategic consistency among member states, each conveying different security identities and interests vis-à-vis EU's external actions and sectors. Primary data, collected between 2016 and 2018, does not point to an increase in conflict-sensitivity, context-specificity and local ownership, they rather reveal the crisis of the EU´s liberal project.

Introduction

This paper discusses uses and misuses of EU border management models and strategies in the framework of crisis response interventions in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods. It focuses especially on Libya and Ukraine, cases which dramatically stand out as *the* conflicts at the gates of Europe. While in the Libyan case a border management mission was designed as an explicit part of the EU crisis response mechanism, in the Ukrainian case the political and security crisis instead transformed a kind of border management assistance that was already in place.

The deployment of border management instruments appears to follow different trajectories in the two countries, diverging in terms of both design and implementation. Accordingly, this paper explores the extent to which the differentiation that

CONTACT Chiara Loschi chiara.loschi@univie.ac.at Centre for European Integration Research, IPW, University of Vienna; Alessandra Russo alessandra.russo@unitn.it

This article was originally published with errors, which have now been corrected in the online version. Please see Correction (https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1738711)

can be observed in border management concepts, policies and practices enacted by the EU in countries that are part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) signals the injection of more conflict-sensitivity and context-specificity on the part of EU responses.[1] Alternatively, this differentiation can be explained as the result of growing political and institutional fragmentation in the EU: i.e., replacing the transformative power-mantra with new stabilization templates that may reflect a turn towards more realpolitik and, perhaps, less strategic consistency due to the underlying divergence of interests among member states. The paper argues that, at least in the 2013–17 period, EU crisis response interventions in the two countries under consideration reflected the EU's concerns about 'stabilizing its neighbourhood', in line with the call for 'principled pragmatism' as the polestar for its external action (EEAS 2016; European Commission and HRVP 2015). In 2016, the European Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy enshrined lines of EU engagement aimed at 'enabl[ing] legitimate institutions to rapidly deliver basic services and security to local populations' (EEAS 2016, 30). The same document prompted the establishment of a coordination cell within the European External Action Service devoted to the 'Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation' (EEAS 2016). As part of these developments, the EU's emphasis on classical state attributes such as borders and a reliable monopoly on the use of force, to be asserted through effective border control and security sector reform programmes, represents a significant similarity between Libya and Ukraine. Further, case-specific developments more broadly call into question the rationale underlying the construction of EU external borders and the practices that were proposed and enacted to manage them. Indeed, our analysis is premised on the assumption that the history of European integration and the emergence of the EU as an actor in the international arena is closely intertwined with bordering, de-bordering and re-bordering practices, that is, the making and unmaking of borders as socio-spatial political processes (Cooper 2015).

The EU established itself as the embodiment of a weak principle of territoriality: it has proceeded in its political production by eliminating internal boundaries (positive integration, boundary transcendence) while also setting new external territorial boundaries through exclusionary rules and practices (negative integration, boundary closure: see Bartolini 2005, 177–178).

Furthermore, by the turn of the century EU border control and management had been gradually off-shored and out-sourced (Bialasiewicz 2012) through an increase in EU external cooperation schemes targeting third countries in training and mentoring national border authorities (European Commission 2010). In that respect, in fact, the EU can be seen as a 'borderlands shaper' in the two-fold sense of constructing specific spatial imaginaries and normative orders at its frontiers and, at the same time, granting border regimes and practices material form (Scott et al. 2018).

Integrated Border Management in Transit

Policy and Norm Trajectories

Border externalisation has been re-articulated in the context of the EU's attempt to establish itself as a crisis manager in its neighbourhoods. Through its range of available instruments and in accordance with Title V of the Treaty on the European Union, EU crisis management has emphasised border control and assistance with border management. EU cooperation with third countries in the area of Integrated Border Management (IBM) was first envisioned in the early 2000s as part of EU enlargement. Already at this point, under the ENP, EU external policies towards third countries merged foreign policy, conflict management and stabilization by prioritizing border management and third countries' capacities in the field of justice and home affairs (Wolff 2012, 85). A three-fold agenda featured the EU's interventions in the Western Balkans, that is, state-building, peace-building and integration of the region into the Euro-Atlantic community. As part of that framework, the EU-backed reforms required by the introduction of the IBM model touched upon core attributes of state sovereignty, even though they were presented as technical restructurings instead of political transformations (Juncos 2012). Critiques were already being posed in relation to that context, questioning the EU's technocratic approach, its disproportionate focus on institution-building coupled with short-sighted capacity-building and training initiatives, what was seen as its securitarian (and decreasingly developmental) bent, and the scant consideration given to local ownership and domestic expectations and views (Belloni 2019, 175; Juncos 2012; Collantes-Celador and Juncos 2012).

Global patterns of mass forced displacement subsequently prompted the EU to reconsider its IBM infrastructures and prescriptions and, eventually, to export them further beyond its borders. The abovementioned criticisms were not addressed at this point, however, possibly demonstrating that the approach the EU was following constitutes a specific model of political and economic re-organisation. The externalisation of border security has progressed to include financial assistance for reforming and professionalizing local border guards (Merheim-Eyre 2016). The shift instead lays in the fact that this technical support, equipment provision (i.e., modernization and technologization), and training and capacity-building initiatives were designed against the background of the gradual erosion of the EU's normative commitments (Bosson and Carrapico 2016).

The increasing participation of third countries in the management of EU external borders takes on a particular form in the Eastern neighbourhood in that it occurred through the gradual visa liberalization associated with the Eastern Partnership through Mobility Partnerships as well as visa facilitation and readmission agreements aimed at regulating and facilitating migration.

