LEARNING IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT?
PERSISTENT SIDE EFFECTS OF THE EUTF

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the existing literature on the unintended effects of migration management programmes beyond migration. By combining a structured literature review with fifteen in-depth interviews with diplomats, consultants, and researchers—all involved with the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the largest migration management programme since 2015—this study examines why policymakers do not always learn from unintended effects. The paper identifies four unintended effects: increased border guard violence; increased organized crime of smugglers and undermined livelihoods; exacerbation of poor governance in recipient countries; and legitimation of governments with limited legitimacy. While officials involved in the EUTF recognize the occurrence of these unintended effects, the EUTF insufficiently addresses these effects. This study analyzes the technical, institutional, and ideological limits to learning that prevent migration management instruments such as the EUTF from effectively mitigating unintended effects.

Keywords: unintended effects; migration management; EUTF; policy learning; limits to learning

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INTRODUCTION

During the Valletta Summit on Migration of November 2015, the European Commission founded the EUTF: the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The EUTF is based on the "root causes approach" to migration management. This initiative is part of a wider trend in EU external migration action, which has seen a shift away from the externalization of EU borders to the eradication of the "root causes" of migration, i.e., linking the EU migration agenda with development goals (Fine, Dennison, and Gowan 2019). This approach is based on the core premise that irregular migration is a symptom of underdevelopment, and that migration goals can thus be achieved by focusing on development cooperation with origin countries (Zanker 2019, 8), even though the negative relationship between development and migration is not necessarily supported by theoretically informed empirical research (de Haas 2010; de Haas and Flahaux 2016; Zaun and Nantermoz 2021, 10). Hence, both within scholarly and popular discourse, the "root causes" approach of the EUTF has received criticism.

Next to EU migration management on the African continent, this development narrative is used in similar ways to migration management in Turkey and Ukraine (Crane 2020; Davitti and La Chimia 2017; European Commission 2015). Furthermore, the United States is also gearing towards incorporating development into its migration agenda. Most notably, in January 2021, the Biden administration put forth a landmark immigration bill, proposing a USD 4 billion four-year-plan to "address root causes of migration" (The White House 2021). Governments in Latin America are also increasingly drawing on EU migration policies for inspiration (Brumat and Freier 2021) This way, governments worldwide are increasingly trying to curb migration while legitimizing the outsourcing of their migration management, all under the umbrella of the migration-development nexus.

As the latest and arguably most ambitious initiative in a long history of EU engagement with migration in Africa, the EUTF is a highly relevant case study for migration studies. Both the EUTF rationale and the implementation of EUTF projects has been criticized: projects do not always take into account and in some instances even undermine regional African stakeholders, interests, and initiatives (Castillejo, Dick, and Schraven 2019;

Zardo 2020). Within this study, we focus on the occurrence of unintended effects within EUTF programming. As Burlyuk (2017) points out, EU policy evaluators have a deeply embedded assumption that EU engagement abroad is a good thing. This results in evaluations of EU external migration policy to become prone to measure effectiveness rather than impact, resulting in a spectrum that does not sufficiently envisage negative impacts, especially if these impacts are unintended. This policy caveat has been reproduced in scholarly discourse, with little attention for the unintended effects of EU migration management. Hence, this paper's aim is to analyze how policymakers face persistent limits to learning from unintended effects over time.

With this study, we build on a growing literature on unintended effects in international cooperation in general and migration management in particular. This literature has explored the broader range of effects that migration management policies and programmes have on their intended goal of managing migration (Bøås 2021; Czaika and de Haas 2015; Reslow 2019), yet unintended effects beyond migration are still scarcely considered. As migration management programmes are widening their operational scope to include development objectives, it is especially important now to understand the occurrence of unintended effects beyond migration. Furthermore, the reasons for why policymakers do not learn from these effects remain understudied. The aim of this study is to analyze which impediments prevent policymakers from mitigating against this broad range of unintended effects. To this end, we will analyse the persistence of four unintended effects of the EUTF through applying the "bounded policy learning" framework used in Koch and Verholt (2020, 516), consisting of three limits to learning—technical, institutional, and ideological. Through analyzing the reasons for the persistence of unintended effects and grouping these into three distinct categories, we aim to create a better understanding of how there are different kinds of impediments to mitigating unintended effects. This paper is based on a case study of the EUTF, but the purpose of this study is to identify limits to learning from unintended effects that can be generalized across different migration management programmes.

