

SIT Graduate Institute/SIT Study Abroad

SIT Digital Collections

Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection

SIT Study Abroad

Spring 2024

The Reconfiguration of the Spanish-Moroccan Border Regime: The Impact of the 2021 Diplomatic Border Crisis

Shayra Nunez
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection



Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [Immigration Law Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Migration Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nunez, Shayra, "The Reconfiguration of the Spanish-Moroccan Border Regime: The Impact of the 2021 Diplomatic Border Crisis" (2024). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 3839.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3839

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

Shayra Nunez

Independent Study Project

SIT Spain: Geopolitics and the Future of the European Union

Supervisor: Gustavo de la Orden Bosch

May 8, 2024

Project Title: The Reconfiguration of the Spanish-Moroccan Border Regime: The Impact of the 2021 Diplomatic Border Crisis

Disclaimer: This project is the product of one month of research for undergraduate academic purposes and is not an accredited scholarly paper.

Abstract: The paper focuses on the relationship between Morocco and Spain, particularly those affecting migration control at the border in the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. The research question is: how do the events of May 2021 (the unauthorized opening of the border by Morocco) impact migration control practices in Ceuta and Melilla, and what are the implications for Spanish-Moroccan operational cooperation? The unauthorized opening of the border is conceptualized as a “diplomatic border crisis,” which is also a main contribution of this paper. The study analyzes this incident, which has impacted the border regime and led to changes in border practices. The methodology consists of interviews with experts in the field, bibliographical analysis, complemented by secondary sources provided by organizations and researchers working in the field. This paper contributes to the overall literature on the border regime in these two Spanish enclaves located in the African continent, concluding that the May 2021 “crisis” has led to the reconfiguration of border management in both enclaves, characterized by an increase in strict immigration obstruction on both sides of the border. This new consolidation of cooperation between Morocco and Spain is seen through the deadly events of June 2022. Ultimately, this paper examines how diplomatic border crises are solved through more externalization policies, diminishing the rights of migrant people, which is evidenced through the adoption of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and, in particular, of the Regulation on Crisis and Force majeure situations.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methods.....	5
3. Analysis	6
3.1. Historical Background: Border Configurations	7
3.2. The Border Regime at the Moroccan-Spanish Border	10
3.2.1. The Special Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	13
3.3. The Latest “Diplomatic Border Crises” between Spain and Morocco.....	14
3.3.1. The “Crisis” in May 2021	14
3.3.2. The Consolidation of Cooperation on Migration and Border Management.....	20
3.3.3. The “Crisis” in June 2022	20
3.4. Effects	21
3.4.1. Increasing Externalization.....	22
3.4.2. Eroding Migrant’s Rights	23
4. Conclusions.....	25
5. References	27
6. Appendix	33

1. Introduction

The southern border of Morocco and Spain has been subject to several challenges, prompting a need for a comprehensive analysis of the border relationships and their implications on political and social aspects. The cities of Ceuta and Melilla have been Spanish territory since the 17th and 15th centuries, respectively (Leiva, 2022). These are the only two land borders between the European Union and the African continent. Therefore, the cities of Melilla and Ceuta provide a long history of interactions between Spain and Morocco. These interactions have fluctuated depending on regional circumstances and the balance of power in the Mediterranean region. For many years, the southern border has been one of the only ways for people traveling from sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world to enter Europe.

Therefore, since Spain's accession to the Schengen area in 1991, the Spanish southern border has been heavily guarded and militarized in order to prevent border crossings. The European Union (EU) has signed several agreements collaborating with the Moroccan government to prevent migration into Spanish territory. Moroccan officials have secured the border to ensure that people do not reach the fences of Melilla and Ceuta. In return, Morocco has received more than £123 million since 2019 for migration control (Statewatch, 2022). However, in 2021, with persisting disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, tensions between Spain and Morocco increased after 8,000 migrants attempted to enter Ceuta without being stopped by Moroccan authorities (Ellyatt, 2021). These migrants were automatically returned to Morocco by Spanish officials without having access to resources or legal representation, also known as “devoluciones en calientes” (hot returns) (Carrera, 2020). This “crisis” resulted from the Spanish authorities’ decision to provide medical assistance to the leader of the Polisario Front, Morocco’s rival in the Western Sahara conflict. This event marked a change in border control between Spain and Morocco, leading to the reconfiguration of cross-border mobility management in the region, which will be the subject of discussion in this paper..

The Moroccan and Spanish authorities amended their relationship after a written letter from the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez directed to Mohammed VI regarding the autonomy of Western Sahara. In the aftermath, the consolidation of the Spanish-Moroccan regional cooperation was represented in the events of June 2022, where a group of 2,000

individuals, predominantly from Sudan, attempted to cross the border into Melilla and were met with extreme violence by border authorities. The revival in cooperation between the two nations translated into reinforcing externalization practices at the EU's external borders.

Thus, the “crisis” of May 2021 shows the failures in border control practices between Spain and Morocco and the influence of external political factors, like the Western Sahara issue, on migration control. This “crisis” served as a vector for change and has toughened the practices of migratory obstruction at Ceuta and Melilla, as evidenced by the “crisis” of June 2022. As it will be argued in the course of the study, these diplomatic border crises are solved through increased reliance on externalization policies, limiting immigrants' rights, as seen in the recently adopted EU crisis regulation part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.¹

Structurally, this analysis will first provide historical context on the fences in Melilla and Ceuta and the border control cooperation between Spain and Morocco, delving into the shifts in collaboration over recent years. Secondly, it will analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the border regime. Thirdly, the study will move to the incident in 2021 at the border of Ceuta, explaining its cause and political and social implications. Fourthly, it will explain the effects of the reconfiguration of border practices, describing the escalation of migratory obstruction, focusing on the event of June 2022. Finally, the analysis will discuss the effects of these diplomatic border crises, including the rise in externalization practices and the erosion of migrant rights. Overall, this contribution aims to shed light on the ways in which practices have changed at the southern border, emphasizing the impact of the “crisis” that took place in May 2021.

2. Methods

This research paper will use secondary sources from published academic articles and papers specialized on the incidents that occur at the fences of Melilla and Ceuta. Along with research articles, newspaper articles from media outlets such as BBC News, The Guardian, Euronews, and VOA news will be examined to contextualize the events in 2021 and 2022. In

¹ European Council. (2024). Response to the migration crisis and force majeure situations. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-migration-policy/eu-migration-asylum-reform-pact/migration-crisis/>

addition, this paper will include a bibliographical analysis using various book chapters that discuss the situation in more detail. Moreover, interviews with experts in the field –Said Saddiki and María Cristina Fuentes Lara—will also be included to provide a richer understanding of the topic. Based on each of the experts' specializations and backgrounds, specific questions regarding the border relationships between Morocco and Spain will be asked, and the implications of the events will also be explained. Using these sources, a comprehensive analysis will be carried out to help fully understand the complexity of the border incidents and their implications in the context of the broader border regime.

3. Analysis

This section delves into the historical background of the border configuration, providing insights into how the Moroccan-Spanish border has evolved over time and the factors that have shaped its configuration. It further explores the border regime, examining the relationship between Morocco and Spain and how it has impacted the border dynamics and collaboration. Within this context, special attention is given to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the effects of this event on border policies and regional changes. This analysis section sets the foreground to better analyze the effects of the crisis in May 2021 on the border regime.