Visa liberalization, which has been offered as an incentive in exchange for adopting and converging with EU norms and practices in the field of border management and law enforcement (and compliance with EU-set parameters on migration, policing, or passport issuance), actually increases the judicial and police capacities of Eastern neighbours (Merheim-Eyre 2016).

At the same time, along the Southern border, 'the EU is reacting to the states' failure to manage their own borders through exclusionary practices' (Merheim-Eyre 2016, 105). Both the Syrian civil war and the Libyan crisis have catalysed the construction of a new European consensus around the need to provide security to EU citizens by making EU external borders more rigid (Schumacher 2015, 387). Such consensus rests on the racialization, criminalization and securitization of border management (and by extension, of mobility), while its policy translation relies on Mobility Partnerships to ensure border security (Zardo and Tasnim 2018, 96).

New Venues for Studying 'Travelling Borders'

The EU Integrated Border Management 'policy package' has travelled to multiple different local social and political contexts. While it was conceived as a specific EU product to be exported to third countries, its transfer and reception have created both intended and unintended consequences. The above-mentioned process of externalizing border security, control and management, as well as the outward extension of the EU external frontier into neighbouring countries (Andreas and Snyder 2000) both call into question EU-centric approaches to EU policies and strategies and their normative and transformative fallout. Further, studying the 'outside-in' dimension of Europeanisation as well as the latter's encounters with local actors and domestic contexts may entail 'leaving the armchair and exploring the EU from the point of view of the people actually producing it' (Adler-Nissen 2016, 87–88), both within the EU and beyond it. On one hand, the practice turn in EU studies has paved the way for including site-intensive methodologies and fieldwork research in the effort to examine how Europeanisation works 'from below'. On the other hand, looking at how Europeanisation works 'from outside' may shed light on interlocutors' perceptions of the EU and Europe at the empirical level, a necessary step towards the endeavour of 'decentering'/'provincializing' Europe: "How do the EU and Europe's counterparts view their internal and international policy aspirations? What role does the EU and Europe have in the mental maps, power political calculations and institutional responses of rising powers today?" (Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013, 289)

Along the lines of these two strands of literature (Europeanisation 'from below' and Europeanisation 'from outside'), our analysis privileges a bottom-up approach: accordingly, our paper will show how stakeholders and

recipients reformulate, enact and perform borders in the context of current EU crisis response interventions. In order to explore these questions, we make use of research material collected in 2017 and 2018 as part of the Horizon 2020 research project 'EUNPACK. A conflict sensitive unpacking of the EU comprehensive approach to conflict and crisis mechanisms.'[2] Our data stems from:

(1) Various rounds of semi-structured interviews (conducted in Ukraine and Tunisia, respectively, as well as remotely[3]), targeting:
   (i) Brussels-based policy-makers and practitioners;
   (ii) EU officials and representatives of other international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies deployed in the two countries;
   (iii) local recipients and stakeholders, beneficiaries of EU crisis response instruments, programmes and policies, intermediaries and implementing partners of EU initiatives in the fields of border management and security sector reform;
(2) Two perception surveys, with questionnaires distributed in Ukraine, Tunisia and Libya among local recipients and stakeholders, actual and/or potential beneficiaries of EU crisis response instruments, intermediaries and implementing partners of EU initiatives in the fields of crisis response at large (not limited to border management and security sector reform), see Table 1.[4]

The design of all these tools of inquiry and the data collection was carried out collectively by a research team based at the CNRS unit Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain, in Tunis, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, in Pisa, and the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.[5]

Border Management Meets Stabilization

Both the Libyan and Ukrainian crises have prompted the review process of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and represented a testing grounds for the innovations introduced as part of the revision of crisis management procedures (EEAS 2013a, 2013b). Both our cases stand at the intersection of EU crisis management and ENP policies (Koenig 2017); however, these interventions were introduced in the context of rather different contexts and histories of EU relations with the two countries.

Ukraine was the first ENP country to begin negotiations on a new Association Agreement (March 2007) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (February 2008). When in 2013 the Ukrainian government decided to suspend preparatory work leading to the Association Agreement,

Table 1. Data Collection in Libya and Ukraine.

	Libya	Ukraine
Quantitative perception survey	228 questionnaires, distributed in Tunisia and Libya: Target groups: Tunis-based EU officials; the international and Libyan staff of international organisations; Libyan border guards; local experts in the field of border management; representatives of ethnic minorities (Tebu and Tuareg) living in peripheral regions; ordinary Libyan citizens; Internally Displaced People (Tawergha).	190 face-to-face and telephone questionnaire-based interviews across four areas of the country: 1) Kyiv and selected locations in the central region; 2) Kramatorsk and selected locations in the Eastern border region; 3) Odessa and selected locations in the Southern border region; 4) Lviv and selected locations in the Western border region. Target groups: Internally Displaced People from Donbass and Crimea; traders and entrepreneurs; activists from local Non-Governmental Organisations; border guards; representatives of local councils and city administrations, as well as other practitioners from security sector institutions such as the police and the Joint Centre on Control and Coordination.
Qualitative semi-structured interviews	50 interviews: - 46 face-to-face interviews - 4 remote interviews (when security constraints so advised). Target groups: Brussels-based and Tunis-based EU officials; representatives of other international organisations deployed in Libya and Tunisia; members and former members of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord government; members of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives; Libyan staff of international organisations; local experts in the field of border management; representatives of ethnic minorities (Tebu and Tuareg) living in peripheral regions.	46 interviews: - 39 face-to-face interviews (32 in Kyiv and 7 in Kharkiv); - 7 remote interviews. Target groups: Brussels-based and Ukraine-based EU officials; representatives of other international organisations deployed in Ukraine; members of the Ukrainian parliament, officers of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, representatives of the National Guard Academy of Ukraine, representatives of the Civil–Military Cooperation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (CIMIC), representatives of NGOs, journalists working in non-government-controlled areas, on the contact line and in the Eastern region; local experts in the field of border management and security sector reform.

a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest erupted in Kiev followed by violent measures on the part of special police units to disperse the protesters.

