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The Coercive Use of Migration on the Southern Border of the European Union: A Case Study of the Melilla Crisis 2022.

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University of Glasgow: 2717753h

Dublin City University: 21110964

Charles University: 43908944

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University
of Glasgow



CHARLES
UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This research paper investigates the concept of coercive engineered migration in the March 2022 Melilla crisis, focusing on the intricate interdependencies that exist between Spain and Morocco. Spain endeavours to uphold amicable relations, whereas Morocco strategically employs irregular migration as a political and geostrategic instrument to attain advantages. This study is grounded in a comprehensive examination of relevant scholarly literature pertaining to the instrumentalization of migration and the cooperation between Spain and Morocco in the context of migration. Additionally, it draws upon Kelly Greenhill's theory of 'Coercive Engineered Migration'. By conducting a historical examination of the bilateral relations, it becomes evident that the relationship between the two nations is characterised by recurring crises and the utilisation of migration as a strategic tool. This study employs a comprehensive case study approach and a rigorous methodology for theory development and hypothesis testing. The findings provide evidence suggesting that the Melilla crisis was a deliberate and coercive event orchestrated by Morocco. The primary objective of this orchestrated crisis was to exert pressure on Spain and influence its stance of neutrality regarding the Western Sahara issue. The corroboration of supplementary data, including news articles, official declarations, and expert viewpoints, provides further support for the hypothesis. This study emphasises the significance of comprehending power dynamics within migration and their consequent influence on global policies.

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List of Abbreviations

CEM- Coercive Engineered Migration
SEM- Strategic Engineered Migration
IDPs- Internally Displaced Persons
SIVE- Integrated External Surveillance System
PSOE- The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
EU- European Union
AU- African Union
ICJ- International Court of Justice
SADR- Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
EEZ- Exclusive Economic Zone
HLM- High-Level Meeting
ENI- European Neighbourhood Instrument
ECJ- European Court of Justice
CETI- Temporary Stay Centre for Immigrants
OPE- Operation Crossing the Strait

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Introduction

In an era characterised by the growing influence of globalisation, the interactions among nation-states have undergone significant transformations, resulting in intricate and multifaceted networks that are constantly changing due to various factors such as negotiation tactics, power dynamics, and geopolitical considerations (Held et al., 1999). In the context of this complex and diverse environment, Morocco has gradually established itself as a significant actor both regionally and internationally. Following the accession of His Majesty Mohammed VI to the monarchy, Morocco initiated a strategic trajectory focused on modernization and global engagement. This approach resulted in a range of endeavours, including initiatives aimed at promoting regional development in Africa, implementing stringent measures to manage irregular immigration, and actively participating in the global efforts to combat terrorism (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). The collective endeavours undertaken have significantly strengthened Morocco's geostrategic standing and augmented its political and economic prominence within the global arena. The increase in Morocco's global influence is not fortuitous, but rather the result of a deliberate strategy that adeptly interweaves ostensibly unconnected matters. The connection between the complex issue of migration and various fields such as territorial integrity, security, and agriculture in Morocco has been identified as particularly significant (De Haas, 2007). The utilisation of migration as a strategic tool offers a perspective through which one can comprehend recurring occurrences, such as the notable surge of undocumented immigrants into Spain whenever there is a perceived threat to Moroccan interests.

The motivation behind this thesis stems from the necessity to gain a deeper understanding of Morocco's ability to exert influence over Spain and other international actors through the strategic utilisation of migration. The maintenance and improvement of bilateral relations between Spain and

Morocco are of utmost importance to Spain, due to the complex interconnections and dependencies between the two countries. However, it is worth noting that these relationships can occasionally give rise to periods characterised by instability and uncertainty (de Larramendi, 2020).

Therefore, it is imperative for Spain to thoroughly examine the origins of its association with Morocco. The comprehension of this concept can contribute to the clarification of the recurring crises that characterise the bilateral relations between the two parties and provide valuable insights into the possible national and international ramifications (López García, 2017). This thesis seeks to undertake a comprehensive historical analysis of the diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco in order to gain a deeper understanding of this subject. The assertion is made that persistent crises and the utilisation of migration for strategic purposes characterise the Spain-Morocco relationship. This study aims to examine the Melilla crisis in March 2022 through a comprehensive analysis of case studies. By employing a methodology that involves theory-building and hypothesis-testing, the study will argue that the crisis was a strategic and coercive manoeuvre orchestrated by Morocco. The objective of this manoeuvre was to exert pressure on Spain, with the aim of influencing its position on Western Sahara neutrality (Goldstone, 2003).

In order to accomplish the goals outlined in this thesis, it is imperative to adopt a systematic and rigorous methodology. This study will utilise a mixed methods approach, incorporating qualitative analysis, historical inquiry, and an in-depth examination of case studies. This study's main data source will primarily consist of secondary sources. These sources will include newspaper articles, official political statements from Spanish and Moroccan authorities, expert insights, and scholarly work specifically addressing the topic (Yin, 2014). The abundance of information available will provide a comprehensive perspective on the fundamental factors, trends, and prospective developments pertaining to the relationship between Spain and Morocco.

CHAPTER 1: Literature Review and Methodology

1.1. Introducing Migration Diplomacy

The strategic utilization of migration to achieve distinct political and diplomatic objectives by certain states has become a subject of scholarly investigation in recent literature (Greenhill, 2010). While large-scale population movements have often been associated with unintended humanitarian consequences, it is crucial to recognize that migration can also be harnessed for diplomatic purposes, as evident in the case of the Melilla Crisis in March 2022.

Scholars have coined the term "migration diplomacy" to describe states' intentional use of migration as a strategic instrument to achieve specific foreign policy goals (Teitelbaum, 1984; Gilad, 1989; Weiner, 1996; Greenhill, 2010; Tsourapas, 2017). Neighbouring countries of the European Union have been observed strategically exploiting and manipulating migration for their purposes, employing both cooperative and coercive approaches in their diplomatic strategies (Tsourapas, 2017). For instance, examples such as Libya leveraging the threat of allowing irregular migrants to reach European shores for diplomatic leverage and sub-Saharan African countries like Senegal and Guinea-Bissau utilizing migration as a means to secure economic assistance from the European Union demonstrate the diverse ways in which migration is instrumentalized (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2017; Gabrielli, 2011). Additionally, Turkey has been acknowledged for its significant influence in managing migratory movements and utilising the potential impact of these movements to alter the distribution of power within the European Union (Leonard, 2016, p.24). The aforementioned varied instances exemplify the utilisation of migration as a means to an end in various circumstances, thereby providing insight into states' deliberate and calculated use of migration to achieve political, economic, and diplomatic objectives. This phenomenon of migration

diplomacy, often overlooked in existing literature, underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between migration, diplomacy, and security (Adamson and Tsourapas, 2019; Greenhill, 2008). Scholars, including Betts (2011), have emphasised the significance of establishing connections between international relations and migration in academic literature. The scholar underscored the importance of conducting a comparative analysis of the two subjects to reveal and comprehend the causal relationship, enhancing the overall knowledge depth. The author posited that the relationship between migration and security is significant in illustrating the causal connections between these two phenomena.

Nevertheless, despite the increasing quantity of scholarly literature focused on contemporary diplomacy, migration has been conspicuously overlooked in these studies, despite its clear significance in the foreign policy priorities of practitioners. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a thorough investigation into the domain of research that examines the significant influence of migration on the formulation of actors' foreign policy agendas. The concept of migration diplomacy, often neglected in existing literature, can contribute to developing theoretical frameworks and examining specific instances, shedding light on how migration relations are established through reciprocal interactions among multiple actors (Ceccorulli, 2022).

For this thesis, the definition of 'migration diplomacy' provided by Adamson and Tsourapas (2019, pp,115-116) will serve as a reference point. It encompasses the deliberate use of diplomatic instruments, mechanisms, and protocols by states and/or transnational actors, such as the European Union, to govern the movement of populations across international boundaries. Within this framework of diplomatic relations, the analysis will unveil the strategic exploitation of cross-border migration to accomplish foreign policy goals, which can take on cooperative or coercive forms. Cooperative migration diplomacy refers to the diplomatic process of negotiations about migration to achieve mutually advantageous outcomes for all parties concerned. In contrast,

coercive migration diplomacy is when one party attempts to restrict the strategic options available to another party, resulting in a zero-sum outcome (Tsourapas, 2017). In light of the significance of migration diplomacy, this literature review will explore various scholarly perspectives to build a comprehensive understanding of the concept and the alternative theories for using migration as a diplomatic instrument in international relations. The study aims to establish a foundation for investigating the coercive employment of migration by Morocco during the Melilla Crisis 2022, providing a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between migration and diplomacy within the context of international politics and foreign policy priorities.

1.2. Academic Foundations on the Instrumentalisation of Migration within Migration Diplomacy

The phenomenon of instrumentalizing migration, also known as ‘migration diplomacy’, involves the intentional use of migration movements by governmental actors and other entities to achieve political, economic, or security goals. In this complex process, migration is treated as a political instrument, subject to manipulation and direction to serve the interests and objectives of states and international actors (Boswell, 2003; Gamlen, 2008).

In the context of migration, states employ a complex set of measures to regulate the movement of individuals. These measures include implementing selective migration policies, establishing conditional agreements, and managing migration flows by their strategic interests (Guiraudon & Lahav, 2006). The theoretical framework of migration diplomacy suggests that nation-states strategically utilise migration to pursue political and military objectives. Esteemed academics such as Myron Weiner and Michael Teitelbaum first proposed this approach to migration, highlighting the potential peril that population movements can present to host countries' political and social equilibrium (Teitelbaum, 1984).

Teitelbaum emphasised the significance of examining the phenomenon of mass migration through the lens of countering foreign policy and enhancing

security measures. He argued that states engaged in sending and receiving migrants have strategically employed mass migration flows as tools of their foreign policies, primarily with two objectives: firstly, to achieve territorial conquest or control without resorting to military force, and secondly, to employ the strategy of mass expulsion of migrants as a means to destabilise or humiliate adversaries (1984, p. 438). According to the scholar, the phenomenon of mass migration flows has been strategically employed by both the states of origin and the states of destination as tools to further their respective foreign policy objectives. Teitelbaum (1984) presented a persuasive argument highlighting a significant limitation in social science-based migration theories. Specifically, he expressed the failure of theories to adequately examine the actions of governments in initiating, selecting, regulating, and concluding migratory movements (p. 7).

In contrast, Weiner's (1996) study examined migration as a means of coercion. This study provided a novel perspective by analysing migration from a perspective that integrates political economy and security considerations. Weiner's research posited that migration serves as a strategic and political instrument utilised by receiving countries to accomplish diverse objectives. According to his statement, the goals in question may encompass economic expansion and the maintenance of political stability. The objectives above encompass actions aimed at causing instability in other states, compelling them to acknowledge the authority of the destabilising entity, impeding neighbouring states from intervening in internal matters, enticing neighbouring states to offer assistance or financial support in return for halting the influx of migrants, and advancing their own political and economic pursuits (Weiner, 1992, pp. 102-103). Weiner's perspective offers a thorough understanding of migration dynamics by considering not only demographic and economic factors but also political and safety concerns. The approach he employs highlights the capacity of governments to utilise migration as a strategic instrument, effectively leveraging the movement of migrants to attain foreign

policy goals and promote their national interests. His approach was designed to emphasise the capacity of origin countries to utilise migration as a strategic instrument.

Using Pape's (1996) notion of "coercion by punishment," it becomes possible to identify situations in which migration is intentionally employed to exert coercive influence on recipient states. In his book *Bombing to win: Air power and coercion in war* he stated that actors have the ability to utilise strategies that escalate the financial or security burdens placed upon civilian populations within the targeted nation, thereby pressuring them to conform to particular demands. In instances of this nature, migration emerges as a mechanism through which harm or suffering is imposed upon civilian populations, compelling them to endure the repercussions of non-compliance or resistance. The utilisation of a "coercion by punishment" strategy in the instrumentalization of migration has the potential to give rise to situations of forced migration, wherein individuals are compelled to abandon their residences in order to evade the unfavourable circumstances imposed upon them by actors employing coercive tactics. Moreover, the conceptual framework proposed by Pape, known as "coercion by denial," can shed light on scenarios in which migration is strategically employed to hinder the target state's ability to acquire specific resources or achieve territorial ambitions. In the context of migration diplomacy, various actors have the option to utilise border control measures in order to refuse entry or limit the mobility of migrants as a strategy to apply diplomatic pressure. By strategically utilising migration flows, states can aim to obstruct the target state's capacities and hinder its political or territorial objectives.

Building on the writings of Weiner (1996), Teitelbaum (1984) and Pape (among others), Kelly Greenhill presents a cogent perspective on examining the coercive engineered use of migration. In her book *Weapons of Mass Migration: Forced Displacement, Coercion, and Foreign Policy*' she posits that migration can be conceptualised as a tool employed to exercise power

(Greenhill, 2010). The author declares that states exercise control over migration flows as political and diplomatic leverage, occasionally deliberately instigating migration "crises" to pressure the intended recipient state. Greenhill employs the theoretical frameworks of "coercive engineered migration" and "strategically engineered migration" to elucidate the phenomenon of migration deliberately orchestrated for political and military objectives.

