

Bureaucratic Migration Politics in West Africa: Opportunities and Dependencies Created by EU Funding

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Abstract

This article delves into the role of bureaucrats and administrations in the development of national migration policies in West Africa. Based upon 87 interviews conducted in Accra, Dakar, and Brussels, it argues that the process of developing migration policies in Ghana and Senegal exhibits features of “bureaucratic politics.” West African bureaucracies have gained more national policy-making agency, due to the opportunities created by external funding from the European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration. EU funding fostered the policy expertise of local officials and provided certain administrative branches with resources to grow. In the process, bureaucracies in Ghana and Senegal have become more receptive to developing national migration policies and adapting to the EU external migration agenda. These findings add to an often-heard assumption in the literature about EU conditionality in its migration policy with non-EU countries — namely, that adaptation to EU standards may be determined by not only the rewards given to foreign governments but also by the donors’ ability to establish a longer-term engagement

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with the bureaucracy. The research also demonstrates that EU migration cooperation reinforces the typical pattern of the postcolonial state, wherein the bureaucracy is funded by the state and external donors. The article addresses a gap in research on EU migration cooperation with the Global South and acknowledges the role of domestic bureaucracies in maintaining dependent postcolonial relationships with the EU in the realm of migration governance.

Keywords

migration politics, EU agenda on migration, bureaucratic politics, West Africa, postcolonial state

Introduction

Researchers studying the European Union's (EU) cooperation with African countries to regulate or control south-to-north migration have highlighted that African countries' domestic preferences and politics often define the outcome of such negotiations (Vives 2017; El Qadim 2018; Cassarino 2018; Mouthaan 2019; Adam et al. 2020; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020; Cham and Adam 2021; Ostrand and Statham 2021). Most studies on this topic have concentrated on the role of political actors, such as governments, with whom decision making and executive power mainly rest (e.g., Vives 2017; Cassarino 2018; Tittel-Mosser 2018). However, a relevant actor in understanding EU migration policy cooperation with countries of the Global South has been neglected by this specialized scholarship — bureaucrats within national administrations. The migration bureaucracy is in the center of the research presented here on West African migration policies and politics.

In this article, we argue that the evolving migration policy framework in West Africa may best be understood as a process driven by bureaucratic politics in which bureaucrats, rather than elected politicians, define the policy-making agenda (Alison 1969). Using the development of national migration policy in Ghana and Senegal during the 2010's as case studies, we identify how external actors and funding created opportunities, and dependencies, for domestic bureaucracies. Receiving external funding for staff and drafting policies for which local resources have been scarce allowed West African state bureaucrats to gain leverage over migration politics. Our data show that such bureaucratic actors used EU funding to grow in staff and increase their influence vis-à-vis elected politicians in Ghana and Senegal in terms of agenda-setting and policy ownership. By providing resources for this bureaucratic empowerment, the EU gained influence on policy content and the domestic administration's capacity to manage the policy-making agenda. Our research goes beyond existing research by showing that migration policy content is partially influenced by external actors via domestic bureaucracies (Adam et al. 2020; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020). It also points to a dynamic of opportunities for bureaucracies intersecting with financial dependency on the EU,

which resembles a distinct pattern of a two-tiered public and donor-funded administration typical of the postcolonial state (de Sardan 2014). This pattern has been neglected in explanations of EU conditionality, the adaption of foreign countries to EU migration policies in exchange for rewards such as development aid (Lavenex and Uçarer 2004; Vives 2017; El Qadim 2018). We find that some West African state bureaucracies may ultimately facilitate their countries' agreements with the EU's priorities on migration. For the EU, establishing a longer-term engagement with bureaucracies is, hence, crucial for the success of cooperation — and a form of conditionality that creates dependency.

To develop these ideas, the article proceeds as follows. The second section shows how this article contributes to scholarship on EU external migration policy and develops a theoretical framework for examining the role of bureaucratic actors in non-EU countries cooperating with external actors. The third section outlines the reasons for selecting Ghana and Senegal as cases and describes our methods and data analysis. The fourth and fifth sections present our empirical work, showing why domestic actors in Ghana and Senegal developed an interest in migration policies and how donor funding fostered bureaucratic politics in the two countries. We conclude by summarizing our findings and discuss what they show about West African bureaucracies' role in EU external migration politics.

Bureaucracies and the External Dimension of EU Migration Policies

Along the lines of Lavenex and Uçarer's (2004) seminal work, most research on EU external migration policy has suggested that forms of "conditionality" are the EU's primary channels of influence vis-à-vis foreign countries, notably in neighboring regions such as North Africa, the Western Balkans, and Turkey (e.g., Trauner and Kruse 2008; Nyberg Sørensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2013; El Qadim 2018). Conditionality is a mechanism by which the EU rewards local actors for adapting domestic institutions, general principles, policy norms, and policy procedures to European migration standards, using bargaining chips such as visa facilitation and development aid to incentivize non-EU countries' cooperation (Lavenex and Uçarer 2004). Looking at Senegalese-European relations during the late 2000s, Vives (2017) suggests that these bargaining chips enabled the EU to gain Senegalese actors' cooperation and greater Senegalese government collaboration with EU actors in returning undocumented migrants to their origin countries.

Focusing on why and how non-EU countries cooperate with international actors on migration, scholarship has pointed to a "Southern agency" driven by powerful domestic societal groups and political parties, who may benefit politically or financially from both the outcome and process of cooperation (Mouthaan 2019; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020, 18). Hence, domestic actors' willingness and ability to cooperate with the EU on migration issues often depend on their own view of possible political gains (Cassarino 2018, 399; Mouthaan 2019;

Ostrand and Statham 2021, 32). Cassarino's (2018, 407) description of the "proactive engagement of North African and Sahelian countries" with the EU reveals this perspective. Tittel-Mosser (2018, 353) even spoke of a "reversed conditionality" in which a non-EU country sets conditions for the EU. Along similar lines, Adam et al. (2020, 3104) show how migration policy in West Africa has become an "intermestic" policy issue influenced by both domestic preferences and external actors. By stressing the concept of intermesticity, scholars combine rationalist and constructivist approaches in examining the process of non-EU countries' reception of EU standards (Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020, 6–7). Intermesticity explains policy transfer by both domestic actors' cost-benefit calculations, assessing the price of EU cooperation, and domestic actors' socialization with EU norms through personal working relationships with EU staff (Mouthaan 2019, 2; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020, 6–7; Ostrand and Statham 2021, 33). This recent scholarship, however, examines processes of norm transfer and adaptation but does not focus on or theorize bureaucracy as a relevant actor.