Parallel to this political crisis unfolding in the capital, a security crisis erupted in Ukraine's Southern and Eastern provinces: in March 2014, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were annexed by the Russian Federation as federated subjects; further, in May 2014 the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics were proclaimed, prompting the Ukrainian government to launch an Anti-Terrorism Operation (MacFarlane and Menon 2014; Menon and Rumer 2015). Since then, a multiform constellation of state and non-state security actors, legal and extra-legal formations as well as military and paramilitary forces has been involved in the hybrid warfare taking place in Donbass (OHCHR, 2016).

Libya resisted any ENP-based partnership, but it did take part as an observer in a number of multilateral EU initiatives while signing bilateral programmes with Italy to control illegal migration. Since 2009, the EU has defined areas 'of common interest' based on fighting terrorism as well as illegal immigration in the Mediterranean while supporting partnerships centred around hydrocarbon energy resources (EEAS 2009, 6). However, the 2011 upheavals brought with them a political crisis characterised by growing political fragmentation and violence, leading to the establishment of two rival governments. Under UN-led mediation in December 2015, the Government of National Accord (GNA) was established in Tripoli in early 2016, cutting the Eastern authorities in Tobruk and Bengasi off from international support (Toaldo and Fitzgerald 2017). In this context, both Western and Eastern Libyan governments have no or only very limited control over Southern land borders.

The crisis that swept across both Libya and Ukraine in 2014–2015 prompted a profound revision of EU strategies. A Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) was drafted for both Libya and Ukraine in 2014, paving the way for more solid intervention in the direction of Integrated Border Management as a key aspect of security sector reform. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions deployed in Ukraine and Libya were mandated to strengthen border security and support the authority and legitimacy of local law enforcement, judiciary, police and security agencies.

The PFCA for Ukraine reconsidered the areas of EU involvement in the country, areas such as macro-stabilization, governance and border management, including the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine. As a matter of fact, the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine has been operating since 2005, with headquarters in Odessa and six additional field offices on both the Moldovan and the Ukrainian sides of the border, giving it quite wide territorial coverage.[6] A few weeks after the PFCA for Ukraine was first released, the Crisis Management and Planning Department (CMPD) drafted the Revised Crisis Management Concept (CMC) for a civilian

CSDP mission in support of security sector reform in Ukraine. The document defined the response to the crisis in Ukraine in terms of EU political interest by stressing the importance of normalizing relations with Russia while creating conditions for a stabilised security situation by enhancing Ukrainian authorities' capacity in the field of internal security (EEAS 2014). The EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) provides financial, technical and expert support for Ukrainian law enforcement and rule of law institutions and agencies. The mission was allocated a budget of €13.1 million for the first year (2014) that has gradually increased (to almost €32 million for the period 1 December 2017 to 31 May 2019; Council of the European Union 2017b).

In Libya, the Council's priority was to set up state structures; before drafting the PFCA, the EU funded a border management needs assessment mission (April-May 2012) that eventually led to the establishment of the CSDP civilian mission EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in May 2013. With an initial budget of €30 million and a 2-years mandate, the mission's objective was to 'support the Libyan authorities to develop capacity for enhancing the security of Libya's land, sea and air borders in the short term and to develop a broader IBM strategy in the longer term' (Council of the European Union 2013, 1). The institutional capacity-building mandate of EUBAM Libya merely translated into advising Libyan authorities in Tripoli and encouraging them to create a cross-ministerial body, the Border Management Working Group (BMWG), to coordinate responses on the part of border stakeholders (EEAS 2015a, 1). Due to security concerns, the mission relocated to Tunis in 2014 and was put on hold from February 2015 to early 2016. EEAS staff perceived that the former EUBAM template aimed at integrating border management was incompatible with the complexities of the crisis and the specificities of cross-border dynamics; it would be preferable, in their view, to shift towards containing crisis spill-overs in the region and in Europe, addressing especially the maritime border (Ivashchenko-Stadnik et al. 2017, 27). Accordingly, the CSPD mission EUNAVFOR Med Sophia was launched in 2015 with the aim of dismantling human trafficking circuits and gathering intelligence (Loschi, Raineri, and Strazzari 2018).

Beyond and behind the formulation of the focal policy documents (PFCAs and CMCs for Ukraine and Libya, respectively), EU action in the two countries throughout the crises seems to have failed to deliver in terms of conflict sensitivity and local ownership. The role of the EU appears (perhaps unsurprisingly) to have been undermined by at least two factors appearing in both Ukraine and Libya: on one hand, member states' diverging political interests vis-à-vis the neighbourhoods, and, on the other, internal inconsistencies and intra-institutional fragmentation leading EU crisis response schemes to be shaped more by bureaucratic logics than by strategic considerations (Mac Ginty 2018). Neither the ENP review process nor the revision

of crisis management procedures appears to have overcome these two limitations. In addition to these areas of weakness, the spectres of displacement and migration as threats to European security have a significant impact on the design of EU interventions in the neighbourhoods.