In more aggressive lines, other scholars approached migration as a tactic employed in hybrid warfare. Migration has been examined as a crucial element of hybrid warfare by scholars such as Ballesteros (2014), Domínguez Cebrián (2021), and Cabrera Medina (2021). Hybrid warfare is a strategic approach that employs a wide range of diverse methods and tactics to exert influence and induce instability within a nation-state. In this context, migration is used as a mechanism to cause apprehension within the general population and exert influence over the political landscape of a nation. The technique is based on the creation of a narrative that portrays migrants as responsible for social and economic problems, thereby leading to divisions and tensions within the host society (Cabrera, 2021). Kotoulas and Pusztai (2020) have shed light on the strategic utilisation of migrants to erode state sovereignty by exploiting the limitations and restrictions of host nations. They stated that some governments engage in strategic actions and employ immigration as a tactic within the framework of hybrid warfare, expecting that the receiving states will bear certain costs associated with the influx of immigrants. The costs could arise due to limitations in the receiving state's capacity or xenophobic sentiments among its populace. Moreover, they expressed that it is crucial for the states that initiate military deployments or migratory crises to ensure that the targeted state lacks the capability or willingness to initiate retaliatory acts of aggression. Implementing this strategy will lead to heightened instability in the target nation and any international organisations affiliated with it, such as the European Union. This is achieved by utilising conventional strategies to convert the movements of goods, data, finances, and

individuals into instruments to inflict substantial consequences on states that become the focal point of its assaults. Smaller nation-states predominantly employ the aforementioned strategy to equalise the balance of power within geopolitical rivalry (Kotoulas and Pusztai, 2020). Scholars such as Bensaad (2005) and Natter (2014) have discussed this notion of migration diplomacy by referring to migration as a "geographical rent." They emphasize the significant presence of migrants in the Maghreb countries and the geographical proximity to the European continent, which allows countries of origin or transit to use migration to achieve geopolitical ends or other national interests. The authors explain the deliberate utilisation of migration within the context of geographical proximity. This statement underscores the strategic utilisation of migration by sending states for political and diplomatic objectives, wherein migration is employed to exert influence on receiving forms and secure favourable outcomes on matters about their national interests.

1.3. Alternative Theories

The aforementioned hypotheses include a wide range of perspectives on how to investigate the phenomena that is commonly referred to as the instrumentalization of migration. However, there are academics who use the term "migration diplomacy," whilst other academics use terminology such as "coercive engineered migration" or "strategic engineered migration," "migration as a geographical rent," or "migration as a hybrid warfare tool." The phenomena of large-scale irregular migration to Spain across the Melilla fence can be understood better with the help of these hypotheses. On the one hand, alternative theories, such as border externalisation or the cushion of interests, postulate the idea of exploiting migration and promoting collaboration as a strategy to restrict migration. These theories are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. In the following sections, the characteristics of these different ideas will be dissected in further detail. It is

essential to recognise that, despite the fact that all theories give strong evidence about the utilisation of migration as a tool of foreign policy, the underlying theory of this thesis is the instrumentalization of migration. This is an important distinction to make. Utilising the conceptual framework of CEM as laid out by Greenhill (2010), this investigation provides a more in-depth investigation of the events that took place in Melilla during the month of March in the year 2022. The events in question took place throughout that time period. The sporadic yet cyclical influx of substantial migratory flows into the Spanish enclave, as well as the strategic use of cooperation in migration matters by the adjoining nation of Morocco, are both thought to be best explained by this theory, which is regarded as the most credible explanation of the two phenomena.

As was said earlier, the idea of "border externalisation" can be seen as an alternative theoretical framework to the concept of the instrumentalization of migration. This is because of the way in which it addresses the question of how borders are defined. As mentioned by Wolff (2007, p.83) and Godenau (2014, p.127), academics that investigate the migration policy of the European Union (EU) beyond its geographical bounds and in conjunction with third nations use the phrase "externalisation of migration policies." In the context of immigration, the term "externalisation" refers to the practise of delegating certain immigration control measures to the nations of origin and transit (Boswell 2003). Rijpma and Cremona (2007) use the phrase to refer to the policy of the European Union towards the rest of the world. Within this particular setting, and drawing upon the argument that was presented by Rijpma and Cremona (2007), it is postulated that the European Union (EU) and Spain, in particular, have disseminated their migration policy to Morocco in order to exert control over migration at the Spanish-Moroccan border. The argument is based on the fact that Rijpma and Cremona (2007) posited that the European Union (EU) and Spain, in particular, have done this. The migration policy includes both steps to protect the rights of migratory individuals,

refugees, and asylum seekers, as well as measures to control, detain, and deport individuals who violate the policy's terms in order to maintain order and safety in the country. Lo Coco and Hidalgo (2021) investigated the effect that a dual logic, known as "protection-control," had on the development of migration policies in surrounding countries, particularly those that are located on the southern coast of the Mediterranean. This impact has been seen as a result of a complex combination of political and economic agreements. According to Zaragoza-Cristiani (2017), the majority of researchers who use this term agree that the EU and its member states are "exerting pressure, conditioning, governing, or forcing third countries to cooperate in the management of migration" (p.41). This is happening to such an extreme degree that the option of negotiating cooperation is not permitted. According to Smith (1998) and Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2007), the European Union makes regular use of the conditionality method in order to encourage non-member states to pursue particular goals.

Drawing from the research carried out by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004), one line of reasoning that can be advanced is that Spain and other member states of the European Union (EU), in their capacity as nations that receive significant immigration flows, establish a network of interdependencies with countries of origin such as Morocco. This line of reasoning can be supported by citing the research of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004). Both "positive conditionality" and "negative conditionality" are utilised in the process of manipulating these interdependencies in order to attain the desired results. The term "positive conditionality" refers to a diplomatic strategy in which Spain or the European Union (EU) offers rewards to Morocco on the condition that it fulfils its mutually agreed-upon commitments regarding border control. This technique is known as "positive conditionality." Negative conditionality, on the other hand, means adopting a more punitive approach, whereby Spain or the EU might limit, suspend, or cancel favourable accords if Morocco does not

effectively implement efficient border control measures. This type of conditionality is referred to as "reverse conditionality."

Scholars such as Trauner and Kruse (2008), (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2013), and Wolff (2007) contend that the complex dynamics between the European Union (EU) and immigration can be conceptualised as a "game of conditionalities" (Wolff, 2007 p.16). This argument is made within the larger context of the immigration policy of the European Union (EU). In this context, Spain, the European Union (EU), and various member states use their development aid or trade agreements as a means to exert influence, contingent upon Morocco's cooperation in the area of immigration control (Boswell, 2003; Hayes & Bunyan, 2003; Valluy, 2009; Gabrielli 2011, p. 250). This is contingent upon Morocco's cooperation in the area of immigration control (Boswell, 2003; Hayes & Bunyan, 2003). In addition, the signing and execution of readmission treaties are connected to these accords as well, as was highlighted by Hurwitz (2003), Lavenex and Ucarer (2004), Cassarino (2005), and Carrera and Hernández Sagrera (2009). This was found in their research. The strategic dynamics between Spain, the European Union (EU), and Morocco involve the usage of a "carrot and stick" strategy to shape Morocco's behaviour, utilising "hard power" as a tool to exercise control over desired outcomes. This is done in an effort to mould Morocco's behaviour. Using "carrots," which are colloquially known as positive incentives, as a technique to encourage desirable behaviour is one method. These incentives cover a wide range of initiatives, including as trade agreements, easier visa processes, investment opportunities, and support with development. On the other hand, when it is deemed necessary, a variety of punitive measures including economic sanctions, reductions in funding, or the suspension of crucial negotiations, such as the Association Agreement, are implemented as a means to incentivize Morocco to increase its level of cooperation (Akçay and Kanat, 2018). This is done in order to encourage Morocco to improve its level of cooperation. According to Chen et al.'s (2015) interpretation, this strategy

incorporates both positive and negative incentives, so achieving a balance of power and interrelationships. The application of pressure on Morocco to carry out necessary reforms in a variety of fields, including democracy, the economy, the legal system, and other areas is included in the negative incentives, which are also referred to as "sticks" in common parlance. On the other hand, the positive incentives, which are often commonly referred to as "carrots," comprise the benefits that Morocco can achieve by actively participating in the integration process within the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In conclusion, Spain and the European Union (EU) establish a complicated and multifaceted relationship with Morocco. This relationship is distinguished by interdependencies and conditionalities that affect the dynamics of their partnership in the management of migration and border control.

By employing the "cushion of interests" approach, it is possible to conduct an exhaustive investigation into the complex dynamic that exists between Spain, the European Union (EU), and Morocco. Although the theoretical framework in migration studies is still in the process of being developed, it provides valuable insights into the complex process of negotiating interests that forms the basis of migration management between countries of origin and destination (Hollifield, Martin, & Orrenius, 2014). These insights are offered despite the fact that the theoretical framework in migration studies is still in the process of being developed. Within this particular context, the act of migration takes on the character of a strategic instrument for negotiation. Within this context, Morocco and the European Union, notably Spain, possess independent yet interrelated interests, and the act of migration assumes the role of a strategic instrument for negotiation. According to Gamlen (2008), in the context of Morocco, the control of migration can be used as a way to attain economic, political, or social objectives, whereby the purposeful management of people's movement is strategically applied. In other words, the management of people's movement is a strategic use of the deliberate management of people's

movement. On the other hand, Spain and the European Union may use a mix of incentives and penalties as a way to exercise control over the activities taken by Morocco and successfully manage the movement of migrants (Smith, 199). This is in contrast to Morocco, which may only use incentives. According to Gamlen (2008), Morocco has the ability to make use of migration as a tool to address domestic issues such as unemployment, increase the amount of money sent back by Moroccans living abroad, and create influential diaspora networks. As a result of the implementation of controlled migration, Spain and the European Union stand to gain advantages simultaneously. This is due to the fact that controlled migration may be utilised to meet demands in the labour market, encourage innovation, and ease demographic decline (CMMI, 2005). In addition, controlled migration can be utilised to address demands in the labour market.

In spite of this, it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge the underlying power dynamics of asymmetry that are present when engaging in the process of negotiating over interests. According to de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli (2018), it is regularly seen that developed receiving nations such as Spain and the European Union enjoy a higher degree of power. As a consequence of this, there are occasions in which Morocco may suffer pressure or coercion to cooperate on migration management. The concept of a "cushion of interests" serves as a conceptual framework to understand the manner in which Spain, the European Union (EU), and Morocco strategically navigate the delicate equilibrium of interests within their talks pertaining to migration management. This is done via the use of the theory of the "cushion of interests." It is necessary to do additional study in order to better develop this theory and improve our understanding of the numerous interdependencies that are present within the dynamics of international migration.

1.4. Previous Research on Instrumentalization of Migration in Ceuta and Melilla

Several authors, each with their own distinct point of view, contribute to the research on the instrumentalization of migration in Ceuta and Melilla. Garcés (2021), for example, investigates the "weaponization of migration" notion by focusing on Morocco's strategic use of irregular migration into Ceuta as a political lever against Spain in reaction to geopolitical tensions in the region. Specifically, the author examines Morocco's use of irregular migration into Ceuta as a political lever against Spain. Garcés (2021) also draws attention to a similar event that took place in the year 2020, in which the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, issued a threat to the European Union (EU) on the possibility of opening their borders. This threat was made subject to the stipulation that financial assistance be increased and that EU support be provided for Turkish military actions in Syria. Garcés believes that there is a discernible intention to coerce present in the conduct that are in dispute. A nation like Spain, which is at risk of experiencing a large migrant crisis, may find itself in a position where it is obligated to accede to the demands of the country that is responsible for delivering the migrants to Spain. These demands may involve political collaboration relative to internal issues in addition to money reasons. These demands may also include financial considerations. In addition, Garcés investigates the phenomena of chaos being acted out on stage and the existence of a huge number of people who are always ready to migrate across borders, stressing the significant role that these individuals play in the process of weaponizing migration. According to Garcés, people living on the fringe of society, such as young people in Morocco or Syrian refugees seeking asylum in other countries, are easy targets for exploitation by the apparatus of the state. The study conducted by Ferrer-Gallardo in 2007, titled "Border Acrobatics in Ceuta and Melilla: Exploring the Management of the European Union's Terrestrial Perimeters on the African Continent," offers a comprehensive analysis of the evolving dynamics observed at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla subsequent to Spain's

accession to the European Union in 1986. The author examines the growing intricacy of border regimes in relation to the movement of individuals and commodities within the Euro-African context.

The study presents persuasive evidence indicating that the border management between the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla and Morocco exacerbates the contradictory dynamics of relaxation and reinforcement observed at the wider external borders of the European Union. The aforementioned inconsistency resonates with Garcés' argument regarding the strategic utilisation of migration as a means of political manipulation, thereby emphasising the intricate nature of these dynamics within the specified border regions.

In his study titled "Empowerment through Migration Control Cooperation: The Spanish-Moroccan Case," Zaragoza-Cristiani (2017) explores the phenomenon of source or transit countries employing migration as a diplomatic instrument to exert influence, employing tactics such as pressure, threats, or coercion on other nations (p. 38). This study explores the various mechanisms through which migration control cooperation can be strategically employed to exert pressure. Zaragoza-Cristiani's case study reveals that the cooperation of Morocco can be attributed to the exertion of pressure by the European Union and Spain. This pressure is a direct consequence of a policy aimed at outsourcing migratory policies. The author emphasises the importance of implementing policies that transfer the responsibilities of migration control and border management to countries that serve as either the origin or transit points for migrants. This process effectively classifies these states as the 'gendarmes of Europe'. The statement introduces an additional aspect that contributes to the intricate nature and political ramifications of migration management in the specific context of Ceuta and Melilla.

The intricate historical dynamics between Spain and Morocco, as highlighted in Romero Sanz's 2022 doctoral thesis "The Evolution of Diplomatic Relations between Spain and Morocco from 1999 to 2020: Analysing the Influence of

the Western Sahara Issue on Bilateral Relations," further illuminate the context in which migration instrumentalization occurs. This analysis thoroughly investigates the enduring impact of the Western Sahara dispute, a protracted conflict that originated in 1975 following Spain's relinquishment of its final colonial territory, subsequently leading to Morocco's territorial occupation.

