

Unveiling a Tragedy: Underground Economies and Criminal Syndicates as Precursors to African, Middle East and Asian Migration Fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea

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Abstract

The Mediterranean Sea, erstwhile emblematic of natural splendor and global interconnectedness, has metamorphosed into a perilous sepulcher for myriad immigrants in pursuit of sanctuary and improved prospects. Several socio-political, economic and environmental factors could account for this. Subterranean economies and criminal cartels have significantly exacerbated the proliferation of conflict-ridden regions, particularly when this engenders illicit arms trafficking. A potential remedy may lie within a North-South collaborative framework, predicated on cooperation rather than exploitation. This article delves into the poignant examination of migrant fatalities in the Mediterranean, meticulously scrutinizes the myriad factors that underpin this humanitarian tragedy – encompassing socio-economic, political and environmental dimensions – and proffers prospective solutions for its amelioration.

Keywords: Maritime Migration, Fatalities, Mediterranean, Criminal Syndicates

Introduction

People on the move constitute an age-old experience and are important in the unfolding of history.¹ As articulated by Stephen Castles and his colleagues, our era has aptly been characterized as the ‘epoch of migration’.² Nevertheless, we must remain cognizant of the human narratives that reside beneath the veneer of statistical data. These narratives encompass tales of individuals escaping persecution and enduring systematic breaches of their fundamental human rights, seeking an enhanced quality of life, aspiring to liberate themselves from the clutches of human traffickers and being compelled to resettle due to the encroaching specter of desertification and the difficulties imposed by shifting climatic patterns.

The Mediterranean Sea, with its azure waters and idyllic landscapes, has long been a symbol of beauty, culture and history. The locale has borne witness to myriad migratory influxes spanning centuries attributed to its pivotal geospatial situation as a nexus interfacing Europe, Asia, and Africa. Human mobility spanning myriad directions within the Mediterranean basin has transpired over millennia. In contemporary times, dating back to at least the mid-1990s, a substantial influx of individuals embarks upon perilous Mediterranean voyages annually, traversing from the northern peripheries of Africa and Turkey. Their primary objectives encompass seeking asylum or pursuing migration to Europe when bereft of the requisite documentation mandated by their prospective host nations. “The reduction of legal exits means that would-be migrants must travel on risky irregular routes”³, assert Frank Laczko, Ann Singleton, and Julia Black. Notably, the magnitude and scope of these migratory phenomena have undergone a notable escalation in contemporary times, propelled by burgeoning conflicts, intricate political volatility, conspicuous economic asymmetries, underground economies and criminal syndicates and pressing environmental exigencies encompassing the domains of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

However, beneath this picturesque façade lies a heartbreaking and grim reality: over the preceding years, numerous migrants have perished in the Mediterranean, where their interment in the same waters coincides with the forfeiture of their aspirations for a life marked by heightened dignity. The frequent loss of lives as thousands of migrants and refugees embark on perilous journeys across its waters in search of safety and a better future is a pressing humanitarian crisis that demands our attention and understanding. This article delves into the background and significance of these tragic occurrences, shedding light on the factors contributing to these deaths and the broader implications for global society.

Underground Economies and Criminal Syndicates

Human migration has been an enduring facet of human history. The Mediterranean region boasts a profound historical tapestry of migratory phenomena, with roots extending to antiquity. Commercial enterprises, conquest-driven expansions, and intricate intercultural interplays have indelibly shaped the flux of populations along its coastlines. Nevertheless, in contemporary times, the area has borne witness to a notable upsurge in migratory currents, epitomized by the tandem occurrence of sanctioned and unsanctioned migrations. The disintegration of empires, the process of decolonization, and the convulsions of conflicts in

¹ H. M. FISHER, *Migration: A World History*, Oxford University Press, New York 2014, p. 125.

² S. CASTLES - HEIN DE HASS et al., *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014, p 331.

³ F. LACZKO - A. SINGLETON et al., *Executive Summary in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva 2017, p. xi.

adjacent regions have markedly underpinned the configuration of present-day migration dynamics. Concerted endeavors have transpired across epochs aimed at mitigating this phenomenon. One such instance materialized in the form of the US Immigration Act of 1924, which imposed limitations on the ingress of immigrants. The crucible of the 1930s, characterized by the Great Depression, seemed to wield a pivotal role in quelling the tide of mass emigration.⁴ Nonetheless, our contemporary generation bears witness to an unprecedented surge in migration.

Migration serves as a prism through which to elucidate the contemporary challenges confronting Africa, the genesis of which can be traced to the enduring legacies of colonialism, protracted armed conflicts, pervasive structural violence, and persistent state fragility spanning several decades. An exhaustive examination of these matters unveils the intricate tapestry of illicit economies and organized crime prevailing across the African continent, characterized by the active engagement of a heterogeneous array of actors, including the political elite and various organized crime syndicates.

This multifaceted panorama exerts a profound influence on migration dynamics, wielding its impact on pivotal facets such as state fragility, democratic processes, pervasive corruption, and the viability of sustainable development initiatives. This predicament poses a formidable challenge to the State's ability to ensure the provision of essential services and safeguard the well-being of its citizens. It engenders a deleterious structural framework that obstructs nations from realizing their full potential in the realm of human development, erodes the inherent resilience of States vis-à-vis illicit endeavors, and disrupts the process of democratic institution-building.