EU Internal Cleavages

In the case of Ukraine, our interviews have confirmed that the Kyiv-based authorities expected the deployment of a CSDP mission similar to the EU Monitoring Mission deployed in Georgia. Even though it is an unarmed civilian mission, EUMM involves daily patrolling, particularly in the areas adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and in addition to the Tbilisi-based headquarters, it features Field Offices in Gori, Mtskheta and Zugdidi. In Ukraine, EU Member States (MSs) reportedly did not agree on the size and scope of the mission to deploy, with a number of countries only in favour of a limited and carefully circumscribed mission, and objecting to the idea of sending missions into the conflict zones (Ivashchenko-Stadnik et al. 2018).[7] In other words, EU MSs' diverging interests translated into a mismatch between the actual mandates of the EU missions and the local partners' expectations: while our interviews point to Ukrainian authorities demanding a monitoring mission in Crimea and Donbas, EUAM was shaped up to be an advisory mission based in Kyiv.[8]

Not only did EUAM not reflect local demands, it created a cluttered overlap with the EUBAM that was already present in the area, a mission whose mandate implementation was inevitably moulded by conflict dynamics.[9] In 2014–15 EUBAM local partners – namely Ukrainian border guards – were involved in the fighting in Donbas. They suffered several casualties and consequently reorganised their work in the other border regions according to staff rotation. In the short term, therefore, EUBAM activities were affected by the discontinuity of contacts and operations. In the medium term, the military component of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine was reinforced and the enthusiasm of local partner services for reforms appeared to wane[10] (even though the EU had requested it be transformed into a civilian agency). Moreover, over time a policy shift took place in the Ukrainian view of Transnistria. Before the crisis, there were areas of collusion vis-à-vis semi-legal trade, with Ukrainian border and customs officials treating these practices with mild tolerance. Since the crisis, Ukrainian institutions have enacted a clear anti-separatist stance which has resulted in more restrictions on trade and Transnistrian residents' travel across the borders.

At the time EUAM was deployed, Ukrainian authorities had already experienced a nearly ten-year-long collaboration with EUBAM in the fields of borders and customs. A functional rationale for the division of labour

between EUAM and EUBAM could have been used, with the former taking sole responsibility for security sector reform while leaving to EUBAM its traditional functions, to be extended over a larger portion of Ukrainian territory. Instead, however, the division of labour between the two missions has followed geographical criteria, leaving EUBAM the Moldova–Ukraine state border and assigning EUAM mixed functions with country-wide coverage.

Further, EUBAM has long benefitted from its status as a technical project that does not depend on the CSDP and has reportedly enjoyed a remarkable degree of autonomy and flexibility, having adapted to the changing context for more than a decade; it has been also characterised by systematic consultations with local partners. According to interviewees, however, especially since 2015 EUBAM has gradually undergone organizational changes, following the turnover from the EU Delegation to Ukraine to the EU Delegation to Moldova in the management of project phases as well as the decreasing involvement of the EEAS in EUBAM activities in favour of increasing participation by the DG NEAR,[11] confirming the rescaling of Eastern countries integration in the European space via bordering processes and harmonization of political practices (Levy 2011). Yet, the abovementioned organisational changes were not conceived of "strategically", leaving the mission with inconsistencies in terms of overall political vision.

In the case of Libya, the 2014 PFCA reflected divergent interests among EU governments. The PFCA made clear that the former EU intervention in Libya lacked context-sensitivity and assertiveness. It also identified four main threats to EU security stemming from Libyan instability, threats which actually reflect the positions of individual MSs: increasing migration flows, affecting Italy and Malta; foreign fighters and weapon smuggling, pointed out by France and (to a lesser extent) Germany; and concerns over energy security manifested by Spain and Italy (Ivashchenko-Stadnik et al. 2017, 22). Moreover, after relocating all the EU missions to Tunis in 2014, EUBAM staff had to 'muddle through' an unintelligible situation with limited tools for understanding Libya's informal and personalised forms of rule in a conflict scenario in which coordination is made more difficult by overlapping and discontinuous chains of command across ministries, departments and sub-state levels. Thus, the mission continued mostly as a planning mission and advisory body for Libyan authorities. Nevertheless, due to pressures from EU MSs' prioritisation of decisions regarding migration flows, the 2017 and 2018 EUBAM Interim Strategic Review – although not clearly identifying actors in charge of IBM interventions in Libya – emphasised a correlation between SSR assistance, stabilization and support for Libyan actors to develop a broader border management framework (EEAS 2017, 2018).

In addition to European governments' varying interests, the specifics of Libyan security sector presented EUBAM with important practical

challenges. After 2016, three main conflicting centres of power emerged in the country (two in Tripoli and one in the Eastern region); however, the EUBAM mandate dictated that its only counterpart be the western-backed GNA. Moreover, remote management further limited coordination with beneficiaries and prevented accountability mechanisms from functioning effectively. While EUBAM officers appeared to be well aware of these limitations, their mapping of the Libyan actors entrusted with border management seemed to disregard the actual Libyan border economy in the South. Following the war, the depreciation of the Libyan dinar and banks' difficulties in disbursing cash led the living standards of the country's citizens to deteriorate to such an extent that local populations no longer actively opposed illicit and human smuggling (Molenaar and El Kamouni-Janssen 2017). With militias securing increasingly key roles as both security actors co-opted by the GNA (Lacher and al-Idrissi 2018) and a source of insecurity for citizens, any international support to the GNA is likely to reinforce feelings of marginalization among Southern populations and the perception that international actors are aligned with the political expansionism of northern authorities.

Borders and Migration

After 2011, the political debate across EU member states has given rise to the criminalization of border crossings, a move driven by growing public concern about the number of illegal/undocumented entries. As a consequence, the entrenchment of repressive policies and prohibition regimes within EU border security paradigms and strategies is on the rise. Although migratory flows across the Central Mediterranean and Eastern Europe display different patterns, empirical research on EU support for border management in Libya and Ukraine reveal similar trends in the direction of human mobility management. Paying tribute to this bottom-up perspective, it is imperative that new lenses be adopted to explain the local implications of border management projects. We engage with the analysis of our data by bringing together insights from human mobility containment literature with studies on state-building military interventions in external countries, two bodies of literature that scholars usually take into consideration separately.