The conflict between Spain and Morocco has had a profound influence on their diplomatic relations, with alternating periods of intense diplomatic tension, exemplified by the Perejil Island crisis, and periods of relative calm. Romero Sanz's research elucidates the intricate dynamics through which the Western Sahara conflict has influenced diplomatic relations, meticulously documenting their evolution from 1999 to 2020. The main aim is to assess the extent of impact that this conflict has on the bilateral relations between the two countries, thus contributing further insight to the migration dynamics previously discussed by Zaragoza-Cristiani (2017).

Del Valle-Gálvez's (2007; 2021; 2022) work on territorial conflicts within the Strait area, the role of the European Union, and Spain's strategic options further refines our understanding of the geopolitical context of migration. The author provides further analysis regarding the European Union's significance as a pivotal participant in these conflicts, while also delineating Spain's prospective strategic alternatives. Del Valle-Gálvez critically examines the migration crisis that occurred in Ceuta in May 2021, while also considering Morocco's territorial assertions regarding Western Sahara and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla. The author emphasises the complex difficulties that arise for Spanish foreign policy in the region. Compounding these intricacies is the post-Brexit predicament of Gibraltar, which entails the pursuit of reevaluating its position and association with Spain within the framework of the European Union. He proposes a feasible strategic approach for Spain, advocating for the proactive involvement of the European Union in addressing territorial matters in the Strait region. The author argues that these spaces should be acknowledged as regions within the European Union (EU) where Spain retains

jurisdiction, thus reaffirming Spain's unique role as a Member State. The analysis conducted by Del Valle-Gálvez offers valuable insights into the geostrategic positioning of Spain in relation to the European Union and its role in the management of regional stability.

In conclusion, the literature review is complemented by the noteworthy contribution of Ignacio Urrutia's scholarly publication titled "The Weaponization of Migration as an Asymmetrical Challenge to National Security: The 2021 Ceuta Crisis," which holds considerable pertinence. Urrutia highlights the growing use of migrant and refugee influxes as a means of coercion by states, identifying it as a significant hybrid and asymmetric threat in contemporary society. Urrutia's study offers a comprehensive analysis of the migration crisis that occurred in the autonomous city of Ceuta in 2021, against the backdrop of a turbulent diplomatic context between Spain and Morocco. The user doubts whether the recent migration increase can be attributed to a deliberate strategy of "Coercive Engineered Migration". In this study, Urrutia examines the potential strategic utilisation of approximately 10,000 irregular migrants entering Ceuta by Morocco, employing Kelly Greenhill's theoretical model and methodology. The objective is to determine whether Morocco weaponized these migrants as a means to exert political pressure on Spain, with the aim of obtaining specific concessions. According to Urrutia's research, it can be observed that Morocco successfully utilised an asymmetric form of coercion, ultimately resulting in Spain's acknowledgement of its 2007 Western Sahara autonomy proposal. Furthermore, the author's research sheds light on the effectiveness of this coercive mechanism, emphasising the notable political, security, and humanitarian consequences for nations such as Spain and the individuals seeking asylum or migrating.

In conclusion, the previous authors offer distinct perspectives on the utilisation of migration as a strategic tool within the specific context of Ceuta and

Melilla. The diverse range of viewpoints has significantly enhanced the comprehension of this intricate phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the methodology employed in this review aims to amalgamate these disparate viewpoints into a comprehensive theoretical structure. The utilisation of Greenhill's three-question framework offers a valuable analytical perspective for examining coercive migration practises. Concurrently, this thesis further integrates Zaragoza Cristiani's concept of interdependencies to examine cooperation's intricacies in migration control. Furthermore, this comprehensive analysis follows the proposed timelines and examination of the development of bilateral relations by Romero Sanz and Ferrer-Gallardo, among other scholars.

A synergetic approach enables a comprehensive comprehension of migration instrumentalization, offering a novel and holistic viewpoint on the subject matter. This statement emphasises the imperative of adopting a multidisciplinary perspective when addressing the intricacies of this intricate matter, taking into account the historical, geopolitical, socio-economic, and humanitarian aspects of migration. By undertaking this review, the present study makes a valuable contribution to the wider scholarly conversation surrounding the phenomenon of migration instrumentalization in the regions of Ceuta and Melilla.

1.5. The Theoretical Framework: Understanding Coercive Engineered Migration in the Melilla 2022 Crisis

This thesis will discuss the theoretical framework applied to interpret the Melilla 2022 crisis. This follows a review of various theories concerning the strategic use of migration to attain specific objectives and an examination of academic literature on these phenomena within Morocco-Spain dynamics, specifically focusing on Melilla. The theory of CEM is central to our framework, a subset of SEM. This necessitates understanding the fundamental

principles of SEM, contributing to a more nuanced comprehension of the CEM concept.

Historically, various actors' deliberate manipulation of migration patterns, including states and non-state entities, has been prevalent during peace and conflict. Often, these actors obscure their efforts to wield influence, to avoid appearing vulnerable or antagonistic.

The framework draws heavily from Kelly Greenhill's 2010 article, "Strategic Engineered Migration", which provides insights into potential actors who might orchestrate strategic migration. Greenhill's work suggests that actors characterised by vulnerability, lack of legitimacy, and limited resources—those unable to exercise influence through traditional channels—are most likely to use this strategy. They employ internally displaced persons (IDPs) as unconventional political tools, manipulating and exploiting them to their advantage. Greenhill (2010) argues that such actors may favour asymmetric tactics, such as the deliberate instigation of migration crises, due to their potential cost-benefit advantages. These benefits include asymmetric leverage, where the creation of crises allows less powerful actors to force more influential players into negotiation, effectively leveling the power dynamics. Other benefits include the ability to impose disproportionate costs on targeted entities via large-scale refugee influxes and the control over the escalation of targeted parties' responses. The sudden influx of refugees often catches targets off guard, while simultaneously creating previously non-existent negotiation opportunities. As per the scholar, weak actors, lack legitimacy, or only semi-legitimate are more likely to use manipulated strategic migration as a political tool.

Strategic engineered migration, which refers to the deliberate and managed movement of populations for political or military goals, plays a key role in this study. To understand the research context fully, we must examine the various facets of strategic migration, focusing specifically on coercive migration, a

significant but under-researched aspect within this domain. Within strategic migration, we can identify four primary categories (2008 p.12-14).

The first category, dispossession, involves seizing another group's territory or property and expelling that group to eradicate potential obstacles to political or economic dominance. Often associated with ethnic cleansing, this migration has historically served as a strategy for achieving territorial control.

The second type, supportive migration, is characterized by the intentional displacement of people to strengthen a nation's political position. In this situation, those voicing dissenting political opinions or other internal adversaries are forcibly relocated, causing disruptions and instability in foreign governments. This kind of strategic migration has been observed in various contexts, especially during revolutions and political conflicts, as a means to rapidly modify a nation's social structure or weaken oppositional regimes.

Militarised migration is another notable form of strategic migration. Here, the goal is to gain military advantage over an adversary by deliberately disrupting or completely dismantling the opponent's command and control systems, logistics, or manoeuvrability. Alternatively, it could involve enhancing one's own military capabilities through the acquisition of additional personnel and resources. Both state and non-state actors have employed this type of strategic migration during conflicts to improve their own standing and undermine their enemies.

Finally, the study focuses on coercive migration. This involves using the real or potential departure of people as leverage to prompt changes in political behaviour or secure economic concessions from targeted countries. Coercive migration can be deployed as a strategy for deterrence, coercion, or countering coercion within conflict settings. Actors aim to sway the decisions and actions of receiving states by leveraging the threat or actual impact of mass human displacement.

1.5.1. Coercive Engineered Migration understood as a component of the broader concept of Strategic Engineered Migration.

CEMs, as defined by Greenhill, are deliberate, organised movements of people across national borders with the primary objective of obtaining political, military, or economic advantages from the target countries. Greenhill's groundbreaking theory clarifies the multifaceted dynamics of coercive migration, identifying normative and political liberalism as interdependent contributors to a state's vulnerability. Greenhill (2010) defines normative liberalism as explicit commitments to the rule of law and refugee rights protection. Due to their adherence to these principles, liberal democracies are regarded susceptible to coercion when deviating from these norms. Although these established norms provide a safety net for individuals who are compelled to seek refuge outside their home country, they limit the ability of states to effectively regulate their borders. In addition, according to Greenhill (2010), political liberalism highlights the degree of transparency and civic engagement in a given nation-state. The coercive mechanisms provided by liberal democracies allow societal factions to influence government policies. Pluralistic politics, a defining feature of democratic systems, frequently results in political conflicts sparked by opposition parties seeking to highlight the failures of the governing party. This process' inherent transparency enables coercive challengers to provide coercive political responses and evaluate internal polarisation within the target state. Inadvertently, the pursuit of democratic openness and the promotion of inclusivity and democratic principles can increase vulnerability to coercion.

1.5.2. The Implications of Hypocrisy on Reputation: A Cost Analysis

According to Greenhill's theory of coercive migration diplomacy, the costs associated with duplicity significantly influence the actions and attitudes of governments and societies. These costs serve as multipliers of leverage,

compelling actors to make concessions. Activating advocacy networks by individuals or organisations that violate established norms exerts pressure on governments or third-party organisations via accountability protocols. Using public pledges made by governments to adhere to particular principles can emphasise the disparity between stated intentions and actual execution. The potential consequences of symbolic or material hypocrisy can force politicians to concede to demands they had initially intended to resist. The risk of incurring these costs is especially pertinent for targeted states, whose refusal to capitulate exposes them to international condemnation (Greenhill 2016, p.24-28).

1.5.3. Factors Influencing the Vulnerability of a State to Coercive Demands

The research of Greenhill (2010, p.50-64) has successfully uncovered eight important risk factors that significantly affect a state's susceptibility to coercive demands. Coercive actors utilise these factors to manipulate the decision-making processes of coerced states. Common strategies include erosion of power base, generation of discontent, decapitation, diminishing, and denial. Coercive engineered migration focuses on power erosion, discontent generation, and weakening, which rely primarily on nonmilitary persuasion techniques.

The first strategy entails employing tactics that endanger the regime's alliance with its primary supporters, eroding its domestic support and weakening its overall position. This puts pressure on the government to comply with the actor's demands. The second strategy attempts to incite widespread discontent with the ruling regime, leading to public demonstrations and social unrest. The objective is to exert pressure on the government to implement measures that meet the demands of the protagonist. The third strategy aims to destabilise the nation's overall structure and capabilities, whether by attacking the economy, destabilising state institutions, or undermining its military power. As a result,

the recipient state is less able to resist coercive demands and more likely to capitulate.

The success of these strategies depends on deftly manipulating the costs or hazards imposed on the target state's population. Coercive actors attempt to create internal discord or public discontent to persuade those in power to yield to their demands, thereby averting the political repercussions of resistance. Coercive engineered migration is characterised by two primary strategies: capacity flooding and political agitation. **Capacity swamping** is the deliberate overwhelming of a host country's capacity to receive, accommodate, or integrate a large number of migrants or refugees. Political agitation, on the other hand, attempts to influence the target state's willingness to act. Both strategies employ a dynamic two-level game framework in which the international actions of a coactor elicit responses from actors within the target state. According to Greenhill, **political agitation** is frequently the driving force behind migration coercion in developed nations. International actors attempt to influence the domestic behaviour of a target state through norm-supported political coercion. Migration crises generate diverse and divisive responses by capitalising on the wide range of political and social interests within recipient societies. Leaders confront a conundrum as they attempt to balance the expectations of international partners with the danger of alienating diverse domestic factions. In this situation, it may be advantageous for leaders to accede to the coactor's demands in order to avoid potential conflicts resulting from divergent domestic interests.

1.5.4. Challengers and Opportunists: Profiling and Role Analysis in Planned Coercive Migration

The examination CEM continues by profiling and analysing the roles of the various actors involved in this process. Greenhill (2010, p.32-36) categorises these actors into generators, agents provocateurs, and opportunists. Migration crises are instigated and manipulated by agents provocateurs and generators

who act actively in inciting and manipulating them. Typically, generators instigate cross-border population displacements, their actions being directly related to particular demands. In contrast, agents provocateurs refrain from autonomously inciting migration flows and instead provoke other actors to generate such crises. The fundamental objective of these actors is to gain global support for their agenda by exploiting crisis situations. Opportunists profit from crises caused by other parties as a distinct category of actors. These actors exploit the resultant disorder and strategic ramifications of the migration crisis to advance their own agendas.

The actors, particularly those employing population mobilisation as a means of coercion, frequently exhibit certain traits, such as vulnerability, partial legitimacy, and illiberal tendencies. The international community frequently views these regimes with scepticism, especially by more powerful actors with a staunch commitment to liberal values. This results in a paradoxical situation wherein inferior, illiberal states are normally disregarded but not regarded as reliable negotiation partners. Despite their socioeconomic disadvantages and authoritarian government, this motivates these actors to increase their bargaining power through migration coercion. This use of mass movements as a foreign policy strategy is, therefore, the result of a complex interaction between domestic conditions and international perceptions.

1.6. Exploring Alternative Explanations for the Susceptibility of a State to CEM

Greenhill (2010) includes three additional variables that may influence a recipient nation's response to coercive migration diplomacy: geographic proximity, the magnitude of the migrant flow, and the pre-existing relationship with particular migrant or refugee groups. Geographic proximity substantially influences the vulnerability of a target state. As the distance between the state of origin and the state of destination decreases, the likelihood of the destination state becoming overwhelmed increases, enhancing the perceived legitimacy of the coercive threat and increasing the likelihood of compliance.

