

THE MIGRATION AGREEMENTS IN EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS FOR A GEOPOLITICAL EUROPE

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The Migration Agreements in Euro-Mediterranean Relations for a Geopolitical Europe

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Introduction

The recent migration accord formalised between Tunisia and the European Union (EU) (Macaulay, 2023) has spurred renewed discussions on the efficacy and implications of the EU's external migration policies, particularly in its interactions within Euro-Mediterranean relations. This diplomatic agreement, which involves reinforcing the EU's border controls in return for financial support to Tunisia, echoes a prior arrangement with Egypt. In the case of Egypt, the agreement entailed the containment of refugees escaping conflicts in neighbouring countries, predominantly Sudan, in exchange for substantial financial aid (O'Carroll, 2023). These examples are some of the few ones in the region, as they could be expanded to Algeria, Morocco, Niger and many others (Koch, Weber & Werenfels, 2018).

These migration agreements, occurring against the backdrop of the EU's concerted efforts to fortify its borders and manage the influx of migrants, coincide with a disconcerting surge in migrant fatalities within the Mediterranean region. Particularly, following the "great migration of summer of 2015" (Düvell, 2019), the emphasis on the need to police the migration flows through FRONTEX in addition to designing plans for potential returns to designated "safe countries" intensified the tension at the EU borders (Baldwin-Edwards, Blitz & Crawley, 2019). Notably, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that, since 2017, the Mediterranean has been witnessing the highest recorded number of migrant deaths, with these tragic incidents occurring along the migratory routes mainly originating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where individuals seek passage to the EU (IOM, 2023). These led to an increasing number of migration agreements to alleviate the tension at the borders of the EU while these agreements,

hence border controls, exacerbate human rights abuses leading to migrant deaths as stated above. This confluence of agreements and escalating humanitarian concerns underscores the complex interplay between regional migration policies, economic interests, and the pressing need for a comprehensive and ethically sound approach to the management of migration flows.

In light of these recent events, this paper undertakes a comprehensive examination of the geopolitical objectives pursued by the EU within the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations, elucidating the intricate dynamics embedded in migration agreements and the conflicting narratives it creates between humanitarianism and securitisation. The analysis of migration agreements assumes significance as it converges geographical proximity and policy considerations, encapsulating key facets of geopolitics through (1) prioritisation of securitisation, (2) the Mediterranean as a region and centrality of third countries, and (3) the New Pact on Migration and Asylum Agreement of the European Union (hereafter referred to as the New Pact) and its potential.

The New Pact, unveiled with the aim of addressing the intricate challenges associated with migration, encompasses a multifaceted agenda geared towards establishing a comprehensive EU mechanism for crisis preparedness and management within the realm of migration and the cooperation between third countries. Hence, it serves a dual purpose: it is framed not only as a mechanism for protecting individual migrants but also as a crisis management tool through the containment of migrant flows, which offers an opportunity to understand the geopolitical aims of the EU simultaneously. Consequently, this paper directs its focus towards unravelling the intricate interplay of politics and geog-

raphy within the framework of the New Pact and delving into its implications and potentials for the EU's geopolitical objectives in Euro-Mediterranean relations, with a specific emphasis on the analysis of migration agreements.

Understanding the EU's geopolitical aims assumes heightened significance for several compelling reasons. Firstly, a nuanced understanding of the underlying motivations driving these geopolitical aims will elucidate the hierarchical prioritisation of EU-level policies, thereby unveiling the political landscape where one policy takes precedence over another. Up until now the EU's overarching geopolitical goals in Euro-Mediterranean relations, hence MENA, have weakened the EU's standing in the region by contributing to heightened tensions at its borders. Secondly, an exploration of these geopolitical aims will underscore the inherent interdependence of geography and diplomacy within Euro-Mediterranean relations, providing insights into the dynamic interplay of physical and political factors. Thirdly, a comprehensive analysis of the New Pact in light of these geopolitical aims will demonstrate the potential of diplomatic spaces on the intricate relations within the Euro-Mediterranean regional dynamics, particularly in relation to the countries of the MENA region.