In Ukraine, the ongoing conflict has been accompanied by an increase in Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and refugee flows dating back to March 2014 (the referendum in Crimea). This problem has intensified in parallel with the escalation of the escalation of the conflict in Donbass: based on UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) monthly reports, a 2015 estimate suggested that the number of IDPs had increased from about 3,000 in March 2014 to 1,600,000 at the end of 2015 (UNHCR 2017). The IOM (2018) reported that the Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy recorded almost

1,500,000 IDPs by the end of 2017. That figure doubles if we also consider Ukrainians displaced abroad: as of 2017, according to government sources in receiving countries, the total number of Ukrainians seeking asylum or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries stands at more than 1,500,000; their requests are mostly directed at the Russian Federation, but also Belarus as well as Germany, Italy, Poland, France and Sweden (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2017). Consequently, EU conflict response initiatives in the fields of border management and security sector reform cannot neglect the control and containment of migration flows coming from or transiting through Ukraine into EU territory, with V4 countries particularly concerned and directly involved. As early as December 2015 representatives of EUAM, EUBAM, and Frontex as well as the heads of border guard agencies of Ukraine and neighbouring EU MSs (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania) met in Lviv. Since then, Ukraine has hosted other meetings (with EU MSs, international organizations and non-EU countries such as Turkey, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova) to discuss the nexus of conflict, border management and migration control, and to envision schemes of cooperation aimed at preventing the uncontrolled expansion of the migration crisis along the EU's Eastern borders. At the same time, the EU has launched the 'Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine' and allocated EUR 27.2 million to Ukraine to support its State Migration Service and State Border Guard Service (2017–2020).[12] Moreover, allegedly in order to address the increased irregular migration flows originating from the conflict in Ukraine, in 2016 the European Commission approved an Annual Action Programme for supporting Belarus' endeavours in that respect. Accordingly, the EU has committed to transfer about €7 million, among other things for the construction of a number of migrants' accommodation centres, to be administered by the Ministry of Interior and the State Border Committee.[13]

In the case of Libya, prioritising migration management has translated into projects such as technical and development-related cooperation that casts some doubt on EU respect for international law enforcement. Through capacity building programmes for the Libyan Coast Guard provided by the CSDP mission EUNAVFOR MED Op. Sophia, and Italian Coast Guard through the European Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) project called "Support to Integrated border and migration management" (EUR 91.3 million), the EU pledged to bolster the Libyan naval coastguard in its delivery of a Search and Rescue (SAR) concept and declaration (EEAS 2015a, 20). This declaration was eventually accepted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in June 2018. However, at the time of writing, a fully operational Libyan Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) has yet been established. The institution of the MRCC is part of the project´s second phase started in December 2018 (EUR 45 million). Italian coast guard is

supporting Libyan authorities to set up the MRCC in Tripoli, which the Commission expects it to be operational in 2020.[14] Such an intense intervention builds on 2017 Communications (European Commission 2017) and the Malta document (Council of the European Union 2017a), which support the idea that the pragmatic principle underlying the EU-Turkey deal could also inspire the resolution of irregular migration flows along the central Mediterranean route. In response and opposition to this context, there is an increasing incidence of '*refoulement* by proxy' (d'Argent, Kuritzky 2017). Given Libya's legal framework, violations of the right to *non-refoulement* are systematic, access to legal remedies is impossible, and impunity is widespread. In this context, critics contend that this general approach of resorting to detention in managing irregular migration in Libya is something the EU should condemn rather than support (even when the support is indirect) if it is to comply with its duties under international law. Moreover, since 2016 official reports have described a component of the Libyan coastguard colluding with smuggling and trafficking activities (UNSC 2017; UNSMIL and OHCHR 2016). As a consequence, any approach to EU crisis response in Libya runs the risk of being considered legally or morally complicit with serious human rights violations and corruption.

Whose Borders?

While the above section provided an account of shortcomings in the design of EU border security policies and instruments, this section provides insights into how these shortcomings might be reflected in the perceptions of EU local counterparts vis-à-vis a EU presence in their own respective countries.

In both Libya and Ukraine, the findings of the respective perception studies confirm that local respondents have a comparatively lower degree of awareness of EU crisis response actions in the field of security sector reform than in other sectors of EU engagement (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, Petrov, and Russo 2017; Loschi and Raineri 2017). It is worth noting that levels of awareness vary across locations, and respondents located along the borders, in this case in Southern and Eastern Ukraine and along the Southern Libyan border, are generally more informed about EU interventions.

In the case of Ukraine, the older EUBAM and the new EUAM give rise to different perceptions among respondents and confirm the confusion and dispersion of EU missions on the ground. On one hand, EUBAM generates overall consensus among local counterparts: that mission was set up in the country earlier and its existence might thus be more firmly 'rooted' in some respondents' minds. EUBAM staff has always paid particular attention to local ownership and continually informed local counterparts' services through a range of reporting activities; secondly, the mission is not framed as a conflict response action, and local counterparts positively praised it as

a useful instrument for countering rising crime rates resulting from the crystallization of war economy dynamics and illegal trafficking across the conflict borderlines. While EUBAM is not directly/univocally involved in security sector reform, it often was mentioned as a model for a much-anticipated EU SSR mission in Eastern Ukraine. Indeed, Ukrainian authorities even tried to negotiate an enlargement of the EUBAM mission to the administrative border with Crimea, although the EU rejected this proposal.[15] On the other hand, local counterparts are less aware of EUAM's presence, and those who do voice an opinion are highly sceptical about the mission's efficacy. There are multiple reasons for this: while the impression that the mandates of CSDP missions are defined by informal backroom deals and lobbying activities in Brussels results in general dissatisfaction, EUAM specifically has been contested for its 'unarmed, non-executive civilian' nature, which is perceived as too distant from the EUMM Georgia-model.

