Extraterritorial Border Practices and Migration

A case study of the Spanish extraterritorial border regime
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Abstract

There is a gradual development in external border control operations along the Mediterranean migration routes. To limit illegal immigration from West Africa to the Canary Islands in 2006, Spain and the European border security agency, Frontex, began the anti-migration project Hera I. This project led to a wide range of critical studies discussing human rights infringements in the context of Hera I. This study focuses on the forgotten side of Hera I: its effect on migration routes, migrants, migrant smugglers, and involved third-countries. Based on existing research conducted by de Haas (2008) and Wilson and Donnan (2016), this study believes that Hera I caused a decline in the accessibility of the West Mediterranean route. This decline led to the intensification of smuggling networks along the West African coast and stimulated West African migrants to use the Central Mediterranean route. By testing these assumptions using the methods of process tracing and secondary analysis, the analysis reveals that Hera I is indeed responsible for these and other unwanted consequences.
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Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon; throughout the entire history of humankind people have been migrating (Wang, 1997). However, how we perceive migration has not remained the same throughout history. As suggested by the Paris School of Bigo (2006), following the end of the Cold War, new types of threats emerged, all closely linked to non-state actors. One of these new threats is migration. In this new security paradigm, migration is perceived as a security threat and is, therefore, unwanted (Bigo, 2006; Guittet and Jeandesboz, 2010). Framing migration as a security threat has been labelled the securitisation of migration (Léonard, 2010).

The securitisation of migration greatly impacts border regimes: “Anti-immigration efforts along the Southern border of the European Union (EU) have evolved greatly in the last three decades” (Vives, 2017, p. 209). According to Berg and Ehin (2006), contemporary border control practices are becoming extraterritorial. Since migration is perceived as a threat, European border controls are shifting away from the physical borderlines towards migration routes and migrant-sending countries in the hope of preventing the ‘threat’ from reaching European territory (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, 2012, 2014, 2015; Loftus, 2015).

Extraterritorial anti-immigration practices imply a ceding of sovereignty since the migrant-receiving states operate inside the territory of the migrant-sending states. Thus, extraterritorial border control practices affect the external and internal affairs of the migrant-sending states. To legitimise this ceding of sovereignty, bilateral and labour agreements are signed. Thereby, extraterritorial border control practices affect migration routes. Anti-immigration efforts, such as push-back strategies, make migration routes less accessible for undocumented migrants (Kuschminder, Bresser, and Siegel, 2015). When a migration route becomes less accessible, migrants use so-called ‘substitute routes’ (de Haas, 2008; Wilson and Donnan, 2016). In addition to the likelihood of creating substitute routes, anti-immigration efforts correlate also with the growth in smuggling networks. As argued by Wilson and Donnan
(2016), “increased border control and migration regulation in destination countries… makes the contracting of smugglers nearly essential for undocumented migrants” (p. 458).

Although extraterritorial border control operations are highly controversial, they are, since 2005, part of the Global Approach to Migration (GAM). The first large-scale extraterritorial border control project was Operation Hera I, which was coordinated by Frontex and hosted by Spain with the aim of preventing illegal migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands in 2006. Hera I has been the subject of many human rights studies (Brouwer, 2011; Guild and Carrera, 2011; Léonard, 2010). However, by mainly focusing on human rights infringements, the scholarly debate on extraterritorial border practices and its effects remain one-sided. By asking the research question, ‘What were the effects of Operation Hera I on the Mediterranean region?’, this paper attempts to narrow the identified literature gap. By gaining an insight into the complexity of extraterritorial border control operations, this study hopes to help anticipate the unintended consequences of future operations and limit the negative side-effects.

This thesis begins with an overview of the existing literature on border management and security studies. The second section encompasses the methodology and data. Here, the applied method and data sources are explained and justified. The section ‘Operation Hera I’ follows, in which Hera I is explained and the necessary background information is provided. The analysis and interpretation follow. This thesis concludes with a comprehensive conclusion, including the implications and recommendations for further research.

**Literature Review**

Following the events of 9/11, Western politicians began to frame migration as a security threat. Migratory flows are now often associated with problems such as terrorism, human trafficking, organised crime, and social unrest (Berg and Ehin, 2006; Leese, 2016; Léonard, 2010).
Migratory flows, according to Léonard (2010), refer to the movement of asylum-seekers, labour migrants, and irregular or undocumented migrants. When these migratory flows are being politicised and framed as a security threat, then we speak, according to Léonard (2010, p. 231), of the *securitisation of migration*. As suggested by the Paris School of security studies, the securitisation of migration is closely linked with the *global (in)security* discourse, which is now the dominant security discourse in the Western world (Bigo, 2006). The notion of global (in)security implies that, with the end of the Cold War, new types of threats emerged. These new threats are linked to non-state actors, such as terrorism or international organised crime (Bigo, 2006; Guittet and Jeandesboz, 2010).

Migration has, since the implementation of the Schengen Agreement in 1985, always been a high priority on the agenda of the EU. This is because Article 20 of the Schengen Borders Code states that, “internal borders of the Schengen Area may be crossed at any point without a border check on persons, irrespective of their nationality, being carried out” (in Boeles, Heijer, Lodder and Wouters, 2014, p. 337). However, the securitisation of migration affects the border management regime of the EU. As suggested by Berg and Ehin (2006), “a new external border regime is in the making” (p. 54). A large portion of (European) border management and migration literature argues that contemporary border control practices are shifting away from physical borderlines (Loftus, 2015). Border controls taking place outside the actual territory of a state are called extraterritorial border controls. Extraterritorial borders are a strategy designed to enact further control of movement beyond the traditional (hard) borders (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, 2012, 2014, 2015). In the definition by Casas-Cortes et al. (2014), border externalisation is characterised by two border control practices: the outsourcing or subcontracting of border responsibilities to third-countries; and anti-migration practices (interception or prevention measures) by receiving states of migration in third-countries where it is perceived that migration flows originate or transit (p. 232). The latter practice implies a
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ceding of sovereignty; receiving states can intervene inside the territories of third-countries to intercept or prevent migration flows.