We will start this paper with setting out the analytical framework developed by Koch and Verholt (2020). We will then briefly justify our methods and case selection, after which we will discuss the four unintended effects that we analysed for this study. We will then present our analysis, explaining the occurrence of the four unintended effects through the lens of the three limits to learning. We will conclude with a discussion on implications for theory-building around unintended effects and policy-making in institutions such as the EUTF.

Unintended effects are always relative to intended effects: an unintended effect is an outcome different from the intent of an action, this intent being the reason for carrying out the action (Baert 1991). In line with recent scholarship, this definition does not equate "unintended" with "unanticipated" (Baert 1991; Burlyuk 2017; De Zwart 2015; Jabeen 2016; Morell 2005; Sherill 1984). An unintended effect may very well be unanticipated, but may just as well be anticipated. Anticipated unintended effects may still occur for a plethora of reasons, such as unintended effects having a low priority or a low (perceived) probability of occurring. Hence, we adopt two categories of unintended effects: "unintended and unanticipated effects" and "unintended but anticipated effects". However, these two categories are not clear-cut dichotomous terms with unintended effects belonging either to the one category or the other. Rather, the anticipation of unintended effects should be understood as part of a broader spectrum with some effects being more or less anticipated than others.

This basic definition leaves one further ambiguity, namely the line between intended and unintended. For the purpose of our analysis, we treat an effect as unintended if it is not part of the *stated* aims of the actor. This may not unequivocally resolve the ambiguity in all instances, but according to this criterion the four unintended effects we discuss in our empirical analysis are all unambiguously unintended (see Burlyuk 2017 for a more in-depth theoretical discussion in this respect).

Unintended consequences remain understudied in both development and migration studies (notwithstanding sparse exceptions such as Koch and Burlyuk 2020; Koch and Verholt 2020). In the few cases that the concept is applied, it is used casually, without much conceptual and methodological rigour (Burlyuk and Noutcheva 2019; Koch et al. 2021). As mentioned above, studies evaluating to what extent the results of a certain EU migration policy have been achieved are prone to miss the negative impacts these policies may have in a local context, especially if these impacts are unintended (Burlyuk 2017; Reslow 2019). Because solely evaluating the degree to which the intended effects have been achieved is insufficient for evaluating development programmes (Ferguson 1994), this is a problematic omission. Finally, and most pertinent to our analysis, the scholars that do pay attention to unintended effects (see for example Bøås 2021; Raineri 2018; Reslow 2019) focus more on the emergence of unintended effects rather than ways in which organizations (fail to) mitigate unintended effects, i.e., whether and how these unintended effects persist over time (Burlyuk and Noutcheva 2019). Koch and Verholt (2020) are the first to coin the term "bounded policy

learning". Based on a review of the policy learning literature they developed an analytical framework to show why unintended effects persist over time. They provide three different limits to learning, or barriers to learning, which they successfully tested on the recurrent mistakes in climate change mitigation programmes. We will further conceptualize and test the three limits to learning in this article.

Technical

The first category encompasses the technical barriers preventing policymakers from learning from programme evaluations. Often, policymakers are perceived to be actors with fixed preferences and complete access to information, making it possible for them to rationally receive, understand, and use assessments of policies for their improvement. However, within the inherent complex and dynamic systems in which migration management policies operate, there are limits to the access to information and the ability of policymakers and organizations to process and learn from this received information (Eising 2000; Koch and Verholt 2020). Thus, technical limits within monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can be found in policymakers and evaluators not receiving complete information on the impact of a project, having monitoring and evaluation indicators that do not fully reflect this impact, or simply the absence of enough people on the ground to do the evaluating.