Figure 1: Map of Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Morocco



Source: BBC News 2023

3.1. Historical Background: Border Configurations:

Ceuta and Melilla reflect a long history of interactions between Morocco and Spain. Bilateral relationships between the two countries have fluctuated between cooperation and confrontations according to changing regional circumstances. Spanish existence in Northern Africa dates back to the “Reconquista” era, a period between 718 and 1412 that ended with what Islamic history calls the “fall of al-Andalus” (Saddiki, 2017). During this time, there was an intense struggle between Christians and Muslims for territorial control in the Western Mediterranean region. The “Reconquista” was not only marked by the repossession of the Iberian Peninsula but also included the spread of Christian control in Northwest Africa (Abdelhadi, 2021). After the “Reconquista” period, Ceuta and Melilla became two of the major cities controlled by Spain. Melilla fell under Spanish rule in 1497, and Ceuta, which Portugal had seized, was transferred to Spain in 1668 under the Treaty of Lisbon (Saddiki, 2010). Thick stone

walls surrounded Ceuta and Melilla to protect the inhabitants from invaders and all external attacks, given that both enclaves had been essential points of conflict between the Mediterranean powers (Saddiki, 2017). While these walls formed part of the old and accepted defensive strategies by Spain and Morocco, the new fences built on the border of these cities have caused intense issues over the years.

In 1956, Morocco gained its independence from France. During this transition to independence, Spain retained Ceuta and Melilla, the two enclaves in Morocco, as Spanish territory (BBC News, 2023). Since obtaining its independence, Morocco has never ceased to call for the restoration of the Spanish-controlled territories in Northern Morocco. Morocco underwent colonialism under multiple countries during European colonial expansion, and for that reason, Morocco considers the existence of Spain in Northern Africa as a “museum of colonialism” (Saddiki, 2017). Hence, the nation has continued to demand for Spain to end its control of these territories. For this reason, Morocco has never signed concrete international agreements with Spain regarding the border management of Ceuta and Melilla, as they believe these territories are wrongfully occupied.

In 1986, when Spain joined the European Union, this marked a change in the history of these territories as they were now considered EU terrain. As mentioned by María Cristina Fuentes Lara, a Professor at Rey Juan Carlos University and an expert on immigration control at the southern border:

“Before 1992, there was no border between Ceuta and the neighboring municipalities in Morocco; similar to Melilla, only some wooden posts delineated which territory was Spanish and which was not. The progressive militarization of the border has been sponsored by Spain’s incorporation into the European Union and Europe’s concern that Spain would become the gateway to Africa.”²

Therefore, Spain built fences in Ceuta and Melilla in 1993 to prevent irregular migration (Saddiki, 2017). As part of Spain’s compliance with the Schengen Agreement in 1991, it was required that Spain institute tight controls around its borders, as they were now subject to Schengen control standards (Ferrer Gallardo, 2007). During this time, Ceuta and Melilla gradually became key hubs for sub-Saharan migration to the European Union, consolidating

² M. Fuentes Lara, interview, April 15, 2024.

Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco as key transit and destination countries (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023). In 1995, the irregular access of sub-Saharan citizens to Ceuta and Melilla was a common phenomenon; thus, as the first fences proved ineffective, more developed and extensive fences were constructed. The fences have continued to be reinforced and secured throughout the years, utilizing new technology and security systems to limit border crossings. In 2005, Spain built a third fence next to the two fences already in place that were deteriorating, apart from the designated checkpoints for entry into the two regions (Saddiki, 2017). These projects were primarily funded by the European Union. In fact, the EU paid “£200 million for the construction of the razor-wire border fence around Ceuta, and it assumed 75 percent of the costs of the first project from 1995 to 2000” (Saddiki, 2017). Therefore, the borders of Ceuta and Melilla exemplify the EU’s goal to fortify its outer perimeter and the active role it is willing to play in restricting immigration.

Figure 2: The fences that mark the border between Ceuta and Morocco



Source: The New York Times (Aranda, 2023)

After Spain’s integration into the European Union, the borders of both Ceuta and Melilla have consistently been militarized. According to the European Commission, the border of Melilla is characterized by an approximate 10.5-kilometer double border fence, with an outer fence that is 3.5 meters high and an inner fence that reaches 6 meters (European Commission, 2005). To prevent irregular crossings, the Spanish government has placed barbed wire and a

surveillance system of 106 cameras (European Commission, 2005). Similarly, Ceuta has a 7.8-kilometer double border fence and 37 movable cameras along the borderline (see *Figure 2*), and the technical equipment used for border surveillance is the same as in Melilla (European Commission, 2005). This securitization of the fences aims to externalize and limit migration towards Spanish territory. The militarization of the border is in accordance with the “Fortress of Europe” strategy, an outcome of securitization processes at EU external borders (Dias & Freire, 2022). This process has generated a spiral of insecurity, leading to the strengthening and renovation of the fences in Melilla and Ceuta, which have contributed to more insecurity perceptions. The primary goal of this EU strategy is to keep people out.

In addition to the two physical fences, the Spanish and Moroccan governments rely on digital surveillance to track and prevent people from crossing the border. At the border, the Integrated System of External Surveillance (SIVE) monitors irregular migrants. This includes “long-distance radar systems, advanced sensors that can detect heartbeats from a distance, thermal cameras, night vision cameras, infrared optics, helicopters, and patrol boats” (Saddiki, 2017). Hence, the Spanish government has utilized a virtual border similar to the one at the United States-Mexico border to regulate the flow of immigrants. In 2019, the Spanish interior ministry updated the CCTV system at the Ceuta border, adding 14 new cameras with a new control system (Statewatch, 2019). In addition, face recognition technology was also implemented in both fences, adding to the externalization practices. However, it is essential to note that Spain’s virtual fence has not significantly prevented migration into Ceuta and Melilla. Instead, introducing SIVE has led smugglers to adopt new and more dangerous routes, including developing new types of boats to cross the Mediterranean and Atlantic oceans (Carling, 2007). Therefore, these strategies force migrants and asylum seekers to turn to harsh and unsafe conditions at the hands of smugglers to cross the border and seek protection.