This phenomenon can be aptly characterized as “institutional fragility”. According to this paradigm, institutional fragility permeates the nation-state in such a manner that renders nations incapable of wielding punitive measures or reinstating their authoritative presence in the face of multifaceted challenges spanning territorial, economic, political, social, security, and environmental domains. This pervasive fragility engenders substantial lacunae where the State is conspicuously absent.⁵ This conspicuous absence, as articulated by Luca Raineri and Francesco Strazzari, engenders a landscape characterized by political instability, exacerbated institutional frailty, and the proliferation of an ethos of informality, all of which exert deleterious effects on the State's capacity to administer justice, deliver public goods, and manage conflicts efficiently.⁶ Such a state of weakness inadvertently bestows considerable latitude upon criminal actors, who operate with impunity, perpetuating corruption, complicity, and extortion. Consequently, this scenario serves as a compelling push factor for immigration.

Effectively addressing and mitigating the pervasiveness of this dual dynamics demands a concerted effort, necessitating cooperation and collaboration among a myriad of stakeholders, including the international community, multilateral and sub-regional organizations, civil society entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and private sector entities. The cooperative endeavor seeks to establish a cohesive and comprehensive development agenda aimed at confronting these intricate challenges.

Illicit economies and organized crime engender substantial impediments to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The situation is exacerbated by the absence of

⁴ E. MORETTI - E. CELA, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, LXVIII (2014), n. 2, p. 120.

⁵ S. EWUSI – J. ZOTTO, *The White Paper on Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa*, University for Peace, San José 2022, p. 26.

⁶ L. RAINERI – F. STRAZZARI, *Organized Crimes and Fragile States: African Variations in European Union for Security Studies* 2017. <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/organised-crime-and-fragile-states-african-variations>

political resolve to address illicit financial activities, including money laundering and tax evasion facilitated by offshore entities. Consequently, this engenders fiscal jeopardy for individual nations and, indeed, the global economy.⁷ In 2015, the Report issued by the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows in Africa made a noteworthy estimation, suggesting that the African continent had incurred a staggering loss of approximately 1 trillion dollars as a consequence of illicit financial flows over the preceding half-century.⁸ This translated into an annual outflow surpassing the significant threshold of 50 billion dollars.⁹ It is imperative to acknowledge that these figures are likely conservative, as the majority of nations grapple with the formidable impediment of generating dependable data, a challenge exacerbated by endemic corruption. This pervasive predicament engenders substantial and far-reaching ramifications for Africa's economic, political, and social development trajectories. Consequently, the continent grapples with enduring cycles of impoverishment, perpetuating the escalation of migration pressures.

Conflict zones are precipitated by deep-seated social cleavages, rooted in the historical legacy of colonial occupation and the ruthless exploitation of the African continent. These schisms have been further exacerbated by persistent poverty and dismal levels of human development. Moreover, the compounding factors of elevated youth unemployment rates and a dearth of quality education resources further fuel the emergence of these societal divisions and ensuing conflicts. African youths who find themselves excluded from gainful employment opportunities are rendered susceptible to assuming roles as either perpetrators or victims within the realm of organized criminal activities. This includes involvement in activities such as migrant smuggling, human trafficking, voluntary or involuntary migration and arms smuggling.

Regarding arms smuggling, its detection proves challenging, with the potential causes being either a deliberate political decision by certain authorities to curb it or a result of insufficient technological and financial capabilities for tracking and identifying trafficked and illicitly transported arms. Ewusi and Zotto contend that the latter explanation holds true, advocating for the urgent acquisition of advanced equipment aimed at monitoring and detecting illicit arms trafficking through air, sea, and land ports by law enforcement agencies and border security personnel. In their reckoning, the absence of advanced technology at various airports, capable of identifying aircraft that have been illegally leased by commercial operators in violation of arms embargoes, coupled with the inability to effectively identify breaches in arms embargoes, perpetuates the use of weaponry as a currency in Africa.¹⁰ These arms foster an elevated degree of criminality and bolster the belligerent actions of non-state actors. Furthermore, violence is equally propelled by the widespread availability of small arms and light weaponry sourced from transnational organized crime networks, state-sanctioned manufacturers, and local artisans.¹¹ Constrained financial resources impede the procurement of the aforementioned technology and hinder the implementation of capacity-building initiatives and training programs aimed at efficaciously addressing this phenomenon. Consequently, this phenomenon contributes to the profound destabilization of numerous nations, prompting a substantial portion of their population to pursue refuge through immigration.