Institutional

Institutional limits to learning relate to the obstacles resulting from organizational pressures and institutionalized interests (Koch and Verholt 2020; Radaelli 2009). Instead of focusing and directing efforts in an attempt to learn from previous policy failures, the institutional barriers to learning incentivize organizations to get on with "business as usual" and maintain the proceedings within a specific regulatory policy paradigm, without self-reflection or self-improvement. The learning process can be compared to a payoff structure in which organizations take into account their specific interests, for example their reputation, funding, or even continued survival. When lessons risk undermining these interests, they will be overlooked or discarded.

Ideological

Ideological barriers differ from technical and institutional barriers as they are formed resulting from deeply embedded values that contribute to a tunnel vision (Koch and Verholt, 2020). These limits to learning occur because the deep, fundamental, and core values of

individuals and organizations are fixed and relatively resistant to change (Bennett and Howlett 1992). Policy learning, then, is "an ongoing process of search and adaption motivated by the desire to realize core policy beliefs." (Sabatier 1988, 151). Ideological positions and prior beliefs influence and constrain the extent to which policymakers use information to draw effective lessons and adapt policies (Gilardi 2010). The weight and importance of new information is dependent on prior ideological understandings and beliefs, even if this information has clear policy implications.

METHODOLOGY

We performed a structured document analysis through an elaborate keyword search focusing on three EUTF countries: Libya, Niger, and Eritrea. We focus on these countries for two reasons. First, they represent all three windows of EUTF funding, respectively North Africa, the Sahel/Lake Chad, and the Horn of Africa. Second, they respectively represent a transit country, transit/origin country, and origin country. We consulted EUTF documents on three different levels of monitoring and evaluation: programmes, regions, and the EUTF as a whole (EUTF 2020a). Most importantly, our research makes use of data provided on the EUTF website (EUTF 2020b) and the Monitoring and Learning System (MLS) reports carried out by Altai Consulting (Altai Consulting 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Our empirical investigation also encompasses NGO and journalist reports, if they are based on primary data collection. In addition, between April 2020 and April 2021, we interviewed fifteen experts and practitioners working with or doing research on the EUTF. [7]

These semi-structured interviews revolved around two broad questions, namely to what extent the unintended effects we identified are also unanticipated, and how the EUTF accounts for unintended effects? Following an inductive approach, we went more in-depth based on the respective interviewees' individual replies. We grouped our interviewees into three categories: diplomats, researchers, and consultants. The diplomats were either directly involved with the EUTF or had a different role within the larger European and Dutch migration management and/or development aid framework. It is important to acknowledge that as a previous version of this research was commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is an overrepresentation of Dutch diplomats in the interview pool. This means there is a potential bias, even though our questions focused on the local contexts of

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[7] The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy restrictions.

EUTF programming rather than EU migration policies in general and member state views about and interests within these policies. The researchers and consultants come from a broader variation of backgrounds, with all researchers having directly addressed the EUTF in their publications. Finally, the consultants were directly involved with the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the EUTF.

UNINTENDED EFFECTS OF THE EUTF

Based on (1) an analysis of EUTF policy documents and academic literature on the unintended effects of the EUTF, and (2) ethnographic interview data, this section will discuss four unintended effects of the EUTF. We formulated these specific unintended effects because they touch upon both the migration management and development side of EUTF projects. These effects served as the point of departure for our semi-structured interviews. Therefore, this is a limited and tentative list serving as an explorative basis to structure our analysis of the EUTF's limits to learning rather than an attempt to exhaustively catalogue all unintended effects of the EUTF.

Increased border guard violence

The EUTF has the potential to increase border guard violence, primarily through its support of border enforcement agencies through "integrated border management" funding under the "improved migration management" objective. Since 2015, the EUTF has commissioned EUR 1.4 billion to this objective (EUTF 2020c). This funding is most utilized in transit countries as opposed to origin countries, with the North of Africa window accounting for 56 per cent of these types of projects.

In aiming to enforce stricter border policing, the EUTF has contributed to border control agencies across Africa, out of which the Libyan case has especially been accused of violence against migrants (see for example Carrera and Cortinovis 2019). Additionally, increased border security has had the effect of forcing migrants to take increasingly precarious journeys through new routes and at night, with the UN assisting 20,000 migrants lost in the desert since 2016 (Lucht and Raineri 2019). Whilst the decrease in (measured) deaths in the Mediterranean is undoubtedly a positive development, this may be offset by an increase of deaths in the Sahara (Official Journal of the European Union 2018; Researcher 7).