We suggest that insights from the bureaucratic politics literature can complement the concepts of "intermesticity" and conditionality by highlighting the role and agency of bureaucrats and national administrations in processing EU norm transfer. Assumptions from the bureaucratic politics literature allow us to formulate how this relationship between the EU and the domestic bureaucracy in West Africa may work. Conceptually, opportunity structures — defined as institutional capacities in terms of staff and financial resources — are essential for the agency of state bureaucracies (Meyer 2004). International organizations (IOs) act as donors to West African countries and can empower domestic bureaucracies by providing them with opportunity structures (Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014). As shown by Geddes and Taylor (2016, 591) in the Balkan countries, EU external investments that aimed to develop these countries' bureaucratic capacities had a lasting influence on the governments' migration policy agenda. Once capacity is built, bureaucrats can strongly influence migration policy making and promote public and political support for policy (Hardcastle et al. 1994). Therefore, the process of policy formulation has been identified as a "site of power" in which non-elected actors can decisively influence the content of migration policy (Paquet 2019, 178).

In the process of policy formulation, bureaucracies also provide long-term institutional memory for policy orientations and shape future decisions (Ascher 2017; Paquet 2019). Different administrative units have control over specific dossiers and manage political actors' access to (and, thus, their ability to take part in) policy formulation (Paquet 2019, 168). Depending on how strictly a political system separates the administrative and political spheres, bureaucrats may engage only at the level of implementation or take up politically a more active role, serving as de-facto policymakers (Mascia 2020). The role of bureaucracies in policy making may be influenced by external investments in state administrations and establish relationships between the donor and the recipient (de Sardan 2014).

Such relationships may foster the ownership of a policy in the sense that administrators develop a policy with support of an external donor.

Ownership of policies by individual administrators or bureaucratic branches is discussed in the bureaucratic politics literature (Ascher 2017, 45). Applied to our research, administrators' ownership of a policy issue can be instrumental for the donor, keeping policy issues on the agenda of national governments even if top-level policymakers' commitment change or decrease (*ibid.*). In addition, officials may see their individual benefit increase with an organization's growth (*ibid.*, 115–116). Thus, in a situation of scarce resources, receptiveness to foreign funding and competition over resources among bureaucratic branches are likely to occur.

Against the backdrop of the bureaucratic politics literature discussed above, we hypothesize that bureaucrats in West African countries are instrumental in transferring policy ideas put forward by international donors to domestic policymakers. Within this study's geographical scope, we must also consider the specificities of African states. West African bureaucracies are comparable, by and large, to Western and European bureaucracies (Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014, 17). A crucial challenge for providing public goods in West Africa, however, is that many bureaucracies are systematically underfunded (Bierschenk 2014, 227–228, 242). As a result, actors other than state administrations, including IOs and nongovernmental and private actors, are involved in providing public services. The establishment of a two-tiered, domestically and externally funded, bureaucracy can be observed (Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014, 16). External actors' involvement is a particular feature of the postcolonial state, in which bureaucracies are “underfunded” and partially “inactive” and struggle to provide public goods next to the projects funded by international donors (Bierschenk 2014, 227). Externally funded projects promoting development and capacity building often offer better working conditions and “islands of efficiency” (*ibid.*). In this context, domestic bureaucrats see external donors as “bottomless resources” (de Sardan 2014, 406). De Sardan (2014, 406) found that state administrations in African countries sought access to resources by devising a multitude of strategies, including “development brokering..., quests for daily expense allowances through the creation of ever more training courses and workshops, opportunities for local reform etc.” To benefit from external donors, however, funding opportunities come at the price of conditionalities (*ibid.*).

External actors expect a return for their investment. In our case, the EU expects bureaucracies in Ghana and Senegal to align their migration agenda with the EU agenda. As this process is triggered externally, it is a typical feature of the postcolonial state in which “governmental employees are at once agents and objects of reform” (Bierschenk 2014, 226–227). Doubtful about such externally motivated policies' actual effects, de Sardan (2014, 425) suggests that they create opportunity structures for local administrators who are keen to use them for their own benefit, thus increasing their power but fostering the state's dependency.

As we argue here, in international migration governance, external funding can increase a bureaucracy's capacity and allow it to forge an alliance with a powerful external actor: the EU or its frequent implementation partner, the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Over time, state administrations' strengthened capacities in West Africa lead to incidences of bureaucratic migration politics — a policy-making mode that is still insufficiently grasped by existing literature on intermesticity in EU external migration governance (Mouthaan 2019; Adam et al. 2020; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020; Ostrand and Statham 2021). Ultimately, we find that such empowered also dependent bureaucracies can be used to incorporate and transfer externally drafted policies in exchange for funding. Over time, domestic bureaucrats can facilitate the acceptance of the EU's conditions and ideas for international migration governance.