Border externalisation and extraterritorial border control practices are a recent development in border management regimes, which is why our knowledge about their impact and possible effects is limited. However, one specific aspect of extraterritorial border controls has been the centre of many scientific debates, namely how it impacts human rights. According to Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul (2016), “Border externalization policies and practices can directly affect the human rights of migrants – and the international obligations of states to protect them – in significant ways” (p. 196). One way in which such practices affect human rights is through limiting the right to seek asylum. To seek asylum, a migrant must fall under the jurisdiction of the destination country. However, extraterritorial border control practices are designed to prevent migrants from ever coming under the jurisdiction of destination countries (Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul, 2016, p. 197). Furthermore, such practices limit human rights through the violation of the principle of non-refoulement (Brouwer, 2011). The principle of non-refoulement forbids states from returning anyone to a country where they would be exposed to ill-treatment (Brouwer, 2011; Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul, 2016). This means that states are obliged to screen migrants before they are returned to the country of departure. Thus, every person has the right to seek asylum, meaning that any refugee or asylum claim must be examined. However, there have been several cases in which migrants who were intercepted at sea during an extraterritorial border control operation were sent back to the country of departure without any screening procedures (see, for example, the ECtHR case Hirsi v. Italy).

As stated previously, extraterritorial border control practices are designed to manage migration routes with the ultimate goal of closing them. From a wide range of human rights studies, we know that this goal often collides with human rights such as the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement (Boeles, Heijer, Lodder, and Wouters, 2014; Brouwer,
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2011; Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul, 2016; Léonard, 2010). However, it is very unlikely that border externalisation policies and practices affect human rights only. How are migration routes and those involved (i.e. migrants, migrant smugglers, and migrant-sending countries) affected by extraterritorial border control practices? Although there is a wide range of literature regarding extraterritorial border control operations and human rights, literature on the other possible effects of extraterritorial border control operations is scarce. However, there are some scholars (see Barros et al., 2012; de Haas, 2008; Lutterbeck, 2006; Wilson and Donnan, 2016) who have studied the effects of border externalisation practices and policies on migration routes, migrants, and migrant smugglers.

According to de Haas (2008), undocumented migrants select the most attractive migration route. How attractive a migration route is depends on its accessibility. When a migration route becomes known for its extreme weather conditions, high safety risks, stricter border surveillance, or increased push-back strategies, its accessibility level falls, as does its attractiveness for undocumented migrants (Barros et al., 2012; de Haas, 2008; Kuschminder, Bresser and Siegel, 2015; Lutterbeck, 2006). Therefore, extraterritorial border control operations make migration routes less accessible and, thus, less attractive, which means that undocumented migrants are likely to opt for an alternative route. Thus, instead of closing migration routes, extraterritorial border control operations simply displace them (de Haas, 2008; Wilson and Donnan, 2016).

Research has been conducted on the possible connections between extraterritorial border operations and human smuggling activities. Doomernik (2013) suggests that the extraterritorial fight against migrant smugglers contains a paradox; although migrant smuggling is a product of border enforcement, extraterritorial border control operations are used to combat migrant smugglers (p. 121). Research by Wilson and Donnan (2016) indicates that extraterritorial border control operations greatly impact smuggling networks: “growth in
smuggling networks correlates with increased border control and migration regulation in destination countries, as heightened difficulty in making a successful journey makes the contracting of smugglers nearly essential for undocumented migrants” (p. 458).

Casas-Cortes et al. (2014) argue that extraterritorial border control operations greatly affect migrant-sending countries. As stated previously, border externalisation practices always imply a ceding of sovereignty: “we have described the process of border externalization as the *spatial and legal stretching* of the domains of migration control beyond sovereign territories” (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, 2014, p. 233). However, in addition to the ceding of sovereignty, how a particular extraterritorial border control operation affects a migrant-sending country is not clear.

**Hypotheses**

Although it is a quite new subject, the existent literature reveals that border externalisation and extraterritorial border control operations have a major influence on those involved.

Extraterritorial border control practices are aimed at closing migration routes. Therefore, this paper expects that extraterritorial border control practices affect migration routes by making them less accessible for undocumented migrants. When the accessibility of a migration route drops, ‘substitute routes’ are created. If the incentive to migrate continues to exist, but the first-choice route becomes less attractive, this study argues that migrants will use other migration routes. Since extraterritorial border control operations make illegal migration to Europe increasingly difficult, this paper argues that extraterritorial border control operations lead to more human smugglers operating along the patrolled migration routes.

HI: Extraterritorial border control operations affect migration routes by making them less accessible for undocumented migrants;

HII: Extraterritorial border control operations are responsible for the creation of so-called ‘substitute routes’;
HIII: Extraterritorial border control operations lead to an intensification of migrant smuggling networks along migration routes.

Does securitisation really lead to greater security, or are these external border practices only creating more problems than they solve? To obtain a better understanding of the effects of extraterritorial border control practices and to test the hypotheses, this study examines the extraterritorial border control Operation Hera I. By considering the research question, *What were the effects of Operation Hera I on the Mediterranean region?*, this paper hopes to contribute to the scholarly debate regarding border externalisation by providing more insights into its effects.