Moreover, the disorderly co-existence of EUAM and EUBAM has reportedly created confusion among Ukrainian counterparts, at least at the beginning of EUAM operations. Nonetheless, interesting indications have emerged from the survey. Among the surveyed sample, 28 per cent of (Ukrainian) border-guards feel that their own conditions improved after EU crisis management interventions, whereas 64 per cent consider their situation unaffected by EU conflict-related presence and 4 per cent perceive that their condition has worsened. However, if the sample is extended to include different target groups and professional affiliations, perceptions about EU's operations in Ukraine are less optimistic: a significant number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with EU officers' detachment from the local dynamics unfolding outside the capital. In this respect, the EUAM's scope and mandate might have amplified the widespread feeling that the country's Southern region is being neglected.

Whereas in Ukraine the coexistence of EUBAM and EUAM is depicted in shades of grey, in the case of Libya, there is an unequivocal perception of incoherence and disengagement from the local context of IBM interventions. Not only does EUBAM Libya suffer from a lack of presence in the border area, as outlined in the previous sections, but the perception survey also confirms that security sector reform and rule of law, spheres EUBAM is tasked with managing, are regarded as the most problematic area of European engagement in Libya. In particular, these policies are neither very visible nor sufficiently connected to local actors, thereby prompting a generalised sense of dissatisfaction. This perception is causing increasing alarm among non-Arab groups living in the South, such as the Tuaregs. In reality, quantitative research shows that the better-known international crisis response actor among non-Arab groups such as Tuaregs is Italy, whereas there is a much lower degree of recognition of EU crisis-response initiatives (Loschi and Raineri 2017).[16] Only EUBAM Libyan counterparts within the

GNA perceive the EU to be the best-placed actor to improve border control and they praise the EU's approach to IBM for being coherent and comprehensive.[17] Such statements must be understood in the context of the specific political conflict unfolding among domestic authorities. In this setting, praise of the EU commitment by Libyan institutions functions more as political leverage over those political actors who seek to reinforce their positions and find a way to 'put a foot in the South'. In the specific case of Libya as country of transit, this stalemate is paralleled by the weak authority of the EU in facing MS competition over migration issues. The structural constraints of the Libyan EUBAM are counterbalanced by the proactiveness of individual MSs in dealing with IBM support. Italy, which benefits from a longer-term relationship with its ex-colony and whose government has been wrangling with constituencies over the issue of migration, is a case in point. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on February 2017 between the Italian Interior Ministry and the western-backed Libyan government GNA is a reactivation of the 2008 'Treaty of Friendship' signed by Gaddafi and former Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, a treaty which included measures countering illegal migration and delivering joint sea patrols and equipment. Subsequent EU documents acknowledge and endorse the country's actions in managing migration in Libya (Council of the European Union 2017a; EEAS 2017).

The incoherence of EU instruments and the confusing overlaps of tasks and missions not only prompt the above-mentioned sense of dissatisfaction, they also reinforce misconceptions regarding the local security situation. Furthermore, these factors contribute to the perception that EU officials have a limited awareness of the actual nature of conflict dynamics and micro-political economies. In Ukraine, competing sovereignty claims, the contested annexation of Crimea by Moscow and Donbas' separatism have fed extra-legal and criminal activities across the conflict lines, fuelling the rise of a veritable 'frozen conflict economy.'[18] Against this background, several survey respondents have pointed to EU's operations in Ukraine as being negatively affected by an allegedly weak capacity to analyse and understand the situation on the ground (for example, EU security protocol reportedly does not allow some EU officials to travel outside the capital).[19] Additionally, EUAM is limited to the reform of the civilian security sector, and is therefore not involved in the military aspects of the security sector. This carefully circumscribed perimeter of action may reflect some divergence between EU and local understandings of the security sector as such. While the EU conceptualises the security sector as law enforcement agencies tasked with ensuring the rule of law, in Ukraine, as stated in the 'Concept for Development of Security and Defence Sector of Ukraine,' this sector excludes prosecuting and fiscal components while including defence.[20]

In the case of Libya, EUBAM responds to a crisis framed in terms of 'migration policy' and ends up combining limited intervention with multiple EU instruments to deal with migrants inflows in the central Mediterranean. Different speeds and scopes of intervention had fuelled distrust among Libyan border political actors instead of support and agreement among factions. The EUBAM mandate on IBM receives some support from the European Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF); the first phase of the already mentioned EUTF project "Support to Integrated Border and Migration Management" (EUR 46.3 million for this phase, adopted on July 2017) was expected to benefit the Libyan Coast Guard and Libyan border guards in the South and aid in their management of borders. To this end, in 2018 a capacity-building pilot activity in the Ghat areas was planned 'to set up or restore the border area surveillance facilities' using EUBAM staff. However, Libyan authorities in the field of IBM, the National Team of Border Security and Management (NTBSM), lack the capacity to patrol remote borders on their own. In the Southern region of Libya, shifting loyalties and economies made up of coexisting legal and illicit elements undermine all attempts at planning – let alone building – long-term IBM, especially if one considers that strict security regulations require EU officers not to leave certain neighbourhoods in Tripoli. The mission in Ghat never materialised because the pilot activity was leaked to an Italian newspaper in June 2018, prompting a reaction from the (ostensibly pro-Gadaffist) Ghat social council of tribes that further exacerbated the conflict with the municipal council supporting visits by EU-Italian delegations. In reality, the municipal council justified the pilot mission's proposed presence of Italian security forces as a reactivation of the 2008 'Treaty of Friendship' signed by Gaddafi and former Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, which included measures countering illegal migration and delivering equipment. The episode confirms that, while local conflict falls outside the friend-or-foe logic in that disagreements over the mission cannot be reduced to pro- or against-Gaddafist ideals, the spearheading of IBM by a single member state may actually attract further criticism in terms of coherence, given that border management assistance to Libya is a fluid accumulation of 'loose institutional arrangements' in relation to border practices (Bialasiewicz 2012, 844) with no respect for international law regarding human rights on land and at sea.