⁷ M. HARARI, *We want Your Feedback on our Financial Secrecy Index*, in *Tax Justice Network*, June 2, 2021

<https://taxjustice.net/2021/06/02/we-want-your-feedback-on-our-financial-secrecy-index/>

⁸ AU and UN Economic Commission for Africa, *Illicit Financial Flows Report of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa*, 2015, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/40545-doc-IFFs_REPORT.pdf

⁹ *Ibidem*

¹⁰ S. EWUSI – J. ZOTTO, *The White Paper on Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa*, p. 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

This also pertains to a dynamic wherein nations external to the African continent actively and indirectly contribute to the generation and facilitation of illicit financial flows to and from Africa. As posited by Francisco Rojas Aravena, the spectrum of prevalent organized criminal activities spans from human trafficking and migrant smuggling to arms trafficking, environmental transgressions, drug trafficking, and financial malfeasance, encompassing tax evasion, trade mis-invoicing, and money laundering.¹² These deleterious activities are symptomatic of Africa's porous borders, ungovernable territories, frail institutional frameworks, endemic corruption, and an absence of requisite regulatory mechanisms. These elements collectively underscore the formidable undertaking facing both the international community and African nations in the regulation of the continent's diverse politico-economic sectors and actors, which significantly contribute to the impetus for migration.

It is crucial to acknowledge that insecurity, exacerbated by societal divisions and compounded by conflicts and underdevelopment, has created fertile ground for organized criminal syndicates to exploit the continent for their financial gain. In light of Africa's historical legacy of colonialism and the attendant legacy of exploitation and socio-economic disparities, certain African States find themselves lacking the capacity to adequately safeguard their populations, provide essential services, and protect their financial institutions and markets. The enhancement of State capacities necessitates a resolute commitment from African governments to devise comprehensive strategies for bolstering national and regional security, facilitating information sharing, establishing robust compliance frameworks, and fostering regional as well as international cooperation. Failure to address the prevailing dynamics of organized crime in Africa imperils the preservation of individual livelihoods, peace, and the pursuit of sustainable development objectives thereby widening the door to migration.

The Development of the Crisis

The post-war epoch ushered in a paradigm shift in the migratory dynamics within Europe. The confluence of altered economic and geopolitical landscapes wrought a profound transformation. Eros Moretti and Eralba Cela posit that the trajectory of post-war reconstruction and industrial advancement significantly underpins the phenomenon of immigration across the Mediterranean. According to their analysis, the exigent demand for labor, often a scarce commodity at the local level due to substantial wartime casualties, found its remedy during the 1950s and 1960s. Within this epoch of economic expansion, the Mediterranean region seamlessly fulfills the role of a reservoir of cost-effective labor. The European nations undergoing robust economic growth extend the purview of their labor markets to encompass not only other European States but also nations from the southern Mediterranean, such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.¹³

The duo posits that the seminal event of the 1973 oil shock, coupled with the subsequent global recession, precipitated the implementation of stringent immigration policies within the European countries reliant on labor influx. The repercussions of this recession wrought an enduring transformation in the intricate interplay of global and European migratory patterns. This epochal shift in movement dynamics engendered an escalating surge of migratory pressures emanating from the developing nations. Interestingly, the closure of borders does not impede the migratory currents; rather, migrants adeptly navigate novel avenues to surmount normative barriers. Notably, migratory flows originating from North Africa capitalize on the absence of regulatory frameworks within host countries. These flows are

¹² F. R. ARAVENA, *Preface, The White Paper on Illicit Economies and Organized Crime in Africa*, p. 9.

¹³ E. MORETTI - E. CELA, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, p. 120.

distinctly oriented towards the well-familiar northern periphery of the Mediterranean, thereby catalyzing a metamorphosis from a mere “transitory land” to a “definitive destination” for the immigrants.¹⁴ Furthermore, the pronounced economic disparities prevalent among Africa, the Middle East, and Europe serve as compelling impetuses compelling individuals to pursue enhanced employment prospects and elevated living standards through ventures fraught with peril. This discernible trend is particularly conspicuous in the migratory flux from sub-Saharan Africa toward the European continent.

The culmination of a chapter characterized by colonization in Africa and Asia, coupled with the incremental amelioration of living standards within a multitude of erstwhile European colonies, heralded the advent of a subsequent era. This epoch not only facilitated the emigration of individuals from these nations but also paved the way for their migration primarily toward their former colonial metropolises, driven by the resonance of linguistic-cultural congruence that had evolved during the colonial regime.¹⁵

The political determinant equivalently assumes a pivotal role in this discernible pattern. The confluence of political volatility, protracted armed hostilities and egregious transgressions of human rights in nations of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia has precipitated a substantial exodus of refugees traversing the Mediterranean region. In this instance, Tara Brian elucidates that persistent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa region has engendered significant forced displacement, thereby catalyzing migratory flows not only from the Middle East and North Africa but also emanating from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, traversing through the Middle East and North Africa corridor *en route* to Europe. The latter phenomenon has assumed paramount importance in the discourse surrounding global in-migration and asylum policies.¹⁶ During 2016, approximately 1.7 million migrants embarked on irregular entries into Europe, their origins or transit points invariably intersecting with the Middle East and North Africa region. In tandem, the Middle East and North Africa hosted approximately 3 million refugees, while an additional 2.8 million sought sanctuary within Turkey.¹⁷

In certain instances, transformative political shifts have engendered a milieu of instability, thereby inciting coerced migrations, as exemplified by the conflicts that unfolded in the erstwhile Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The etiology of the Arab Spring, meticulously outlined by Erzsébet N. Rózsa and colleagues, principally originates from domestic intricacies. These encompass a spectrum of issues encompassing deficient democratic frameworks, transgressions against human rights, pervasive graft, economic recession, unemployment, acute destitution, soaring food costs, and an array of demographic dynamics. These encompass a substantial proportion of educated and disenchanting youth alongside centralized systems that perpetuate the marginalization of populations residing beyond capital cities—an overarching dynamic that pervades both the African and Asian continents.¹⁸

Much akin to the Arab Spring, the recent spate of coups and protests in sub-Saharan Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger etc) has been strategically orchestrated to supplant prevailing regimes. Conversely, in other demonstrations across these continents, the focal aspiration pertains to the enhancement of living standards. As underscored by Stephan Rosiny, the response of the ruling elite toward these protesters has been variegated: ranging from the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁶ B. TARA, *The Middle East and North Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 1.

