"Frontiers of a possible European grand strategy - illegal migration as an indicator"

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Research plan

1. Background, international context, problems to be solved. What former work on the subject?

In the context of the foreign and security policy of the European Union as well as in relation to the EU's capability at the advocacy of its interests on the global level, in past decades the demand for an *EU grand strategy* has emerged time and again. This discourse was already present before the Arab Spring of 2011, a symbolic event from the point of view of our research, and has been going on ever since. (Sven Biscop: *The value of power, the power of values: a call for an EU grand strategy* (2009); EU Grand Strategy: Optimism is Mandatory (2012); James Rogers: *From 'Civilian Power' to 'Global Power': Explicating the European Union's 'Grand Strategy' Through the Articulation of Discourse Theory* (2009); *A New Geography for European Power?* (2011); Jolyon Howorth: *Why the EU Needs a Grand Strategy* (2015); Michiel Foulon: *European Grand Strategy in an Era of Geopolitical Change* (2020). *Bart M.J. Szewczyk: Europe's Grand Strategy Navigating a New World Order* (2021)

An eventual EU foreign policy grand strategy, however, poses questions not only related to the *contents*, but also to *its geographical scope*. The 2003 EU security strategy was thinking in a full global approach, which was consequently subject to several criticisms pointing to the fact that the EU's real potential for action is much more limited (see e.g. the analyses by Biscop, Rogers, etc). (As a parallel the strategy of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe also has – besides its functional tasks - a geographical space perception ("OSCE area"). Based on these remarks, the 2016 Global Strategy has much more narrowed down the geographical scope of EU action, but due to its primarily content-based approach it did not define clearly which are the regions considered by the EU as its strategic spheres of interest; where, in order to ensure/maintain its own stability it is ready to undertake conflict management tasks, including even peace operations. (This lack of clear definitions is a noted weakness of the GS.)

Consequently, the 2016 GS – in spite of its undoubted positive aspects – could only partly fulfill its intended role: on the one hand, as a strategy it is primarily a political and not an analytical document; on the other hand, because the member states did not, or only to a small extent participated in its elaboration. Therefore, there has been only a moderate consensus on the new strategy (which consensus is partly zero in the practical foreign policy measures to be taken).

It seems that in its current state the EU mechanism is not able to give coordinated answers to the migration challenges reaching the European Union: migration, although it poses security risks, does not primarily belong to the CFSP, but to the Justice and Home Affairs, which is a shared competence. At the same time, the drivers of migration, either economic concerns or military conflicts, belong to the scope of the CFSP. A further element is the fact that the European Union is able to conclude international agreements even where it has partial rights

only, e.g. the question of repatriation and readmission (The EU shall develop a common immigration policy, … the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt measures in the area of illegal immigration and unauthorisation residence, including removal and repatriation of persons residing without authorisation.) Although – based on the 2015 European Agenda on Security and the 2016 Global Strategy - the European Union tried to take certain measures towards the integration of the two fields (e.g. the Foreign Affairs Council in 2015 was dealing with the synergy of the CSDP and the Justice and Home Affairs; and since 2016 the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy coordinates the foreign affairs activities of the Commissioners), the process has been hindered by the incoherence between the internal and external policies.

A further problem is that there are two parallel concepts in the external dimension of the European Union migration activities: on the one hand, the EU Justice and Home Affairs identify illegal migration as a security risk, consequently aims at the containment or rejection of irregular migration (e.g. tightened border control, surveillance measures). On the other hand, as a normative power the EU tries to "manage" the main drivers of migration in the form of development aid, cooperation agreements with third countries, trade and direct capital investment. The EU is also an active participant in international migration fora (e.g. the Khartoum or the Rabat processes, GCM).

Regarding humanitarian aid and international development, the European Union itself has the competence to take certain measures and to pursue a common policy in international aid. Yet in parallel, the member states also maintain their independent right in the same field. Following the Lisbon Treaty, the aims of development policy have been expanded both horizontally (by the geographical expansion of the EU's sphere of interest) and vertically (by taking into account the objectives of its external action). The aims of conflict prevention, the maintenance of international security, humanitarian aid after natural disasters, sustainable development, the reduction or eradication of poverty also appeared on the EU's agenda. (Lisbon Treaty)

Regarding the *geographical scope* a further starting point is provided by the EU's new "strategic autonomy" concept. In consequence of the "Pivot to Asia" announced by Barack Obama and the "America First" policy of Donald Trump the content of American-European relations has changed, and so has the "division of labour" in the direct neighbourhood of Europe. The Mediterranean, which was a theatre of Cold War competition, has come to be perceived as the scene of specific European Union interests after the Cold War. (The importance of the Mediterranean was already reflected in the Helsinki Declaration of the CSCE in 1975.) The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) launched in 1995 defines only the direct southern neighbourhood, while the 2003/2004 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) widens the scope with including the eastern neighbourhood as well as the direct field of action for the European Union.