Methods and Data

As cases for our study, we chose Ghana and Senegal for a number of reasons. Compared to the literature on North Africa, the literature on migration dynamics in West Africa remains small (cf. Vives 2017; Mouthaan 2019; Adam et al. 2020; Ostrand and Statham 2021; Olakpe 2022). Ghana and Senegal also share some important features. Both are stable democracies and have a competitive party landscape, free civil society, and established administrations (Mkandawire 2017, 196). In addition, international actors and funding relating to migration are present in both countries (Zardo 2020). West Africa was the main beneficiary of the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF, 2015–2021) for Africa (EU 2020; Zardo 2020). The IOM is often the intermediary actor between the EU and African countries, offering project implementation and development (Bartels 2017, 318; Van Dessel 2020).¹ The EUTF's establishment in 2015 connected the IOM more with the EU's agenda (Trauner et al. 2019). The IOM implemented many projects of the EU or its member-states in the two countries and elsewhere in Africa, such as the Sahel region (Van Dessel 2020). From the European Development Fund (2014–2020), Senegal received EUR 747 million and Ghana EUR 325 million (EU 2021a and b). The most recent EU budget planning (2021–2027) continues to allocate funds for both countries, with Ghana to receive EUR 203 million and Senegal EUR 1.3 billion (*ibid.*). Migration management has also become a focus of EU development actors (*ibid.*). Senegal was a Migration Partnership country and main beneficiary of the EUTF (EU 2018). Its partnership with the EU has mainly been due to irregular migration and relatively low return rates of Senegalese citizens to the country (*ibid.*).

¹The EU and its member-states are among the largest contributors to the IOM budget (IOM 2022). In the two years following the 2015 “refugee crisis,” the EU contracted with the IOM for 850 projects worldwide (*ibid.*). The European Commission allocated half the EUR 1.6 billion needed to implement these projects (*ibid.*).

Our main empirical sources were semi-structured expert interviews, policy documents, Ghana's and Senegal's national migration policies (NMPs), and secondary data. We conducted 87 interviews over the course of four months of fieldwork in Accra and Dakar in 2018, complemented by additional interviews in Brussels that same year.² Covering the spectrum of actors relevant to migration in Ghana and Senegal, interviewees included policy officers working for IOs and national administrations, as well as representatives of domestic civil-society organizations, academics, and policy analysts. The list of interviews cited in this article (see Supplemental Table 1) is divided into Ghana National (GNA) and International Actors (GIA), as well as Senegal National (SNA) and International Actors (SIA). Following the transcription of recorded interviews, the research team established a coding scheme in three rounds of testing and applied it to the data, using a content analysis software (Nvivo). Interviews included questions on migration policy development and the role and interests of domestic and international actors therein and emphasized the policy-making process, the origin and use of funding, and domestic and international actors' expectations on cooperation with one another.

Migration Policy Priorities for Ghana and Senegal

Beginning in the early 2010s, the EU's migration capacity building started to attract more interest from domestic actors in both Senegal and Ghana (Mouthaan 2019). The NMPs of Ghana and Senegal codified this agenda. Their key priorities were a more effective management of diaspora and remittances (1), an incentivization of voluntary return and reintegration support for citizens that migrated abroad (2), and cooperation on measures against trafficking and more secure borders (3) (NMP Ghana 2016; NMP Senegal 2017). Below, we illustrated these preferences briefly to show why two countries with relatively low rates of international migration (EU 2018; UNDESA 2019) developed an interest in national migration policies. Shared migration policy preferences with the EU are one explanation for NMPs. Available EU funding for policy development and institutional capacity building is another. We develop these explanations in more detail in the following sections, which flesh out how and why bureaucracy is instrumental for policy development.

Ghana and Senegal both wish to maintain close ties with their diaspora, which contributes to their socio-economic development via the transfer of remittances and coordinated investments (Adam et al. 2020). Domestic and international actors

²Interviews were held in English and French by a project researcher. The female researcher with a western background received positive responses for most interview requests with domestic and international actors in the case countries. Additionally, two local research assistants were hired on a part-time basis to assist with fieldwork. Field research in West Africa produced a total of 38 interviews in Ghana and 44 in Senegal. As many as 65 interviews were transcribed; the remaining only allowed for note-taking. Transcribed and partially translated, interviews and notes comprised more than 1000 pages of primary data.

in both countries share the belief that the potential contribution of entrepreneurs abroad and returned nationals to socio-economic development may be better exploited by engaging systematically with diaspora communities in Europe and the United States (SNA #6; GNA # 26, #27; GIA #32). Enforceable guidelines for such systematic engagement with the diaspora were absent in Senegal. In Ghana, however, they were developed but not yet adopted by the government. Interviewees in national ministries and related experts considered the lack of policy to hinder their countries' socio-economic development. Thus, when offered European funding to support a more systematic engagement with the diaspora, civil servants in the foreign ministries of our two case countries saw an opportunity to develop this policy (GNA #26; SNA #1).

Beyond the demand for regulation of migration, external actors' support for policy development also included technical assistance for the Diaspora Affairs' offices of both countries. This meant establishing a database of nationals living abroad, processing remittances more efficiently via the international financial system, and funding outreach toward Ghanaian and Senegalese communities in the EU (GNA #26; SNA #5). In diaspora affairs, domestic actors were keenly aware of the distinction between helping improve diaspora engagement by adapting EU policy, on the one hand, and taking an uncompromising position on the issue of involuntary returns, on the other (GNA #18; GIA #34, #31; SNA #1). In contrast to forcible return, which was generally objected to by the public and political parties, voluntary return with financial support was supported by both international and domestic actors in both countries (Adam et al. 2020). Programs for returnees and potential emigrants were influenced by domestic actors, such as the ministries of labor and interior, who often linked (re)integration to small-scale development initiatives, thus making EU demands match local interests (SIA#14). These projects were included in the Senegalese NMP under the headline "legal migration" and aimed to improve reception capacities for returnees (SNA #2; SIA #15, #16). In this regard, Senegal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the EU in setting up five Bureaus d'Accueil et d'Orientations Sociale (BAOS) to help reintegrate returnees while also dis-incentivizing irregular migration (SIA #16). This local operational institution contributed to further cooperation between the EU and Senegal, as well as NMP development. As a representative of the EU delegation in Dakar explained, "They [Senegalese] did not have the capacities and financial means, so we helped them to set up an NMP, and what will develop from this is an operational plan of the Direction Général des Sénégalais de l'Exterieur that will also cover the BAOS and the needs at the central level" (SIA #16). The quote exemplifies how the NMP brought the Senegalese government's interest for voluntary return together with the EU's interest in curbing irregular migration. At the same time, the NMP also expressed "needs at the central level," implying further EU support for institution building. Thus, the EU managed to establish cooperation on return, a very politicized issue area, by linking it also to support for the bureaucracy in Senegal.