¹⁷ UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends 2016*, p. 6

https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2017/04/midyeartrends_2016.pdf

¹⁸ E. N. RÓZSA *et alii*, *The Arab Spring: Its Impact on the Region and on the Middle East Conference; Policy Brief in Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East*, (2012) n. 9/10, p. 1.

introduction of ostensibly reformative measures orchestrated from the top-down to endeavors aimed at placating social unrest through concessions, or conversely, employing repressive measures and resorting to armed coercion.¹⁹

This substantiates the perspective advanced by Moretti and Cela, asserting that Europe finds itself traversed by a multitude of refugees and entire populations compelled into exile due to multifarious factors, including inter-ethnic and interreligious conflicts, the ascendancy of totalitarian regimes, as well as intricate economic determinants.²⁰ While the uprisings are propelled by aspirations toward political liberty, human dignity, and equitable social constructs, their aftermath has engendered intricate and frequently somber ramifications: a discernible augmentation in migratory movements across the expanse of the Mediterranean Sea. The dearth of secure and sanctioned channels for migration has notably augmented the proliferation of perilous and frequently fatal episodes.

In light of these circumstances, Tara concisely elucidates that the act of departing from conflict-ridden nations within the Middle East or traversing through North Africa gives rise to formidable and perilous hazards that manifest long before migrants approach the European borders. Furthermore, individuals find themselves unable to extricate themselves from the throes of conflict and migrate to secure regions. Indeed, the Middle East has borne witness to the plight of hundreds of thousands ensnared within conflict zones or marooned along border territories, impeded from traversing into neighboring nations. In parallel, migrants in North Africa may encounter protracted predicaments within precarious transit countries. For him, although comprehensive datasets concerning migrant fatalities in the Middle East and North Africa region are scarce, compelling anecdotal accounts from migrants allude to pervasive and life-threatening perils. The available data, albeit incomplete, underscore an annual toll in the thousands, with a multitude of deaths likely remaining unrecorded.²¹

The climatic element unquestionably constitutes a paramount consideration within this framework. Impediments associated with climate change, which encompass phenomena such as droughts, desertification, and the inexorable rise of sea levels, have the potential to exacerbate migratory trends by undermining sustenance avenues and exacerbating the scarcity of resources. As elucidated by David J. Kaczan and Jennifer Orgill-Meyer, concerns regarding the anthropogenic consequences of climate change have given rise to prognostications regarding the behavioral responses of inhabitants residing within regions susceptible to the vicissitudes of drought, inundation, and shifts in temperature. Preliminary inquiries cautioned that climatic transformations would precipitate remarkable upsurges in human migration, as households encountered impediments to acclimating to the exigencies imposed by climatic fluctuations. More recently, empirical investigations that have directed their focus towards observed climatic phenomena and trends have meticulously chronicled the nuances of migration dynamics, contingent upon multifarious facets, including the gravity of the occurrence and the migratory capacity of households, among other determinants.²²

¹⁹ S. ROSINY, *The Arab Spring: Triggers, Dynamics and Prospects* in *GIGA Focus International Edition English*, (2012), n. 1.

<https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/the-arab-spring-triggers-dynamics-and-prospects>

²⁰ E. MORETTI - E. CELA, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, p. 120.

²¹ B. TARA, *The Middle East and North Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 1.

²² D. J. KACZAN - J. ORGILL-MEYER, *The Impact of Climate Change on Migration: A Synthesis of Recent Empirical Insights in Climatic Change*, CLVIII (2020), pp. 281–300.

The current crisis and the European Union Legislation

It is now unequivocally established that the European nations adorned with Mediterranean coastlines have exhibited a confluence of shared attributes concerning their socio-economic advancement and migratory inflow. In fact, one can readily invoke the scholarly observation of Russell Kings to denote the emergence of a discernible “Mediterranean migratory mode”.²³ Moretti and Cela discern that these influxes of migrants have undergone a metamorphosis in their organizational paradigms, diverging notably from the meticulously orchestrated frameworks of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁴ A sense of spontaneity, coupled with the unanticipated receptivity of the host countries, fosters migratory entries, culminating in the pervasive irregularity that constitutes the hallmark of this particular model.