The 2016 Global Strategy, therefore, while tries to define the territory of the real/realistic potential of action besides starting from the outside towards the inside (from the global to the direct sphere of influence), aims at the definition starting from the inside (the direct neighbourhood) towards the outside (a wider geographical space) when it raises the three times

institutionalized policy towards the direct neighbourhood (EMP, ENP, UfM) to a higher level, to include a wider regional scope.

The aim of the present research project, therefore, is <u>not</u> to define a grand strategy for the European Union, but **to define** the first step leading to any such strategy, namely **what is the geographical scope, which the European Union may consider as its direct sphere of influence and interest**.

This definition is not an easy task as each of the 27 member states would – for their own specific historical, political, economic and geopolitical reasons – consider different regions. Therefore, a common theme should be looked for, which incorporates all these different demands and approaches.

The geographical sphere of interest of the European Union may be defined by several indicators: among them the enlargement strategy, the drivers of the neighbourhood policy, or humanitarian responsibility and assistance, which are all based on the approach of the European Union as a 'normative power'. ((Ian Manners, Richard D. Whitman and others' "Normative Power concept). A so-far little tried approach may investigate the countries sources of the migration aiming at the EU.

The current research, therefore, would not only conduct basic research, but by its unique Hungarian approach, wide academic spectrum represented by the research team (international relations, law, economy, security policy, European integration, regional studies, etc) and its synthetizing approach would fill in an academic niche in the research of migration aiming at the European Union. Thus, it would establish a new theoretical background to a multi-faceted security risk. At the same time, the project would also serve wider public interest on a relevant contemporary issue.

Former work on the subject

Most of the 15 participants of the project has had academic experience with the migration issue. The leader of the project, Erzsébet N. Rózsa was the head of an EU-funded project under the title of *Mapping Migration Challenges in the EU Transit and Destination Countries*; organized a series of roundtables on *Islam and migration*. Viktor Marsai and Norbert Tóth were/are working for the Migration Institute. András Kóré, besides being a PhD student, works at the Hungary Helps program. The participants-to-be have published altogether some 30 academic papers related to the different aspects of the proposed research project. (The list is attached to the Research plan.)

2. Hypothesis, main questions, the aim of the project (each question under a different number)

In our hypothesis, over and above the sphere delineated by the normative role of the European Union, geographical sphere can be defined on a practical and pragmatic, non-normative basis: the main indicator would be where the EU, in the context of its CFSP, is ready to intervene – reaching over its normative aims – to defend and/or to assert its strategic interests and security. Illegal/irregular migration may specifically serve to delineate this geographical scope – not

because each member state is affected, but because this approach shows the regions the conflicts of which have a direct impact on Europe, and which may initiate/force an EU reaction.

The mapping of the source and transit states clearly help to designate the conflicts which have a substantial impact on the EU's position. Thus, for example Afghanistan or Bangladesh in spite of their geographical distance belong to this geographical sphere, while the Democratic Republic of Kongo – in spite of some member states' interest – most probably remain outside this delineation, proving that over the normative kind of activities (humanitarian perspectives, the defence of human rights) the EU has no direct strategic interests to lead missions there – as the Union came to realize after a long mission in Congo.

The present research project aims **to define - on the basis of the analysis of the illegal migration trends of specific regions - the geographical space which the EU considers its strategic spheres of interest, in which, should a conflict evolve there, the EU must act in its own interest.**

In the process, the capability of the European Union will also be tested and analyzed if it is able to realize/assert its interests in the strategic sphere under examination. After 2015, illegal migration has gained an increasing momentum in the European Union's perception. What's more, by 2020 the position seems to be unified that illegal migration should be stopped (see Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, Ursula van der Leyen's statements), the boundaries of the EU should be defended (e. g. the strengthening of the FRONTEX), and to strengthen the retention capacity of the region's sources of migration.

The main question of the project

How can the geographical space - considered as the EU's strategic sphere of interest - be delineated through the examination and analysis of the trends of illegal migration? (What role the illegal migration trends play in the delineation of the geographical space of the EU's strategic sphere of interest?)

Further questions include:

1. How the EU and the member states' perceptions of illegal migration changed after 2015?
2. How can the illegal migration trends and their different regional/country-wise/sub-regional characteristics be described and analyzed from the point of view of the European Union, and what practical relevance they have for the EU?
3. How did the EU analyze the illegal migration trends of such regions/countries/sub-regions and how were they reflected in the EU policies? What are the weaknesses and the consequences of the perception of the differences?
4. What are the EU or member state practices, projects, which increase the withholding capacity of the regions and states sources of migration, and the resilience of these to migration drivers?
5. What are the domestic/local drivers pushing for illegal migration from the different regions/countries/sub-regions?
6. Does normativity appear in the migration-related external actions of the European Union or is it Realpolitik, interest-based considerations that prevail?