Amidst internal and external criticism (see for example OHCHR 2017; Médecins Sans Frontières 2019), the EUTF has provided EUR 87.2 million to integrated border management in Libya in two phases, some of which went to providing training to the Libyan

General Administration for Coastal Security. The allegations levelled against Libya's coastguard are manifold, and the question of EUTF responsibility has been raised as a legal submission to the International Criminal Court (Shatz and Branco 2019), making the Libyan case a telling example of unintended effects. Researcher 5 referred to the EUTF's engagement with the Libyan coastguard as "militarization", and warned that these types of projects can often undermine human rights, especially in unstable contexts. Furthermore, Researcher 7 spoke of the decreased ability to monitor programmes in Libya due to the deteriorating political situation, which has additionally hampered implementation through the closing of migrant centres for safety reasons.

Increased organized crime of smugglers and undermined livelihoods

One of the core objectives of the EUTF is to improve migration management by combatting migrant smuggling. This is achieved by undermining the smugglers' capacities through criminal justice and law enforcement mechanisms (EUTF 2020d; Khartoum Process, n.d.). These policies criminalize human smuggling, contributing to the unintended effect of increasing organized crime.

Migration numbers and case studies suggest that EU interventions aimed at criminalizing human smuggling have been fairly successful (IOM 2017). Since the Nigerien government started increasingly securitizing their borders and clamping down on irregular migration under EU pressure in May 2015, fewer smugglers have been in operation in the Agadez region. The human smuggling business is a large source of income for many individuals in the recipient countries of the EUTF, based on supply and demand rather than direct coercion (Raineri 2018, 80). Therefore, smugglers have had to find other jobs or adapt their methods of smuggling (Micallef, Horsley, and Bish 2019, 7). A portion of human smugglers went underground and converted to more organized, criminal, and dangerous practices (Triandafyllidou 2018, 216; Researchers 1 and 3). This way, EU interventions have been incentivizing more criminally affiliated smugglers to professionalize their networks (Golovko 2018, 5).

Besides jeopardizing smuggler livelihoods, the fight against human smuggling had a further unintended effect as it negatively affected the livelihoods of entire regions. In Agadez it was not solely smugglers benefitting from migration as the entire region revolved around the migration management industry, with for example restaurant and motel owners being derived from customers coming into the town as they were now taking more dangerous routes (Bøås 2021, 62).

It must be noted that the EUTF did in fact implement projects with the explicit goal of creating new livelihoods for former smugglers. A relevant project with respect to this aim is the Reconversion Plan in Niger, which set up funding to establish new economic projects and thus to address the unintended effect of a loss of income for former human smugglers (EUTF 2020e). This project has faced many difficulties, such as a lack of funding and, more importantly, a lack of adequate implementation processes (Molenaar 2018, 7; Researchers 2, 4, and 7). Additionally, since the project only targeted former human smugglers—and not, for example, former truck drivers who also benefited from the migration industry— frustrations were generated among the population of Agadez and sparked tensions about the future stability of the region (Bøås 2021, 62).

Exacerbation of poor governance in recipient countries

When implementing the EUTF projects, in most cases, donor agencies and NGOs replace the recipient authorities to offer public services and promote sustainable development in local communities, based on the implementation arrangement of the EUTF projects. This could unintentionally make these recipient governments escape accountability for their bad governance and developmental failures and additionally push the outsourcing tendency of public responsibilities in recipient countries (Newby 2010).

On the other hand, some recipient governments such as the Nigerien authorities are directly involved with implementing the EUTF projects, but this might still unintentionally break the intended good governance efforts. Corruption in the Nigerien governmental agencies is commonly perceived by the public, but it did not stop the EUTF from providing budget support to the Nigerien government to enhance justice, security, and border management in Niger (De Guerry and Stocchiero 2018, 24). Due to the public perception that local governments are becoming proxies of the EU, local legitimacy of governmental agencies might be further deteriorated.