It should be noted, however, that mere geographical proximity does not inherently or necessarily result in or necessitate coercion. The magnitude of the migration influx is an additional crucial factor. As the number of migrants increases, so does the pressure on the receiving state to assimilate and manage the newcomers, potentially making it more susceptible to and resistant to coercive demands. Yet, difficulties in obtaining accurate data on the actual scale of migrant flows may impede establishing a direct correlation between the flow size and the effectiveness of coercive measures.

Lastly, the historical relationship between the target state and particular migrant or refugee groups can influence its response. Existing ties can elicit conflicting sentiments regarding migration, influencing the willingness of the target state to concur with coercive demands. However, it is crucial to recognise that these relationships cannot predict the effectiveness of coercion on their own.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

2.1. Research Objective and Research Question

This research investigates coercive engineered migration as a tactic at the Southern Border of the European Union, specifically emphasising the Melilla Crisis that occurred in March 2022. This study aims to evaluate Morocco's potential utilisation of the crisis as a strategic approach to exert influence on Spain's position regarding the sovereignty of the Western Sahara. This study employs the theoretical framework introduced by Greenhill (2010) to analyse the phenomenon of coercive engineered migration, thereby establishing a

connection between the irregular attempts to enter Melilla and the stability of Spanish-Moroccan relations.

Research Objective 1 (RO1): Identify how Morocco harnessed the power of migration flows as a means of coercive influence, particularly in relation to the events that occurred in the Melilla region in March 2022. The research seeks to thoroughly examine the degree to which Morocco employed migration as a coercive foreign policy tool to wield diplomatic and political influence over Spain, thereby instigating shifts in Spain's stance on the sovereignty of Western Sahara..

Research Objective 2 (RO2): Critically evaluate the bilateral relations between the adjacent nations concerning their collaborative efforts on migration control, externalisation of borders from Spain to Morocco, and past attempts to leverage migration for strategic purposes. To do so, I will present a historical evolution of the bilateral relations and the interdependencies that prompt or block cooperation in migration control. Furthermore, through the lenses of CEM, I will assess the development and the consequences of the Melilla crisis in 2022. This study aims to investigate the distinct roles played by the parties involved, their reactions to the crisis, and the foreign policy strategies both Morocco and Spain implemented. A significant portion of this phase will be dedicated to evaluating Spain's evolving stance on the Western Sahara matter.

Research Objective 3 (RO3) is to implement a multi-faceted conceptual framework that integrates migration, foreign policy, and security studies. The aim is to identify the link between the Melilla crisis and Morocco's strategic exploitation of migration to exert its influence over Spain. While recognizing the significance of the humanitarian aspects of the phenomenon, the aim here is to contribute academically to the field of migration diplomacy and its implications, particularly in this context.

2.2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the Melilla Crisis of March 2022. We focus predominantly on Morocco's manipulation of migration as a means of pressuring Spain to change its position on the sovereignty of Western Sahara. Qualitative methods are justified by their ability to examine complex, context-dependent phenomena, a claim supported by a vast body of academic literature. The methodological framework is founded on Yin's (2014) assertion, validating the efficacy of case study research in examining phenomena in their actual contexts. Given the complexity of the Melilla crisis, with its intertwined diplomatic, social, and political dimensions, this methodology seems particularly pertinent. Baxter and Jack (2008) support qualitative case studies by highlighting their capacity to manage multiple variables and navigate complex relationships. This strategy provides a method for deconstructing and interpreting the interconnected web of international relations, migration patterns, and geopolitical agendas within the Melilla crisis.

This methodology is also influenced by Stake's (1995) emphasis on the unique insights case studies provide. A case study approach is particularly applicable to the Melilla crisis due to its capacity to capture peculiarities and complexities distinct to individual cases. The crisis clearly illustrates forced migration engineering within the larger context of Morocco-Spain-EU relations. According to Creswell (2013), the exploratory power of case studies permits us to investigate the 'why' and 'how' of Morocco's strategic use of migration as a political instrument in the Melilla context. We supplement this with Greenhill's (2010) theoretical framework of coercive engineered migration, acknowledging Morocco's use of this strategy against Spain since the beginning of the 90s. This study relies predominantly on secondary data from a variety of sources, such as news articles, official statements from

Spanish and Moroccan political figures, expert opinions, and scholarly literature. A combination of theory-building and hypothesis-testing techniques is used to decipher the complexities, variables, and potential coercive elements of the Melilla crisis.

The first chapter of this thesis presents a literature review on the foundations of the instrumentalization of migration, highlighting the theories of the first scholars who observed and investigated this phenomenon. Theories about Hispano-Moroccan migration cooperation and migration conditionality are addressed. The theory of Coercive Engineered Migration is also reviewed, serving as a theoretical framework for this case study. The subsequent section of the initial chapter elucidates the interconnections existing between Spain and Morocco, with a particular emphasis on matters of sovereignty pertaining to Western Sahara, irregular immigration, as well as the territories of Ceuta and Melilla. The text highlights additional interdependencies that frequently serve as sources of strain or cohesion between the two nations. The present section commences with an examination of the work conducted by Jonathan Zaragoza Cristiani (2017) in his study titled 'Empowerment through migration control cooperation: The Spanish-Moroccan case'. The third chapter provides the context of the Melilla crisis in March 2022, presenting a comprehensive account of the factual occurrences. The application of Greenhill's (2010) three-phase process allows for examining three key inquiries about the nature of the migratory flow: its orchestration, strategic intent, and coercive elements. The text examines the sequence of events that occurred during the crisis, analyses the sociopolitical context of Melilla, and considers the official statements made by prominent politicians and members of the monarchy.

In conclusion, the thesis posits that the crisis primarily served as a coercive mechanism to compelling Spain to alter its stance regarding Western Sahara.

2.3. Analytical Framework.

The analytical framework of this study incorporates two key methods: theory building and hypothesis testing. In the process of theory building, this research uses the theoretical construct CEM proposed by Kelly Greenhill (2010), that refers to the strategic use of migration as a tool of coercion, typically for political gain. Greenhill's theory, as mentioned before, asserts that coercive migration can be used as an instrument of foreign policy, and that it often involves a significant degree of planning and control by the state orchestrating the migration. The examination of secondary data is conducted within the framework of this theoretical construct in order to unravel the intricacies of the event and its connection to the bilateral relations between Morocco and Spain. This study addresses three research inquiries using the methodology suggested by the political scientist and illustrated in figure 1. These inquiries are as follows: (1) To what extent did the principals exercise control over the (threatened) exit? (2) Was the (threatened) exit a strategic manoeuvre? (3) Did the (threatened) exit involve elements of coercion? (2010, p. 20). The objective of this analysis is to refute the three alternative hypotheses put forth by the author. This will be achieved by incorporating migrants' testimonies, examining the timing, size, and destination of the flows, and considering challenger's statements, among other sources of information.

Hypothesis 1: The occurrence of abandonment could potentially be attributed to factors that are beyond the control of the principal. Migrants and refugees exhibit a sense of agency in their decision-making processes, as they possess the ability to independently determine the timing and destination of their movements.

Hypothesis 2: The act of exiting a situation or relationship may be attributed to irrational or non-strategic behaviour that is not influenced by external coercion.

Hypothesis 3: While an exit strategy can be a strategic decision, it does not inherently imply the presence of coercion.

This study will acknowledge the Melilla 2022 crisis as a valid instance of coercion, utilising Greenhill's model. The recognition is based on the identification of three essential elements: (1) the explicit coordination and manipulation of the scale, timing, and direction of the population movement, whether through actual implementation or the use of threats; (2) the presence of a strategic motive behind the orchestration; and (3) a distinct intention to exert pressure on the party being targeted. It is imperative to acknowledge that these criteria possess a stringent nature, thereby rendering numerous instances of existing or potential mass migration incompatible with them

2.4. Case Study Selection

The selected case for this investigation is the Melilla Crisis that unfolded in March 2022. This particular month saw an unprecedented influx of migrants, with a single day's tally reaching 2,500 individuals, of which 900 were successful in entering the city (EFE, 2022). However, this entry came at a substantial toll on their physical and psychological health. In the days following this incident, a pivotal diplomatic shift transpired, as Spain's Foreign Minister, Manuel Albares, announced a change in Spain's position regarding Western Sahara's autonomy. This strategic move reinforced Morocco's territorial claims and mended the diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco. The Melilla Crisis is chosen for this study because it represents a potential example of the use of a significant migratory influx as a tool of coercion to induce changes in diplomatic stances.

2.5. Data Collection and Evaluation of Sources.

The primary method employed for data collection in this study is the utilisation of secondary data, sourced from a diverse range of outlets in order to facilitate a thorough and comprehensive analysis. The sources encompassed in this study consist of news reports derived from Spanish and Moroccan media outlets, official press releases issued by the Spanish and Moroccan governments, and pre-existing scholarly literature pertaining to migration diplomacy between Spain and Morocco. The sources were chosen based on their pertinence and capacity to offer a range of viewpoints on the matter. The data collection process necessitates thoroughly examining the chosen sources to ascertain their credibility and reliability. Given that this study is based on secondary data, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential presence of bias and the need to verify the authenticity of the sources. The data is subjected to cross-referencing and rigorous evaluation to mitigate these concerns to ensure its reliability. This procedure facilitates a comprehensive examination of Morocco's potential utilisation of migration as a coercive strategy.

2.6. Scope and Limitations

While the research comprehensively examines the Melilla crisis within the context of CEM, certain limitations are inherent to the approach. As a female master's student of Caucasian descent with a mixed heritage encompassing Arab and European backgrounds, it is important to acknowledge that my biases can potentially impact the outcomes of this study. Considering these biases and realising the potential unattainability of absolute objectivity, I have duly considered these limitations throughout the process. Furthermore, it is essential to note that this study relies solely on secondary data sources. It is worth mentioning that the absence of primary data collection through interviews with migrants or refugees represents a significant limitation of this research.

Furthermore, the extent of the investigation is limited by the duration that has passed since the occurrence of the Melilla Crisis. However, applying

theoretical frameworks and rigorous analytical methods allows for mitigating these limitations and facilitates a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon. Although this study relies on secondary data, it upholds its integrity by systematically cross-referencing and validating the information.

CHAPTER 3: Evolving Landscapes: The Interplay of History, Territory, and Multifaceted Interdependencies in Spanish-Moroccan Relations.

This chapter comprehensively examines the historical and contemporary dynamics of the interactions between Spain and Morocco, employing a meticulous, analytical approach. This preliminary research builds on temporal analyses by scholars such as Ferrer-Gallardo 2008, Zaragoza Cristiani 2017, and Romero Sanz 2022 (among others). Following their tracing, this timeline begins in the eighth century, tracing a trajectory through history that illuminates the intricate events of interaction, struggle, colonisation and collaboration that have shaped the reciprocal partnership. The enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, characterised by their distinctive geographical and political status, are a recurring theme in the intricate network of interactions, embodying tensions and negotiations between the two nations.

The latter portion of the chapter delves into the various facets of interdependence that connect Spain and Morocco in the contemporary era. The interdependencies, spanning economic, political, social, and migratory dimensions, exemplify an intricate network of collaboration and conflict, mirroring the complex dynamics between these geographically proximate yet frequently politically divergent nations.

3.1. The Historical Context of Spanish-Moroccan Relations and the Status of Ceuta and Melilla.

Examining the historical progression of bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco is crucial for comprehending the utilisation of coercive measures concerning migration in Melilla in March 2022. The utilisation of a historical approach offers a valuable perspective on the development of the present-day interdependencies between the two nations and the reciprocal influence they have exerted on one another throughout several decades (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Spain and Morocco have a substantial shared historical background

characterised by instances of tension, conflict, and cooperation. Beginning with the Spanish colonisation of specific regions in Morocco during the nineteenth century, followed by Morocco's attainment of independence in 1956, and extending to the present-day tensions surrounding Western Sahara as well as the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, each of these historical occurrences has significantly influenced the bilateral relations between the two entities and has played a pivotal role in shaping the existing interdependencies (Balfour, 1997).

The contentious status of Ceuta and Melilla has consistently remained a subject of controversy. Despite their geographical location on the African continent, both cities are considered integral to Spain and serve as the European Union's sole terrestrial borders in Africa (De Tapia, 2003). Morocco, nevertheless, has asserted its sovereignty over these cities throughout history, resulting in recurring tensions (Gold, 2000). Simultaneously, Ceuta and Melilla have emerged as focal points for African migration to the European continent, with Morocco assuming a significant role in managing and overseeing these migratory movements (Carrera, 2008). How Morocco has managed the phenomenon of migration throughout its history, as well as its utilisation of its position as a facilitator of migration to Europe to apply influence on Spain, can be comprehended most effectively by considering the historical background (Lahlou, 2015).

Hence, a comprehensive analysis of the historical progression of bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco offers valuable insights into the origins and extent of their present interdependencies. This analysis offers significant perspectives on conflict and collaboration, shedding light on the reasons and methods through which Morocco has strategically utilised migration in Melilla to influence Spain's stance on the Western Sahara issue.

I. Evolution of Spanish-Moroccan Relations: From Early Interactions to Contemporary Territorial Disputes (VIII-XX Centuries)

The incursion of Muslim forces into the Iberian Peninsula in 711 marked the commencement of an era characterised by Islamic dominance across a significant portion of the area, commonly referred to as al-Andalus (Kennedy, 2014). The Battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212, which resulted in a Christian triumph, signified a significant shift in the Reconquista, ultimately leading to the establishment of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon in 1479 and the emergence of the Spanish state. The frontier, initially situated in the Mediterranean following the significant conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs, underwent a gradual southward shift (Buenaposada del Hoyo & Glondys, 2014). This shift culminated with the Crown of Castile's acquisition of Melilla in 1497 and the Crown of Portugal's acquisition of Ceuta in 1415 (Ferrer Gallardo, 2008, p.131). In the year 1497, the Crown of Castile successfully obtained the city of Melilla, along with additional territories situated on the North African coastline, including the Rock of Vélez de la Gomera (p.132).