3.2. The Border Regime at the Moroccan-Spanish Border:

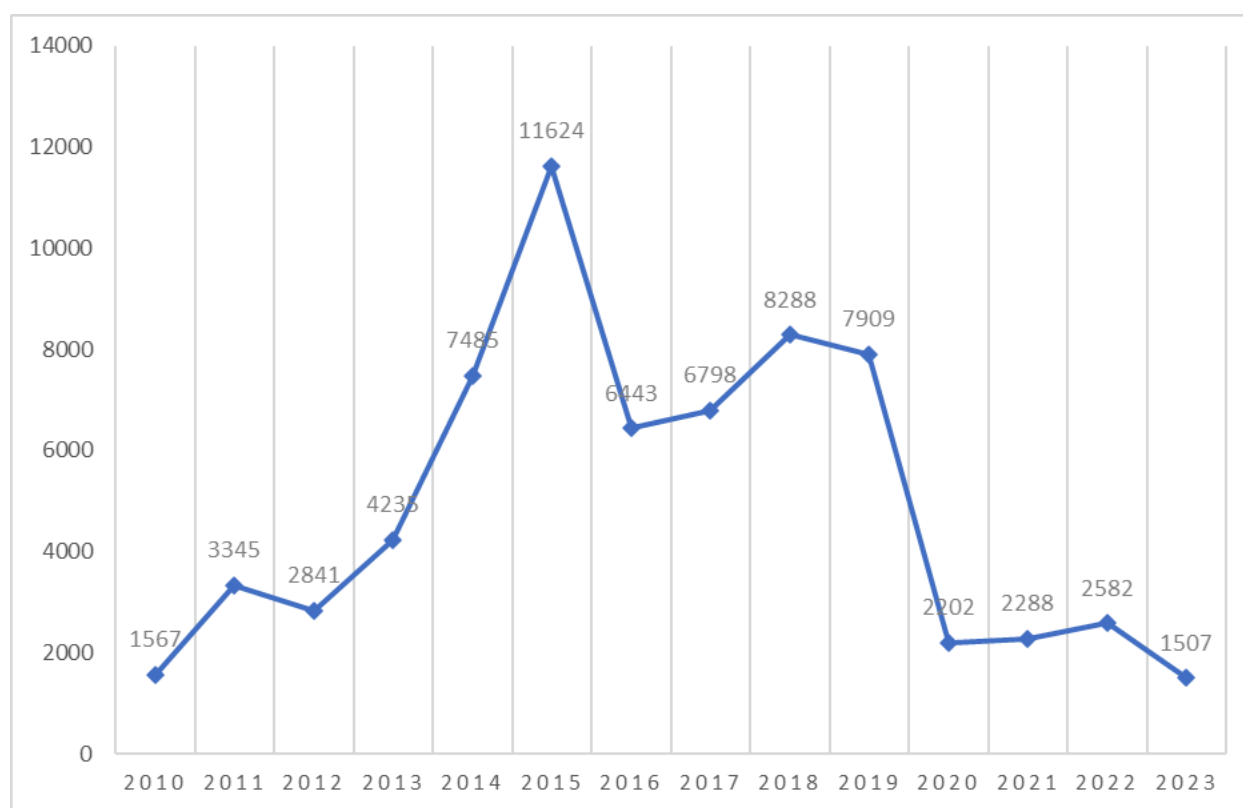
The relationship between Morocco and Spain has gone through different stages, shaped mainly by the agreements and treaties signed on different matters of bilateral cooperation, which have affected Ceuta and Melilla directly or indirectly. In 1991, Morocco and Spain signed the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, and Cooperation to create a new chapter of trust

and unity among both nations (United Nations, 1991). This agreement constitutes a framework for understanding between both countries. The Treaty of Friendship helped reduce the tensions between the two nations over Ceuta and Melilla, emphasizing dialogue and cooperation. Similarly, the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 alleviated the conflicts between Spain and Morocco, as the project aimed to establish peace and stability between the European Union and countries in the Mediterranean. This agreement allowed for cooperation in different areas, such as security, immigration, financial support, and development (European Commission, 1995). Thus, these agreements allowed Spain and Morocco to build stronger and more positive relations. In this case, Morocco benefited from having good relations with the EU and, as such, Spain; as a result, the government did not increase pressures regarding the territorial integrity of Ceuta and Melilla.

Spain has initiated several agreements and initiatives to export internal immigration and asylum problems to Morocco to relieve the burden of undesired migration in Spain and Europe. In 2011, Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, was elected. Rajoy deepened the cooperation between Spain and Morocco, especially in terms of economics, greatly benefiting Morocco. As a result, throughout his term, many of the attempts to enter Melilla and Ceuta were quashed by the presence and cooperation of the Moroccan police, aimed at combating drug trafficking and anti-terrorism operations (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). In the Rajoy administration, the Spanish and Moroccan relationship reached an unseen level, as the Spanish security forces were allowed to do “hot returns” of the undocumented migrants crossing the border of Ceuta and Melilla (Kalir, 2023). “Hot returns,” which violates international law, is the process in which Spanish civil guards return migrants to the Moroccan side of the border without providing them access to legal representation or the standard entry procedures (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). These acts have been largely criticized by the international community and the International Court of Human Rights; however, Spanish authorities insist it is within their sovereign right to decide who can reside within its national borders. Spain's obstruction and outsourcing of responsibilities have become common in Europe, as other countries have begun to adopt similar practices. Yet, while there is a growing commitment between both governments to prevent irregular migration into Ceuta and Melilla, it is clear that these practices have not stopped the persistent arrival of migrants (see *Figure 3*).

Morocco and Spain have worked collaboratively through these practices to tackle immigration issues; however, this relationship has fluctuated over the years. The border “crisis” of 2021 is a clear example of a failure in border control practices between the two nations. The irregular crossings of thousands of migrants into Ceuta with Morocco's cooperation illustrate the growing dependency of the EU on its neighboring countries. This “crisis” directly resulted from the Spanish government's decision to provide medical attention to Brahim Ghali, the secretary-general of the Sahrawi Polisario Front. This 2021 border “crisis” impacted cross-border mobility and has toughened the practices of migratory obstruction at Ceuta and Melilla while diminishing the rights of immigrants. In the subsequent sections, these factors will be explained in more detail.

Figure 3: Migrants entry into Ceuta and Melilla (land and sea borders)



Source: Own elaboration; data provided by Ministry of Interior, Balances, and Reports 2010-2023.³

The numbers in 2014 and 2015 are primarily a result of the war in Syria. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be considered. In the official reports published by the Spanish Ministry of

³ Ministerio del Interior. (2023). Balances e Informes. Retrieved from <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/es/prensa/balances-e-informes/>

Interior, data for 2021 do not include the May 18th and 19th crossings in Ceuta, and numbers in 2022 also do not include the June 24th crossings in Melilla. All these different situations will be further explained and analyzed in the following sections.

3.2.1. The Special Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

It is vital to note that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all border regions, and the Spanish-Moroccan was no exception. The pandemic led to a complete disruption of the cross-border mobility between Ceuta/Melilla and Morocco. In 2020, the pandemic caused the sudden closure of Ceuta and Melilla's border to prevent the virus's spread. This meant that people and merchandise could not freely transit, negatively impacting these cities' economies. During this time, Moroccan authorities took the opportunity to fully implement an ongoing agenda to end illicit smuggling at the border, which included the end of 'atypical' economic trafficking related to the transit of *porteadoras* women (Williams, 2021). Following this decision to close the border and block these informal trade flows, Ceuta's economy contracted by 40%, according to the governor of the enclave (North Africa Post, 2020). Accordingly, the COVID-related border closure aggravated the socio-economic circumstances in Ceuta and Melilla, causing unrest on both sides of the border. As highlighted by Professor Fuentes Lara:

“Morocco and Spain took the opportunity during the pandemic to make reforms that could not have been done with the normal border transit. For example, previously, Moroccan citizens from neighboring cities, such as Tétouan and Nador, were allowed to enter Ceuta and Melilla without needing a visa, only with a passport. However, this possibility has not been restored after the pandemic; you can enter Ceuta/Melilla with certain conditions, such as a work permit. The pandemic closure has been used to restrict mobility rights, rights that were previously guaranteed.”⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic was used to make changes to the border regime. These disruptions were in line with the growing restrictions in the region that force immobility at the borders and obstruct cross-border flows. The pandemic accelerated the ongoing process of rearranging the migration flows that Morocco had been putting into operation since 2019 (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023). These changes have not only impacted the rights of individuals but have also largely affected the economic stability in the region. Some of the border points in the region were reopened in May 2022, once the Western Sahara diplomatic conflict was addressed. However,

⁴ M. Fuentes Lara, interview, April 15, 2024.

many border crossing points are still inaccessible, impacting free transit in these enclaves and exacerbating the economic volatility (El Faro Melilla, 2024).