Relatedly, these issues raise questions as to *who* the locals are and who is really empowered by these interventions, with serious implications for local ownership and conflict sensitivity. In both Ukraine and Libya, the implementation of IBM and security sector reform support has generated a number of significant unintended consequences in terms of empowering actors and bad practices instead of governance and the stabilization of border practices. While EU intervention formally seeks to eventually build strong relations between state institutions and citizens, this goal is overrun by prospects of short-term

gains and external agendas. Ukrainian interviewees have pointed to the fact that the design of EUAM's agenda runs the risk of inadvertently reproducing the widespread corruption entrenched in Ukraine' security sector. One example is the EU's support for public councils, bodies that include representatives of NGOs, trade unions, media, etc. and have been created within the ministries in keeping with the Decree on facilitating public participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies.[21] Instead of ensuring civil society oversight of the activities of security sector authorities, public councils (specifically the ones operating within the Ministry of Internal Affairs) reportedly replicate informal networks of loyalties that might hinder reforms aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in security institutions. Similar trajectories are triggered by the EU's calls for links between the non-governmental sector and state authorities (in the framework of EU-funded programmes), links that empower 'reliable' organizations rather than independent actors. For that matter, it is not a novelty for the EU to (inadvertently) generate negative externalities, especially if one looks at EU involvement and peacebuilding/post-crisis interventions in the Western Balkans: in its attempts to build and/or reform state institutions, indeed, the EU has favoured the development of public agencies weak or lacking in accountability and responsiveness (Belloni 2019; Chandler 2010).

In the case of Libya, an excessive focus on migration management and collaboration with detention centres not only eventually results in complicity with human rights violations, but it also empowers the Ministry of Interior departments dealing with migrants and collaborating with the international organizations that visit detention centres without changing the way the sector is governed. In reality, such empowerment causes Libyan authorities' political control over foreign organizations to proliferate. Individual Libyan officers have sometimes exerted pressure on young local Libyan staff members of international organisations in an effort to convince them to report the names and activities of international organizations to Libyan authorities.[22] Moreover, following the combining of the SSR intervention on border management with the one on migration, Libyan authorities became keen on taking up the technical phraseology of EU programmes around the idea of 'managing borders', in this case translated into local representations of security needs in connection with illegal migration. As post-2011 authorities have not reformed asylum and *non-refoulement* rights under Libyan law, this technical phraseology allows GNA's institutions to abide by EU and MSs security frameworks while bypassing any actual commitment to international human rights law or humanitarian provisions under the law of the sea.

In sum, in both cases the limited positive perception of EU activities is contradicted by insufficient and context-insensitive interventions in the border areas. The implementation of IBM policy design creates more space for destabilization, given the misconception of border economies and

confusion regarding who is in control of what. Relations between EU missions and local counterparts are weak, and in areas where they are stronger they tend to bring about negative repercussions on conflict dynamics.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has illustrated how the templates the EU uses in its neighbourhood have changed, specifically through the prism of EU assistance in the fields of border management and security sector reform. The move to embrace new policy templates reflects a deeper paradigm shift – from 'transformation' to 'stabilization' – and the crisis response measures that EU adopted in Ukraine and Libya have arguably played an important role in this process.

In Libya, EUBAM was deployed in 2013 as part of the EU crisis response intervention in the country. However, the weak authority of Libyan counterparts, EUBAM's inability to deal with political fragmentation 'at a distance' (after relocating the mission to Tunis), and mounting pressures from individual MSs to deal with irregular migration flows along the Central Mediterranean Route eventually undermined the coherence and efficacy of EUBAM's mandate, especially along the Southern borders. This state of affairs has entailed negative direct and indirect outcomes on the ground. In Ukraine, EUBAM came into existence long before the 2013–2014 political and security crises, whereas EUAM was established as a direct response to the crisis situation. Thus, EUAM faced a completely different political context from the beginning, one increasingly characterised by competition between two regional integration schemes – that is, the Eurasian Economic Union promoted by the Russian Federation on one hand and the EU-sponsored Eastern Partnership on the other. Problems of intra- and inter-institutional coordination among different actors, disagreements among EU MSs regarding the mandates and agendas of EU missions, and gaps between the EU's actions and Ukrainian authorities' expectations are all additional factors that have impacted the actual and perceived effectiveness of EU initiatives in the field of border management and security sector reform in Ukraine.

We have examined these two cases by paying particular attention to the reception and perception of EU norms, policies and practices on the ground. In spite of the EU's commitment to democracy and good governance on one hand, and to conflict-sensitivity, local ownership and context-specificity on the other, scrutinizing policy formulations and implementation in Libya and Ukraine it becomes relatively clear that the normative aspirations of the EU have been gradually side-lined in favour of security and stability concerns. Whereas in November 2015 it was announced that the new ENP would take 'stabilization as its main political priority' (European Commission and High Representative 2015), by that point EU crisis response actions in Ukraine and Libya already pointed in that direction.