Accordingly, the paper is structured as follows. The second section offers an examination of the geopolitical aims of the EU in Euro-Mediterranean relations. In showing this, the paper details the prioritisation of securitisation over humanitarian rhetoric, the role of third countries and the Mediterranean as a region, and the potential of the New Pact. The third section concludes and extends a set of recommendations. These recommendations are addressed to the EU-level policy-makers, with a particular emphasis on those sharing land and maritime borders with the MENA countries. The

central tenet of these recommendations calls for a shift in the focal point of the framing of EU's narratives – from mere border control to prioritising migrants' security and rights. This shift would ultimately contribute to heightening the EU's presence and influence within Euro-Mediterranean relations through a strategic realignment of actions and policy frameworks in line with its geopolitical aims.

The geopolitical aims of the European Union and its current reform ambitions

The term “geopolitical” encompasses diverse conceptualisations, ranging from perspectives accentuating the centrality of geography to those highlighting the strategic deployment of military resources, the pursuit of economic interests, and the dynamics of “power politics” (Kundnani 2023; Laidi, 2023). In navigating these varied perspectives, it is essential to recognise that the diplomatic nature of migration agreements underscores the “power politics” dimension, emphasising the role of norms as distinct from established rules governed by customary practices (Hagan, 1942). This viewpoint facilitates an expansive conceptualisation of geopolitics that extends beyond conventional territorial frameworks, incorporating norms and values into its analytical scope while remaining attuned to the enduring influence of geography (Kuus, 2017).

In this context, the paper narrows its focus to the normative aspect of the EU's geopolitical objectives as manifested through migration agreements in the Mediterranean. By examining the normative dimensions, the analysis seeks to elucidate how the EU, through its diplomatic engagements in migration agreements, not only navigates

the intricacies of power politics but also shapes and is shaped by normative considerations, including values. This nuanced exploration contributes to a more holistic understanding of the multifaceted geopolitical landscape surrounding migration agreements, shedding light on the broader implications for international relations, regional stability, and ethical governance.

Hence, in the Mediterranean context, one important normative consideration of the EU is based on cooperation in which the EU's geopolitical objectives are intricately interwoven with the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Serving as one of the EU's principal foreign policy instruments, the ENP is designed to fortify ties between the EU and its Eastern and Southern neighbours, facilitating their enhanced integration, with the EU playing a central role within the broader context of Euro-Mediterranean relations and partnerships and promoting political reforms (Hamzaoui, 2020; Kelley, 2006; Smith, 2005). This strategic policy framework assumes precedence by placing emphasis on social, cultural, economic and human rights dimensions in fostering relations and catalysing reform through the provision of EU funds. Consequently, the EU's geopolitical ambitions find an avenue for diffusion through a multifaceted array of interactions embedded in the ENP (Haukkala, 2008). However, the complexity of this policy becomes apparent when considering its application to both Eastern and Southern neighbours. While the ENP extends to include Eastern neighbours, holding out the prospect of EU membership as a potential "reward" for alignment with European values, this incentive is notably absent for the Southern neighbours. This circumstance, in turn, bestows a certain leverage upon Southern neighbours, notably pronounced in dealings with MENA countries characterised by authoritarian re-

gimes (Abderrahim, 2019; Norman, 2020; Norman & Micinski, 2023).

At the same time, this leverage has manifested itself in pragmatic practices as a transformation of containment of migrants within third countries in exchange for financial assistance, a mechanism concretely embodied in the framework of migration diplomacy (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019; Seeberg & Volkel, 2020; Tsourapas, 2017, 2018, 2019). Migration diplomacy, detailing how the third countries use their migration population as a foreign policy tool in their negotiations with the countries in the Global North, particularly the EU, also serves the unequal power relations during the migration agreements in which the EU also has its own security concerns for containing migration outside of its borders. This is where the EU's normative leverage is in conflict with the humanitarian values in which the leverage converges and interacts within the framework of migration agreements.

This strategic leverage becomes particularly conspicuous when examining the domain of migration, which has increasingly become a focal point of deliberation within academic and policy circles over the past few decades. The EU's enduring geopolitical interests in the MENA region have been a consistent thread, often intricately woven into its foreign and security policies. These policies, historically underscored by the objective of cultivating mutual understanding grounded in shared values, have laid the foundation for the EU's engagement with the MENA region (Georgakis Abbott, 2018).