**Methodology and Data**

The research design used in this study is a case-study analysis of the Spanish extraterritorial border regime. This choice follows logically from the research question: *What were the effects of Operation Hera I on the Mediterranean region?* The research methods used are process tracing and qualitative secondary analysis. A brief discussion on both methods is provided, below. The data section follows the methodology.

**Methodology**

The qualitative analysis of this study is based on process tracing. As argued by David Collier (2011), “Process tracing is an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena” (p. 824). In other words, process tracing is the systematic examination of analytical evidence. Collier suggests that the method of process tracing is especially helpful for the analysis of single-case studies, because it “inherently analyses trajectories of change and causation” (2011, p. 824). Collier argues also that it is important that all the phenomena
observed at each step in this trajectory are adequately described (2011, p. 824). This means that process tracing requires a thick description approach.

In addition to process tracing, this study uses qualitative secondary analysis. According to Bryman (2012), secondary analysis is “the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data” (p. 312). Secondary analysis can be both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, qualitative secondary analysis refers to the analysis of, for example, interviews that were not conducted by the researcher him or herself.

Data
The primary data of this study consist of official (bureaucratic) textual documents and numeric data regarding the following: Mediterranean migration routes; migrant smugglers and smuggling routes in West Africa; and third-countries Senegal and Mauritania in the context of Hera I.

To test the possible effects of Hera I on the Mediterranean migration routes, this study uses the I-Map\textsuperscript{1} programme, a scientific article (Vives, 2017), and an Amnesty International report (2008). By using the I-Map programme, this study can, objectively, discover whether migration using the Mediterranean routes changed during Hera I. Since the I-Map programme provides this study with statistical insights and not with (theoretical) explanations, the scientific article by Vives (2017) and the Amnesty International report (2008) are used to discover whether there is a causal connection between Hera I and the migration patterns displayed in the I-Map programme.

Regarding the possibility of a causal link between Hera I and the changing nature of smugglers and smuggling routes in West Africa, this study examined an official report (2011) by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); a scientific article by Liempt

\textsuperscript{1} The I-Map programme is online at http://www.imap-migration.org/index.php?id=471
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(2016); a scientific article by Vives (2017); and an online blog by political scientist Any Freitas on the website of the Royal United Services Institute (2016). These data sources are relevant since they encompass numeric data, theoretical arguments, and insights on possible confounder variables. Regarding confounder variables, this study identifies several: extreme weather conditions; economic recession(s) in Spain; increased economic stability in the country of departure; the accessibility of other migration routes; increased political stability in the country of departure; and increased security risks along migration routes.

As previously argued, how safe and accessible a route is determines its attractiveness for undocumented migrants. However, safety in this context is very subjective; extreme weather conditions are the reason for one undocumented migrant to use an alternative route, but might not be for others. To discover whether and why undocumented migrants use a particular route and when and why they feel the need to contact smugglers, this study considers their personal motivations as reported in the Amnesty International report (2008).

This study examined official research centre reports (Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research and International Centre for Migration Policy Development) regarding the possible effects of Spanish extraterritorial anti-migration efforts (such as Hera I) on third-countries Senegal and Mauritania. These official reports reveal how Hera I affected Senegal and Mauritania. This study differentiates the effects on both countries, since it may lead to further insights on whether the effects of Hera I can be generalised or that significant differences exist.

**Operation Hera I**

Operation Hera I is an example of an extraterritorial border project with the purpose of preventing illegal migration to the EU. The operation focused on the West Mediterranean route to intercept and prevent West African migrants from reaching the Spanish Canary Islands. That
Hera I took place is, according to López-Sala (2015), understandable if you consider the importance of the route for undocumented migrants:

Spanish policy on controlling migration flows has undergone a great deal of institutional and instrumental development over the past two decades. This area has grown in importance within the Spanish political agenda due to the intensification of irregular immigration from Africa via maritime routes to its territory, the geographic characteristics of Spain and the symbolic construction of its border as one of the territorial boundaries of the European Union most vulnerable to uncontrolled migration flows (López-Sala, 2015, p. 514).

Between 2000 and 2005, most of the unauthorised migrants trying to reach Spain used the route from Morocco to Ceuta and Melilla (two Spanish enclaves). The land borders between Morocco and the enclaves in northern Africa became increasingly monitored, in 2005, by Spanish officials. This led to a shift: Migrants began to favour the sea route to the Spanish Canary Islands more than the land route to Ceuta and Melilla (Vives, 2017).

**Figure 1:** Numbers of immigrants arriving in the Canaries through illegal Entry points between 1994 and 2012

![Graph showing numbers of immigrants arriving in the Canaries](chart.png)

*Source: Retrieved from the article by Dirk Godenau. Provided to Dirk Godenau (2014) by the Government Office in the Canaries*
In the summer of 2006, illegal migration to the Spanish Canary Islands reached a new record high. In that year alone, more than 30,000 unauthorised migrants reached the shores of the Spanish Canary Islands. Most of these unauthorised migrants came from Senegal (16,215 migrants; 53.9%), followed by Gambia (12.1%), Mali (11.4%), and Ivory Coast (5.6%) (Godenau, 2014).

**Table I:** Percentage distribution by nationality of immigrants arriving in the Canaries from Africa between 2004 and 2007 via illegal routes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL AFRICA (number of migrants)</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,218</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,640</strong></td>
<td><strong>30,063</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,376</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Retrieved from the article by Dirk Godenau. Provided to Dirk Godenau (2014) by the Government Office in the Canaries*

To prevent illegal migration from West Africa to the Canary Islands, Spain asked Frontex for assistance patrolling the West Mediterranean route, which was granted in accordance with Art. 8 Frontex Council Regulation 2007/2004 (Wriedt and Reinhardt, 2017). Once assistance was granted, Operation Hera I could be realised. The operation began in July 2006 and lasted until October 2006. Frontex frames Hera I as a success since illegal migration to the Canary Islands was significantly lower in 2007 than it was in 2006 (Wriedt and Reinhardt, 2017).