Furthermore, the Crown of Castile extended its territorial acquisitions to include Tripoli in 1510. Regarding Ceuta, it was subjected to conquest by the Crown of Portugal in 1415 (Ferrer Gallardo, 2008). According to Calderón Vázquez (2014), specific interpretations propose that these enclaves may have functioned as a precursor to an eventual Spanish hegemony over North Africa. According to Ferrer Gallardo (2008), these entities are often characterised as a unique frontier established to manage potential conflicts from the African continent towards the peninsular territory.

Following its expansion into North Africa, Spain shifted its focus towards explorations in Central and South America and the Pacific Ocean. Consequently, its interest in the African continent was diminished (Romero Sanz, 2022). Although the Portuguese managed to retain control over the

territories of Melilla and Ceuta, most of Africa remained within their sphere of influence, as outlined in the Treaty of Tordesillas (Duve, 2013). Throughout the subsequent centuries, a series of treaties were established between Spain and Morocco, which acknowledged Spanish authority over these enclaves and contributed to the delineation of their present-day borders (Sánchez, 2014). The Treaty of Tetuan in 1860 significantly advanced this progression by establishing a demilitarised zone surrounding the enclaves and extending Spanish legal authority (Romero Sanz, 2022). Consequently, there was a notable rise in commercial activity in Ceuta and Melilla, leading to the expansion of the Spanish market in North Africa and the establishment of novel trade connections (Calderón Vázquez, 2014).

Following the Franco-Moroccan treaty of 1956, Morocco became an autonomous nation. However, the Spanish protectorate in Morocco necessitated a distinct negotiation process, ultimately resulting in the joint Spanish-Moroccan Declaration in April 1956 (Omar, 2008). Although the area now known as Western Sahara was still under Spanish control, decolonisation was underway by the United Nations Charter's principle of "equal rights and self-determination of peoples," established in 1945 (Romero Sanz, 2022 p.29).

II. Diplomacy and Challenges: Transformations in Spanish-Moroccan Relations after the End of the Protectorate (1956-2004)

The termination of the Spanish protectorate in 1956 instigated a significant shift in the understanding of Spain's territories in the Maghreb region and its boundaries with the recently emancipated Morocco. In the current geopolitical context, Morocco has asserted its claim to sovereignty over these enclaves and other territories under Spanish control. This assertion has incited an enduring territorial conflict that remains ongoing today (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2017). Despite the changes brought about by the Franco regime, Ceuta and Melilla continued to be under Spanish sovereignty. The establishment of intricate personal connections between the Moroccan monarchs, namely Mohamed V and Hassan II, and the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, contributed to

instability in the bilateral relations between the two nations (Echeverría, 1989). Following the demise of General Francisco Franco in 1975, the autocratic rule in Spain concluded, marking the commencement of a new era characterised by establishment of a democratic system. The current political transition has presented a favourable occasion to strengthen and solidify diplomatic ties with the Kingdom of Morocco. During this era, the dynamic between King Hassan II and Spanish President Felipe González was pivotal in enhancing bilateral relations. Despite the presence of ongoing tensions surrounding matters such as Western Sahara and the ratification of the Fisheries Agreement, the collaborative endeavours undertaken by González and Hassan II ultimately resulted in the formalisation of the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation in the year 1991 (Gillespie, 2006; Romero Sanz, 2022). The year 1986 witnessed Spain's accession to the European Union, a significant occurrence that brought about a fundamental transformation in the Spanish-Moroccan border, thereby designating it as the EU's external border (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2007; Pinos, 2013). This geopolitical occurrence prompted European integration at the border, introducing a novel and somewhat conflicting rationale that combined aspects of flexibility and fortification.

According to Ferrer-Gallardo (2006, p.134), the year 1995 it has marked the recognition of Ceuta and Melilla as autonomous cities within the legal framework of Spain. During this particular phase, alongside the adaptation period, a notable increase in bilateral tension existed that impacted Morocco's decision to postpone the renewal of the Fisheries Agreement. Additionally, the policies of the European Community regarding agricultural matters also exerted influence during this time. The issue of irregular migration emerged as a significant area of concern (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2007).

The endeavour undertaken by individuals from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa to unlawfully traverse into Spain via the Strait of Gibraltar prompted both nations to agree on migration security. In 1990, Spain entered into the

Schengen Agreement, thereby instigating the establishment of regulations on the presence and activities of individuals from Morocco within Spanish territory (Zapata-Barrero & Witte, 2007). The escalating influx of undocumented migrants to Spanish coastlines exacerbated tensions in bilateral relations, particularly following the 1996 elections. The commencement of barbed wire fences on the borders of Ceuta and Melilla occurred within the same year (Calargé, 2015). According to Castan (2014), these structures have come to symbolise the Spanish-Moroccan border and represent 'Fortress Europe'. Concurrently, establishing a 'technological fence' called the 'Integrated External Surveillance System' (SIVE) was implemented in the maritime border segments (Carling, 2007; Saddiki, 2010; Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008). The culmination of the crisis between the two nations occurred from 2001 to 2003, specifically during the dispute surrounding the island of Perejil (Rodríguez, 2006). Significant improvements in bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco were observed in 2004, leading to the signing of noteworthy agreements, both on a bilateral level and in collaboration with the European Union. Nonetheless, the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla and the Western Sahara continued to be subjects of dispute.

III. Spanish-Moroccan Diplomatic Interactions (2004-2009): Tension and Cooperation in a Context of Political Change.

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) assumed executive power following the 2004 general elections, leading to a significant shift in focus towards enhancing relations with Morocco. The Spanish monarchy's historic visit to Morocco in 2005 and the subsequent renewal of the EU-Morocco fisheries agreement in the same year manifests this reorientation (Romero Sanz, 2022).

The collaborative deployment of a military unit composed of Spanish and Moroccan forces within the framework of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti in 2004 marked a noteworthy achievement in the

reconciliation process between Spain and Morocco. Nevertheless, after the unsuccessful implementation of Morocco's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara in 2007, there has been speculation that Spanish policy shifted towards a more pronounced alignment with Rabat. The implementation of this policy sparked a significant discourse regarding the fundamental rights of the Sahrawi population (Romero Sanz, 2022).

Since 2004, Spain and Morocco have embarked on collaborative border control and migration management efforts. Additionally, both countries have forged joint security agreements to combat the threat of Islamist terrorism.

In 2007, a diplomatic crisis unfolded as the King and Queen of Spain visited the contested regions of Ceuta and Melilla. As a consequence of the incident, the Moroccan ambassador in Madrid was temporarily recalled for consultations (Del Valle, 2021). Nevertheless, the conflict was expeditiously resolved, leading to the prompt reinstatement of the ambassador to his diplomatic responsibilities in Madrid.

In 2008, Morocco attained an elevated status within the European Neighbourhood Policy, a notable accomplishment primarily ascribed to the influential role of Spain (Ferrer-Gallardo 2007). Notwithstanding the diplomatic advancements, it is essential to acknowledge that Morocco's unwavering position on Western Sahara, which was first established in 2009, has resulted in tensions.

IV. Bilateral Relations between Spain and Morocco (2009-2015): Pragmatism, Controversy and Resilience.

During this period, the Spanish government astutely navigated diplomatic ties with Morocco. The Sahrawi issue and the increasing apprehensions regarding irregular immigration have emerged as significant factors within Spanish-Moroccan relations.

The ascension of the Popular Party to political dominance in Spain in 2011 signified a significant period in Spanish-Moroccan diplomatic relations,

characterised by notable transformations in the bilateral connections between the two countries. This period witnessed a simultaneous augmentation in collaborative efforts and a surge in areas of disagreement, notably concerning irregular migration and territorial disputes (McKenna, 2022). The newly established government purposefully implemented a strategic approach towards engaging with Morocco, considering it a fundamental aspect of their overall state policy. This approach subsequently facilitated the development of a remarkably positive rapport, reaching its pinnacle with the 10th High-Level Meeting in October 2012 and a visit by King Juan Carlos in July 2013. These noteworthy occurrences served as evidence of greatly enhanced diplomatic relations (Romero Sanz, 2022).

Nevertheless, behind the veneer of diplomatic amiability, specific incidents contributed to the deterioration of these relations. An illustrative example can be found in the European Parliament's decision in 2011 to reject the fisheries agreement that had been in effect since 2006. This agreement granted European vessels the right to access Moroccan waters, including the contentious area near Western Sahara's coast. Concerns regarding the absence of assurances regarding the potential benefits for the Sahrawi population primarily drove the rejection of the proposal. This disagreement led to a divergence in the mutual interests of Spain and Morocco (Buenaposada del Hoyo & Glondys, 2014).

A further disagreement emerged regarding territorial matters of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla. The decision made by the Spanish government in 2012 to bestow a decoration upon a battalion for its involvement in the Rif war, followed by the foreign minister's visit to Melilla, elicited a sense of displeasure among the Moroccan populace (Zaragoza-Cristiani 2017). The latter group perceived these gestures as acts of provocation and reacted by reasserting their territorial claims over Ceuta and Melilla.

Concurrently, the authorities in Rabat faced heightened pressure due to a surge in irregular migration. The persistent efforts of migrants to penetrate the

border fence in Melilla have emerged as a noteworthy issue of concern. 2015 witnessed the culmination of the 11th High-Level Meeting between Spain and Morocco, marked by the signing of six Declarations of Intent encompassing diverse areas such as tourism, transport, and judicial cooperation (Ferrer-Gallardo, 2008). This development highlighted the intricate equilibrium between cooperation and self-control in bilateral relations during the specified timeframe.

V. Shifting Tides: The Intricate Dynamics of Spanish-Moroccan Relations (2016-present).

A notable strategic reorientation in Moroccan diplomacy has marked the period from 2016 to the present. Morocco's renewed emphasis on the African continent is exemplified by its decision to rejoin the African Union (AU) (Abourabi, 2022). As mentioned above, the transition indirectly impacted diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco, as it heightened the competition surrounding the Saharawi issue in global forums. Spain adopted a relatively neutral stance in these discussions, while Morocco took a more assertive position.

Concurrently, suspending the agriculture and fisheries agreements between the EU and Morocco, which are pivotal components of the EU-Morocco bilateral relationship, indicated the onset of an era characterised by escalating tension. The suspension of diplomatic relations between the EU and Morocco, resulting from rulings by the EU Court, had an indirect impact on Spain. Terminating these agreements posed challenges to the economic relationship between Spain and Morocco (Fernández-Molina, 2015). Furthermore, the Moroccan government's cautionary statements regarding a potential surge in migration towards Europe after the termination of these agreements have placed added strain on Spain, considering its close geographical and historical ties with Morocco.

The strain observed in the bilateral relations was particularly noteworthy concerning Ceuta and Melilla. The closure of Morocco's commercial customs

crossing in Melilla was interpreted as a strategic manoeuvre aimed at reaffirming Moroccan territorial assertions concerning these enclaves. Furthermore, these actions had a detrimental impact on local economies and migratory dynamics, thereby influencing Spain's policy responses (Donaire & Soler, 2012).

During this time, there was a notable rise in irregular migration, as evidenced by the frequent collective entries of migrants into the regions of Ceuta and Melilla. The escalation of tension occurred when Morocco issued a warning regarding the potential increase in migration flows in response to the European Union's suspension of agreements (Europapress, 2018). In dealing with many maritime arrivals, Spain interpreted this move as a diplomatic strategy to exert pressure.

The political landscape in Spain introduced an additional level of intricacy. Morocco harboured suspicions regarding the ascension of a coalition government comprising PSOE and Unidas Podemos, political parties that hold critical views towards Morocco's position on the Saharawi issue and the Rif Hirak. Additionally, the post-election period witnessed a notable setback in Spanish diplomacy, as evidenced by the postponed visit of Pedro Sánchez to Morocco, which exacerbated the already strained relations between the two countries (Romero Sanz, 2022). The international aspect of the Western Sahara dispute regained prominence following the acknowledgement by former United States President Donald Trump in December 2020, affirming Moroccan authority over the territory. The aforementioned global reorientation resulted in Morocco's heightened diplomatic pressure on Spain, intensifying tensions surrounding Ceuta, Melilla, and migration (EFE, 2022).

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morocco made the decision to implement the closure of the land borders in Ceuta and Melilla on 13 March 2020. Following the resumption of flights and port traffic in Morocco, the decision to open the borders in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla has been indefinitely postponed (Martín, Peregil, & Varo, 2022). In December 2020, the Prime

Minister of Morocco expressed the viewpoint that 'Ceuta and Melilla possess Moroccan sovereignty, comparable to that of the Sahara' (Delmas & Goeury, 2020). This assertion was met with the Spanish government's resolute rebuttal, reiterating its stance that Ceuta and Melilla fall under Spanish jurisdiction. The admission of Brahim Gali, the leader of the Polisario Front, to a Spanish hospital in 2021 resulted in diplomatic tensions between Spain and Morocco (González & Peregil, 2021). On 17 May 2021, the conflict escalated as Morocco relaxed its border controls, resulting in the entry of over 5,000 Moroccan citizens, including more than 1,500 minors, into the Spanish city of Ceuta. As mentioned above, the action elicited a robust reaction from the Spanish government, with senior officials from the European Union also expressing their disapproval of Morocco's actions (Martín, 2022).