Additionally, the funding support offered by the EUTF could further lead to a tendency of recipient countries to heavily depend on foreign aid. This might stimulate the recipient governments to prefer to satisfy the needs of their major donors rather than their citizens, which clearly violates the good governance principles (also see Raineri and Bâ 2019).

Legitimation of governments with limited legitimacy

The EUTF has the potential to legitimize governments with limited legitimacy. The EUTF goal of "promoting conflict prevention, addressing human rights abuses and enforcing the rule of law" (EUTF 2019a, 8) becomes problematic if enforcing the rule of law means supporting state institutions in countries with (semi-)authoritarian governments, such as the Eritrean government, or without a clear legitimate governmental authority, such as the Libyan government. The EUTF is specifically supporting capacities of national state organs and local security forces. Recipient governments may use the donor–recipient relationship to secure regime authority and international legitimacy by attracting foreign aid (Fisher 2013, 537). This potential for aid to strengthen the position of recipient governments with a dubious human rights record constitutes the "donor's dilemma" (Dasandi and Erez 2017, 1432).

Whereas diplomats and policymakers are under the impression that the EUTF is prone to the donor's dilemma, they also nearly always emphasize that in practice the EUTF has been reluctant to directly fund those governments with low legitimacy. They stressed that hardly any direct funding of governments is currently taking place, and that there are redlines and safeguards established for all agreements (Diplomats 1, 2, and 5). For instance, Diplomat 5 emphasized that governments do not get to spend EUTF funds on equipment that could be used against civilians. However, this can be hard to monitor. Researcher 2 mentioned that in Libya, the boats, salaries, and equipment financed through EUTF projects to intercept migrants were simultaneously used by militias in Libya to fight a "second" civil war. Equally, EUTF projects in Eritrea—where forced labour has been an apparent issue in aid-funded projects—have been called into question, with the EUTF facing criticism for its two-track approach of neglecting human rights concerns over its direct goals (Stevis-Gridneff 2020).

LIMITS TO LEARNING

In this section, we will discuss the different kinds of limits to learning from unintended effects. These findings are based on induction from our interviews, supplemented by literature where necessary. As the analysis below will show, these limits are interwoven and perpetuate and exacerbate each other.

Technical limits to learning

Owing to the dynamic and complex contexts of implementing projects and the limited monitoring and evaluation approaches adopted by the EUTF, the occurrence of at least some unintended effects of the EUTF projects is inevitable. EUTF monitoring and evaluation relies on predetermined and incomplete indicators, and the absence of a single clear organizational

infrastructure, subcontracting, and lack of (local) expertise undermines its responsiveness. These issues constitute technical limits to learning.

Although the EUTF puts a lot of emphasis on project monitoring and evaluation—to such an extent that we may speak of an "evaluation fatigue" (Researcher 1)—the current monitoring and evaluation system of the EUTF was still criticized as being superficial and insufficient by many interviewees (Diplomat 4; Researcher 5, 7, and 8). The monitoring and evaluation of the EUTF projects rely on predetermined and incomplete indicators (Consultants 1 and 2), which might be effective to measure and assess linear consequences (predominantly related to migration), rather than the more comprehensive effects in complex and dynamic systems. Within these indicators, there is little room for local considerations as opposed to the overarching project goals, with the voice of local communities often excluded from the evaluation process (Researcher 6). Potential unintended effects are not involved in the MLS of the EUTF, and only positive outputs of EUTF projects are measured and further generalized in the MLS (Consultants 1 and 2).

This superficial and insufficient monitoring and evaluation can be identified in the case of the legitimation of governments with limited legitimacy. Although this problem is considered a "classic" development dilemma (Researcher 7) and is thus considered anticipated, this unintended effect does not find itself in the formal output indicators of the MLS. This is despite the fact that supporting countries "violating human rights" is one of the highest and most likely risks identified in its publicly available EUTF Risk Register (EUTF, n.d., 1).