Although the public received little information regarding the procedures, it was confirmed by Frontex that, to reduce the number of illegal arrivals in the Canary Islands, the use of aerial, maritime, and terrestrial assets was necessary (Wriedt and Reinhardt, 2017). To intercept and return unauthorised migrants, Spain and Frontex cooperated with the authorities of Senegal, Morocco, and Mauritania. Cooperation was formalised through bilateral agreements. To increase transparency, the European Centre for Constitutional and Human
Rights (ECCHR) requested Frontex to provide them with information regarding the screening procedures. However, “the precise content of the screening activities conducted before the return of migrants and refugees intercepted at sea remains unclear” (Wriedt and Reinhardt, 2017, p. 2).

**Analysis**

This analytical chapter holds three arguments: (1) During Hera I, the accessibility of the West Mediterranean migration route declined; (2) During Hera I, the Central Mediterranean migration route became a ‘substitute route’ for migrants who otherwise would have used the West Mediterranean migration route; and (3) Hera I led to an intensification of migrant smuggling networks along the West Mediterranean route. The main aim of this chapter is to test these three arguments. However, this chapter does not constrain itself to only these three arguments; this study’s objective is to shed new light on the broader effects of Hera I on those involved (i.e. undocumented migrants; migrant smugglers; involved third-countries Senegal and Mauritania, and their citizens). To obtain a better understanding of the effects of Operation Hera I, this analytical chapter commences with a brief discussion of the context in which the operation was created.

As stated in the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Working Document (No. 261), during the early 2000s, the EU was developing a border management strategy that focused on durable solutions for reducing illegal migration at its southern maritime borders (Carrera, 2007). In this new approach to illegal migration, the European Commission began to advocate the importance of an “integrated and global response” to illegal migration and its challenges (Carrera, 2007, p. 1). Cooperation between European Member States and third-countries became a crucial aspect of the new border management strategy, which is now called the GAM. As outlined in the CEPS Working Document, the GAM aims to reduce “illegal migration flows
and the loss of lives, ensure safe return of illegal migrants, strengthen durable solutions for refugees, and build capacity to better manage migration” (Carrera, 2007, p. 7).

The Hera operations are part of the GAM approach and should, therefore, focus on a durable solution for the problem of illegal migration to the Canary Islands. However, Carrera (2007) argues that Hera I did not provide a long-term solution at all:

The fact that the two first joint operations were launched without it being completely clear what was really needed there shows how at that time it was more important to find a ‘rapid solution’ to the political pressures, than dealt with the actual situation taking place in the Canary Islands. Frontex became ‘the institutional response’ to the constructed emergency situation in Spain (Carrera, 2007, p. 13)

Carrera (2007) suggests also that the GAM approach fits the discourse of global (in)security since it advocates the idea that securitisation leads to greater security. In this discourse, illegal migration is perceived as a security threat. From this perspective, Hera I should lead to improved security since it was designed to intercept illegal migratory flows at the West Mediterranean route. However, the Centre for European Studies (CES) argued in a 2012 report that Spain’s social and economic situation remains a strong ‘pull-factor’ for illegal migration (Ifantis, 2012). The Hera operations (I, II, and III) were unsuccessful in terms of providing a durable solution for the issue of illegal migration because the cause of the problem (i.e. the pull-factor) remained after the operations ended.

The aim of this analytical chapter is to construct a comprehensive understanding of the effects of Hera I. As discussed in the previous section, Hera I was part of a new approach to migration (GAM) and should, therefore, have invested in durable solutions regarding illegal migration and its imposed challenges. Whether Hera I did this is not the main concern of this study; however, it is an important question to ask: If Hera I was unsuccessful in providing a
durable solution for the issue of illegal migration to the Spanish Canary Islands, then it should not serve as a ‘GAM blueprint’ for other European extraterritorial border control operations.

The remaining body of this chapter is divided into five parts: (1) Changing Migration Routes; (2) The Changing Nature of Smugglers and Smuggling Routes; (3) Hera I and Senegal; (4) Hera I and Mauritania; and (5) Discussion.

**Changing Migration Routes**

This section analyses documents directly linked with the Mediterranean migration routes. The migration routes to Europe, however, are not always referred to in a consistent manner by the sources. The Central Mediterranean route, for example, is sometimes called the Libyan route. When discussing migration routes to Europe, this study identifies five different routes: The Central Mediterranean route; the West Mediterranean route; the East Mediterranean route; the Eastern Europe route; and the Western Balkan route (see Figure II).

**Figure II: Migration routes to Europe**

![Migration routes to Europe](image)

*Source: BBC ‘Spain sees surge of migrants by sea from Morocco’* ²

However, the I-Map programme identifies four routes: the Western Mediterranean route; the West Africa route; the Central Mediterranean route; and the East Mediterranean route. This study does not recognise the West Africa route as a separate route. Instead, this study argues

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that the West Africa route is part of the West Mediterranean migration route since it concerns migration from Africa to Spain.

The Interactive Map on Migration (I-Map) has served as a support instrument to intergovernmental dialogues on migration since 2006. The I-Map programme reconstructs the dynamic nature of migration routes by using data largely provided by Frontex and Europol. This study used the I-Map programme to map migration trends at the Mediterranean migration routes between 2005 and 2008.