3.3. The Latest “Diplomatic Border Crises” between Spain and Morocco:

The event of May 2021—the unauthorized opening of the border by Morocco—can be characterized as a “diplomatic border crisis” because it involves a breach in diplomatic border protocols and agreements regarding border control in Ceuta. Unlike a typical border incident, where a “crisis” might arise from security concerns or conflicts over territory, this event in May 2021 involves explicitly diplomatic relations and cooperation between Morocco and Spain. The border opening by Morocco to allow immigrants to enter Spanish territory is a direct challenge to the border cooperation agreements between the two nations. To address this incident, a diplomatic reaction is required to respond to the immediate practical implications and the broader effects on bilateral relations. By framing this discussion as a “diplomatic border crisis,” it shifts the focus to the geopolitical and diplomatic dimensions of the event, highlighting its significance beyond just the physical borders of Ceuta and Melilla.

3.3.1. The “Crisis” in May 2021

In order to understand the “crisis” of May 2021 in Ceuta, it is essential to discuss the influence of political factors on the bilateral relationship between Morocco and Spain. In 2018, when Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez came to power, leading the Spanish socialist party, the relationship between Spain and Morocco was affected. On July 31, 2018, Moroccan authorities decided to close down the border in Melilla for a day, causing concern among the population in Melilla as an extended border closure could lead to the debilitation of the economy since it is dependent on the exchange of goods and services with Morocco (Cembrero, 2018). This event could be analyzed as Morocco testing the new Spanish administration under Sánchez. In 2020, Pedro Sánchez formed a coalition government with the left-wing party Unidas Podemos, including members of both parties in the new cabinet (Jones, 2019). Podemos was one of the many political parties that opposed Morocco's plans for Western Sahara (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). Western Sahara was a Spanish colony until 1975 when Spain transferred control of the colony to

Morocco and Mauritania (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). Since then, this territory has been contested, given that Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania claim it as its own. Additionally, inhabitants of Western Sahara claim their independence and the right to establish the Saharawi Arab Republic (Pavia & Cafiero, 2023). This conflict has persisted since 1975 and has caused regional instability and prevented Maghreb countries from building economic or political cooperation. Concerning Western Sahara, the Spanish government has always maintained an “active neutrality” position to avoid confrontation with its neighboring country, Morocco. Western Sahara is a diplomatic priority for Morocco and has become a “sacred cause” of Moroccan internal and foreign policy (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016). Hence, when Podemos stated in their political program that they “will support, through concrete actions, the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people,”⁵ it created tensions between the Spanish and Moroccan governments (Podemos, 2023). The Western Sahara issue is controversial and could threaten the relationship between Spain and Morocco if not handled appropriately.

For nearly two decades, the European Union has relied on third countries like Morocco to manage irregular migration beyond EU borders. This delegated responsibility has given countries such as Morocco the political agency and the ability to influence the border/migration control agenda. During an interview with Said Saddiki, a professor of international relations and international law at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, he explained that Morocco has become an indispensable partner in the EU border externalization strategy, allowing them to use migration as a political tool.⁶ Saddiki mentioned that Morocco – like other North African countries – does not want to act as a “policeman” for Europe’s borders without receiving anything in return.⁷

What happened in May 2021 in Ceuta is a prevalent example of this. On May 18, 2021, more than 8,000 people irregularly crossed from Morocco into Ceuta in a single day (BBC News, 2021). Morocco was accused of encouraging its own populations, minors included, to cross the border or, more subtly, of not preventing irregular border crossings (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023). Morocco, one of the most essential partners in migration control, was not

⁵ Translated from Podemos. (n.d). ESPAÑA, CON LA LIBRE DETERMINACIÓN DEL PUEBLO SAHARAUI. Retrieved from <https://podemos.info/en/medida/espana-con-la-libre-determinacion-del-pueblo-saharaui/>

⁶ S. Saddiki, interview, April 8, 2024.

⁷ S. Saddiki, interview, April 8, 2024.

cooperating at all. This incident was shocking as it seemed that migrants were being pushed forward. Many entered Ceuta by swimming from Morocco, and others were even allowed into Ceuta by the doors built to stop them from crossing (FaroTV Ceuta, 2021).

Thus, Morocco unilaterally and temporarily suspended border control with this enclave. This event on Spanish territory was analyzed as a response from Moroccans to the actions of the Sánchez administration in the “Ghali case” (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). Brahim Ghali, the secretary-general of the Sahrawi Polisario Front– the primary group aiming to establish an independent Sahrawi state in Western Sahara– traveled to Spain to receive treatment for COVID-19 in April 2021 (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023). The Polisario Front is one of Morocco’s biggest rivals regarding Western Sahara. Hence, Morocco interpreted Spain’s actions to aid the Polisario Front leader as a breach of its neutrality on the Western Sahara conflict and reacted. Through the suspension of border control cooperation, Morocco was sending a clear warning message to Spain: “The Western Sahara issue is a red line.”⁸ This action from Morocco to suspend border cooperation illustrates that they have some cards to play in the game of nations. It also shows the lengths they are willing to go to express their dissatisfaction with the Spanish government.

The Moroccan ambassador in Spain, Karima Benyaich, established a clear line between the events in Ceuta in 2021 and Ghali’s presence in Spain, which sounded like the events in 2021 were a reprisal. Benyaich told Europa Press, before she was summoned to the foreign ministry in Spain, that “there are acts that have consequences in relations between countries,” emphasizing that relations have to be based on “mutual trust” (Kasraoui, 2021). Hence, it is clear that Morocco utilized this “crisis” as a way to pressure the Spanish government for their own political gains.

Many people who crossed the border in May 2021 were automatically returned to Morocco by the Spanish Civil Guard. More than 700 minors were brought back to Morocco without collecting information on their circumstances or providing them with services (VOA News, 2024). On January 22, 2024, Spain’s Supreme Court ruled that the mass deportations that occurred in Ceuta violated the “physical and moral integrity” of the migrants and breached the European Human Rights Convention (VOA News, 2024). The court cited Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 of the European Human Rights Convention, which states that the “Collective expulsion of

⁸ S. Saddiki, interview, April 8, 2024.

aliens is prohibited” (VOA News, 2024). Following this ruling, the Spanish Interior Minister defended the events in 2021 and denied that they breached international law (Reuters, 2024). The actions of the Spanish government show the lack of regard for immigrant lives. It also clearly indicates that the Spanish government has put its state interests—to limit immigration—above those of vulnerable populations. Thus, the externalization practices from the EU have allowed third countries, like Morocco, to “weaponize” migration by manipulating population movements to obtain benefits from Spain without regard for human lives.

The use of undocumented migrants, many of them minors, by Morocco is a clear example of the ways transit countries use immigrants as bargaining power in foreign relations. Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli further explain that:

“It is true that migrants can be (and in many cases are) used as pawns, and they are instrumentalized in the framework of long and remotely played geopolitical games. Notwithstanding that, it should not be neglected that these so-called pawns are not passive actors on a chessboard. Migrants make their own decisions, and unlike what happens in chess, these pawns do not require the hands of any player to move themselves around. They can design their own strategies and trajectories; they can choose their allies. And, clearly, they can even individually or collectively defeat the adversary and subvert the mechanisms of control of the border regime” (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023).

Immigrants are often not taken into consideration in border practices and instead are used by states in these geopolitical games to send a message. The instrumentalization of border control practices has often been used as a resource for foreign policy in the EU and other countries. Yet, as mentioned above, it is crucial to highlight that migrants take the initiative and are resistant to these border practices, as they constantly fight back against the oppressive border regime. This plays a role in the performative dimension of the EU external borders in Africa, which often displays immigrants attempting to enter Ceuta and Melilla as an emergency, overfocusing the media on the border and fueling the “border spectacle” (De Genova, 2013). The border spectacle stages a scene of exclusion that renders the “illegal” status of immigrants spectacularly visible and is used by states to achieve desired political outcomes.