In 2022, a shift occurred in the stance of the Spanish government regarding the conflict in the Western Sahara. On 14 March in the year, as mentioned earlier, the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez, corresponded with King Mohamed VI of Morocco, expressing support for an autonomy proposal regarding the Sahara region. Sánchez deemed this proposal the most significant, plausible, and feasible foundation for resolving the ongoing dispute. The stance mentioned above, which entails acknowledging Morocco's sovereignty over the previous Spanish territory of Western Sahara, has garnered disapproval within Spain and condemnation from Algeria.

During a High-Level Meeting (HLM) held on 2 February 2023, the governments of Morocco and Spain committed to uphold mutual respect and refrain from actions that could potentially infringe upon their respective spheres of sovereignty.

On 31 May 2023, the Spanish government lodged a formal protest with the Moroccan government regarding the designation of Ceuta and Melilla as 'Moroccan cities'. The protest was initiated through an official communication dispatched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Moroccan Embassy in Spain.

3.2. Shifting Dynamics: Pre- and Post-1990 Interdependencies in Territorial, Economic, and Security Aspects.

The dynamic between Spain and Morocco is characterised by a complex interplay of factors that can either foster collaboration or give rise to conflicts and instability. While certain aspects of interdependence have consistently influenced the bilateral relationship, others have exhibited a sporadic presence. According to Zaragoza-Cristiani's (2017) classification, it is possible to differentiate between interdependencies that originated before or after the 1990s, a pivotal period during which Morocco initiated its involvement in migration matters. Comprehending the intricate interdependencies between Spain and Morocco is imperative for deciphering the utilisation of migration as a coercive tool in the context of Melilla in March 2022. Keohane and Nye's (1977) theory of interdependence underscores that states do not function in isolation but rather within a complex web of interdependent relationships wherein the actions of one state can have repercussions on others. The interdependence between Spain and Morocco encompasses various economic, political, and security aspects.

Spain and Morocco exhibit robust trade connections from an economic standpoint. Spain is identified as one of the primary trading partners of Morocco, as reported by the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX, 2022). Economic interdependence implies that any strain in the bilateral relations between two countries can result in immediate economic consequences for both nations (Kahler & Kastner, 2006).

The collaboration between Spain and Morocco holds significant importance in security, specifically in counter-terrorism efforts and handling irregular migration. Spain heavily depends on Morocco to manage the influx of migrants from Africa to Europe, particularly emphasising the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (Geddes et al., 2020). According to Lahlou (2015), Morocco has emerged as a significant ally for the EU in managing migration flows, effectively assuming the role of a gatekeeper on the EU's southern border.

The political stance of Spain regarding the Western Sahara conflict holds considerable significance for Morocco. According to Zunes (1995), the pursuit of international recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara has been a longstanding objective for Morocco, with Spain's historical role as a former colonial power holding particular significance within this framework.

In this intricate network of interdependencies, migration can be strategically utilised to exert pressure. Morocco can strategically leverage migratory flows to influence Spanish decision-making processes, particularly concerning sensitive matters like the Western Sahara conflict. According to Andoura and Timmerman (2008), interdependence in migration control gives Morocco a mechanism to exert influence over Spain's foreign policy.

3.2.1. Old Interdependencies (started before the 1990s)

Contentions Over Land.

After gaining independence in 1956, the Kingdom of Morocco has asserted several territorial claims rooted in the concept of 'Greater Morocco', as conceptualised by Mohammed Allah el-Fassi (Muñoz Japón, 2022). This ideology promotes the integration of various territories, spanning from Senegal and Mali to Algeria and a portion of the Algerian desert, encompassing the entirety of Mauritania. Additionally, it includes the former Spanish colonial enclaves of Tarfaya, Ifni, Western Sahara, and the Mediterranean coastal possessions, namely Ceuta and Melilla, as well as the rocks of Vélez and Alhucemas and the Chafarinas Islands (Peña Díaz, 2022).

Western Sahara

Western Sahara is an example of a non-self-governing territory that has been the focal point of protracted and highly contentious territorial conflicts, primarily involving Morocco (Iglesias, 2010). Since achieving independence, the Kingdom of Morocco has consistently asserted its claim over the Western

Sahara region as an integral part of its territory, despite divergent perspectives within the international community.

Resolution 2072 (XX) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1965 to advocate for the decolonisation of Western Sahara. This resolution significantly established a global precedent for recognising the territory's autonomy (Romero, Sanz, 2022). The resolution mentioned above, and its subsequent geopolitical landscape led to a Sahrawi nationalist movement. Brahim Basir played a pivotal role in the development of the movement, ultimately leading to the establishment of the Polisario Front under the subsequent leadership of Brahim Ghali (Muñoz Japan, 2022, p. 50). As advised by the United Nations, the failure to conduct a referendum on self-determination for the Saharawi people can be attributed primarily to the opposition and antagonism exhibited by Morocco and Mauritania. The culmination of this conflict occurred in 1975 through an event known as the Green March, which was a symbolic invasion of Western Sahara led by Morocco (Soroeta Licerias, 2001, pp. 127-128).

Significantly, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rendered an advisory opinion in October 1975, determining that Western Sahara possessed an autonomous and independent territory. The ICJ determined that the most feasible resolution to the matter in Western Sahara entailed conducting a referendum of self-determination. Even with the above ruling, Morocco proceeded with the Green March in November 1975, disregarding the guidelines set forth by the ICJ (Arjona, 2021).

In the given context of heightened political strain, Spain, having previously exercised dominion over Western Sahara as a colonial power, relinquished its control over the region in 1975 after the clandestine ratification of the Tripartite Madrid Accords (Soroeta Licerias, 2001, pp. 31-53). As a result, a void was created, subsequently filled by the nations of Morocco and Mauritania. The proclamation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic

(SADR) by the Polisario Front was a direct consequence of the shift in territorial control.

Since 1975, Western Sahara has been under Moroccan occupation, leading to persistent territorial disputes on the international stage. Morocco persistently asserts its territorial claim over Western Sahara, both within its domestic sphere and on the international stage, thereby elevating the significance of Western Sahara as a prominent geopolitical concern in the region.

Ceuta and Melilla

The Spanish autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla are a significant point of contention between Spain and Morocco. Morocco asserts its territorial integrity by claiming these territories without acknowledging Spanish sovereignty (Gold, 2000). Spain has contested these assertions by presenting several justifications, including the continuous exercise of sovereignty over the territories, their incorporation into Spanish territory prior to the establishment of the Moroccan state, the presence of a predominantly Spanish population in these regions, and their exclusion from the United Nations roster of non-self-governing territories (Iglesias, 2010, pp. 316-317). In contrast, Morocco asserts that these territories are integral to its geographical continuity, citing the 'Greater Morocco' concept mentioned earlier. Moreover, the author posits that a distinct tax framework in these urban areas engenders inequitable competition with domestic goods (Iglesias, 2010, pp. 317-318). Despite Morocco's efforts to compare its situation and Spain's previous claims over Gibraltar, Spanish jurisprudence has dismissed this analogy. By Spanish legal precedent, it is noteworthy to highlight that, in contrast to the situation involving Gibraltar and the United Kingdom, there exists a lack of documentary evidence substantiating Morocco's relinquishment of these territories to Spain (Remiro Brotóns, 1999).

Jurisdiction of territorial waters and fisheries agreements

Territorial waters

Establishing the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea affirms that coastal states possess sovereign rights over their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and territorial seas. However, the implementation of this convention has given rise to conflicts between Spain and Morocco, specifically in the Strait of Gibraltar and the Moroccan EEZ adjacent to the Canary Islands archipelago (Iglesias, 2010; DiariodeAvisos.com, 2021). Spain advocates for the principle of 'equidistance' in demarcation, whereas Morocco advocates for 'equity' (Moreno, 2021). The escalation of tension arises from Morocco's independent endeavours to establish its maritime boundaries, which have resulted in conflicts with Spain's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the inclusion of Western Saharan waters within its jurisdiction (Hernández, 2020; Vargas, 2019; EFE, 2019). The involvement of the United Kingdom in the Strait of Gibraltar dispute adds a layer of complexity (Castillo, 2011). The ongoing conflict regarding resource utilisation has escalated, as evidenced by Morocco's establishment of fish farms in contested waters and the issuance of permits for hydrocarbon exploration in the Canary Islands area (González, 2021; Moreno, 2021; Martín, 2022; Marimón, 2022; Fuentes, 2022).

Fisheries treaties

Fisheries treaties have played a significant role in shaping the diplomatic ties between Spain and Morocco. As a strategic actor, Morocco has derived substantial economic and commercial advantages from these bilateral relations (Holgado Molina and Ostos Rey, 2002). After Spain's accession, the European Community assumed responsibility for managing fisheries affairs. However, it is worth noting that Spain continues to exert significant influence during negotiations with Morocco. The significance of this interaction for Spain stems from the reliance of Spain's southern fleets on waters under Moroccan

control, as the resources within Spanish territorial waters are deemed insufficient. Significantly, fishing plays a crucial role in the economic sector of Andalusia, the Canary Islands, and Galicia, as highlighted by Holgado and Ostos (2002) and Zaragoza-Cristiani (2017). Nevertheless, incorporating Western Sahara into recent fisheries agreements currently awaiting official ratification has resulted in tensions in bilateral relations. Morocco has strategically employed fisheries negotiations to exert pressure, consistently impeding progress in these discussions (EFE, 2022; Palomar, 2014).

3.2.2. New Interdependencies (initiated after the 1990s)

Economy

Despite their asymmetrical nature, the economic relations between Morocco and Spain hold significant importance. Despite the relatively small proportion of Spanish exports to Morocco with the overall Spanish export volume, Spain is Morocco's primary trading partner and the third-largest foreign investor (Escribano, 2015; Fernández-Molina, 2021). According to Alonso (2022) and ICEX (2022), many economic agreements have been formally established, exceeding 15 in total. Additionally, Morocco is a host country for a significant presence of Spanish enterprises. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that these links can be influenced by political factors and territorial disputes (Fernández, 2015). The agricultural sector plays a significant role in the tensions above with Morocco, employing the utilisation of imports of its products as a mechanism of leverage during periods of crisis (López Sala, 2012). The EU General Court nullified the agricultural agreement that exacerbated the conflict. However, the two countries have a reciprocal interdependence due to intra-industrial and intra-corporate trade transactions (Donaire & Soler, 2012; Abril & Peregil, 2021; Escribano, 2013). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Morocco has positioned itself as the primary beneficiary of Spanish development assistance and educational and cultural collaboration (Fernández-Molina, 2021).

Counter-terrorism

The cooperation between Morocco and Spain in countering terrorism has its origins in the 1980s and 1990s and has been further strengthened following the Atocha bombing in 2004. This collaboration serves as a vital foundation for ensuring the security of both nations (Amirah, 2015). Despite the demonstrated efficacy of collaborative endeavours in countering terrorism, as exemplified by various counter-terrorism operations and intelligence alliances (Reinares and García Calvo, 2015), there remains a persistent requirement for a comprehensive legal framework to govern these endeavours (Amirah, 2015). This necessity was duly acknowledged and addressed through the formal adoption of a convention in 2022 (Europapress, 2022), notwithstanding collaborative efforts in preventive measures, such as the implementation of strategies to combat violent radicalisation (Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha Contra la Radicalización Violenta, 2015), Reinares and García-Calvo (2015) caution against the potential exploitation of this cooperation by Morocco to further its agenda, potentially at the expense of Spain's interests. This implies that counter-terrorism cooperation possesses not only inherent security significance but also serves as a strategic tool within the control of Morocco.

Irregular Migration

The irregular immigration between Morocco and Spain has established Morocco as a strategic entity, possessing the ability to utilise immigration for its objectives. This phenomenon is evident in its capacity to regulate migratory movements and leverage them as a negotiating instrument in diverse domains, notwithstanding the implementation of more stringent security measures in host nations (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). The connection between migration and territorial conflicts, particularly in Western Sahara, underscores Morocco's strategic utilisation of migration to enhance its authority and influence over these regions (Zaragoza-Cristiani 2016).

Furthermore, Morocco has strategically utilised the convergence of terrorism and migration to cultivate a climate of apprehension and opposition within host nations, thereby solidifying its position as a pivotal entity in stability and migration management (CMMI, 2005). Migration has become a significant factor in allocating EU development assistance within the economic domain. The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) has emerged as a significant factor in the context of Morocco (Fundación por Causa, 2020).

Morocco's capacity to exploit migration was demonstrated prominently on the global platform during the negotiations on fisheries in 2015. According to Otazu (2021), Morocco strategically employed migration to negotiate in response to an unfavourable ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), resulting in a one-year cessation of communication with European institutions.

CHAPTER 4: The March 2022 Migration Dashboard: Influences, Transformations and Spain's Changing Position on Western Sahara Policy under the Prism of Coercively Engineered Migration.

This thesis chapter aims to outline the critical events that unfolded in the autonomous city of Melilla between 1 and 3 March 2022 and how this migration crisis is linked to Spain's change of position on the sovereignty of Western Sahara, announced on 17 March of the same year. The temporal correlation of these events hints at a causal relationship that deserves thorough analysis.

The primary purpose of this section is to illustrate how Morocco's instrumentalisation of migration may have been a strategic tool to exert pressure on Spain, leading to a change of position in the Western Sahara. We will argue that these events underline a political victory for Morocco, a hypothesis that will be further examined in the second part of this chapter.

4.1. Unveiling the Melilla Migration Crisis, March 2022.

In March 2022, the Spanish autonomous city of Melilla experienced a historic episode in its ongoing struggle with migration challenges. This month was notable for the unprecedented scale of attempts to cross its border. On 1 March, the town was faced with what the Government Delegation in Melilla confirmed as the most numerous entry attempt ever recorded in the history of this infrastructure.