Diaspora engagement was closely related to another salient issue: the well-being of citizens who migrated or worked abroad. Human rights violations experienced by nationals from West African countries in detention centers in Libya gained worldwide attention in 2017 (CNN 2017), and reports highlighted migrants' exposure to domestic servitude in the Gulf states (IOM 2015). As a consequence, the wider public and governments of both countries were more sensitive about lawlessness pertaining to the living or working conditions of nationals abroad (GIA #34). Taking up these issues, Ghana and Senegal's NMP documents demanded more protection and safety measures for labor migrants (NMP Ghana 2016, 36–37; NMP Senegal 2017, 42). The policies also foresaw a higher level of cooperation with IOs, such as the IOM, and foreign governments regarding migrant rights and protection (ibid.). Two issues which international donors often related to migrant safety were human trafficking and smuggling (IOM 2015). Regarding trafficking, funding from the EU and individual member-states served the interests of the EU and its member-states, giving them a bigger role in cross-border mobility in migrants' origin countries and regions (Mouthaan 2019; Jegen 2020). Funding also led the EU to involve West African actors in efforts to build capacity on border security (GNA #20; SNA #4). Since the 2000s, border posts in Ghana and Senegal have been financed, surveillance technologies transferred, and document fraud detection improved (Jegen 2020). This EU funding gave West African ministries of the interior and related law enforcement agencies opportunities to expand their budgets and improve their administrative standing (GNA #20; SNA #4). The extra means for border security were also welcomed by Senegal, due to a deteriorating security situation in the neighboring countries of Mali and Nigeria (Jegen 2020, 8, 14). Senegal's and Ghana's interest in avoiding the import of insecurity from regional neighbors, thus, converged with the EU's interest in having more migration control at borders (GNA #20; SNA #4).

In sum, cooperation with international actors on border and migration management, including diaspora and return, was present in both NMPs as a concrete policy objective (NMP Ghana 2016; NMP Senegal 2017). Overall, this section identified how preferences of EU and West African actors aligned in migration policy. We showed that cooperation was a result of rational cost–benefit considerations of the two countries at the level of government *and* administration. Funding for the latter allowed for smoother cooperation with the EU in areas that were politicized in Ghana and Senegal. The next section explores how both countries' bureaucracies became instrumental in promoting the codification of these migration objectives within the NMPs.

The Role and Evolution of Migration Bureaucracies in Ghana and Senegal

Our research observed that funding and consultancy for developing NMPs in Ghana and Senegal were provided by external donors — mainly, the IOM and also the EU. This funding and consultancy also strengthened administrative capacities and created

new dependencies, eventually increasing EU influence over migration policy in West African countries.

Ghana and the Development of a National Migration Policy

When Ghana drafted its NMP document between 2011 and 2014, a broad range of ministries, stakeholders, and consultants, including those responsible for internal affairs, labor, health, foreign affairs, and finance, were involved (GNA #20). The most active consultants were academics from the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana in Accra (initially established with support from the Dutch government) (GNA #28). For their involvement in the agenda-setting process, the Ghanaian ministries and stakeholders received funds from the IOM channeled through the Ministry of Finances (GNA #28). Overall, the process of policy drafting was built on the input of approximately 11–12 institutions and coordinated by an inter-ministerial committee led by the Ministry of the Interior (GNA #20). The drafting process allowed for broad stakeholder involvement (GNA #20), including a wide range of governmental actors, migrant associations, community leaders, and other civil-society representatives (GNA #27). Two years after completing the MNP document's final draft, the Ghanaian government adopted it as a formal policy in 2016 (IOM 2016).

The NMP set out a comprehensive strategic framework for migration policy development, with the objective of regulating migration into Ghana and to other countries (Ghana NMP 2016). The 170-page document defined various migrant categories, such as labor migrant, refugee, and diaspora, and drafted a regulatory framework to promote poverty reduction and national socio-economic development in the country. To reach the development objective, the NMP suggested a coherent and comprehensive policy approach that replaced the fragmented, often-piecemeal interventions that had characterized migration policy making in Ghana (Ghana NMP 2016, vii–viii). The legal framework for migration was primarily based on Ghana's 1992 constitution, the Immigration Act (2000), the Citizenship Act (2000), and the Labour Act (2005) (Ghana NMP 2016). Since 1971, Ghana has been a signatory to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) free movement protocol (ICMPD 2015), which has contributed a liberal approach to the entry and residence of citizens of neighboring states (ICMPD 2015). The NMP went beyond regulating intra-regional migration and aimed to create a more coherent framework for “different institutions to fulfil their mandates in managing migration in Ghana” (NMP Ghana 2016, 27). The NMP's objective was to maximize the gains of migration, to promote regular migration, and to provide the various institutions (governmental, IOs, or civil society) with strategic guidelines for policy making (GNA #23; GNA #18).

The Ghanaian case demonstrates that input and support of the IOM, the EU, and — in the early stages of policy drafting — the United Nations Development Programme were essential for policy development. An IOM official summarized

his organization's role as follows: "So it was us who was pushing because of our activities. The government was looking in the same direction" (GIA #31). The IOM, in particular, actively served as a consultant to participating actors during the drafting stage and provided material support, including funding to organize the meeting and travel costs of certain stakeholders (GNA #26; GIA #33). Again, Ghanaian actors did not object to this external actor's direct influence as a facilitator and initiator for defining policies and acknowledged that their preferences had been recognized during the national migration policy's drafting.