Prioritisation of securitisation

The geopolitical ramifications of migration necessitate a harmonious integration of normative values and policies, fostering a holistic analytical framework. Despite the

overarching presence of the ENP, the EU's policy agenda, particularly in the realm of migration, conspicuously pivots toward an emphasis on border control, which is in tension with the EU's normative values. The evolving discourse surrounding border control has increasingly gravitated toward the strategy of containing migrants outside the EU borders, as described in the beginning of this paper in the examples of agreements with Egypt and Tunisia, commonly characterised as "externalisation" (Boswell, 2003).

This paradigm of externalisation, however, reveals a tension with the fundamental principles of the ENP. While the externalisation policy accentuates security imperatives and fosters cooperation through securitisation, the ENP, in contrast, is oriented towards cultivating collaborative solutions. This dichotomy underscores a policy misalignment within the EU, where divergent priorities between externalisation and the cooperative ethos of the ENP come to the fore, exposing inherent tensions in the EU's approach to migration governance. As such, a nuanced examination of this divergence contributes to a more profound understanding of the complex interplay between security imperatives, cooperative frameworks, and normative considerations within the EU's broader geopolitical agenda in the Mediterranean region that manifests itself in migration agreements.

These agreements hold paramount importance within these competing narratives as they are designed to fortify EU borders and regulate the influx of migrants and refugees, addressing security imperatives and committing to safeguarding the well-being of individual migrants and refugees, reflecting a humanitarian dimension at the same time (Cardwell & Dickson, 2023; Niemann & Zaun, 2023). This duality of objectives is intricately woven into the fabric of these agreements, which, in turn, involve the

provision of financial assistance to third countries within the framework of cooperation (Norman & Micinski, 2023).

The transfer of these interests and values to the MENA region adds an additional layer of complexity to the geopolitical landscape, as the EU endeavours to strike a balance between asserting its regional interests, upholding its normative principles, and navigating the intricate web of power dynamics inherent in international relations. For instance, Cassarino (2021) demonstrates that, while the talks on cooperation for migration tend to be initially based on the EU's normative values, they quickly turn into national interest discussions both by the EU and third countries. Particularly from the side of third countries, these interests go beyond migration.

In this context, despite the EU's normative discourses emphasising humanitarian values, Del Sarto (2015) posits that the EU adopts a "utility-maximising" strategy within its normative approach when confronted with events deemed "close to home". The pragmatic turn towards utility-maximising strategies underscores the EU's imperative to navigate the intricate geopolitical landscape, where normative considerations are shaped by proximity and immediacy. The adoption of such strategies in the realm of migration agreements signifies a delicate balancing act wherein normative principles are selectively applied, giving precedence to pragmatic considerations, such as securitisation over protecting migrants' rights.

This is characterised by a noticeable pivot towards prioritising security imperatives, often at the expense of other established European norms. This recalibration is prominently exemplified in the EU's inclination to align itself with authoritarian states in the MENA region (Skare, 2022). Moreover, the seismic shifts witnessed across

the MENA region, particularly since the Arab uprisings in 2011, have not only left an indelible impact within the region itself but have also reverberated across the EU. Consequently, the EU's influence in the MENA region has witnessed a concomitant weakening, mirroring the escalating influence of MENA events on the EU's internal dynamics. Noteworthy instances include the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) and its subsequent attacks in various European cities, coupled with the massive displacement resulting from the Syrian civil war. These events have significantly shaped the intricate interplay between the EU and the MENA region, with many displaced individuals seeking refuge in Syria's neighbouring countries and even within Europe (Boyd Anderson, 2021; European Council of Foreign Relations [ECFR], 2019).

These instances underscore the EU's pursuit of an amplified geopolitical role in the MENA region, especially against the backdrop of evolving political landscapes and opportunities that beckon the EU to fortify its presence and influence through strategic manoeuvres and policy adjustments. Yet, despite these aspirations, the EU remains tangential in major events within the MENA area, highlighting the complex challenges inherent in navigating the geopolitical intricacies of the region. This indicates the need for the EU to recalibrate its strategies and engage proactively with the evolving geopolitical dynamics to assert a more consequential role in shaping events within the MENA region.