Approximately 2,500 migrants of sub-Saharan origin attempted to scale the border fence. This collective assault resulted in the successful entry of 491 individuals, marking one of the highest entry volumes in the fence's history. The last incident of similar magnitude was in May 2014, when around half a thousand people managed to cross. It is essential to underline that this event also triggered a significant humanitarian crisis, resulting in more than 40 injuries, of which around twenty were Guardia Civil and police officers.

This fact became even more significant due to the circumstances at the Temporary Stay Centre for Immigrants (CETI) in Melilla. Before this crisis, the CETI was experiencing low occupancy, with only around 50 people housed in a centre designed to accommodate up to a thousand. However, with the sudden influx of these 491 migrants, the centre had to adjust quickly to accommodate the new arrivals.

However, the crisis did not stop there. Just twenty-four hours after the first assault, on 2 March, a new group of 1,200 migrants attempted to cross the border, 350 of whom managed to reach Spanish territory. This sequence of events demonstrated once again the persistent migratory pressure on the region and the resilience of those willing to take significant risks in search of a better life.

However, there are discrepancies in the reports on the exact number of people who tried and succeeded in crossing the border on these two days. Some sources indicate that the number of individuals who attempted to cross during these two days was lower, with 1,100 on the first day and 600 on the second.

According to these reports, only between 500 and 600 people, at most, managed to cross the border.

4.2. The Domino Effect: From the Migrant Assault in Melilla to the Diplomatic Turnaround in Western Sahara

Spain's remarkable change of stance on the Western Sahara dispute, evidenced in the context of the Melilla migration crisis in March 2022, demonstrated the significant implications of migration crises in shaping foreign policy.

On 18 March of that year, a letter from then-Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to King Mohammed VI of Morocco was reported in the Moroccan media, in which Sánchez expressed his support for Morocco's autonomy plan for Western Sahara, marking a milestone in Spain's traditional stance.

Historically, Spain had maintained a position of neutrality on the Sahrawi question, aligning itself with UN resolutions calling for the decolonisation of the last remaining territory in Africa. The conflict in question had lasted for over 45 years, since Spain's departure from the region and Morocco's entry, with the war officially resuming on 13 November 2020, following Morocco's violation of the ceasefire in the Guerguerat area, a zone that is intangible for the opposing military forces.

This change of position made public by the daily El País on 23 March 2022, generated unease among government allies, Algeria and the Sahrawi population. However, the decision was welcomed by the European Union, which saw this shift as a benefit for the 'implementation of the Euro-Moroccan partnership', according to Nabila Massarali, the EU's foreign affairs spokesperson. The then President Sánchez defended his new position during a visit to Ceuta, at the epicentre of the migration crisis and the reconfiguration of Spanish foreign policy. He argued that this reorientation guaranteed the stability of both cities and strengthened relations with Morocco in terms of security, migration control and economic cooperation. His foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, assured Congress that this moves ended tensions between the two countries.

This shift in Spanish foreign policy was rooted in a conflict that had persisted since 1975, when the Spanish authorities decided to transfer sovereignty over Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania, abandoning the Sahrawi people without possibly establishing their independent state. Since then, the situation for civilians has changed little, with UN-led international mediation failing to find a consensual solution to self-determination for the Sahrawi people and Moroccan occupation of populated areas having displaced thousands of Sahrawis to refugee camps in the Algerian desert. Since the transfer of sovereignty in 1975, the contest between the Algerian-backed Polisario Front and Morocco has persisted, building into a confrontation over the independence of Western Sahara and the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination. For its part, Morocco has maintained the view of Western Sahara as an undisputed extension of its territory and has proposed a solution based on autonomy under its sovereignty. This conflict has had significant human consequences. For decades, many Sahrawi refugees have inhabited camps in Algeria, often in challenging conditions. Attempts at international mediation have been numerous, though, to date, none have achieved a sustainable and definitive solution. The United Nations has attempted to facilitate a referendum on self-determination, but this effort has faced repeated obstacles.

Spain's recent decision in 2022 to support Morocco's proposed autonomy plan has introduced a new element into this protracted conflict. This decision has generated an adverse response from the Polisario Front and Algeria, which perceive Spain's change of position as a betrayal of the Saharawi cause.

In sum, the modification of Spain's position concerning Western Sahara represents a critical development in a protracted conflict with a considerable human impact. It is imperative to continue observing future events unfolding in response to this shift.

4.3. Analysing The Crisis Through the Lens of CEM

This analysis will be conducted through the lens of the 'Coercive Engineered Migration' theory. To test our central hypothesis, we will attempt to answer three critical questions in the affirmative: 1. Was the migration flow orchestrated? 2. 3. Was the migration flow coercive?

To affirm the existence of coercive migration by design in this case, it is imperative to refute the three alternative hypotheses proposed by Greenhill (2010): (1) Migration could be the result of forces largely uncontrollable by principals, giving migrants and refugees the power to decide when and where they move to. (2) Migration may result from non-rational, not necessarily strategic, action, with little or no relation to coercion. (3) Migration may be strategic but not coercive in nature, driven by dispossession, supportive or militarised, rather than coercive, motivations. Throughout this thesis, we will examine these arguments in detail to provide a comprehensive and rigorous analysis of the events of March 2022 in Melilla and their repercussions on the international political chessboard.

Was the migration influx orchestrated?

Bringing together a chronology of recent events, an examination of historical patterns, and an analysis of specific geographic and socio-political conditions, I have argued that there is substantial evidence to suggest that Morocco has previously used migration flows as a tool of political pressure in response to diplomatic tensions with Spain. This pattern is reflected in the Melilla migration crisis of March 2022, leading to the conclusion that it is likely to have been orchestrated by Morocco.

Chronology of events

The sequence of diplomatic and migratory events at the Melilla border in March 2022 offers insight into the political tensions and power dynamics between Spain and Morocco. Specifically, the two incidents of mass storming

of the border fence in Melilla on 1 and 3 March can be interpreted as a **direct reaction to the meeting that took place a fortnight earlier between Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Polisario Front leader Brahim Gali in the framework of the EU-Africa summit in Brussels**. Sánchez's diplomatic rapprochement with Gali, in contrast to the distancing maintained by other international leaders during the summit, generated deep unease in Morocco, which publicly expressed its mistrust towards the intentions of the Spanish representatives.

Morocco perceived Gali's presence at the summit, representing the African Union, as an aggravation. The Moroccan media criticised the exceptionality of Gali's presence at the summit, especially in his interactions with the Spanish president (Koundouno, 2022). Perceptions of dishonesty in the intentions of Spanish officials, particularly the actions of Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, who spoke out to strengthen relations with Morocco, and Sánchez's rapprochement with Gali, exacerbated mistrust. The diplomatic events at the summit, followed by the migratory incidents in Melilla, evidenced an inconsistency between diplomatic declarations and subsequent actions (Fernández-Molina, & Youngs, 2022). Thus, in conjunction with Morocco's response, the gap between the discourse and actions of Spanish officials contributed to the escalation of the diplomatic crisis between the two countries.

Historical patterns

A historical analysis offers examples in which Morocco has exerted pressure on Spain using migratory flows as a strategic tool to advance its diplomatic objectives. This analysis shows how Rabat has interrupted collaboration on migration issues in several instances of bilateral conflict.

In 2014, an incident occurred in which the Guardia Civil stopped a boat with King Mohammed VI on board during a routine inspection in the Mediterranean. This incident was interpreted as a breach of decorum by the Alawite monarch, and within two days, there was a considerable surge of

unauthorised migrants (approximately 1,300) towards Spain, coinciding with a notable vacuum of action by Moroccan security forces (Cembrero, 2014; Agueda, 2019; Precedo & Duva, 2014; Romanguera, 2014; Agueda, 2021). As reported by *El Diario*, migrants who managed to reach Spanish territory claimed not to have experienced any resistance from Moroccan security forces; in fact, they indicated that Moroccan security forces seemed to encourage their entry into Spain (Sánchez & Castro, 2021)—the *New York Times* reported the experiences of Daouda Faye, a 25-year-old migrant from Senegal. Faye expressed surprise and joy when he saw Moroccan border guards allowing undocumented migrants to pass through to Ceuta. Faye recounted that the guards encouraged him and other migrants to cross the border on 17 May with expressions such as: "Go ahead, boy" (Casey & Bautista, 2021).

Moreover, in exchange for restoring diplomatic relations with Israel, the US recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara at the end of 2020 marked another turning point in Spanish-Moroccan relations (NIUS Diary, 2020). Amid the growing migration crisis in the Canary Islands, Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita urged Spain to follow in the footsteps of the US and recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara (Cembrero, 2021). During this period, the number of immigrants arriving by boat in the Canary Islands exceeded 23,000, which overwhelmed Spain's capacity to receive irregular migrants (Ortiz, 2021). Moreover, Morocco's decision to keep the borders of Ceuta and Melilla closed, initially implemented as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 pandemic, put additional pressure on Spain, with serious economic repercussions for these autonomous cities (Martín et al., 2022). Morocco also excluded Spain from Operation Crossing the Strait (OPE), resulting in a considerable financial loss (Peregil & Varo, 2021).

Tension between Morocco and Spain escalated considerably in 2021, marked by notable events. One of the triggers was the hospitalisation in Spain of Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali, an event that Morocco perceived as a

severe offence. Although Spain defended its decision by citing humanitarian reasons, Morocco denounced the action as unacceptable. Notably, Spain did not notify Morocco of this decision beforehand, further aggravating the situation (Peregil, 2022). Morocco's reaction was swift. A few days after Ghali arrived in Spain, an unprecedented number of migrants, approximately 10,000, entered Ceuta (Euronews with AFP, 2021). Reports indicated a surprising lack of intervention by the Moroccan Gendarmerie during this incident, suggesting a level of connivance or at least permissiveness on the part of Morocco (Martín, 2021; NIUS Diario, 2022). Simultaneously, the economic repercussions of these tensions materialised in the agricultural sector. During this period of diplomatic tensions, there was a notable increase in imports of Moroccan agricultural products into Spain, a strategy that threatened the stability of the Spanish agricultural sector (López, 2021).

In sum, historical evidence suggests that Morocco has systematically used migration flows as a tool of political pressure in its relations with Spain.

Geographical and socio-political conditions

When interpreted in the broader context of Spain-Morocco relations, Melilla's geographical location and socio-political environment elucidate Morocco's capacity to trigger a migration crisis. Melilla, like Ceuta, is strategically located at the intersection of Africa and Europe, making it a considerable point of attraction for irregular migration (Arango, 2000). Sociopolitically, Morocco has exercised its ability to manipulate migration patterns to Melilla in different circumstances. Moreover, Melilla's socio-economic reality, with high unemployment rates and an economy heavily dependent on trade with Morocco, exposes it to these migratory tensions (García Gallo, 2020). Melilla has become a 'hotspot' for irregular migration (Queirolo Palmar, 2021: 2).

Thus, it is possible to conclude that Melilla's specific geographical and socio-political conditions, in conjunction with Morocco's ability to manage migration flows, contribute to the possibility of a migration crisis in the

autonomous city at Rabat's discretion. There is sufficient evidence that the neighbouring country could have orchestrated the March 2022 crisis.

Was the migration influx strategic?

In order to prove that the migration flow was strategic, an analysis is employed that convincingly articulates that it was, in fact, a strategic act. This conclusion is derived from a careful assessment of the diplomatic and political circumstances between Morocco and Spain before and after the migration crisis, highlighting the role of immigration as a tool of political pressure. The response effectively identifies the connections between political decisions, diplomatic responses and migration fluctuations, supported by official statements and expert analysis. It argues that the migration crisis in Melilla in March 2022 resulted from strategic and tactical decisions in the context of broader political and diplomatic tensions.

Spain's reception of Brahim Ghali, an individual considered an enemy by Morocco, created an atmosphere of tension between the two nations. Morocco strongly criticised the Spanish attitude and expressed displeasure by "taking note" of the affront (AFP, 2021). The situation was exacerbated between 17 and 18 May 2021 when approximately 10,000 migrants, an unprecedented number, stormed the Ceuta fence and entered the city irregularly. According to Haizam Amirah Fernández, senior researcher at the Elcano Royal Institute, the assault on the Ceuta fence was not a random act but the product of a conscious decision taken in the spheres of power in Rabat. According to Fernández, the aim of this action was twofold: on the one hand, to send a message of dissatisfaction to Spain and provoke a reaction from its government; on the other, to influence the political scene (Amirah Fernández, 2015). In parallel, Blanca Garcés of the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) argued that Morocco had used the migration crisis as a 'quick' strategy and a 'warning', similar to what the Turkish government did when it allowed

thousands of migrants to pass through to Greece the previous year (Garcés, 2021).

During this crisis, on 18 May, the Moroccan ambassador was summoned for consultations. Meanwhile, Morocco began constructing a fish farm near the Chafarinas Islands, further exasperating tensions (González, 2021). It became clear that Morocco hoped that Spain would change its position on Western Sahara and recognise the former Spanish colony as part of Morocco, just as the US did under Donald Trump in December 2020 (Allison, 2021).

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita made official statements on 1 June 2021. Pedro Sánchez vehemently criticised Morocco's stance, calling the use of immigration as an instrument of political pressure "unacceptable". He declared that it is not admissible for a government to justify attacks on borders in response to foreign policy disagreements (MapNews, 2021). His statement about the influx of more than 10,000 Moroccans to Spain's borders in 48 hours further exacerbated tensions between the two countries. For its part, Morocco rejected Sánchez's accusations and denied using immigration as a 'pretext' in this conflict. In two statements issued within 12 hours of each other by the Moroccan foreign ministry on 1 June, Minister Nasser Bourita emphasised that the roots and root causes of the crisis were well known, referring to the central role of Western Sahara in the current diplomatic tensions. The statement stressed that the "serious crisis" between Madrid and Rabat would not be resolved simply by the Sahrawi leader Brahim Gali's appearance before the Spanish Audiencia Nacional. Instead, Morocco urged Spain to offer an unequivocal position on Western Sahara.