Changes in the NMP could be triggered by domestic actors who participated in the drafting stage; as one interviewee noted, actors "try as much as possible to make sure we are not influenced by anybody" (GNA #26). Others, however, felt that the national migration policy reflected more European than Ghanaian preferences (GNA #22). While the extent to which IOM and other international actors influenced the NMP's content is difficult to establish, most interviewees rejected the idea of direct external influence on the policy's development and acknowledged a more subtle IOM and EU influence. As a Ghanaian actor put it,

IOM participates in some of these discussions, [but] not as leaders. They give their view. The Ghanaian experts sometimes listen to them; sometimes they don't listen to them. The ownership of the policy is by Ghanaians because usually, you will see that there is an inter-ministerial working group that comes up with what has to be in the policy... IOM has certainly contributed to the agenda setting because, of course, they also influence the policy space by way of their technical advice on what are best practices elsewhere and what they are also doing in programs... And that it is not only IOM but the European Union's money that IOM has been using... is important to recognize (GNA #27).

Studying the process leading up to the NMP reveals a deeper layer of external influence. Cooperation of Ghanaian bureaucrats with the IOM allowed the donor to become a partner in the bureaucracies' own strategy to launch its ideas. Specifically, an interviewee from the Ghana administration considered donors' presence to legitimize their own ideas vis-à-vis colleagues: "Sometimes, when you want to do something on your own, your own colleagues find it difficult to accept. When you bring an outside partner, who is able to reinforce some of the ideas that you already have — this gives legitimacy" (GNA #20). He went on to explain the Ghanaian Immigration Service's (GIS) involvement in the inter-ministerial committee that developed the NMP as a result of the agency's work on human trafficking. GIS was among Ghana's primary institutions dealing with migration management. As GIS dealt with returnees from Libya, as well as the diaspora, it recognized that Ghanaians should be sensitized to the dangers of irregular migration and trafficking. Therefore, the agency decided to contribute to the NMP drafting process and receive external assistance. This engagement provided more "legitimacy" to lead a national response to the issue (GNA #20). As this example shows, the external donor became a "change agent" who backed the bureaucrats that pushed for this change (GNA #20).

In the case of the GIS, the involvement of external actors allowed Ghanaian officials to avoid conflict within their respective ministerial branches, busy with topics other than migration (GNA #21).

Similar examples for the reinforcement of policy agendas via external funding are the Migration Information Bureau at GIS and the Migration Unit at the Ministry of Interior. These units were created in 2008 and 2009 with IOM funding, before work on the NMP started. A prime objective of the two units was to deal with the surge in irregular migration to Europe (GNA #18; GNA #24; GNA#21). In terms of the NMP, lobbying for and developing a policy required personnel and structural and technical support — resources not easily accessible in a context defined by scarcity. Funding for personnel was the biggest challenge and component in developing policies, as well as institutions (GNA, #19). The GIS and the Migration Unit at the Ministry of the Interior were established by means of external funds and could gain institutionally by developing the NMP (GNA, #19). Thus, tracing the process behind the NMP's development shows how the push for a new policy agenda may also be driven by domestic officials seizing the opportunities to grow institutionally and gain legitimacy in a resource-poor and competitive administrative landscape.

The distribution of funds from external actors not only supported a unit's agency within a ministry but also promoted policy learning among bureaucratic actors. For example, the Ghanaian state actor in charge of the NMP was the Ministry of the Interior — the key actor on migration issues (GNA #27). Ghana officials recognized that several projects funded by international donors had similar objectives, potentially lacking synergies and duplicating efforts. For example, within the GIS, a Migration Affairs Unit and a Migration Information Bureau dealt with migration issues, alongside a Migration Unit at the Ministry of Interior (GNA #21). This duplication may also have had some positive side effects; for example, limited oversight and government coordination could leave room for bottom-up initiatives within administrations. Policy making in Ghana (and elsewhere) was not only about output but also about bringing all actors together to cooperate with and learn from one another (GNA #26; GIA #31). Spreading donor funding allowed the Ministry of Interior to counter rivalries over resources, leading to greater competency in migration-related matters for all actors involved (GNA #18). At the same time, funding large parts of the migration bureaucracy led to greater dependency on external resources.

Related to the NMP, a labor migration policy had been on the agenda of the Ghanaian Ministry of Labour and was adopted in a draft version in 2018 (IOM 2019). In this area, the German government had been investing in increasing knowledge and labor market institutions' capacity to "help model the employment sectors along the lines of what exists in Germany" (GNA #24). Since labor migration policy was not a priority issue for the Ghanaian government, the Ministry of Employment did not have knowledge or the logistical and financial capacity on the issue of labor migration regulation (GNA #21). Observers from civil society saw the NMP's

adoption as a beginning for an administration that “could have beef,” meaning the capacity to develop and implement a policy (GNA #29). In fact, the adoption of the draft labor migration policy in 2018 shows that the NMP, from 2016, triggered further policy development (IOM 2019). It is increasingly evident that external actors (and EU donors) initiated and assisted with the NMP’s development (GNA #20; GNA #23; GNA #26; GIA #31). Thus, donor support for policy development and transposition was a key force driving the work of Ghana’s different ministries. Step by step, migration expertise was built up within the Ghanaian bureaucracy’s different branches, allowing the adaption of the EU’s migration policy objectives within the NMP.

Although the NMP was politically validated in 2016, it had not yet been implemented when our fieldwork was carried out in 2018. Due to this delay, actors from the Ministry of Labour and Interior requested additional funding in 2018 to establish a Migration Commission within a National Migration Authority that would coordinate efforts to push the strategy into law (GNA #24; GNA #23). According to an official from the Ministry of the Interior, the reasoning behind their request was straightforward: “Implementation has been very slow. I can attribute this to lack of funding” (GNA #17; GNA #20; GIA #31). In making this demand, the ministry’s top priority was to gain funds to expand its human resources (GNA #20). A similar pattern could be observed within GIS, where the policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation unit was created via assistance from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and funding from the British High Commission, with the objective to improve policy implementation generally (GNA #19, #20).