**Figure III**: Migratory trends to Europe 2005

![Migratory trends to Europe 2005](source: I-Map programme)

**Figure IV**: Migratory trends to Europe 2006

![Migratory trends to Europe 2006](source: I-Map programme)
As displayed in Figure III, illegal migration to the Spanish Canary Islands (the West Africa route) was slightly less in 2005 than it was in 2004. Migration from North Africa (Morocco) to Spain (labelled by I-Map as the Western Mediterranean route) was higher in 2005 than it was in 2004, with an estimated increase of 7,000 people. Almost 30,000 migrants used the Central Mediterranean route during their attempt to reach Europe. This makes the Central Mediterranean route, in 2005, the most attractive Mediterranean migration route for African migrants.
Figure IV illustrates that illegal migration to the Canary Islands (the West Africa route) reached a new record in 2006. It is estimated that, in 2005, around 7,000 undocumented migrants undertook an illegal journey to reach the Canary Islands. This number increased to more than 30,000 in 2006. This makes the West Africa route the most popular Mediterranean migration route in 2006. Illegal migration using both the West and Central Mediterranean route declined between 2005 and 2006. It is estimated that approximately 25,000 migrants used the Central Mediterranean route in 2006 to reach Europe. For the West Mediterranean route, this number is estimated at around 11,000 migrants.

As displayed in Figure V, illegal migration to the Canary Islands was, in 2007, significantly lower than in 2006. The migratory trend to the Canary Islands between 2005 and 2007 is shaped as a pyramid: the decrease of the number of migrants in 2007 is the same as the increase of migrants in 2005 – abrupt and in extreme numbers. It is estimated that, in 2007, around 12,000 migrants used the West Africa route to the Canary Islands. Between 2006 and 2007, migration to the Canary Islands decreased by two-thirds. During this significant decline, the Central Mediterranean route remained more or less stable. The migration route from Morocco to Spain (the West Mediterranean route) also declined after 2006. In 2006, it is estimated that approximately 11,000 migrants used the Morocco-Spain migration route; while in 2007 this number is estimated at 10,000 migrants.

Figure VI reveals that illegal migration to the Canary Islands continued to decline between 2007 and 2008. It is estimated that, in 2008, approximately 11,000 migrants attempted to reach the Canary Islands. Illegal migration from Morocco to Spain also diminished between 2007 and 2008. In 2008, an estimated 9,000 migrants used the Morocco-Spain. The Central Mediterranean route gained in importance between 2007 and 2008. In 2007, approximately 22,000 migrants used the Central Mediterranean route. This number increased significantly in 2008, with more than 42,000 migrants using the route.
The article ‘Unwanted sea migrants across the EU border: the Canary Islands’ (Vives, 2017) states that between 2000 and 2010 the Mediterranean migration routes constantly changed because of ‘external pressures’, such as increased patrolling in the Mediterranean Sea by Frontex. As mentioned in the article, before 2005, most illegal crossings (concerning the West Mediterranean route) happened at the land border that separates Morocco from the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. When, in 2005, the Spanish Government increased surveillance along the Morocco-Spain route, migratory flows shifted to the Canary Islands. The article further states that when the global financial crisis of 2008 hit Spain, West African migrants became less motivated to move to Spain. As argued by Vives (2017), the economic well-being of Spain was a major pull-factor for West Africans, and when the global economic crisis negatively affected the economy of Spain, this pull-factor weakened.

The Amnesty International report ‘Mauritania: Nobody wants to have anything to do with us’ (2008) argues that, since 2006, Mauritania has become “a particularly favoured departure point for migrants who want to go to Europe” (p. 6). The report consists of several interviews with illegal migrants who were sent back from the Canary Islands to Mauritania, and who are now held in a detention centre at Nouadibou (in northern Mauritania). From these interviews, it is clear that undocumented migrants preferred the migration route through Morocco to the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, but that this was no longer an option because of increased patrolling. Instead, they were now ‘forced’ to take the much longer and dangerous route from Mauritania to the Canary Islands.

The Changing Nature of Smugglers and Smuggling Routes
This section analyses documents directly linked to migrant smuggling activities along the Mediterranean migration routes during the period of increased external border controlling by the Spanish Government.
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published the report ‘The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants from West Africa to the European Union’ (2011), in which the role played by organised criminal groups is discussed. This report, and the research prior to it, were funded by the EU within the framework of the project “Law enforcement capacity-building to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants in the ECOWAS region and Mauritania” (p. 1). The report states that migrant smugglers are often migrants themselves and, therefore, do not consider themselves criminals. The report further suggests that anti-migration policies in destination countries often lead to unintended consequences:

They have made the market for the smuggling of persons more lucrative, thereby attracting the attention of existing criminal groups, as well as causing those already working in this sector, as they become more professional, to develop more contacts with existing criminal networks (UNODC, 2011, p. 2)

The report states that following the Canary Islands’ migration peak of 2006, an increasing number of professional smuggling organisations began to base themselves in Mauritania. These migrant smuggling organisations are generally ruled by ‘white Moors’ (or Beydanes). They have the money to buy wooden vessels from local fishermen and the ‘right appearance’ to easily bribe the authorities (UNODC, 2011). As stated in the report, some law enforcement officers in Mauritania sell the engines or fuel from boats they have previously confiscated to the white Moors. Those who recruit the migrants, however, are normally black Mauritians (UNODC, 2011, p. 34). Furthermore, following the 2006 migration peak to the Canary Islands, migrant smuggling became a flourishing business in Mauritania, which, according to the report, was the result of the increased patrolling along the sea route to the Canary Islands by Spain and Frontex. The report suggests that because undocumented migrants want to evade official controls, they contact smugglers.
The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (Sieps) published an article on the criminalisation of human smuggling. The article, entitled ‘A Critical Insight into Europe’s Criminalisation of Human Smuggling’ (Liempt, 2016), argues that when Spain began to introduce sophisticated military border control systems, migrant smuggling professionalised and migration routes became more dynamic and diversified (p. 2). Europe’s response to migrant deaths at sea is Frontex. By increasing patrolling activities along the West Mediterranean Sea route, vessels in distress are more likely to be detected, which leads to fewer casualties at sea. However, increased border patrolling forces migrants to use even more dangerous and longer routes, which also means more deaths at sea (Liempt, 2016, p. 5). This ‘cat and mouse game’ played along the European border has resulted in a clear geographical shift in border deaths. When patrolling the border between Morocco and Spain increased, smugglers began using the long and dangerous sea route between Mauritania and the Spanish Canary Islands. When Hera I increased the number of patrols along the sea route to the Canary Islands, migration shifted to the Strait of Sicily (Central Mediterranean route) (Liempt, 2016, p. 5). Thus, increased patrolling of migrant routes forces migrants to use the services of human smugglers.