After the “crisis” of May 2021, the Spanish foreign minister, José Manuel Albares, a career diplomat with ample experience, attempted to redirect the bilateral relationship between Spain and Morocco toward reconciliation (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). However, these efforts were proven

unsuccessful, as the Moroccan authorities refused to normalize the relationship. The Moroccan government was waiting for the Spanish authorities to make a gesture showing their willingness to amend the relationship. This action came in March of 2022 as a letter from Pedro Sánchez directed to Mohammed VI concerning the issue of Western Sahara (Muñoz, 2023). On April 7, 2022, there was a “Joint Statement” published after the talks between King Mohammed VI and Pedro Sánchez stating that:

“Spain recognizes the importance of the Sahara issue for Morocco, as well as Morocco's serious and credible efforts in the framework of the United Nations to find a mutually acceptable solution. As such, Spain considers the Moroccan autonomy initiative, presented in 2007, as the most serious, realistic, and credible basis for the resolution of this dispute” (Kingdom of Morocco, 2022).

This agreement between the Spanish and Moroccan governments shocked the international community, as Spain had effectively changed their historic position towards Western Sahara. Given that previous administrations defended an arrangement between the Saharauis and the Moroccans (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). This gesture is considered a concession by the Spanish government to rebuild the relationship with Morocco, given its essential role in preventing irregular crossings into the enclaves. This led to a new diplomatic “honeymoon” between Spain and Morocco, which implied the possibility of new border control agreements and the reopening of land borders between Ceuta/Melilla and Morocco (Ferrer Gallardo & Gabrielli, 2023). The two countries opened a new face in relations, including a roadmap with working groups in common areas of interest such as immigration, economy, infrastructure, education, and sports (La Moncloa, 2022). Thus, the statement from the Spanish government transformed this relationship and indicated the actions they were willing to take to maintain positive diplomatic relations with Morocco.

Nonetheless, this acknowledgment from the Spanish government did cause negative effects on the foreign relations between Spain and Algeria and the Polisario Front. Algeria immediately suspended the Treaty of Friendship signed in October 2002 and any foreign commercial exchange between the two countries (Campo, 2022). This reaction from Algeria was expected as Algeria and the Polisario Front are close allies and are against the plans of Morocco. Following this occurrence, the Sánchez administration faced a new reality in the Maghreb region, as Algeria was unwilling to support the Spanish government in different security issues,

including immigration control. Hence, Algeria, a key player in stopping sub-Saharan immigrants from entering Morocco, whose goal is to cross into Ceuta and Melilla, has not reduced the migration flows in these cities (Saddiki, 2024). This lack of cooperation from Algeria will continue to affect immigration control as this issue requires the active collaboration of Morocco, Algeria, and Spain to avoid a future crisis in Ceuta and Melilla. The statement from the Sánchez administration in support of Morocco's plan for Western Sahara has shown the world the power of Morocco in bilateral relations. It has also emphasized how important Morocco is as a partner for the European Union to continue to achieve its goal of securing its external borders.

While the relationship between Morocco and Spain has entered a new phase, marked by positive relations, this complicity does not entail a lack of dispute over Ceuta and Melilla as the Moroccan government continues to claim these territories. In October of 2022, Morocco argued before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights that it “‘has no land borders’ with Spain and that Melilla is an ‘occupied fortress’” (Europa Press Nacional, 2022)⁹. This declaration from the Moroccan government illustrates their goal to “recover” Ceuta and Melilla regardless of their good relations with Spain. Yet, the meeting of NATO in Madrid in 2022 marked a crucial moment in the territorial integrity of these enclaves. The Sánchez administration viewed this meeting as a success (Gallardo, 2022). The member states approved the new Strategic Concept of NATO, which was considered by the Sánchez administration as a new layer of security regarding Spanish sovereignty over Ceuta and Melilla (Ruiz Diaz, 2023). The new Strategic Concept did not change Article 5 of the Treaty of the Alliance but instead expanded the concept of self-defense for the national territory of the member countries. According to the Strategic Concept: “while NATO is a defensive Alliance, no one should doubt our strength and resolve to defend every inch of Allied territory, preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Allies and prevail against any aggressor” (NATO, 2022). Therefore, it was interpreted by the Spanish government that Ceuta and Melilla were included as Spanish territory and would be protected by NATO against any attack. This change in the interpretation of the article could pose issues for Morocco as both NATO and the EU now protect these territories.

3.3.2. The Consolidation of Cooperation on Migration and Border Management:

⁹ Translated from: Europa Press Nacional. (2022). Marruecos sostiene ante la ONU que "no tiene fronteras terrestres" con España y que Melilla es "presidio ocupado". Retrieved from <https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-marruecos-sostiene-onu-no-tiene-fronteras-terrestres-espana-melilla-presidio-ocupado-20221013122438.html>

Nevertheless, Morocco and Spain relations will continue to be important in managing and controlling immigration into the EU. As previously mentioned, now more than ever, Spain will be looking toward Morocco to assist in preventing border crossings and maintaining immigration in the African continent. In 2023, the High-Level Meeting (HLM) between Morocco and Spain was a historic diplomatic milestone with the signing of 24 agreements on different levels of bilateral cooperation (La Moncloa, 2024). The relationship between both countries is seen to be at its best moment in decades, with the consolidation of border control cooperation. Professor Saddiki asserts that:

“The future of Moroccan-Spanish relations depends on the dynamics of the internal political life in Spain. However, it is unlikely that Spain’s relationship with Morocco will change drastically in the upcoming years. This is because it is not in Spain’s national interest to complicate this relationship. Spain not only has immigration control needs, but it also has economic interests with Morocco, including the renewal of the fishing agreement between Morocco and the EU. The relationship between both countries will likely continue to be strengthened through collaboration on projects like the 2030 Football World Cup between Spain, Morocco, and Portugal.”¹⁰

Hence, these new projects are a way to maintain friendships and build stronger ties between the two nations. As the world becomes more interconnected, Morocco and Spain will continue to sustain their relationship regardless of who is in power. This collaboration will impact the border dynamics and strategies to secure the EU's external borders.

3.3.3. The “Crisis” in June 2022

The deepened collaboration between Spain and Morocco has led to the toughening of immigration obstruction at the borders of Ceuta and Melilla, sustained by the events in 2022. On June 24, 2022, over 2,000 people attempted to cross into Melilla, mainly asylum seekers from Sudan and South Sudan (Bremner, 2023). Moroccan authorities responded to this incident by firing tear gas and wielding batons (Smith, 2022). According to government reports, at least 23 people died (Bremner, 2023). Human rights organizations say that the actual toll may be as high

¹⁰ S. Saddiki, interview, April 8, 2024.

as 37, with dozens more injured (Smith, 2022). This deadly event, also known as the “Melilla massacre,” is the result of the consolidation of Moroccan-Spanish operational cooperation, which has aggravated the interference practices at the border. After Spain’s significant change in its foreign policy on the Western Sahara conflict, Morocco is much more willing to cooperate in border control practices. In fact, in the months leading up to this event, Moroccan police had repeatedly raided immigrant settlements in the mountains. Moroccan authorities had also “prevented local shopkeepers from selling food to the migrants and stopped taxi drivers from transporting them to the Spanish consulate in the nearby city of Nador” (Bremner, 2023). These barriers are utilized to deter migrants from attempting to cross the border. However, many felt trapped and decided in June 2022 to cross the border illegally. They were met with extreme violence on both sides of the border. Judith Sunderland, acting deputy Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch, mentions: “Video and photographs show bodies strewn on the ground in pools of blood, Moroccan security forces kicking and beating people, and Spanish Guardia Civil launching teargas at men clinging to fences” (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This horrific scene is a result of the lack of concern for human lives in the border regime.