The EUTF (2015–2021) earmarked funds to initiate the Migration Commission (EU 2019), and the EU made access to this fund contingent on the Ghanaian government’s willingness to cooperate in identifying Ghanaian nationals who were to be returned to Ghana from European detention centers (GNA #23). However, the Ghanaian government had rejected this form of cooperation, since the topic of forcible return was highly salient and controversial in public discourse (GIA #31). The conditionality on return impacted administrative structures; refusing cooperation with the EU meant that new institutions might not be supported by funding (GNA #23). The Ghanaian electorate may not have wanted its government to cooperate in return of nationals from EU member-states. However, as we have shown, bureaucrats in Ghana may become more flexible on this issue over time if they see an institutional gain.

Interviewees in the Ghanaian bureaucracy remained cautious when exploring their influence on decision making. While the various branches of the Ministry of Interior had acquired international funding and developed relevant policies such as the NMP, the timing and extent of reforms depended greatly on the government’s priorities (GIA #32; GNA #26). A general problem for the policy process was the high degree of fluctuation among senior personnel and the reshuffling of competences among ministries after changes in the government (GNA #26, GIA #32). This instability, with senior

positions being re-staffed and re-envisioned with each new election, hampered efforts to build administrative capacities (GIA #31). The promotion of the Ghanaian government's diaspora unit offers a good example of this volatility. Initially run by only two officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was later transformed into a bureau for diaspora relations, administered by eight to 12 people, at the office of the Presidency (GNA #26). While more personnel implied higher political appreciation of the topic, the diaspora unit's proximity to the top-level executive also made it more vulnerable to a change of government (GNA#26). If a new government assembled power, the unit's efforts to foster diaspora engagement risked being side-lined as a topic. Accordingly, an official from IOM remarked critically: "We are now building the capacity of government officials. When there is a change in government, you would have to start all over again" (GIA #31; GNA #26, GIA #32). The fact that government priorities impacted the ministerial bureaucracy's capacity is perhaps clearest in the NMP's delayed implementation. As a former official of the Ministry of Interior observed, "We had the migration policy developed before the new government came into the process of setting up structures to implement. The government came. One-and-a-half years going towards almost two years, we have not seen any policy being implemented" (GNA #20). Trust in the administration's ability to implement the NMP was generally low among nonstate actors. Representatives of civil-society organizations considered implementation to be better handled by the IOM, given its experience in managing programs (GNA #29; GNA #30). Meanwhile, an interviewee from the EU delegation in Accra stressed that their mission was to "support the country in implementing the policy that are matching our [the EU's] principles" (GIA #34).

The case of Ghana, thus, shows that a donor's actual influence on policy development can depend on several factors: the donor's access to a state's administration, the standing of a given unit or even an individual bureaucrat within the administration, and the different actors' commitment to a policy. In any case, the NMP's development and adoption showed how the Ministry of Interior used the IOM funding as an opportunity to expand its institutional capacity and pursue its next objective (i.e., the development of a labor migration policy for Ghana). The government can be an intervening factor in cooperation between external donors and the administration. If the government has different priorities than the administration (and is determined to pursue them), a donor may struggle to influence politics by creating opportunities for the bureaucracy. In this environment, the (elected) government remains the key player in achieving concrete policy outputs. Still, the donor can act as a long-term change agent and legitimator of certain ideas put forth by a given administrative branch (e.g., the Ministry of Interior and the Ghana Immigration Service). In sum, we find that the bureaucracy's agency regarding the NMP's development in Ghana was a result of opportunity structures initiated by external donors. However, at the same time, this funding also created a certain dependency in the bureaucracy to follow up and develop policy in line with EU policy priorities.

Senegal and the Development of a National Migration Policy

The Senegalese migration framework's legal basis was established in 1971 and is embedded within the ECOWAS protocol on freedom of movement, set forth that same year (ICMPD 2015). This framework, described as “fragmented” by the authors of the NMP (SIA #9; NMP Senegal 2017, 14), was not considered a migration policy in the sense of acting as a regulatory framework that pursued a certain strategy for the entry, residence, or exit of foreigners (SNA #2). Therefore, between 2015 and 2017, Senegal developed a national migration policy document (la Politique Nationale de Migration du Sénégal — NMP), which detailed a coherent framework for all aspects of migration (immigration, emigration, diaspora engagement, and border policy) and was meant to reform the 1971 legislative framework.

Overall, Senegal's NMP aimed to better define migration as a means of bolstering the country's development, while also paying attention to issues concerning human and social rights, health, and the well-being of internal migrants, immigrants, emigrants, and returnees (NMP Senegal 2017). Outlining a comprehensive strategy and agenda, the 200-page document addressed migration as a social phenomenon that needed better management across a range of areas, including border control (ibid.). Technically, the document was validated on March 28, 2017 (Koné 2020) but was still awaiting final political approval by the Senegalese President at the time of writing this article in 2021.

Similar to Ghana, in Senegal, migration was not an issue that mobilized the electorate (SNA #10). However, the Senegalese government and administration had an interest in institution building which coincided with EU incentives to cooperate on migration issues (SIA #13). The push for cooperation came largely from external actors: “IOs proposed Senegal to have its own national migration policy” (SIA #13).

We (IOM) approached the government through the prime minister, proposed them this opportunity. It was something that was frequently requested through different workshops and events by the different stakeholders. So, the government of Senegal appointed the Ministry of Finances and the Economy [for this task] (SIA #12).

At the same time, IOM officials (quoted above), as well as government representatives and civil-society members in Senegal, highlighted that the NMP's content aligned well with Senegalese domestic interests:

I elaborate the national migration policy of Senegal. If I go to the relevant administrative structures dealing with migration issues, I will establish their concerns and priorities. They will be at the center of the national migration policy... It's for Senegal; it is not for the interests of international actors (SIA #13, SNA #2; SNA #7).