The article ‘Unwanted sea migrants across the EU border: The Canary Islands’ (Vives, 2017) claims that prior to 2006 most of the human smugglers in Senegal were local fishermen. The economy of Senegal relies on agriculture and fishing. However, overfishing and foreign illegal fishing resulted in the collapse of Senegal’s local fish stocks in 2005. Local fishermen became unemployed or were no longer capable of making a living through fishing alone. As a result, these fishermen began using their knowledge of the sea and their equipment to make extra money as migrant smugglers. These local fishermen were often smuggling friends, neighbours, or other people from their villages to the Canary Islands. Since these fishermen were held accountable by their local communities, they prepared well for the smuggling trips to minimise the risks. Vives (2017) states that the smuggling trips organised by these local
fishermen were, in general, safer than those organised by professional smugglers. Vives (2017) contends that when, in 2005, the Government of Senegal criminalised human smuggling activities, such as carrying undocumented people in your vessel, the local fishermen were replaced by more professional human smugglers who were willing to take higher risks for themselves and the migrants.

Any Freitas, a political scientist and policy analyst specialising in European studies, wrote, for the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), an online blog about irregular migration to the EU. She argues that when migratory routes are displaced, they tend to become longer and more difficult. Since, in this particular context, a migrant’s journey becomes more dangerous, there is a greater likelihood that he or she will need to rely on migrant smugglers at some point during the journey (Freitas, 2016). Freitas (2016) further argues that migration and border control policies “tend to have a greater impact on displacing migratory itineraries or increasing people-smuggling activities than effectively controlling or stopping migration” (p. 1).

Moreover, because of Hera I, the migration route to the Canary Islands lost its popularity for undocumented migrants. However, as the blog states, the West African migrants still wanted to go to Europe. Since the route to the Canary Islands became more difficult to navigate, Freitas (2016) argues that migrants from West Africa began to use, with the help of migrant smugglers, the Central Mediterranean route.

**Hera I and Senegal**

This section analyses documents linked to third-country Senegal in the context of Hera I and other projects concerning increased external border controlling by the Spanish Government in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) published, in 2008, the report ‘Labour mobility: A win-win-win model for trade and development in the case of Senegal’ (Panizzon). The report suggests that Hera I played a key role in setting the stage for a
new generation of bilateral migration agreements. Spain applied a new migration strategy that combined development cooperation with border securitisation and labour migration. Beginning in 2006, Senegal became the ‘testing ground’ for this new approach.

According to the NCCR (2008) report, Spain encouraged Senegal to embrace migration as an opportunity for growth and development. Together with Spain, Senegal created new programmes seeking to reintegrate returned migrants, such as the REVA programme. There were also programmes created that work with business contacts established by Senegalese workers abroad to draw foreign direct investment into Senegal (Panizzon, 2008, p. 11).

The report further states that income from remittances accounted for 3% of GDP in Senegal in 2006. Migrant remittances sent home to Senegal constitute a significant source of foreign currency. Therefore, in 2006, the Government of Senegal began to put more effort into channelling these flows of remittances into productive investments. This strategy fitted the new approach to migration; if development in Senegal leads to higher employment rates and living standards, migration from Senegal to Europe will decline (Panizzon, pp. 5 & 14). However, the report states also that most of the remittances are not invested in development but are used to pay for the day-to-day needs of the families left behind in Senegal. Thus, in reality, the remittances contribute little to creating jobs or employment opportunities in Senegal. As stated in the report, in 2006 and 2007, Senegal faced a financial crisis, which meant that remittances were increasingly used to meet daily needs and were not channelled into development projects.

The report (Panizzon, 2008) argued that knowledge and economic exchanges with the local communities have failed to reach the unemployed workforces of Senegal. Development programmes that were created in the context of Hera I target the higher educated of Senegal. However, most of the migrants who went to the Canary Islands in 2006 were low-skilled workers.
The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) published a 339-page report on migration policies in West Africa (2015). The report, ‘A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa’, discusses the migration and policy trends of 15 African countries. The report states that, of the Senegalese living and working abroad, it is not the high-skilled workers but the low-skilled workers who are sending high percentages of remittances back to Senegal. For the higher educated, it is more common that they use their savings to build houses in Senegal where they can return to in the future (p. 278).

The 2015 report suggests that, since 2008, the National Commission of Job Offers in Senegal has been responsible for listing employment sectors and type of occupations available in ‘partner countries’. By ‘partner countries’, the report refers to countries with which Senegal has concluded bilateral labour agreements, such as France and Spain. According to the report, these agreements may lead to an intensification of the brain-drain problem, since most of the available occupations are in the health sector. The report further explains that the emigration rate of nurses to European Member States was estimated at 8.9%, and that of medical doctors at 43% in 2007 (ICMPD, 2015, p. 277).