3. Methodology; existing conditions to the research project

The research will have two main pillars: one analyzing the European Union, one looking at the regions sources of migration, as below:

- identification and analysis of the EU and member states' policies: colonization and dependence (very brief historical summary), the OSCE, the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation agreements (Helsinki Declaration, EMP, ENP, UfM), the Global Strategy, EU mission and UN mission with EU member states' participation, other for a with EU participation (e.g. the Quartet); political views and efforts at a European grand strategy, economic analyses; contacts and agreements among the EU/member states and partner countries (EU - A/B/C/D country, EUmember1 - A/B/C/D country, EUmember2 - A/B/C/D country, etc. On this basis an analysis of how these activities – humanitarian aid, international development, peace-keeping missions contributed to the development of the target regions.
- Analysis of aid, development and other EU programs from the point of view if there has been a change from the normative role of the EU towards a non-normative, interest-based involvement, i.e. what projects are financed by the EU.
- Delineation of the strategic scope: defining the "regions" in the EU narratives, the identification of the states within these regions, from where the biggest migration pressure reaches the EU, the identification of the "drivers" – on a state-by-state basis specifically (armed conflict, economic crisis, over-population, environmental change, etc.). Besides the "common" drivers, region-specific drivers will be identified and analyzed, collecting best practices to contribute to a targeted strategy.
- On the basis of the databases at hand migration is reaching Europe/the EU from the Middle East and North Africa, the sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (incl. Afghanistan).The research aims at delineating the exact boundaries defining what smaller regions and/or countries, or even sub-regions within a certain country or a cross-border region should be taken into consideration.
- To this end the researchers will conduct academic research (publications, news, databases, etc) as well as interviews with colleagues in the relevant sections of state administration both Hungary and abroad, both in Brussels and in the regions. Consequently, field trips are also planned, primarily to states on the routes of migration (Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, as well as in the Balkans).
- In the course of the research, a roundtable is planned for each 6-months to be organized at 5 different universities (in Budapest and in the countryside). The first one at the National University of Public Service, and a concluding final conference in the 6 months of the project, at the NUPS again. (The leader of the project had already organized and directed a similar series of roundtables/conferences under the title of *Islam and migration*.)

4. Probable results

The new analytical framework of the project would, on the one hand, support national and EU decision-making, and, on the other, enhance and promote strategic thinking. The international experience gained through the research would help to embed Hungarian decision-making into the multi-level governance trends in the European Union.

- a website for the project
    - databases (FRONTEX, IOM, UNHCR, etc.);
    - a common bibliographic database and articles to support the research
- events
    - a roundtable every 6 months (held at different university campuses)
    - a project closing conference (at NUPS)
- publications
    - 4 Policy Briefs/year on the partial results of the research
    - 2 volumes – one on the European Union, one on the regions (+Open Access)
- travel
    - field trips – consultations with political decision-makers, EU representative offices in the regions, think-tanks, NGOs dealing with migrants
- dissemination
    - teaching – teaching material and course
    - media – several participants are regular commentators in the media – by relying on these contacts the results would be presented in the media
    - sending the results to the relevant sections of the state administration (Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Deputy State Secretariats for Eastern/Southern Opening, Ministry of Defence, Hungary Helps, etc.)

5. Research infrastructure (tools, personnel, etc.)

In the course of the research project we aim at building an academic community and a school-like operation. The academic quality is provided by the fact that the participants are senior researchers, fresh PhD graduates and PhD students. Consequently, in our research we rely on our former academic research activities, projects and the publications, as well as the methodology and practice gained through these projects.

The National University of Public Service provides the necessary infrastructure for such a research project, we shall need only some IT tools (2 laptops, website) in addition to the existing infrastructure.

Our researchers possess the academic knowledge and practical experience to identify the resources, to use the internet databases, to compile and edit the planned publications, the transfer of which knowledge and experience is also part of the academic community building activities.

In order to disseminate academic results first of all our universities provide an ample ground, which not only support, but also demand that new research findings be shared with the students

to improve their knowledge, and to connect the universities as research centers to the academic research networks, in Hungary and abroad. Therefore, research results are planned to be channeled into the lectures and course materials for both the BA and the MA students as well as the PhD training. In methodology-related courses we would introduce them to the basics of academic research, data-collection, compilation of bibliographies. In order to foster these aims, we plan to employ two PhD students in the whole course of the project. This would also contribute to the training of a new generation of researchers, who could not only gain academic knowledge in preparing publications, but would also get some practice in organizing conferences, etc.