Civil-society organizations in Senegal viewed external involvement in the policy development more critically, suspecting that the “one who pays also commands” (SNA #8). Tellingly, civil-society organizations claimed that IOM financial support

had facilitated their own involvement (SNA #9). Civil society's criticism of donor influence through the policy process may be legitimate. Funding availability played a crucial role in pushing the migration policy. The IOM supported Senegalese actors involved in setting up the NMP, providing them with advice and funding during policy development (SNA #2). Not only were IOM consultants present at all meetings, but they also cooperated with the Ministry of Finance and Economy to develop the document, drafting, and coordinating input from other ministries' stakeholders and from civil society (SIA #12). In fact, without the IOM and its funding, Senegal's national migration policy would not have seen the light of day (SIA #12, SIA #13, SNA #2). External funding was, hence, crucial to the policy's development:

It happens that a ministry says, 'As long as we have no funding, we are not going to work for it,' even if it is in their perspective... and there is a commitment, usually... The response we often have is, 'We want to do it, but we need money for it!' So, donors, come and fund it because 'We won't be able to do it without funding'... Everything requires money. When we want policy, everything boils down to money... So that's why, when one has money, one has power to push the agenda and the legislation to go forward (SIA #12; SNA #7).

For the donor — in this case, the IOM, conditionality was seen to drive cooperation: "I give you migration in exchange of development aid, or I give you students in exchange of other problems and so on" (SIA #12). The NMP's function was to give legitimacy to various positions; it "encourages these things... with that you can claim it, you can work on it" (SIA #12). Cooperating with other regional and international actors in 2017, the IOM developed a plan of action to realize the NMP's objectives by promoting its political validation (SIA #14). IOM funded personnel, whose job was to foster this process and liaise with other stakeholders within and outside the ministries (SIA #14). Support also came from the Spanish Development Agency, which, in collaboration with IOM, has already accessed the EUTF to reinforce national strategies for migration policies (SIA #14).

The process of policy development in Senegal and Ghana can be observed in both the administrative/technical and political spheres. External actors faced little resistance from bureaucrats; however, they had more difficulties in gaining access to the political sphere (SIA #12). In politics, people with power tend to fluctuate more, so it can be difficult to exert influence on a policy's long-term development (Ascher 2017, 45). By contrast, administrative officials can acquire a certain level of policy expertise over time, from which a country can benefit (*ibid.*). Regarding Senegal, external actors' investments in the bureaucracy proved to be more sustainable, compared to investments in politicians (SIA #12). Nevertheless, this process was not devoid of challenges, as an official of an IO explained: "Step by step, we are enlarging the network of supporters of this [migration policy] document. [However] holding and presenting a document and making it a 'policy' requires a lot of efforts and investment, which is not always easy to secure" (SIA #12).

In case of the NMP, bureaucratic actors lobbied politicians — notably, individual ministers, the prime minister, and the Presidency — to prioritize migration issues (SIA #12). During fieldwork in 2018, bureaucrats within the Ministries of Economy and Finance saw momentum for the NMP's validation after securing endorsements from the ministers from foreign affairs, interior, finance, and the economy (SIA #12). An official from the Senegalese Ministry of Finance identified funding as a crucial precondition to keep up the momentum (SNA #2). An interviewee from the Ministry of Economy and Finance revealed the bureaucracy's perception of its own importance to the government and state:

The state, this is us. It is the government that carries the project. Hence, we will not let the civil society take the place of the state... Who is advancing things? It's the state, with all its different groups of actors, the ministries of foreign affairs, of interior, the ministry of the youth and employment. All these different dimensions are important for migration policy (SNA #2).

Tellingly, this bureaucrat's account of migration politics in Senegal downplayed the importance of other actors, such as elected politicians, political parties, or civil society. The ministries, it was stressed, *were* the government. This observation that the process of formulating a policy was more hierarchical than horizontal (meaning stakeholder-led) was confirmed by external observers (SIA #14; SIA #13).

The 2019 presidential election and subsequent changes in Senegal's political system delayed political validation of the NMP (Koné 2020). The position of prime minister was abolished by the Senegalese president in 2019, and the NMP's political validation moved exclusively to the (re-elected) President Macky Sall (*ibid.*). The restructuring and separating of Senegal's Ministry of Economy and Finance also impaired bureaucrats' sway over the migration dossier (SNA #6). In 2020, however, the Ministry of the Economy repositioned the NMP's political validation on the agenda of the Ministerial Council presided over by the president (Republic of Senegal 2020) and continued to push the NMP's political validation on the president's agenda (Koné 2020; Republic of Senegal 2020). The administrators' persistent commitment to policy legitimization highlights that an investment in their capacities can be rewarding.

Beyond the efforts of various administrative branches pushing for policy validation, the process of drafting shows how funding can trigger bureaucratic agency. Ministries involved in migration policy development — most prominently, the Ministries of the Interior and Foreign Affairs — were reliant on external funding and received little political guidance on this issue during the drafting stages between 2015 and 2017. Little oversight induced the risk that ministries duplicated one another's efforts (SIA #13; SIA #15; SNA #9). However, duplication may also have supported ministerial budgets for meeting organization, draft writing, and liaising with others. If validated, the NMP may change multistakeholder involvement by facilitating coordination through a new national Agency for Migration Management. The NMP's implementation via operational planning was defined as a key task of the newly established agency in the NMP in which Senegalese and

international actors expected to receive EU funding (SIA #13; SIA #15; SNA #9). Policy development pays off for the bureaucracy. The EU financially supports stakeholders for their involvement. If the policy is successfully implemented, a whole new agency will be established.