With these in mind, in navigating the geopolitical landscape of the Mediterranean, the EU adopts a nuanced approach characterised by implicit influence rather than explicit directives (Youngs, 2015). It reflects the EU's strategic adaptability in navigating the complexities of Euro-Mediterranean relations, employing migration agreements as conduits through which implicit influence

is exerted, thus contributing to the ongoing discourse on the multifaceted nature of geopolitical interactions within this crucial geographical domain. This implicit approach takes a more explicit turn when examining border control policies, a shift that became particularly pronounced in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, creating an inconsistency.

The consequence of this inconsistency is the formulation of a dual-narrative by the EU, oscillating between a humanitarian discourse and a security discourse, both of which are in inherent conflict with each other. This duality is further complicated by the EU's diminishing geopolitical influence in the region, and this shifting narrative creates a perceptible dissonance between the proclaimed geopolitical aims of the EU and its actual actions. This incongruity is encapsulated in the disjunction between "what the EU does versus what the EU says", elucidating the challenges and complexities inherent in articulating and implementing coherent geopolitical objectives within the context of migration agreements in the region.

The Mediterranean as a region and centrality of third countries

Aligning with the EU's broader geopolitical objectives, these agreements wield a notable impact on Euro-Mediterranean relations, hence the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean assumes a position of paramount importance due to its distinctive geographical and political characteristics, a significance that has become increasingly pronounced over the past decade. A closer examination of the policy tools employed by the EU for fostering stronger Euro-Mediterranean relations suggests a collaborative negotiation has been established, which can be used as a tool for further cooperation including migration.

Notably, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), commonly known as the Barcelona Process, provides as a conspicuous illustration of the EU's strategic engagement in the region (European Commission, 2023a). Initiated in 1995, the EMP involves collaboration between EU member states and other Mediterranean countries, with its objectives delineated across three overarching pillars: (1) the promotion of peace and stability, (2) the pursuit of shared prosperity, and (3) the facilitation of rapprochement between peoples through a comprehensive social, cultural and human partnership.

In accordance with the foundational tenets of geopolitics, this partnership emerges as a conduit through which the EU disseminates its normative approach in the region, endeavouring to fortify its relations with the countries in the Mashreq and Maghreb regions. This multifaceted initiative embodies a strategic amalgamation of economic, political and cultural relations, reflecting the EU's proactive role in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Euro-Mediterranean region. As such, a nuanced analysis of the EMP serves as a valuable lens through which to discern the EU's evolving geopolitical agency and its pursuit of normative objectives in the complex and dynamic geopolitical terrain of the Mediterranean.

This, as underscored in the introduction, revolves around the centrality of third countries in the dynamics of migration deals. This prominence stems from the prerequisite of securing the consent of these third countries in which they strategically employ migration policy as a bargaining chip to enhance their international standing and project influence (Greenhill, 2010; Tsourapas, 2019). This phenomenon is frequently characterised by the weaponisation of migrants, a practice that tends to lack sustainable solutions for addressing the root causes

of migration. For instance, when Tunisia or Egypt accedes to assist the EU in managing migration, the absence of clear migration integration laws within their territories may render the migrant flow towards the EU more attractive for individuals seeking a secure and safe life, thereby exacerbating challenges in migrant weaponisation rather than mitigating them.

Furthermore, recent events, as vividly illustrated by the Greek-Turkish border crisis in 2020 (Stamouli, 2023), have highlighted that these agreements with third countries can act as catalysts for the emergence of conflicts at the EU's borders. In this instance, Turkey strategically employed refugees as a bargaining tool, leveraging their movement to demand EU support for its military operations in Syria and continued support to Syrian refugees in Turkey (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Subsequently, when EU assistance was not promptly provided, Turkey threatened to open its borders, leading to a surge of migrants and triggering intense clashes, resulting in fatalities at the EU borders.

Because of this, balancing geopolitical objectives with a robust commitment to human rights becomes imperative to prevent such crises and uphold the ethical standards integral to the EU's identity and global standing. Motivated by the imperative to fortify its external borders, coupled with the strategic geolocation of the Mediterranean, discussions surrounding migration agreements often accentuate the role and interests of third countries, often overshadowing the EU's intrinsic geopolitical aims and the intended normative values about human rights that are discussed under migration diplomacy.