In Libya, stabilization seems to be one and the same with the governance of migration flows and the containment of irregular human mobility, an area that is explicitly depicted as a threat to MSs' national security, EU internal security and the long-term survival of the EU as a political project. In Ukraine, stability prescriptions have been translated into the consolidation of state authorities and infrastructures, yet in a context in which state officials and representatives are in the process of reshaping their relations of trust vis-à-vis local constituencies and the public, and the resilience of state institutions is endangered by separatism and novel forms of extremism and political violence. While particular attention has been paid to the reform of the public sector and administration, long-term solutions in terms of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement as well as ensuring the rule of law in the country as a whole have instead been overlooked.

Within this framework, the EU's emphasis on border control and security sector reform presents significant analogies within the logic that guided responses in Libya and Ukraine. Aimed at consolidating the pillars of statehood and stability, the mandates of these missions and interventions revealed certain blind spots regarding conflict and power dynamics. In addition to weak (if not absent) conflict-sensitivity and context-specificity, the EU's presence and initiatives in Ukraine and Libya appear to reflect the crisis of the EU's liberal project.

Notes

1 This article has been elaborated in the framework of a collaborative EU-funded project whose overall objective has been to critically assess how and to what extent the EU is conflict-sensitive when it implements its crisis response capacity across different third countries. According to the respective literature on conflict management and transformation, a conflict-sensitive intervention in conflict-ridden contexts is likely to produce a sustainable peace (Chandler 2010b; Mac Ginty 2011; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Richmond 2012; Richmond, Björkdahl, and Kappler 2011), as it implies recognizing the multiplicity of actors and agents embedded in the conflict, each one with own perceptions and sources of authority and legitimacy. However, EU's engagement with the complexity and multi-layeredness of each conflict has collided with its technocratic understanding of state-building ("as capacity-building which disregards the fact that statehood is a dynamic, and sometimes violent, historical, and political process", Ehrhart and Petretto 2014, 192), thus diluting its commitment to conflict-sensitivity.

2 Grant No. 693337. The research has obtained ethical clearance: data have been collected with the highest regard to the privacy and safety of all research participants; researchers followed informed consent procedures and strict protocols in terms of the pseudonymisation of research data.

3 Conducted either on the phone or via videoconference tools.

4 The local interlocutors were selected according to their participation in the implementation of EU-supported/funded projects and/or their expertise.

5 Preliminary research findings and a more detailed and extensive account of research materials have been published in: Ivashchenko-Stadnik et alii 2017; Ivashchenko-

Stadnik, Petrov and Russo 2017; Loschi and Raineri 2017; Ivashchenko-Stadnik et alii 2018; Loschi, Raineri and Strazzari 2018.

6 EUBAM was designed to help the Moldovan and Ukrainian border authorities curb smuggling networks and counter criminal activities feeding the Transnistrian frozen-conflict economy. As the mission appeared to represent not only an instrument for addressing illegal cross-border trafficking and professionalise customs, border guard and law enforcement services, but also a contribution to conflict settlement (Sasse 2009), elements of competition and contrast with Russia's interests and actions gradually emerged.

7 See also (Zarembo 2017).

8 It is worth noting that EUAM has opened two regional field offices since May 2016, one in Lviv and one in Kharkiv. In March 2018, a third Regional Presence was created in Odesa. This development helped EUAM to deliver on its mandate across the whole country.

9 Authors' remote interviews with Ukraine-based EU officials, November 2017.

10 The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine is a special-purpose law enforcement agency; since 2003 it has undertaken a transition from military to civilian strategy. EU-promoted reforms include precisely such demilitarisation of law enforcement agencies.

11 Authors' remote interviews with Ukraine-based EU officials, November 2017.

12 It should be noted that, even before the 2013–2014 crisis and even though the Ukraine had seen a decrease in the numbers of arriving and transiting migrants in the first decade of the 2000s, the EU injected considerable resources into the country to boost its detention capacity in spite of international observers' concerns about Ukraine's compliance with human rights international standards vis-à-vis asylum seekers and protecting the members of vulnerable groups (HRW 2010). In 2011, € 30 million were allocated to build nine new detention centres in Ukraine, reportedly with the aim of locking up "readmitted" migrants sent by EU countries (DECU, 2011a, 2011b; Europa TTED, 2010).

13 See 'New detention centres part of €7 million EU migration project in Belarus', *Statewatch News Online*, 1 Februrary 2017, http://statewatch.org/news/2017/feb/eu-belarus-camps.htm.

14 At time of writing, "The contract negotiations between the Commission and the Italian Ministry of Interior for the construction of the MRCC are ongoing." See Parliamentary questions, 20 May 2019, Answer given by Mr Hahn on behalf of the European Commission, Question reference: E-000190/2019.

15 Authors' remote interviews with Ukraine-based EU officials, November 2017.

16 In the case of the Tebu community, the perception of international presence in the South-eastern region is almost absent. Authors' interview with Tebu civil society actors, March, Tunis 2018.

17 Authors' interviews with Libyan political actors and stakeholders, Tunis, October and November 2017.

18 This has been well documented in the case of Georgia, see for example The EUMM Monitor: A bulletin from the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, Issue 2 – August 2016.

19 Authors' remote interviews with Ukraine-based EU officials, November 2017.

20 The "Concept for Development of the Security and Defence Sector of Ukraine" was formalised by the Edict of the President of Ukraine (No. 92/2016), on 14 March 2016 (http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/922016-19832).

21 The decree was adopted in 2010 and then amended in 2015 and 2019 (https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/996-2010-%D0%BF).

22 Authors' interview with INGO's local staff, March 2018, Tunis.

Funding

This work was supported by H2020 Societal Challenges - Europe In A Changing World - Inclusive, Innovative And Reflective Societies [grant number 693337].

ORCID

Chiara Loschi http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7782-5583
Alessandra Russo http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6304-7928

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