The IOM-initiated deliberations for the NMP, provided the essential resources for its development, and served as a consultant to the Senegalese Ministry of Economy and Finance during the drafting phase (SNA #2; SNA #1). Still, the entities that worked most closely on migration issues were the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior (SNA #5). Within the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Directorate General of Human Capital Development was the driving force in drafting the NMP (SIA #13). Other ministries could have coordinated such a policy, but the government considered the Ministry of Economy and Finance more “neutral” on migration than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Labour Ministry, or the Ministry of Interior (SIA #13). The statement below exemplifies how external funding not only created tensions among different administrative branches but also prevented a single ministry from becoming overly influential with respect to migration issues:

The ministry I am talking about — the Ministry of the Economy and Finance — is in charge of coordinating the policy. For the simple fact that the directorate for Senegalese living abroad had already elaborated projects, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted [proposals] to the Trust Fund [for Africa] of the European Union. They were accepted for financing. As soon as they had the money, they convened their working group to say that [the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] is positioning itself as a leader in the field. This has created small tensions but natural tensions because everyone wants to position themselves [as the leader] (SIA #13; SNA #7).

To avoid conflicts while drafting the NMP, the Ministry of Economy and Finance left it up to the different ministries — the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice — to formulate their own sectoral issues, such as those concerning diaspora policy, human trafficking, and border control (SNA #5). In doing so, the Ministry of Economy and Finance helped develop expertise and ownership of the policies, ensuring that a broad set of state bureaucrats could continue political lobbying for the validation of the Senegalese NMP, should internal and external opportunities arise. In sum, the case of Senegal shows similarities to the Ghana case. External funding strongly promoted policy development and initiated institutional growth. Even though political validation and the following implementation could not be realized at the time of writing in 2021, the bureaucracy continued to lobby for the NMP. The IOM, using EU funding, was crucial in this process of establishing the Senegalese migration bureaucracy.

Conclusion

This article addressed the question of how external donors impact the development of migration policies in West African countries, with a particular focus on the role of

bureaucracies. Drawing on NMP documents formulated during the 2010s and interviews in Ghana and Senegal, the research contributes to scholarship on African countries' responses to the externalization of the European migration agenda (e.g., Cassarino 2018; Natter 2018) and on accounts of intermesticity in migration policy development (Mouthaan 2019; Adam et al. 2020; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020; Ostrand and Statham 2021) by focusing on the role of domestic bureaucracies in policy making (e.g., de Sardan 2014).

We argue that cooperation between the EU and our two case countries, Ghana and Senegal, promoted forms of bureaucratic migration politics in drafting NMPs. The IOM and EU empowered the bureaucracies of Senegal and Ghana to become more influential in policy making, in relation to national elected politicians, and this by funding bureaucratic capacities. In the two West African countries, where migration hardly mobilizes the electorate (Cham and Adam 2021), bureaucracies became a “site of power” (Paquet 2019) for agenda setting. With regard to the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Finance in Ghana and Senegal, EU funding was often channeled through the IOM, which provided technical expertise and influenced the national priorities and agendas. The bureaucracies used these resources for their own ends: to increase competence, obtain legitimacy, and expand the personnel. In making use of these resources, domestic administrators perceived external donors as “change agents.”

Our argument of “bureaucratic politics” in the migration field adds to the findings of other scholars by giving a detailed account of how bureaucratic agency can arise from opportunities created by external actors and their funding streams in two West African countries. In the case of North African countries, Cassarino (2018) showed how cooperation with the EU on migration control increased the influence of national security agencies there. Bureaucracies in Morocco and Tunisia interacting with IOs have also played a role in shaping their countries' migration and refugee policies (El Qadim 2018; Natter 2018). Beyond highlighting the bureaucracy as an important actor, the research elucidated accounts of intermesticity — namely, the importance of considering domestic and external preferences in West African migration policy making (Adam et al. 2020; Fernández-Molina and De Larramendi 2020). We theorized West African states' engagement with the EU's migration agenda in terms of opportunities for the domestic administration. The EU's offers, however, rarely come without conditions and expectations. Bureaucracies' reception for funding and agency in policy making may, therefore, be linked to the mechanism of conditionality (Lavenex and Uçarer 2004). From this angle, the effectiveness of conditionality set by the EU or other international actors may regard not only the size and weight of rewards but also whether donors establish a long-term engagement with the bureaucracy, thereby fostering policy expertise and “bottom-up” interests in bureaucratic growth. Due to their self-interest, bureaucracies become more dependent and receptive to adapting the EU external migration agenda. Incidents of such adaptation are the drafting of the NMPs in Ghana and Senegal. The countries also engaged with projects fostering capabilities for the management of returning citizens and the enhancement of border security. The

NMP provides the framework of engagement, further justifying domestic bureaucrats and IO interactions with each other. The relations we identify describe a distinct pattern of a two-tiered public and donor-funded administration typical of the postcolonial state (see also Bierschenk and de Sardan 2014).

While external donor funding of national bureaucracies is a foundation for long-lasting influence, policy output in both countries still critically depends on the decisions of national elected politicians. In Ghana, government changes caused considerable fluctuations in senior personnel and led to the reshuffling of organizational structures, reducing the capacities of administrations and their room for maneuver. In Senegal, the NMP's validation became deadlocked, due to changes in administrative organizational structures and elected politicians' noncommitment. However, both administrations "owned" the migration dossier and committed to moving forward with the political validation of the NMPs (Senegal) or their implementation (Ghana) when a window of opportunity arises. Hence, investments in bureaucracies seem to pay off for donors, as it increases both donor and bureaucracy influence over policy making.

In short, our results elucidate how external actors play a role in the development of migration policy via funding national bureaucracies. The EU's ability to engage domestic administrators in a way that increases their policy-making leverage set a foundation for its enduring influence in Ghana and Senegal. The NMPs served as a framework for further institution building and an overarching goal for donors to address their specific migration-related projects. However, for the bureaucracies in Ghana and Senegal, opportunities via funding come with a price — it increased their financial dependency on the EU.

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Supplemental Material

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