Geopolitical shifts, the incremental expansion of the European Union (EU), and the escalating migratory pressures exerted upon Europe have catalyzed a heightened consciousness among European nations regarding the imperative for a collective approach to immigration policy. To redress the conspicuous dearth of regulatory mechanisms and to grapple with the burgeoning cohorts of irregular migrants, the concerned nations have recurrently resorted to the utilization of amnesties. Initially conceived as a tool for the regularization of extant unauthorized immigrants within the country’s borders, this instrument has inadvertently enticed irregular migrants, driven by the lack of substantive planning and the iterative nature of amnesty provisions. The situation is further complicated by the contemporary reality that migratory currents towards southern Europe are no longer confined solely to emanate from the Mediterranean basin, as was the prevailing trend in the post-war era; rather, they originate from a multitude of source countries.²⁵

Deliberations have been initiated concerning the management of immigration within the European Community, as well as the pursuit of a harmonized trajectory that ought to epitomize the immigration frameworks across EU Member States. Nonetheless, the endeavors of these Member States appear to disproportionately prioritize the fortification and hermetic sealing of their borders over fostering interlocution and collaborative strategies.

Within the Mediterranean context, the inability of recipient societies to perceive migration through the lens of a profoundly transformed geopolitical global order, coupled with the adoption of predominantly stringent legislative measures, has conspicuously failed to facilitate effective governance of this phenomenon or the mitigation of migrant inflows. Paradoxically, the policies of repulsion towards immigration have tragically converted the Mediterranean into a graveyard for migrants. Furthermore, the neglect to adopt and execute integration policies has frequently hindered the societal assimilation of migrants already established within European nations, exacerbating the tenuousness of their legal standing and culminating in a dearth of entitlements and their resultant marginalization within the social fabric.²⁶

The recent geopolitical conflicts prevailing within the Mediterranean region, coupled with the formidable barriers through visa processes, impeding entry into European nations, have engendered a surge in the populace endeavoring to reach European shores aboard rudimentary vessels traversing the Mediterranean. The tragic events that have unfolded off the coast of Lampedusa and other locales have borne witness to the loss of countless lives.

²³ R. KING, *Southern Europe in the Changing Global Map of Migration* in R. KING - G. LAZARIDIS et al (eds.), *Eldorado or fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2000, pp. 3–26.

²⁴ E. MORETTI - E. CELA, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, p. 121

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

In response to the Lampedusa catastrophe of 2013, wherein 350 migrants met their unfortunate demise, the European Commission's reaction materialized in the establishment of a Mediterranean Task Force (October 2013). This task force proffered a series of strategies aimed at averting further loss of life in the Mediterranean expanse: fostering enhanced collaboration with nations beyond the European periphery; formulating schemes for regional safeguarding; expanding avenues for legitimate entry into Europe; waging a campaign against the scourges of human trafficking, illicit smuggling, and organized criminal enterprises; heightening surveillance of maritime boundaries; facilitating synergy between the Frontex and Eurosur agencies; and furnishing aid to EU Member States confronting substantial migratory pressures.²⁷ Again, a palpable emphasis appears to be placed on matters of security, perpetuating Europe's inclination to retreat behind the protective facade of its enchanted citadel.

The 1995 Barcelona Conference, orchestrated to augment the Mediterranean's stature as a conduit for interlocution with Arab nations, ignited optimistic aspirations that, alas, have remained unfulfilled due to the dominion of Eurocentric proclivities within EU policies. Subsequent to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, there has been an observable pivot towards subjects pertaining to security, counter-terrorism initiatives, and the combat against illicit immigration. This paradigm shift has laid bare Europe's perspective that views the Mediterranean as a maritime bulwark demarcating two distinct worlds, where one realm perceives the other as an existential affront to its own identity. Consequently, diplomatic ties with countries encompassing the southern Mediterranean basin have been structured not upon principles of mutual reciprocity and all-encompassing policies, but rather have hinged upon unilateral dictates and prescriptive measures.²⁸

From the foregoing analysis, the intricate interplay between Europe and the Mediterranean region underscores the inherent tensions and perceptual dissonances that shape their interactions. It becomes apparent that a reevaluation of policy paradigms is warranted, predicated upon a more equitable and inclusive approach fostering dialogue and cooperation between these interconnected domains.

Comprehending the intricate interplay of push and pull factors that propel migrants to embark upon perilous maritime voyages holds paramount importance in effectively grappling with the current crisis. Push factors, encompassing climate conditions, armed conflicts, political tumult, egregious human rights transgressions, and dire impoverishment, compel individuals to forsake their domiciles in pursuit of sanctuary and enhanced prospects. Conversely, pull factors, exemplified by the allure of economic promise, ameliorated living circumstances, and the prospect of familial reunification, exert a magnetic force, luring migrants toward the shores of Europe.

The allure attributed to the "European dream", encapsulating Europe's image as a sanctuary replete with stability, affluence, and untrammelled liberty, assumes a pivotal role in galvanizing migrants to embark upon hazardous maritime passages. Europe's comparably favorable standards of living, all-encompassing social welfare frameworks, and unflinching commitment to human rights conspire to create an irresistible allure for those in quest of respite from adversity and jeopardy. Nevertheless, the veracity of this narrative oftentimes falls short of expectations, as migrants encounter an array of challenges, spanning from prejudicial treatment and exploitation to constrained access to legal safeguards.