After this deadly incident in Melilla, Spanish authorities were quick to support the actions of the Moroccan police. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez congratulated the Moroccan authorities for the actions on June 24th, declaring that this incident was a “violent assault on Spanish soil” (Bremner, 2023). After this statement, Sánchez admitted that he had not seen the images from that day. Nonetheless, the actions on June 24th are a transparent indication of the extreme measures taken to secure the border.

3.4. Effects

Following the “crisis” in 2021, the border regime in Ceuta and Melilla was reconfigured, resulting in notable changes in border control practices. These changes have been marked by an intensification of externalization practices, where immigration control is increasingly outsourced to countries outside Europe’s borders. This shift is accompanied by a corresponding erosion of migrant rights, as seen through the EU crisis regulation, increasing barriers to entry and reducing access to asylum procedures. In the following section, the ramifications of these changes will be

explored in more detail, highlighting their impact on both migrants and the broader dynamics of migration governance.

3.4.1. Increasing Externalization:

The “crisis” in 2021 reconfigured the border, intensifying externalization policies. Immigrants now face harsher consequences, as seen in June 2022, for attempting to enter Spanish territory. This incident shows the unwillingness of both governments to provide humane assistance to those attempting to seek asylum. The border regime has been reconfigured towards more coordinated externalization practices that aim to prevent irregular migration.

These harsh policies of deterrence and containment have also led neighboring border cities in Morocco to become sites of immobility, as immigrants are forced to settle since they are unable to cross the border. Professor Fuentes Lara asserts:

“Morocco is no longer a country of origin for migration or a country of transit; it is becoming a destination country for immigrants. There are two main factors for this change. One is the increasing difficulty of crossing from Morocco to Europe; so many people are literally trapped in the territory for many years, and they start to structure their lives there. The second reason is that it is another phase of the process of externalizing the management of European borders. It's not just about countries acting as a barrier or blocking migration; it's about directing immigration directly in the African continent, positioning North Africa as a privileged economic and social status. Regularization processes have already taken place in Morocco and also in Libya. Therefore, there is a coordinated strategy by European policies to trap migration in the northern part of the African continent.”¹¹

Accordingly, the goals of the EU are reinforced through these strategies; by trapping immigration in Africa, they absolve themselves from the responsibility of caring for immigrants. The logic is that as long as migrants are in Africa, Spain, and the EU do not have a moral duty to assist. This rationale disproportionately burdens neighboring countries, which must assume the obligation of integrating immigrants into their social and economic lives without the necessary

¹¹ M. Fuentes Lara, interview, April 15, 2024.

resources for successful integration. This emphasis on externalization diminishes immigrants' rights as they cannot move freely and pursue their goals.

3.4.2. Erosion of Migrant's Rights:

These diplomatic border crises are solved by implementing policies that shift responsibilities beyond national borders, which result in the erosion of migrants' rights, as seen in the EU Regulation of crisis and force majeure situations contained in the Pact on Migration and Asylum.¹² The "Pact" agreement between the EU member states responds to a decade of recurring crises at the EU borders. The new laws aim to limit the entry of migrants into the EU, accelerate asylum procedures, facilitate returns, and better share asylum responsibilities among states (Woolrych, 2024). In order to clarify the scope of the concept of 'crisis,' the Regulation defines it as an 'exceptional situation [or an imminent risk thereof] of mass influx of third-country nationals or stateless persons arriving irregularly in a Member State or disembarked on its territory following search and rescue operations, being of such a scale, in proportion to the population and GDP of the Member State concerned, and nature, that it renders the Member State's asylum, reception or return system non-functional and can have serious consequences for the functioning the Common European Asylum System" (art. 1.2.a [and b]).

Where a Member State considers it facing a 'crisis,' it could apply to the Commission for authorization to suspend the standard legal framework, with particular implications for border, asylum, and return procedures. Following the request, the Commission could authorize this suspension for a period of six months, which could be extended to a maximum of one year (European Council, 2024). After the suspension, special 'asylum crisis management procedure' and 'return crisis management procedure' are put in place to improve the State's capacity to address and manage the critical mass influx, activating extraordinary measures in such a way that allows the containment of unauthorized movements.

These special procedures consist mainly of a set of exceptional rules designed to help alleviate the pressure on the State quickly by extending the time limits for identification

¹² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum (COM/2020/613 final).

procedures, suspending the ordinary international protection procedures (and replacing them with ‘immediate protection’ only in cases of a high degree of risk of being subject to indiscriminate violence, in exceptional situations of armed conflict), facilitating the relocation of applicants for international protection, and speeding up the transfer and return of illegally staying third-country nationals.

This EU “Pact” risks exacerbating rather than solving the existing challenges. The new laws require large-scale “screening” and processing of asylum seekers in border facilities. Asylum seekers could be held for up to 12 weeks while their claims are being assessed, and during that time, people will be treated as not having entered EU territory until the screening is completed (Woolrych, 2024). This can lead to mass detention at the borders, and immigrants can be denied rights and services. The mass detention of asylum seekers, including children, can also have detrimental effects on their mental well-being as they would be treated as criminals rather than people seeking safe haven. Additionally, the fast-tracked asylum procedures will lead to inadequate vulnerability assessments without the right to appeal the decision, a short time frame for interviews, and limited access to legal services (International Rescue Committee, 2023). As a result, many people could be put through the fast-track asylum process without the safeguards they are entitled to. This new policy will also lead to deportations that are not well-founded. These new changes and the other laws will make the already difficult process of entering the EU even more strenuous. Additionally, the changes to the EU crisis regulation risk worsening the already delicate situation for people seeking international protection. These changes came after the toughened border control practices in Ceuta and Melilla, demonstrating the goal of the EU to continue to externalize and prevent entrance into its territory while eroding the rights of immigrants.

4. Conclusions

As it has been analyzed, Morocco and Spain's relationship has varied over the years, which has impacted the border control practices in Ceuta and Melilla. The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of the Ceuta/Melilla borders, led to changes in border mobility and the rise in social-economic unrest on both sides of the border. In May 2021, Morocco suspended all border control cooperation in Ceuta after Spain decided to assist the Polisario Front leader in his

COVID-19 treatment. This led to the arrival of thousands of people into Spanish territory seeking international protection. Many of them, including children, were automatically returned to Morocco without access to services. This was condemned by human rights organizations and was declared illegal by the European Human Rights Court in January 2024. Following the “crisis” in 2021, Spain and Morocco amended their relationship after the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, released a “Joint Statement” with King Mohammed VI recognizing the Moroccan autonomy initiative over Western Sahara. This was a historic change in the Spanish government’s position on this issue, exemplifying the influence of Morocco in the bilateral relationship. After these events, there was a clear consolidation of cooperation between both countries, leading to increased externalization practices at the fences of Ceuta and Melilla. The May 2021 “diplomatic border crisis” led to a reconfiguration of the border regime, increasing restrictions on cross-border mobility. This is supported by the deadly events in June 2022, where more than 23 immigrants died attempting to cross the border into Melilla. Additionally, the recently adopted EU crisis regulation as part of the Pact on Migration and Asylum illustrates how countries solve diplomatic border crises by diminishing immigrant rights.