However, Morocco's refusal to acknowledge that it was using migration as a pressure tactic contradicts statements by its ambassador, Karima Benyaich. In an interview with Europa Press on 18 May, Benyaich admitted that the arrival of thousands of migrants was a response to Morocco's complaints about Spain's hosting of Polisario Front leader Brahim Ghali. His words could be

interpreted as a threat, as he stated, "In relations between countries, there are actions that have consequences and must be assumed" (Bourekba et al., 2023). The 'Gali case' incident was an apparent aggravation of existing tensions¹. Although Arancha González Laya, then Spanish foreign minister, justified her presence in the country on 'strictly humanitarian grounds', this caused outrage in Morocco. Morocco's disapproval of Spain was highlighted by Gali's hospitalisation and Spain's apparent lack of firmness on the Western Sahara issue. Indeed, Morocco blamed González Laya for the tension that had arisen. To calm the situation and re-establish a solid bilateral relationship, González Laya was replaced by José Manuel Albares. However, this change did not achieve the expected results, and Morocco's dissatisfaction continued (Europapress, 2022). Morocco made clear in its communiqués that it expected Spain to "unambiguously" clarify its decisions and positions. According to Morocco, the central issue was the "breakdown of trust and mutual respect between Morocco and Spain" (MapNews, 2021).

However, in a significant gesture towards Morocco, the Spanish government announced on 3 February 2022 that it had agreed to Morocco's request to help guarantee its energy security. This would be done through the regasification in Spain of liquefied natural gas purchased by Rabat, which would then be sent to Morocco via the pipeline that previously supplied gas from Algeria to the Iberian Peninsula (Euronews, 2022). These concessions by Spain to Morocco came from a rapprochement between the Spanish and Moroccan monarchies during the same month. In this context, King Felipe VI of Spain extended a helping hand to Morocco with the desire to 'walk together' and 'begin to materialise the new relationship' on 'stronger and more solid pillars' (Bocanegra, 2022).

However, the tension between Spain and Morocco intensified after the meeting between Pedro Sánchez and Ghali during the EU-Africa summit held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022. Following the meeting, the Kingdom of

¹ This incident concerns the hospitalisation of Brahim Gali, leader of the Polisario Front, in the San Pedro Hospital in Logroño on 17 April due to a severe case of COVID-19.

Morocco feared the rapprochement efforts made by Spanish officials. Despite well-meaning statements by José Manuel Albares, Spain's new foreign minister, who expressed his desire to strengthen relations with Morocco and overcome the crisis with Rabat, Morocco underlined the existence of 'dubious actions and facts that discredit the benevolent intentions of the Spanish ministers'—this period of tension culminated in an assault on the Melilla fence a few days later (Campo, 2022).

In direct response to these migratory assaults, intense secret negotiations began between Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares and his Moroccan counterpart, Nasser Bourita. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilisations, took a crucial role in these discussions. In his previous position as Spanish foreign minister, Moratinos had encouraged Morocco to propose an autonomy plan, according to US diplomatic documents released by Wikileaks in December 2010. However, when Morocco presented its plan in 2007, Moratinos expressed his disappointment, feeling that the proposal was not sufficiently 'generous' to the Sahrawi people (CBS News, 2021).

This background provided intriguing context when, on 14 March 2022, the Spanish prime minister sent a letter to King Mohamed VI of Morocco. Sánchez wrote in French that 'Spain considers the Moroccan autonomy initiative as the most serious, realistic and credible basis for resolving the conflict' in Western Sahara. This stance, however, was news to the Spanish public, including several members of the government, who were not aware of this radical change of direction until four days later, when the Moroccan monarch publicly revealed the letter. On 21 March 2022, Morocco's ambassador to Spain returned to her post in Madrid, stating that a new stage was opening, a new page in relations between the two neighbouring countries (Campo, 2022).

According to Moreno (2022), Morocco had won a significant diplomatic victory thanks to Spain's change in its traditional stance on the conflict.

However, for Spain, this change has translated into a mere restoration of the initial situation prior to the diplomatic crisis that began in 2019. Pedro Sánchez visited Rabat on 7 April to share an iftar with the King of Morocco. Following this meeting, both parties published a communiqué which, in line with Sánchez's previous letter, expressed Spain's support for Morocco's autonomy. The communiqué's 16 points were presented as a roadmap for creating working groups to resolve existing conflicts, starting with territorial waters and airspace disputes.

In conclusion, the migratory flow in Melilla in March 2022 was strategic, influenced by the existing diplomatic tensions and conflicts between Spain and Morocco. The key evidence is to be found in the actions and statements of both governments in the run-up to and aftermath of the migration crisis. Spain's admission of Brahim Ghali, the unprecedented increase in migration to Ceuta, the official responses and the tacit admission of the Moroccan ambassador indicate that migration was used as a tool of pressure. The shift in Spanish policy towards Western Sahara, which came after the assault on Melilla and the secret negotiations, justifies the notion that Morocco successfully exerted its influence, using the migration crisis as leverage.

Was the influx coercive?

To answer whether the migration flow in Melilla in March 2022 was coercive requires a thorough understanding of the historical-political fabric of Spanish-Moroccan relations. Given the interdependencies between the two countries, a more detailed analysis demonstrates the coercive nature of the migration crisis and how Morocco employed it as an instrument of political pressure.

Examining Morocco's role in the crisis, it acts as a 'generator' or 'agent provocateur' according to Greenhill's (2010) typology. This behaviour is

supported by the Moroccan authorities' official attitudes and statements, such as the Moroccan Ambassador to Spain's warning about the possible consequences of specific actions (Europapress, 2021). Moreover, this diplomatic activism coincided with the hospitalisation of Sahrawi leader Brahim Ghali in Spain and the ensuing migration crisis, indicating a 'rational' purpose behind such events.

Morocco's track record in manipulating migration crises also supports the coercion hypothesis. Morocco has previously demonstrated its ability to pressure Spain through migration. Spain's responses to such actions evidence its vulnerability to these tactics. The 'secret' nature of President Sánchez's letter to King Mohammed VI of Morocco strengthens the idea of coercion. It was not published until Rabat chose it, and its content was ostensibly intended to ease diplomatic tensions (Peregil & González, 2021).

The broader context of the crisis is also revealing. Western Sahara has become a focal point of Morocco's claims. Spain's decision to host Ghali and the subsequent rapprochement between Ghali and Sánchez in Brussels in February 2022 was seen by Morocco as a direct provocation, and the country itself showed its displeasure with Spain. A few days later, the assaults on the Melilla fence occurred, indicating a clear and focused strategy of using migration as an instrument of coercion.

The economic aspect of bilateral relations must also be considered. Morocco and Spain have close trade ties, and in the past, Morocco has used its power in areas such as agricultural imports to exert pressure on Spain, especially in times of crisis (López, 2021). In addition, tensions around maritime zones and interests in hydrocarbon exploitation in the Canary Islands have further fuelled tensions (Martín, 2022; Marimón, 2022; Fuentes, 2022).

Concerning security aspects, Morocco has employed surveillance tactics through the Pegasus programme. Although it denies spying on Spanish political figures, documentary evidence shows that Morocco acquired 10,000

licences for this programme (Moreno, 2022). Cembrero (2022) has speculated that the extraction of data from the Spanish president's mobile phone could have been used as a means of blackmail, although no concrete evidence supports this claim.

Finally, Morocco has exhibited a remarkable pattern of using coercion to advance its strategic interests internationally, clearly visible in its diplomatic relations with countries such as the US, France and Sweden.

In 2020, in an emblematic example of *realpolitik*, Morocco agreed to normalise relations with Israel. This strategic act enabled Morocco to achieve unprecedented US recognition of its sovereignty over Western Sahara. This territory, whose status has been the subject of international disputes for decades, has become a focal point of Morocco's geopolitical aspirations. The US decision to change its traditional stance on the Western Sahara dispute, as a direct result of Morocco's rapprochement with Israel, underlines Morocco's ability to employ coercive manoeuvres with significant diplomatic results (BBC, 2020).

In its relations with France, Morocco has exploited the two countries' close historical and cultural relationship to gain support on sensitive issues such as Western Sahara. France has played a decisive role in the UN Security Council, blocking or preventing resolutions critical of Morocco. This French support, which has often been criticised, shows how Morocco can influence a significant diplomatic power like France to gain support on the international stage through subtle manoeuvres and diplomatic pressure (Le Monde, 2010).

Furthermore, in 2015, Morocco used economic coercion tactics against Sweden, threatening to boycott Swedish companies. This ultimatum came after Sweden considered recognising the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which contradicts Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. By threatening Swedish business interests, Morocco demonstrated its willingness to use economic

pressure tactics to protect and advance its political and territorial objectives (The Local, 2015).

These cases are evidence of Morocco's tendency to use political and economic coercion to influence other states' decisions and promote its strategic interests. The flexibility in its approach, adapting to circumstances and specific interlocutors, reinforces Morocco's effectiveness in international diplomacy.

Given the country's timing, circumstances and diplomatic track record, the March 2022 migration flow in Melilla appears to be an act of coercion by Morocco. Pedro Sanchez's close meeting with Brahim Ghali in Brussels following Spain's official statements of commitment to Morocco's objectives and the resulting diplomatic tensions provide relevant political context. Morocco's tactics of manipulating migration crises, demonstrated in previous episodes, underline the feasibility of the coercion hypothesis. Strong trade ties between Morocco and Spain, tensions over maritime zones and interests in hydrocarbon exploitation in the Canary Islands further complicate the bilateral relationship. Morocco's evident pattern of using coercion in its international relations - as illustrated by its dealings with the US, France and Sweden - further supports this interpretation. It is reasonable to conclude that the migration crisis in Melilla was a strategic act of coercion by Morocco to pressure Spain in its respective political and territorial interests.

Conclusions

In summary and drawing from the analysis findings, this study has discerned and illustrated that in the context of the Melilla crisis of 2022, Morocco effectively employed the strategy of 'Engineered Forced Migration' to exert coercion upon Spain. In response, Spain once again demonstrated flexibility and acquiesced by altering its stance on the matter of Western Sahara. This case study exemplifies the recurring pattern in bilateral relations between Morocco and Spain, characterised by alternating periods of increased restrictions by Morocco and relaxed measures by Spain. The Melilla case is regarded as a reaffirmation of Morocco's strategies, which underscore its approach of exerting influence over Spain's foreign policy through the manipulation of migrant reception and assimilation capabilities. Morocco, in its capacity as an agent provocateur, has instigated a migrant crisis characterised by the utilisation of the 'capacity saturation method' as outlined by Greenhill. This method involves overwhelming Spain with a significant influx of migrants, thereby exerting strain on its resources and capabilities (Urrutia, 2022). The utilisation of a combination of coercive strategies enables the party with less power to apply influence on the party with more power, thereby facilitating the possibility of engaging in negotiation.

The recurrence of the Melilla crisis has once again emerged as a significant factor propelling Morocco towards a position of advantage in its relationship with Spain. Despite the inherent disparities in terms of capacity and power that exist between the two nations, Morocco effectively capitalised on the migration crisis as an opportunity to establish a platform for constructive dialogue with Spain. Consequently, this diplomatic engagement led to concessions being made by the latter party.

Additionally, the findings of this study provide evidence in favour of the notion that Morocco assumes the position of a "crisis creator" as classified by Greenhill, actively contributing to the emergence of migratory movements.

Morocco has successfully utilised internal tensions within Western societies, such as Spain, to amplify polarisation regarding the acceptance of migrants.

This study has compiled compelling evidence regarding the efficacy of Morocco's pressure exertion during the Melilla crisis in 2022. The presented evidence is derived from a collection of factors and events, which collectively indicate that Morocco achieved success in persuading Spain to acknowledge its autonomy proposal for Western Sahara. Morocco effectively utilised asymmetric pressure tactics in order to exert influence over Spain's policy decisions, a noteworthy accomplishment given the significant political and social ramifications involved.

Prior to arriving at these conclusions, an extensive analysis was conducted on the historical progression of bilateral relations between Morocco and Spain. The historical analysis conducted has unveiled that Morocco has consistently exploited the interdependencies between the two nations to its own benefit. Morocco has demonstrated a notable capacity to utilise interdependencies, such as territorial disputes and trade agreements, as strategic instruments for negotiation and coercion. The model proposed by Greenhill, which centres on tactics related to migration pressure, has demonstrated significant utility as a framework for comprehending this particular phenomenon. Through the utilisation of a well-structured methodology and a comprehensive theoretical framework, Greenhill's model has facilitated the precise examination of the strategic approach adopted by Morocco in this study. This model has not only facilitated the identification and comprehension of asymmetric pressure tactics, but it has also furnished a conceptual framework for comprehending the integration of these tactics within the wider foreign policy strategies of Morocco.

Despite the scarcity of official statements from Spanish authorities pertaining to the Melilla crisis and its subsequent events, the utilisation of Greenhill's

model, in conjunction with existing literature and information, has facilitated the verification of the initial hypotheses in this study. The significance of these findings lies not only in their contribution to a more comprehensive comprehension of the Melilla crisis, but also in their illumination of potential pressure tactics that Morocco may employ in subsequent instances.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the majority of elements pertaining to CEM theory and its characteristics, as outlined in Greenhill's research, were evident in the asymmetric coercion employed by Morocco in the case of Melilla. This implies that Morocco utilised various coercion strategies, encompassing the exploitation of internal divisions within Western societies and the deliberate instigation of a migration crisis. The aforementioned discovery provides additional evidence in favour of the credibility of Greenhill's model and emphasises the necessity for additional investigation and comprehension of asymmetric coercion strategies.

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