While the aforementioned patterns are integral to understanding Euro-Mediterranean relations and, by extension, applying this to the case of migration agreements, a

comprehensive analysis necessitates the inclusion of the EU's geopolitical objectives in these patterns. Collyer (2016) underscores three crucial points to be considered when delving into the EU's geopolitical aims in migration management: (1) recognising the diverse array of heterogeneous actors in the region, as outcomes can only be effectively designed when the complexity of these actors is acknowledged; (2) expanding the ENP to include incentives for non-member states, particularly those in the Southern region like the MENA countries, which are ineligible for EU membership; and (3) incorporating non-state actors into the policy development processes, recognising their pivotal roles in migration routes and their firsthand knowledge to address the exigencies prevalent in the Mediterranean. Through these, the EU can potentially foster a more holistic and effective approach to migration management in the Euro-Mediterranean context offering a pathway for the EU to align its geopolitical aspirations with pragmatic and inclusive policy measures.

The New Pact and its potential

The New Pact, which has not yet been introduced into law but core sections of the proposal have received agreement from the Council and the EU member states, designed to address the complexities and divergent interests within the EU, strives to establish equilibrium seeking to equitably distribute the burden associated with migration (European Commission, 2023b). However, to what extent the New Pact will emphasise human rights over externalisation remains to be seen. Yet, as stated by Beirens and Le Coz (2023), two issues are clear: "First, the question of responsibility sharing and how it can be made tangible across the European Union, in a context where each member state is increasingly retreating behind its borders. Second, how to balance protection stan-

dards with a system that aims to more quickly process asylum applications at the border and return those with no right to stay."

Among its key provisions, the New Pact seeks to enhance cooperation on search, and rescue operations by emphasising the non-criminalisation of these activities. While responsibility sharing overlaps with EU human rights concerns, consolidating EU-level tools for reception and streamlining their efficacy for return through the relations established with third countries brings forth externalisation.

Furthermore, the New Pact introduces a voluntary solidarity mechanism, encompassing options for relocation or financial contribution, to promote collaborative responses among member states with the addition of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation. This mechanism serves as a significant strength, introducing a novel concept of "mandatory solidarity" designed to alleviate the burden on a member state should it experience a disproportionate influx of immigration compared to its counterparts. This introduces a spectrum of options for member states, encompassing (1) the relocation of a designated number of asylum seekers within their territory, (2) the payment of a contribution for each asylum seeker declined for relocation, and (3) the provision of financial support for operational needs, such as personnel, facilities, and technical equipment (Liboreiro, 2023). Yet, its combination with the return emphasis of the agreed New Pact remains to be seen.

For instance, Zoomers, van Noorloos and van Liempt (2018) aptly argue that the "externalisation of the EU border – finding ways to keep irregular migrants out while simultaneously creating 'legal ways' is presented as the 'new' EU approach." Although this references various migration deals and

compacts, this observation is applicable to both bilateral and EU-level agreements signed with third countries, notably in the MENA region. The consequence is a scenario characterised by ineffective migration control, human rights violations, and unequal power relations, as has been witnessed before. To what extent these conditions will yield different outcomes with the New Pact is debatable.

Because of this exact conflicting narrative, the New Pact exhibits a notable weakness. As demonstrated above and evidenced in the latest points agreed by the New Pact, a more nuanced analysis reveals that the core principles are predominantly oriented towards the reinforcement of EU borders and the prioritisation of “return migration”. This accentuation of return migration gains heightened significance in the broader context of the Euro-Mediterranean relations and is poised to stimulate an increased proclivity for entering into additional migration agreements. A notable illustration is found in the aspect of “preparedness and management of crises related to migration,” which revolves around early warning and forecasting systems. However, this seemingly strategic approach appears at odds with a purely humanitarian perspective. The anticipation of potential threats may inadvertently propel the EU towards seeking additional migration agreements, particularly with states embroiled in conflicts or their neighbouring nations, as witnessed in the case of Tunisia.