Furthermore, the absence of a single clear organizational infrastructure, subcontracting, and limited (local) expertise undermines EUTF responsiveness (Researchers 2, 3, 4, and 5). Researcher 3 noted that it takes a lot of time for the EUTF to implement new development projects in a region without a development infrastructure already in place. As Researchers 2 and 4 highlighted, the complicated issue of situations on the ground changing faster than project implementation means that there is a serious risk of not providing a timely and effective response. Furthermore, Diplomat 5 pinpointed that the budget support offered by the EUTF is difficult to be tracked transparently, which can further erode transparency and access to accurate information. Taken together, these conditions make it very difficult for the EUTF to understand in a sufficient and timely fashion what exactly is happening with the funding in recipient countries, especially with respect to unintended effects.

An example of the technical driver of a lack of responsiveness is the case of increased organized crime of human smugglers: the failure of the Reconversion Plan in Niger to

successfully mitigate this unintended effect was due to subcontracting and limited evaluation during the implementation process of the project, undermining the responsiveness of the EUTF (Molenaar 2018, 7; Researchers 2, 4, and 7). Furthermore, the insufficiency of these kinds of EUTF projects to counterbalance the negative impact of antimigration efforts on the local economy could lead to growing local discontent and potential political instability (De Guerry and Stocchiero 2018, 26–27).

Having identified these two important technical limits to learning, namely the insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the limited responsiveness of the EUTF, we may ask why the EUTF does not seek to resolve these technical problems, or, at the very least, why it is not successful at resolving these problems. Also, in dealing with systems as complex as the ones within which the EUTF is operating, the growing mismatch between output indicators and results should become apparent enough to warrant evaluation of these indicators. We will now discuss the institutional and ideological limits to further examine why technical limits are not always dealt with appropriately. We will argue that both institutional pressures and ideological biases at times facilitate and perpetuate these insufficient evaluation methods and low EUTF responsiveness.

<div align="center">Institutional limits to learning</div>

The EUTF, as part of the wider "migration industry", is prone to the impediments that this industry creates (Andersson 2014). In order to ensure its survival and secure its funding, policymakers at the EUTF have an incentive to justify its existence, competences, and budget. This means fulfilling the priorities of its creators, i.e. the European Commission and EU Member States, as well as creating the impression that it is fulfilling these priorities without compromising its reputation with the wider public. Hence, there is a dual pressure to create good results and to create the perception of good results. This way, the prioritization of institutional gains over local impact disincentivizes EUTF policymakers from learning, especially if the unintended effects are not consequential for EUTF results and reputation.

The priorities of the EUTF beneficiaries, then, are strongly geared towards reducing migration. Although the EUTF has a dual focus on migration and development, there is a much stronger focus on reducing irregular migration into the EU than on other goals (Researcher 5). When the EUTF was set up, there was little recognition for the political goals of the recipient countries (Researcher 7). Therefore, the broader goals and interests of the EUTF do not necessarily meet the interests of recipient countries. African governments generally do not have a strong desire to reduce irregular migration to Europe. The number of

people who migrate within the region by far outnumbers the number of people who migrate to Europe, and the relatively small number of people who do migrate to Europe can be an important source of income for their origin country in the form of remittances (Researcher 8).

This migration focus leads to situations where the local interests are not sufficiently taken into account, which obscures the ways in which programmes hinder progressive reforms in local governance and consequently might even exacerbate poor governance (Venturi 2017; Venturi and Ntousas 2019). This is telling in light of the EUTF's own stated strategic objective of improving local governance. In this context, NGOs and other implementers are even pressured to change their target groups from vulnerable women and children to young men who are most prone to become migrants to the EU, twisting NGO efforts such as improving governance, combating poverty, and protecting women and children's rights (De Guerry and Stocchiero 2018, 29). Making reducing irregular migration the dominant parameter to assess the success of EUTF projects does not necessarily preclude the possibility of achieving goals unrelated to migration, but it does run the risk that policymakers are accepting unintended negative effects unrelated to migration more readily.