**Hera I and Mauritania**

Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart’s (2014) research article ‘Migration Policy Development in Mauritania: Process, Issues, and Actors’ argues that, similar to Senegal, Mauritania has been a testing ground for European migration policies since the early 2000s. However, Mauritania’s Government, its public opinion, and civil society are not as interested in migration issues as Senegal. Therefore, “the management of migration flows in Mauritania has not had the same impact on the country’s political agenda and on societal debates” (Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart, 2014, p. 1). This lack of effect is partly because of Mauritania’s status as a transit country, which means that the issue of migration is regarded (by Mauritania) as an indirect concern to
Mauritania and its population. The 2007 article argues that migration was a key political issue on the agenda of Senegal, but not on the agenda of Mauritania.

Although Mauritania was less concerned with migration issues, it did change its approach to migration in 2006 when the ‘migration crisis’ in the Spanish Canary Islands occurred (Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart, 2014). External pressures by Spain and the EU resulted, in 2006, in the creation of a branch of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in the Mauritanian city of Nouakchott. The IOM branch had the task of helping the Mauritanian Government establish a national programme of migration management. However, because of the lack of interest Mauritania had for migration issues in the early 2000s, the country lacked the knowledge, material, and financial resources to implement a national migration project (Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart, 2014, p. 3).

Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart (2014) argue that, until 2006, the term ‘illegality’ was not used in the context of migration by the Government of Mauritania. However, Mauritania’s view on migration became, following increased pressure by Spain to fight illegal immigration to the Canary Islands, negative. Senegal considers migration an opportunity for development, Mauritania, on the other hand, considers it an economic and social burden.

Discussion

The analysis of the I-Map programme reveals that during Hera I illegal migration to the Canary Islands decreased significantly. The I-Map programme further reveals that, in 2007, in the aftermath of Hera I, migration along the Central Mediterranean route increased tremendously. The analysis of the article of scholar Vives (2017) demonstrates that the significant increase of migration to the Canary Islands between 2005 and 2006 was caused by the border control enlargements of 2005 along the Morocco-Spain border. Furthermore, the analysis of the article (2017) states that the positive economic situation of Spain was a large pull-factor for migrants, and therefore the decline of migration to the Canary Islands in 2008 was intensified by the
global economic crisis affecting the economy of Spain. The analysis of the Amnesty International report (2008) revealed that West African migrants preferred the migration route between Morocco and the two Spanish enclaves, but that increased patrolling of this route ‘forced’ them to take the route to the Canary Islands.

The analysis of the UNODC report (2011) indicates that anti-migration policies in destination countries enable existing criminal groups to create lucrative smuggling businesses. Thereby, existing human smuggling networks professionalised. The analysis of the report (2011) revealed that during Hera I, professional smuggling organisations began to base themselves in Mauritania. The analysis of the article of Liempt (2016) reveals that the increased patrolling activities along the West Mediterranean route created a ‘cat and mouse game’ between smugglers and patrol officers. This game led to more cases of migrants dying at sea because, to evade border patrol officers, smugglers use more dangerous routes. The analysis of the article (2016) also revealed that Hera I caused a significant increase in migration along the Central Mediterranean route in 2008.

The analysis of the article of Vives (2017) demonstrates that Hera I was responsible for the professionalisation and criminalisation of migrant smuggling activities in Senegal. The analysis of the online blog (Freitas, 2016) reveals that when a migration route becomes less accessible for undocumented migrants, reliance on human smugglers increases. Furthermore, border control operations such as Hera I tend to displace migration routes instead of controlling them. Increased patrolling along the West Mediterranean Sea resulted in a migration shift, in 2008, from the West route to the Central route.

The analysis of the NCCR report (Panizzon, 2008), showed that during Hera I, Senegal created development projects. Unlike Mauritania, Senegal considers migration an opportunity for development because Senegalese migrants abroad send large amounts in remittances back to Senegal. Spain is aware of this activity and, along with the EU, urged Senegal to use the
remittances to invest in development projects in the hope that the incentive to migrate would weaken. However, the analysis of the report also showed that in 2006 and 2007, Senegal faced a financial crisis and remittances were not used for development projects but to pay day-to-day needs. The analysis of the report (Panizzon, 2008) also revealed that development projects created and funded by Spain and the EU targeted the high-skilled workers of Senegal. According to the ICMPD report (2015), however, it is low-skilled Senegalese workers abroad who send large portions of their salaries back to Senegal, while high-skilled workers abroad prefer to save their money. The ICMPD report (2015) further reveals that, during Hera I, Spain and Senegal signed bilateral labour agreements that made it possible for high-skilled Senegalese workers to work in Spain. This led to the so-called brain-drain problem.