In the realm of the EU’s geopolitical aims, this unequal relationship deriving from the existing migration agreements and the elements of the New Pact, coupled with the EU’s prioritisation of security over human rights, diminishes the normative leverage that the EU might otherwise possess over the third countries. This tension between security imperatives and human rights considerations not only impacts the effective-

ness of migration agreements but also shapes the broader narrative of Euro-Mediterranean relations along with the EU’s geopolitical aims in the region. The ramifications extend beyond the immediate policy realm, influencing the normative discourse and ethical positioning of the EU. As the EU grapples with the intricate dynamics of migration management, it becomes imperative to reassess the balance between security concerns and human rights within the framework of its geopolitical objectives through the New Pact.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

As delineated earlier, notwithstanding its inherent shortcomings, the New Pact, given its ongoing development, provides a platform and opportunity for the pursuit of the EU’s geopolitical objectives within the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations. However, an inherent tension arises within the New Pact’s approach, notably in its commitment to the “preparedness and management of crises related to migration.” This has been reiterated by many humanitarian organisations as the EU member states claim to have agreed on the core elements, including the limitation of the number coming in (Henley, 2023). As mentioned in the introduction, the deal between the EU and Tunisia led to many migrant deaths that were trying to cross the desert before the terms of the deal affected them (Tondo, 2023). The identification of potential threats could potentially lead to further migration agreements, hence migrant deaths, especially with states perceived as “potential” conflict zones or their neighbouring countries.

Historically, the EU’s prioritisation of securitisation has fallen short of achieving its intended objectives, prompting a re-evaluation where normative leverage emerges

as a crucial tool within the political dynamics of migration agreements. This is why the New Pact holds potential involvement and represents a strategic opportunity for the EU to foster a harmonious interaction among the diverse and heterogeneous actors within the Mediterranean, a framework already established through the EMP. By leveraging its normative discourse and integrating it into migration agreements, the EU can promote human rights-aligned solutions rather than emphasising return. It can also contribute to the cultivation of cooperative and inclusive practices in addressing migration challenges. This can be achieved with a reformed version of the New Pact that does not prioritise “limiting the number of arrivals into the EU” but encourages cooperation and humanitarian values. This approach also aligns with the overarching goals of the EMP, creating a conducive environment for multifaceted cooperation and dialogue among the parties involved in the complex geopolitical landscape of the Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Recommendations for the EU-level policy-makers

- To avoid succumbing to the securitisation narrative, the EU's geopolitical objectives must encompass not only physical power dynamics, as manifested in border controls, but also political power dynamics, involving the interplay of geography and diplomacy. This holistic approach is essential to ensure that the New Pact effectively addresses both the imperatives of EU border controls and the well-being of migrants within the framework of the agreement. This entails acknowledging the geographical realities that shape migration flows and the diplomatic intricacies involved in negotiations with partner countries, which needs to be integrated into the New Pact.
- In enhancing the efficacy of migration agreements, with the New Pact serving as a potential template for future accords, the EU, together with third countries, must align their objectives with the goals outlined in the EMP, particularly with respect to peace and stability. This alignment with the EMP goals signifies a commitment to fostering peace and stability within the Mediterranean region, acknowledging the interdependence of nations for the collective well-being of the region. Such a coordinated effort can facilitate the communication of EU geopolitical objectives in a manner that resonates with the priorities of the Partnership, thereby fostering greater harmony. This approach recognises the unique challenges and intricacies of migration management within the Mediterranean context, emphasising cooperation and shared goals to address the diverse needs of the region through the New Pact.
- Elevating the equilibrium between the internal and external geopolitical objectives of the EU emerges as a crucial imperative. This dissonance, marked by an overemphasis on EU concerns regarding border control, not only exacerbates conflicts at the EU borders but also deviates from the intended purpose of migration agreements. Consequently, this misalignment hinders the realisation of the EU's overarching geopolitical goals in Euro-Mediterranean relations, hence MENA, as it weakens the EU's standing in the region by contributing to heightened tensions at its borders. Therefore, rectifying this internal-external imbalance is imperative for the EU to foster a more effective and harmonious approach in its dealings with Euro-Mediterranean relations, aligning its geopolitical objectives with the

collaborative spirit intended in migration agreements.

- Given that migration agreements fundamentally centre around migrants, their well-being should be prioritised alongside the intentions of both the EU and the third countries as signatories. Embedding a commitment to the protection of human rights at the core of these agreements is imperative for the EU. Aligned with the fundamental values of the EU, adopting a rights-based approach to its geopolitical aims becomes

not just a preference but an urgent necessity. By prioritising human rights in the implementation of migration agreements as a core requisite in these agreements, the EU can foster a more comprehensive and ethical framework for its geopolitical objectives in the region, contributing to the development of agreements that protect the well-being and dignity of migrants while concurrently advancing the EU's overarching goals in conflict prevention and regional stability in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

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