Also, in the case of increased border guard violence, the high risks in the projects pertaining to border control are often foreseen but attempted regardless because of high stakes, for instance in the case of Libya (Researchers 2 and 5). In Libya, the EUTF has been driven by a dominant focus on reducing high rates of arrival in Italy. This has led to what Researcher 5 referred to as the "militarization" of the Libyan coastguard. In essence, transit countries—where increased border guard violence is a tangible unintended effect—are normally those that are most in crisis and thus see the most politicized, urgent, and humanitarian programming. Diplomats 1, 2, and 3 all talked about the crucial facilitating role that Italy played in Libya in funding and implementing these projects, speaking to a higher priority of narrow migration goals if a Member State with a direct stake in the project facilitates a project. Researchers 2 and 5 expressed that the high risks in border securitization projects are often foreseen but taken regardless because of high perceived rewards, in this case driven by the pressure of migrant arrivals in Italy.

As mentioned above, the EUTF explicitly anticipates the unintended effect of legitimizing illegitimate governments in its publicly available "EUTF for Africa Risk Register". However, it does so in a rather defensive way when it states the risk as the "wrong perception that EUTF-funded actions support security & migration agenda of countries violating human-rights" (EUTF, n.d., 1). Evaluating project objectives and activities during the formulation phase is listed as a mitigation strategy. In line with our theoretical

framework, the EUTF is primarily driven by reputational costs in this respect, again highlighting the discrepancy between achieving good results and creating the image that good results were achieved. Our interviews support that in practice, the mitigation of this unintended effect is not taken as seriously as it should be. For instance, Diplomats 1, 2, 3, and 4 all mentioned that legitimizing the Government of National Accord as "the competent Libyan authority" was a poor decision in light of the ongoing political violence. Researcher 2 mentioned that after receiving EU funding, the Nigerien government became less concerned with satisfying its own population vis-à-vis attracting more funding by satisfying EU interests.

Together, these examples paint a broad picture of how the EUTF is more willing to learn when there are high reputational costs attached to an unintended effect. Substantial safeguards have been set in place in the wake of the sponsoring of the Libyan coast guard, and the EUTF has become more mindful of the reputational risks of collaborating with illegitimate governments. In turn, the EUTF seems less prone to learn from unintended effects that receive less media attention and are less politically salient. As technical developmental dilemmas, both increasing organized crime and undermining local governance are persistent problems that the EUTF has not explicitly set out to deal with.

Ideological limits to learning

Based on our interviews, we identified a tendency to treat some unintended effects as unavoidable. This way, although certain unintended effects of EUTF projects are anticipated or become anticipated over time, they are accepted by EUTF policymakers to a high degree (Researcher 8; Diplomat 3).

The four unintended effects mentioned above were all anticipated to some extent. Actors in the development sector consider both exacerbating poor governance and legitimizing illegitimate governments as "classic" dilemmas that every programme has to be wary of (Researcher 8). The diplomats we interviewed also acknowledged they were aware of these risks and challenges (Diplomats 1, 2, 4, and 5), but when asked why they continued with programmes that caused these unintended effects, they emphasized that "doing nothing may also cause harm and have unintended effects" (Diplomats 1 and 2). Diplomats 1 and 2 mentioned the example of Eritrea, where the operating context is so difficult that setting conditionalities would make it impossible to operate. Diplomats also acknowledged they had grown aware of the sometimes detrimental consequences of border securitization. Asked about border guard violence and the crackdown on human smuggling in Libya, Diplomat 4

acknowledged that "yes, human rights abuses happen [so there is nothing to be done about it]", and, asked about budget support to (semi-)authoritarian governments, answered, "that's how international relations is". The same diplomat stated that "helping people is more important than a clear conscience", suggesting that it is impossible to have a clear conscience in the humanitarian and development sector when implementing policies.

It is important to note that diplomats and policymakers also stressed that there are redlines and safeguards established for all agreements, which means the EUTF does learn from these effects to some extent (Diplomats 1, 2, and 5). However, whenever the EUTF does not sufficiently mitigate these unintended effects, it is justified based on the premise that there is no other way. This way, EUTF policymakers fail to consider other options such as more community-based approaches. Within the context of human smuggling the full potential of community-based solutions has not been explored; the inclusion of local communities next to state authorities and international NGOs should not just be "for the fun of it" (Researcher 6). An example of the way in which the EUTF seeks to mitigate some of the problems unintended effects are causing rather than rethinking their operating paradigms altogether is the Reconversion Plan in Niger discussed above. Rather than critically evaluating the effects of border securitization and the criminalization of human smuggling, the EUTF takes the occurrence of the effect for granted and aims to mitigate against its results. The trade-off between migration reduction and destroying smuggler livelihoods is seen as inevitable, and rather than directly mitigating or resolving the unintended effect the EUTF looks at indirectly mitigating the results of the unintended effect. Even when the Reconversion Plan turned out to have major flaws, no alternatives to securitization and criminalization strategies were implemented (Researcher 6).