²⁷ E. MORETTI - E. CELA, *Rivista Italiana di Economia Demografia e Statistica*, pp. 124- 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

The ramifications in terms of humanitarian consequences loom substantial. Across the passage of time, a multitude of migrants have met their demise or disappeared amidst the vast expanses of the ocean, becoming casualties of shipwrecks, capsizing, and other lamentable occurrences. The living conditions endured by the immigrants within these vessels are situated at the very precipice of acceptable standards of human dignity. These fatalities serve as a solemn and poignant testament to the grave outcomes that materialize when individuals are compelled to undertake acts of desperation as a consequence of circumstances over which they hold scant sway. This predicament has elicited profound ethical and moral inquiries regarding the collective responsibility of the global community to ensure the safeguarding and provision of succor to those imperiled, irrespective of their geographic provenance.

The enormity of the crisis has galvanized international organizations, governmental bodies, and non-governmental entities into decisive action. Deployments of search and rescue endeavors have been initiated with the primary aim of salvaging lives amidst the maritime expanse, while concurrent endeavors have been directed towards tackling the foundational drivers of migration through interventions encompassing developmental aid, conflict mitigation, and diplomatic overtures. Nevertheless, persistent discussions revolving around the apportionment of responsibility and the delineation of policy paradigms persistently undermine the attainment of harmonized and collective reactions.

Migration Patterns

The Missing Migrant Project (MMP), an initiative implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to document the deaths and disappearances of people in the process of migration towards an international destination, indicates that alternative irregular migration pathways for gaining entry into Europe also exist, encompassing maritime voyages from Africa to the Spanish Canary Islands and Comoros to French Mayotte, as well as overland traversals spanning the Turkey-Greece border and the Balkan region. The phenomenon, as per the aforementioned organization, manifests itself across three primary conduits, converging upon Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. It is crucial to underscore that these designated routes are not invariably adhered to and may, in fact, intersect. It is noteworthy that journalists and civil society organizations have diligently chronicled the perils inherent in these migratory conduits since the early 1990s. Moreover, beginning in 2014, the MMP has meticulously documented the tragic toll, recording more than 20,000 fatalities and instances of individuals vanishing in the Mediterranean Sea.²⁹

As per the above institution's analysis, the Central Mediterranean route represents the maritime transit from North Africa to Italy, with Malta being a secondary point of arrival. Migrants embarking on this trajectory typically harbor aspirations of reaching the Italian coastline, originating from various North African nations that share Mediterranean borders. Historically, Libya has served as a prominent departure point, fulfilling both the role of a destination and a transit nation. However, there is a discernible but comparatively modest surge in departures from Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria. Notably, Tunisia has witnessed a pronounced escalation in departures, with Tunisian nationals constituting a majority, exceeding 60 percent, of Central Mediterranean crossings in 2020.³⁰ In accordance with the research conducted by Bram Frouws and Colin Sollitt, a notably diminished proportion of the overall migrant population embarking upon the Central Mediterranean route originates from

²⁹ MMP, 28.228 *Missing Migrants Recorded in the Mediterranean (Since 2014), Migration Within the Mediterranean* <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

Egypt. Certain reports even posit that Egypt is selected as a comparatively more secure alternative to Libya.³¹

During the interlude spanning from 1997 to 2010, as per the institution, Italy experienced an annual average of approximately 23,000 migrant arrivals via the Mediterranean route. Nonetheless, this figure dwindled to fewer than 10,000 between 2009 and 2010. Subsequently, in 2011, there was a dramatic upswing in the number of migrants arriving in Europe via the Central Mediterranean route, with Italy registering 62,692 sea arrivals—an astounding thirteen-fold increase compared to the 4,406 arrivals recorded in 2010. While migrant arrivals in Italy remained elevated in the years after 2011, a decline was observed in mid-2017. However, discerning whether this decline is indicative of an actual reduction in arrivals or is attributable to increased interceptions of migrants at sea by North African authorities and/or elevated incidents of fatalities at sea remains ambiguous. The former scenario is particularly evident, given the heightened frequency of individuals being repatriated to North African shores in recent years. Notably, interceptions by the Tunisian and Libyan coast guards accounted for merely 8 percent of all search and rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean in 2016. In stark contrast, by 2018, this figure had surged to 49 percent, reflecting a notable shift. Several factors underpin this transformation, including the reduced maritime patrol zone enforced by Italian authorities and the reallocation of EU/Frontex assets from maritime vessels to drones, which are incapable of performing sea rescue operations.³²

The Western Mediterranean route region has historically served as a pivotal nexus connecting North Africa and Spain, a phenomenon perpetuated over millennia, reports the organization. This therefore, encompasses various sub-routes, including maritime expeditions originating from Morocco and the western littoral of Algeria, traversing the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alborán Sea. Additionally, a terrestrial route exists, leading to Ceuta and Melilla, two autonomous Spanish enclaves situated in North Africa. The onset of irregular migration to Spain ensued following Spain's implementation of visa prerequisites for many North African nations in 1991, as an integral facet of the Schengen process.