This study's concept of the diplomatic border crisis allows for a more detailed analysis of the situation in May 2021. This term captures the idea that this “crisis” requires diplomatic negotiations and dialogues and could have far-reaching implications for international cooperation. Utilizing this terminology is significant for migration studies as it emphasizes the geopolitical dimension of border incidents and underscores the potential impact on migrant rights. For instance, the May 2021 “crisis” led to heightened securitization measures, negatively affecting the well-being of immigrants. States solve diplomatic border crises without regard to the rights of immigrants, illustrating that the primary interest reflected at the international level is that of nations.

In the event of May 2021, immigration was used for geopolitical interests. Morocco exerted pressure on Spain to achieve its political goals. This highlights the complexity of migration governance and the need for a nuanced understanding of the motives employed by nations in managing border dynamics. In the future, as Saddiki recommended, it is essential to establish a permanent body for border security between Spain and Morocco that oversees the management of migration control and ensures that the rights of individuals are protected (Saddiki, 2024). This will ensure effective cooperation between both nations and can eliminate

Morocco's ability to use immigrants as a bargaining tool with the EU. As the border regime in Ceuta and Melilla continues to be shaped by political and social factors, further research on the long-term effects of the “Joint Statement” in the border region as well as the socio-economic impact of increased externalization policies in local communities on both sides of the border can further inform the dynamics of the border regime. Ultimately, the intricate interplay between political action, diplomatic tensions, and human rights considerations has profoundly shaped the border regime in Ceuta and Melilla. By accepting recommendations for establishing a permanent border security body and bolstering cooperation between Spain, Morocco, and the European Union, there is a tangible opportunity to mitigate the harmful impacts of externalization policies and ensure the dignified treatment of individuals seeking refuge.

5. References:

- Abdelhadi, M. (2021). Ceuta and Melilla: Spain's enclaves in North Africa. *BBC News*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57305882>
- Aranda, S. (2023). A Spanish Team Endures on a Toehold in Africa. *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/23/sports/soccer/cueta-soccer-migrants.html>
- BBC News. (2023). Ceuta, Melilla profile. Retrieved from
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14114627#:~:text=5th%20Century%20%2D%20Ceuta%20and%20Melilla,siege%20by%20Muslim%20forces%20follows.>
- Bremner, M. (2023). The Melilla massacre: how a Spanish enclave in Africa became a deadly flashpoint. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/29/the-melilla-massacre-spanish-enclave-africa-became-deadly-flashpoint-morocco>
- BBC News. (2021). Ceuta: Spain sends troops as 8,000 migrants enter enclave. Retrieved from
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57156320>
- Carrera, S. (2020). The Strasbourg court judgment 'N.D. and N.T. v Spain': a 'carte blanche' to push backs at EU external borders? *Migration Policy Centre*.
<https://hdl.handle.net/1814/66629>
- Carling, J. (2007). Migration Control and Migrant Fatalities at the Spanish-African Borders. *International Migration Review*, 41(2), 316-343.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00070.x>
- Cembrero, I. (2018). Marruecos cierra unilateral y definitivamente la aduana de Melilla. *El Confidencial*.
https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2018-08-11/marruecos-cierra-aduana-comercial-de-melilla_1603536/
- Campo, S. (2022). Argelia suspende El tratado de amistad con España por su "injustificable" postura sobre el Sáhara. *La Razón*.
<https://www.larazon.es/espana/20220608/3ihtcsopxfgxahybx3anala4i.html>
- Dias, V.A., & Freire, M.R. (2022). Insecurities in EU border management: the unintended

- consequences of securitization processes in the Mediterranean. *Methodos revista de ciencias sociales*, 10(2). 297-311. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17502/mrcs.v10i2.561>
- De Genova, N. (2013). Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(7), 1180–1198.
- Ellyatt, H. (2021). Spain and Morocco in diplomatic crisis after 8,000 migrants enter Spanish territory. *CNBC*.
<https://www.cnbce.com/2021/05/19/spain-and-morocco-clash-after-thousands-of-migrants-enter-ceuta.html>
- El Faro Melilla. (2024). Las fronteras de Melilla y Ceuta cumplen cuatro años de un cierre que lo cambió todo. Retrieved from
<https://elfarodemelilla.es/fronteras-ceuta-melilla-cuatro-anos-cierre/>
- European Commission. (2005). TECHNICAL MISSION TO MOROCCO Visit to CEUTA AND MELILLA ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION. Retrieved from
<https://migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-ceuta-melilla-2.pdf>
- European Commission. (1995). Barcelona Declaration. Retrieved from
<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Declaracion-de-Barcelona-1995.pdf>
- Europa Press Nacional. (2022). Marruecos sostiene ante la ONU que "no tiene fronteras terrestres" con España y que Melilla es "presidio ocupado". Retrieved from
<https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-marruecos-sostiene-onu-no-tiene-fronteras-terrestres-espana-melilla-presidio-ocupado-20221013122438.html>
- Ferrer Gallardo, X. (2007). Chapter 3. Border Acrobatics between the European Union and Africa: The Management of Sealed-off Permeability on the Borders of Ceuta and Melilla. In Brunet-Jailly, E. (Ed.), *Borderlands: Comparing Border Security in North America and Europe*. Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa Press. Retrieved from <http://books.openedition.org/uop/1600>
- Ferrer-Gallardo, X., Gabrielli, L. (2024). The Fenced Off Cities of Ceuta and Melilla: Mediterranean Nodes of Migrant (Im)Mobility. In: Zapata-Barrero, R., Awad, I. (eds) *Migrations in the Mediterranean*. IMISCOE Research Series. Springer, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-42264-5_17
- Fuentes Lara, M. (2024, April 15). Personal Interview.

- FaroTV Ceuta (2021). Esto es lo que hace Marruecos: abrir las puertas y bloquear a Ceuta [video], May 18th. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqvf9xox7H0>
- Gallardo, C. (2022). Spain lugs its political fights, scandals and protests into the NATO summit. *Politico*.
<https://www.politico.eu/article/spain-domestic-baggage-overshadow-nato-summit/>
- Human Rights Watch. (2022). Morocco/Spain: Horrific Migrant Deaths at Melilla Border. Retrieved from
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/29/morocco/spain-horrific-migrant-deaths-melilla-border>
- International Rescue Committee. (2023). What is the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum? Retrieved from <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum>
- Jones, S. (2019). Spain's ruling socialists strike coalition deal with Podemos. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/12/spain-ruling-socialists-strike-coalition-deal-with-podemos-sanchez>
- Kalir, B. (2023). Qualifying deportation: How police translation of 'dangerous foreign criminals' led to expansive deportation practices in Spain. *Security dialogue*, 54(6), 548–567.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106221118798>
- Kasraoui, S. (2021). Morocco's Ambassador to Spain: There Are Attitudes That Cannot Be Accepted. *Morocco World News*.
<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2021/05/342460/moroccos-ambassador-to-spain-there-are-attitudes-that-cannot-be-accepted>
- Kingdom of Morocco. (2022). Kingdom of Morocco, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Statement Adopted at the End of Talks between HM King Mohammed VI, President of Spanish Government Pedro Sanchez.” Retrieved from
<https://www.diplomatie.ma/en/joint-statement-adopted-end-talks-between-hm-king-mohammed-vi-president-spanish-government-pedro-sanchez>
- Leiva, M. (2022). Why do Ceuta and Melilla matter to Spain and Morocco? *Investment Monitor*.
<https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/features/why-do-ceuta-and-melilla-matter-to-spain-and-morocco/#:~:text=The%20coastal%20cities%20of%20Ceuta,on%20the%20continent%20of%20Africa.>
- Ministerio del Interior. (2023). Balances e Informes. Retrieved from