Combined with the institutional imperative of reducing migration, the ideological assumption that some unintended effects are inevitable creates an implicit acceptance among EUTF policymakers, which makes it less likely for them to look into ways to mitigate these unintended effects.

CONCLUSION

This paper shows that unintended effects occur within migration management mechanisms of the EUTF due to certain limits to learning. Using three case countries, we identified four unintended effects. These effects manifested themselves to different degrees and with different characteristics in the three countries. For example, the most salient unintended effects in Eritrea were the exacerbation of poor governance and legitimation of governments

with limited legitimacy, whereas Niger and Libya saw more increased border guard violence and increased organized crime. However, these unintended effects should be placed on a continuum where different unintended effects can occur in both transit and origin countries.

Since the case studies were situated in different regions and differed with respect to whether they were an origin or transit country (or both) we are moderately positive about the generalizability of the findings with respect to other countries. These unintended effects occur due to "bounded policy learning", constrained by three kinds of limits to learning. First, due to limited responsiveness within complex contexts on the ground and an insufficient monitoring and evaluation infrastructure, technical limits to learning occur. Second, the EUTF is part of a larger "migration industry", within which its EU benefactors create an imperative to produce good results (in many cases, reducing or "managing" migration) and the perception of good results. Institutional pressures are prioritized, leading to the risk of unintended effects being overlooked. This is especially the case if these are not consequential for the dominant parameters of the EUTF's effort to manage migration. Third, the tendency to treat unintended effects as an unavoidable part of migration management highlights the ideological limit to learning. When EUTF policymakers accept unintended effects to be inevitable, this thwarts attempts to learn from them and prevent them in the future.

This research paper has contributed to the migration management literature by building on to the academic debate on the often-neglected relevance of unintended effects within migration management programmes by acknowledging their occurrence. Furthermore, this study went beyond acknowledging their importance and is relevant for understanding the mechanisms that prevent policymakers from learning from them. Our analysis of the EUTF's technical limits to learning show that policymakers might do well to recognize the importance of more context-specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Frameworks like the EUTF for Africa Risk Register need to include more risks than just reputational ones, and need to formulate mechanisms that can account for unanticipated risks as well (EUTF, n.d.).

However, our analysis of institutional and ideological limits to learning show that technical fixes—although easiest to implement—need to be accompanied by a critical reflection of the institutional setup as a whole as well. The three limits to learning are not separate issues, but are mutually constitutive. This is especially the case with the impact of institutional and ideological constraints on the technical limits to learning: institutional pressures and ideological biases engender a prioritization of certain technical methods over others, with possibly nefarious consequences. Hence, although acknowledging the different

logics at play is certainly analytically useful, these logics cannot be treated—as they were until now by Koch & Verholt—as wholly separate from each other. This is something that future analytical frameworks for understanding bounded policy learning must internalize better.

The importance of unintended effects is not only relevant within the context of the EUTF, but speaks to ways in which unintended effects should be taken into account in migration management programmes in other contexts as well. This study suggests that researchers and policymakers must be more sensitive to unintended effects, especially in distinguishing the different kinds of limits at play in learning from them. Most importantly, technical constraints need to be understood as being at least partly driven and perpetuated by institutional imperatives and ideological biases. In a similar vein, from a policymaking perspective, this study indicates that dealing with the specific blind spots and mistakes may not always be enough to sufficiently mitigate against unintended effects. Hence, policymakers should not only focus on the specific project that produces unintended effects or flawed evaluation system that perpetuates them, but also consider the possibility that their organization as a whole may be prone to certain blinds spots in the long run. Unintended effects must be understood as part of broader tendencies, and are ought to be addressed as such.

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