Predominantly, migrants embarking on this trajectory hail from Morocco, a proximate neighbor to Spain, with the shortest distance between the two countries measuring a mere 14.4 kilometers at its closest point. Nevertheless, since the mid-2010s, there has emerged a nascent yet discernible uptick in maritime departures from the western shores of Algeria to mainland Spain. Notably, Moroccans constitute the most prevalent nationality among those who have accessed Spain through the Western Mediterranean route, with a majority of them being young males. Nonetheless, by Mark Micallef's analysis, the volume of arrivals into Italy from Libya experienced an exponential surge in 2014, driven by the influx of over 42,000 Syrian refugees seeking asylum in Europe, alongside transformations within the illicit trafficking landscape following the overthrow of the erstwhile Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi.³³

For MMP, the Eastern Mediterranean route encompasses maritime migration commencing from Turkey and directed towards Greece, with additional endpoints encompassing Cyprus and Bulgaria. Remarkably, in the year 2015, this particular route emerged as the preeminent conduit for irregular ingress into Europe, witnessing an astonishing surge of nearly one million migrants embarking on the perilous journey across the Mediterranean *en route* to Europe as

³¹ B. FROUWS – C. SOLLITT, *Migration through Egypt: The safe alternative to Libya?* in *Mixed Migration Centre*, 9 August 2016

<https://mixedmigration.org/articles/migration-through-egypt-the-safe-alternative-to-libya/>

³² FRONTEX, *European Border and Coast Guard Agency: Risk Analysis for 2017*, Warsaw 2017, pp. 6-10.

https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf

³³ M. MICALLEF, *The Human Conveyor Belt: Trends in Human Trafficking and Smuggling in Post-Revolution Libya* in *The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, Geneva 2017.

per IOM in 2021. After the implementation of the EU–Turkey agreement in late March 2016, the utilization of this maritime passage experienced a precipitous decline. Consequently, the volume of individuals availing themselves of this corridor has consistently remained significantly below the zenith witnessed in 2015. Predominantly, this migratory route functions as a channel for individuals originating from the Middle East and South Asia compelled to seek refuge due to the protracted conflict and pervasive instability plaguing their homelands. Noteworthy among these migrants are nationals hailing from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, who constitute the predominant demographic composition along this route.³⁴

A Comprehensive Analysis of Mortality Rate

In the comprehensive survey conducted by the Mixed Migration Hub (MHub), encompassing 380 migrants who successfully reached the shores of Italy in the year 2016, a significant proportion, precisely two-thirds, corresponding to 65%, attested to the grim and distressing phenomenon of having borne witness to one or more deaths throughout the course of their arduous odyssey. This distressing occurrence was primarily concentrated in the fraught territories of Libya, constituting 44% of the reported incidents, closely followed by the unforgiving expanse of the Sahara Desert, where 38% of these distressing events unfolded.³⁵ In the context of deaths recorded within Libya, an overwhelming majority, surpassing 80% were ascribed to instances of severe physical maltreatment. In stark contrast, the preponderance of deaths registered in the inhospitable expanse of the Sahara was primarily attributable to the adverse environmental conditions endured during the perilous journey and the grievous neglect exhibited by unscrupulous smugglers.

Drawing from interviews conducted with a substantive cohort of 3,560 migrants hailing from the Horn of Africa during the period spanning from 2014 to early 2017, the Danish Refugee Council's Mixed Migration Monitoring Mechanism Initiative, meticulously documented an alarming tally of more than 2,500 fatalities. These somber accounts were predominantly relayed by migrant interviewees who had borne witness to these tragic events, with the primary locus of such occurrences situated within the fraught regions of Libya and Sudan.³⁶ Conversely, when we turn our attention to the findings derived from media reports and various other reputable sources, the *Global Migration Data Analysis Centre* (GMDAC) reported a total of 6,377 mortalities in both the Mediterranean and the North African region for the year 2016.³⁷ These grim mortalities could be attributed to ailments, dehydration, malnutrition, or exposure, instances of severe abuse culminating in death or outright homicides.

The Central Mediterranean route stands as the most perilous migration corridor globally, bearing witness to an alarming tally of over 17,000 documented deaths and disappearances, as meticulously documented by MMP since 2014. This grim distinction arises from the considerable duration of the maritime voyage, spanning multiple days, compounded by an escalating perilousness stemming from intricate smuggling networks, conspicuous lacunae in search-and-rescue capabilities, and constraints imposed on NGOs. Migrants undertaking this treacherous passage often navigate in unseaworthy, overburdened inflatable vessels, further

³⁴ MMP, 28.228 *Missing Migrants Recorded in the Mediterranean* (Since 2014), *Migration Within the Mediterranean* <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

³⁵ MHub, North Africa Mixed Migration Hub - *Survey Snapshot - Italy*, January 2017

<https://reliefweb.int/report/italy/north-africa-mixed-migration-hub-survey-snapshot-italy-january-2017>

³⁶ C. HORWOOD, Sub-Saharan Africa in *The Middle East and North Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 28.

³⁷ IOM, GMDAC: *Migrant Deaths and Disappearances Worldwide: 2016 Analysis in Data Briefing Series* (2017), n. 8, p. 2

exacerbated by the simultaneous launch of multiple boats, thereby exacerbating the complexity of search and rescue operations.