- <https://www.interior.gob.es/opencms/es/prensa/balances-e-informes/>
 La Moncloa. (2022). Pedro Sánchez and Mohamed VI launch a new stage in relations between Spain and Morocco. Retrieved from
https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/presidente/news/Paginas/2022/20220407_trip-to-morocco.aspx
- La Moncloa. (2024). In Rabat, Sánchez stresses that bilateral relations between Spain and Morocco are at their best moment in decades. Retrieved from
<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/presidente/news/Paginas/2024/20240221-trip-to-morocco.aspx>
- Muñoz, M. (2023). La Carta oculta de Sánchez a Mohamed VI sobre el Sáhara occidental cumple un año: ¿Y ahora qué? *Público*. Retrieved from
<https://www.publico.es/politica/carta-oculta-sanchez-mohamed-vi-sahara-occidental-cumple-ano.html>
- North Africa Post. (2020). Ceuta's economy contracts 40% after Morocco closes borders. Retrieved from
<https://northafricapost.com/42781-ceutas-economy-contracts-40-after-morocco-closes-borders.html>
- NATO. (2022). Strategic Concept. Retrieved from
https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf
- Pavia, A., & Cafiero, G. (2023). WHAT'S BEHIND SPAIN'S ABOUT-FACE ON WESTERN SAHARA? *Foreign Policy in Focus*.
<https://fpif.org/whats-behind-spains-about-face-on-western-sahara/>
- Podemos. (n.d). ESPAÑA, CON LA LIBRE DETERMINACIÓN DEL PUEBLO SAHARAUI. Retrieved from
<https://podemos.info/en/medida/espana-con-la-libre-determinacion-del-pueblo-saharaui/>
- Ruiz Diaz, A. (2023). THE BILATERAL SPANISH-MOROCCAN RELATIONS, THE DILEMMA OVER CEUTA AND MELILLA. *Universidad Europea*.
https://titula.universidadeuropea.com/bitstream/handle/20.500.12880/8088/21855629_tfg_AlejandroRuiz.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Reuters. (2024). Spain's top court rules mass deportation of minors to Morocco was illegal.

- Retrieved from
<https://www.reuters.com/world/spains-top-court-rules-mass-deportation-minors-morocco-was-illegal-2024-01-22/>
- Smith, E. (2022). What's behind the deaths at Morocco's land border with the EU? *The New Humanitarian*.
<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/09/08/Migrant-crisis-Morocco-Spain-border>
- Saddiki, S. (2024, April 8). Personal Interview.
- Statewatch. (2022). Spanish government approves another €30 million for migration control in Morocco. Retrieved from
<https://www.statewatch.org/news/2022/october/spanish-government-approves-another-30-million-for-migration-control-in-morocco/#:~:text=Morocco%20has%20now%20received%20%E2%82%AC,million%20more%20up%20to%202027.>
- Statewatch. (2019). Spanish-Moroccan borders upgraded with new cameras, facial recognition and a barbed wire 'swap.' Retrieved from
<https://www.statewatch.org/news/2019/september/spanish-moroccan-borders-upgraded-with-new-cameras-facial-recognition-and-a-barbed-wire-swap/>
- Saddiki, S. (2017). World of Walls (1-). *Open Book Publishers*.
<https://books.openedition.org/obp/4546>
- Saddiki, S. (2010). Ceuta and Melilla Fences: a EU Multidimensional Border? *Congress 2010 of the Humanities and Social Sciences*. <https://cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2010/Saddiki.pdf>
- Saddiki, S. (2022). Knocking at the Walls of Ceuta and Melilla: Irregular Migration and the Political—Security Nexus. *Moroccan Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis*.
<https://mipa.institute/en/9362>
- United Nations. (1991). Treaty of friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation. Signed at Rabat on 4 July 1991. Retrieved from
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201717/volume-1717-I-29862-English.pdf>
- VOA News. (2024). Spain High Court Rules 2021 Mass Deportation of Minors to Morocco Was Illegal. Retrieved from

<https://www.voanews.com/a/spain-high-court-rules-2021-mass-deportation-of-minors-to-morocco-was-illegal-/7450619.html>

Williams, Z. (2021). THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN CEUTA AND MELILLA. *The Borgen Project*.

<https://borgenproject.org/humanitarian-crisis-in-ceuta-and-melilla/>

Woolrych, K. (2024). The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, Explained. *HIAS*.

<https://hias.org/news/eu-pact-migration-and-asylum-explained/>

Zaragoza-Cristiani, J. (2016). Empowerment through migration control cooperation: The Spanish-Moroccan case. *European University Institute*.

https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/41686/Zaragoza_Cristiani_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

6. Appendix

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

Title of the Study: The Reconfiguration of the Spanish-Moroccan Border Regime: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the 2021 Diplomatic Border Crisis

Researcher Name: Shayra Nunez

My name is Shayra Nunez I am a student with the SIT program: Geopolitics and the Future of the European Union. I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting as part of the SIT Study Abroad program in Bilbao, Spain. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between Spain and Morocco regarding the southern border to shed light on the issues that occur, including human rights violations. This paper also analyzes the cases that happened in 2021 and 2022 on the border of Melilla and Ceuta. Through the discussion of these incidents, the aim is to understand the implications of these events for political and social relations in the region. Additionally, the paper aims to illustrate the growing importance of migration control for Spain and the European Union, particularly in their interaction with Morocco. I also intend to investigate how the incidents at the southern border have impacted diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Your participation will consist of answering a few questions related to the topic through Zoom and will require approximately 30-45 minutes of your time. I am requesting the ability to record the interview through Zoom, in order to facilitate my research. However, if the participant is not comfortable being recorded, they can still participate in this research study.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no anticipated benefits for the participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data Storage: Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

☐ I will record the interview through Zoom and will store the video and audio recordings in my laptop which is password protected. No photos will be taken during the interview. I will delete the recordings six months after the conclusion of my research project.

☐ I will not record the interview and will only take notes on a Word document that I will store in my password protected laptop. I will destroy this document six months after the conclusion of my research project.

Anonymity: Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

☐ I will keep your identity anonymous. In my paper, I will only identify you as Interviewee X, Y, Z and will not include your professional title.

☐ I will not keep your identity anonymous. In my paper, I will identify you through your full name and professional title.

Publication:

- After my research is completed, I will present the findings to my SIT cohort and advisors.
- I will also use the paper findings as a basis for my senior thesis at Franklin and Marshall College.

- I will publish my paper on SIT's website. In my introduction, I will be very clear that my paper is the product of one month of research for an academic program and that it is not an accredited scholarly article.
- If you would like your identity to be kept anonymous, no identifiable information will be used when the paper is presented, published, or used as a writing sample.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

"I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older."

Participant's signature _____ *Date* _____

Researcher's signature _____ Shayra Nunez _____ Date _____

RESEARCHER'S CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at (snunez@fandm.edu) or my advisor at (gustavodelaorden@deusto.es)

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

School for International Training
Institutional Review Board

1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
irb@sit.edu
802-258-3132