By using development projects and labour agreements with Spain, Senegal tried to deliver a durable solution for the problem of illegal migration. However, these efforts were unsuccessful because they only targeted the higher educated of Senegal. Thus, the Government of Senegal was unable to channel any significant inflow of remittances into development projects. However, Senegal did cooperate with Spain, and illegal migration became a key issue on their political agenda. Mauritania, on the other hand, never considered migration to be their concern because of their status as a transit country. Although Hera I did not change this position, Mauritania found themselves in a position in which they were ‘forced’ by Spain to deal with the problem of illegal migration. This situation greatly impacted Mauritania’s perception of illegal migration. The analysis of the research article of Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart (2014) revealed that Mauritania began to regard migration as a social and economic burden. The external pressures by Spain and the EU during Hera I meant that Mauritania became hostile towards migration because bilateral agreements forced the country to invest money and time in an issue that was not a priority for them.
This analytical chapter reveals that because of Hera I the West Mediterranean migration route changed. To evade patrol officers the route diverted and became more dangerous, which led to more casualties at sea. Furthermore, Hera I resulted in the professionalisation of human smuggling networks in Mauritania and Senegal. Thereby, this analytical chapter found evidence indicating that Hera I did not provide a durable solution for the issue of illegal migration. For example, the bilateral agreements between Spain and Senegal were not beneficial for the low-skilled population of Senegal. This analytical chapter shows that Hera I did not have the same effect on Senegal as it had on Mauritania. Although both countries were unable to provide a durable solution for the problem of illegal migration, the reasons are different. As a transit country, Mauritania was not truly motivated to invest in the issue. Thus, Mauritania’s hostile perspective on migration made it impossible to tackle the core of the problem, which is poverty. By creating development projects, Senegal tried to deal with illegal migration in a positive manner. However, because of the economic crisis and the fact that the development projects never reached the low-skilled population of Senegal, a durable solution was never found.

Conclusions

This paper researched the effects of border externalisation policies and practices in the Mediterranean region. The methods of process tracing and secondary analysis were used to answer the following research question: What were the effects of Operation Hera I on the Mediterranean region? Since border externalisation is a recent development in border management regimes, little is known about its effects on those involved (i.e. migrants, migrant-sending countries, migrant smugglers, and migration routes). The scientific aim of this study is to contribute to existing literature on ‘what’ these effects are.

As stated in the literature review, there are a few scholars (see Barros et al., 2012; de Haas, 2008; Lutterbeck, 2006; Wilson and Donnan, 2016) who have studied the effects of
border externalisation practices and policies on migration routes, migrants, and migrant smugglers. Based on their research, the literature review constructed three hypotheses: (I) Extraterritorial border control operations affect migration routes by making them less accessible for undocumented migrants; (II) Extraterritorial border control operations are responsible for the creation of so-called ‘substitute routes’; and (III) Extraterritorial border control operations lead to an intensification of migrant smuggling networks along migration routes.

These hypotheses were tested within the context of Hera I. Although Hera I has been criticised for its lack of transparency regarding push-back practices, the operation continues to serve as a ‘blueprint’ for other European border control operations. However, by considering the other possible effects of Hera I, this study contributes to the existing border management literature by providing more insights into the effects and by bringing more transparency to the debate. The literature review states also that the effect of a particular extraterritorial border control operation (e.g. Hera I) on a migrant-sending country is not clear. Therefore, this study considered third-countries Mauritania and Senegal in the context of Hera I.

The analysis shows that the expanding surveillance practices along the Morocco-Spain border in 2005 shifted migration to the Canary Islands. It was also shown in the analysis that the anti-migration practices of Hera I decreased the accessibility of the Canary Islands route, which made the Central Mediterranean route a substitute route for West African migrants. The analysis suggests that because of Hera I migrant smuggling became a lucrative business in West Africa, which resulted in the proliferation of migrant smuggling networks along the West African coast. Spain pressured Senegal to criminalise migrant smuggling activities, meaning the ‘type’ of migrant smuggler in Senegal changed. Before Hera I, most of the migrant smugglers in Senegal were local fishermen. During Hera I, these local fishermen were replaced by professionals who were willing to take higher risks for themselves and the migrants they smuggled. Thus, the analysis shows that Hera I was not only responsible for the proliferation
of migrant smuggling networks, but, in the case of Senegal, also for its professionalisation. Based on these findings, the hypotheses have been proved true.

The analysis shows that the bilateral agreements Spain concluded with Senegal led to an intensification of the brain-drain problem in Senegal. The agreements were unsuccessful in providing a long-term solution for the issue of illegal migration. The analysis shows that Hera I did not affect Mauritania in the exact same way as it affected Senegal, because Mauritania serves as a transit country for migration, while Senegal is a migrant-sending country. The analysis also revealed that because of Hera I, Mauritania changed their perception on migration from neutral to negative. As a result of the external pressures by Spain, Mauritania began to perceive migration as a social and economic burden. This is in great contrast to Senegal, who perceived migration as an opportunity for development.

Given these findings, the answer to the research question – *What were the effects of Operation Hera I on the Mediterranean region?* – is that Hera I led to an intensification of migrant smuggling networks along the West coast of Africa; it professionalised migrant smuggling activities in Senegal; it displaced migration routes instead of closing them; it led to a negative perception of migration in Mauritania; and it intensified the brain-drain problem in Senegal. These findings contribute to the existing debate on border externalisation practices by providing new insights into the effects border externalisation practices have on involved third-countries, and by providing a more detailed discussion of the different effects Hera I had on migrants, migration routes, and migrant smugglers.

There are some limitations that should be considered. Several scholars (de Haas, 2008; Liempt, 2016; Vives, 2017) and organisations (Amnesty International and IOM) have repeatedly addressed the problem of missing and unreliable data concerning migration flows along the Mediterranean routes. Since most of the migrant-sending countries in West Africa do not collect and store data in a systematic way, reliable data sets regarding West African
migration flows to Europe are very scarce. Recognising this limitation, this study cannot prove that the increased migration along the Central Mediterranean route in 2008 consists of West African migrants. Therefore, this study can only assume that because of Hera I West African migrants decided to shift to the Central route. Thus, this paper recommends a follow-up study with a qualitative design to test whether there is a causal relationship between Hera I and the significant increase of migration along the Central Mediterranean route in 2008. By conducting interviews with the Italian authorities and involved non-governmental organisations (Red Cross, Amnesty International, etc), it should be possible to profile the migrants along the Central Mediterranean route in 2008 to discover whether the route served as a substitute route for migrants who otherwise would have used the West Mediterranean migration route.
References