Upon their arrival in Libya, migrants encounter the most perilous phase of their odyssey. Kidnappings and coerced labor pervade this hostile terrain, wherein migrants frequently find themselves confined within “connection houses”, agricultural estates, warehouses, or comparable clandestine locations. Their captivity is sustained either through laborious toil or detainment until a ransom is extorted. This harrowing ordeal often entails physical beatings, maltreatment, and torment, wielded as instruments to extract larger and swifter ransoms. An array of meticulously documented reports attests to the grim consequences of death, as substantiated by authoritative sources such as Ross Kemp, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in 2016, Amnesty International, and Mark Micalef.³⁸

The phenomenon of arbitrary detention in Libya is rampant, extending even to more informal detention settings controlled by armed factions and the intricate web of smuggling and trafficking networks.³⁹ UNSMIL, in its investigative efforts, has underscored the abhorrent conditions prevailing within detention facilities across Libya. These disconcerting assessments are underscored by an alarming consensus of accounts detailing various forms of torture, encompassing both sexual and physical abuses, as well as coerced labor perpetuated under the aegis of armed groups endowed with access to these detention enclaves. Regrettably, these grievous violations culminate, in some instances, in outright homicides as indicated by UNSMIL.⁴⁰

Additionally, the Central Mediterranean route harbors the highest frequency of disappearances, though it is plausible that a substantial number of fatalities remain unrecorded. For example, Laczko, Singleton, and Black note that; “Crimes committed against migrants, including those leading to death and disappearance, are rarely investigated, let alone reported, which leads to large gaps in the available data on missing migrants”.⁴¹ Data compiled by MMP since 2014 underscores the unsettling fact that the mortal remains of more than 12,000 individuals have been lost at sea along this route. Equally disconcerting is the compelling evidence suggesting the existence of numerous “invisible” shipwrecks, where vessels in distress vanish without a trace, leaving no survivors and consequently eluding formal documentation. As an illustration, MMP's records feature hundreds of human remains discovered on Libyan shores, devoid of any linkage to known shipwrecks. Laczko, Singleton, and Black substantiate this assertion by elucidating that: “Most migrant deaths continue to occur in large unpatrolled spaces, often at sea, and are not necessarily captured in coverage of these ‘crises’. For example, the deaths of migrant women and children are visible in a handful of high-profile incidents, but they are underrepresented in the overall available data”.⁴²

On the Western Mediterranean route, an alarming toll of over 2,000 migrant deaths and disappearances has been meticulously documented since 2014, with the predominant proportion stemming from tragic shipwrecks that transpire during the overseas voyage towards the Spanish mainland. Nevertheless, the terrestrial crossings into the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta have not escaped peril, with MMP records attributing several dozen

³⁸ R. KEMP, *The Migrant Slave Trade is Booming in Libya. Why is the World Ignoring it?* in *The Guardian*, 20 February 2017 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/20/migrant-slave-trade-libya-europe; OHCHR; UNSMIL 2016; Amnesty International 2015; M. Micalef (2015).

³⁹ UNSMIL, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya*, United Nations Security Council, 2016, S/2016/1011.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ F. LACZKO - A. SINGLETON et al., *Executive Summary in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. xi

⁴² *Ibidem*

fatalities to multifarious factors including violence, illness, and the dearth of access to healthcare. Notably, in several instances, inadvertent and violent fatalities have occurred at the fortified border fences of these Spanish enclaves, intricately connected to the desperate attempts of migrants to breach these barriers.⁴³

Since 2014, an alarming tally of nearly 1,700 fatalities and instances of disappearance has been systematically chronicled along the Eastern Mediterranean route, with a noteworthy concentration of 803 of these occurrences confined to the year 2015 alone. In comparison to other Mediterranean migratory pathways, a notably higher percentage of human remains are successfully retrieved and brought ashore, amounting to nearly 1,200 individuals accounted for since 2014. This, in turn, translates into a more comprehensive understanding of the identities and characteristics of those who have met untimely demises. Poignantly, this dataset includes the tragic demise of nearly 500 children, a disheartening number of whom were not yet five years of age. Additionally, the recorded fatalities encompass 266 women and 273 men, predominantly originating from conflict-stricken nations such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The migratory odysseys antecedent to these Mediterranean crossings are equally fraught with considerable peril, frequently necessitating the traversal of desolate terrains like the Sahara Desert and temporary sojourns in nations such as Libya, where the conditions for migrants are commonly marked by substantial hazards. This aligns with the observation made by Laczko, Singleton, and Black that: “The journeys of migrants traveling through or from Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries across the Mediterranean Sea have been widely reported since 2013, but there is little public or policy awareness of the risks migrants encounter before they reach the coasts of Turkey and North Africa”.⁴⁵ Similarly, this sentiment is echoed in Tara’s observation when he articulates that: “Less visible to the public eye, migrants face daunting risks and human rights abuses as they journey through sub-Saharan and Northern Africa to reach the coast. While data are poor, thousands of migrants likely lose their lives each year in the attempt to navigate these overland journeys, with horrific stories of abuse, torture and bonded labor along the way”.⁴⁶

Micallef’s work highlights, that migrants hailing from sub-Saharan African nations access Libya through an array of overland desert routes, primarily traversing the Niger and Sudan regions, with occasional crossings from Egypt or transit through Algeria.⁴⁷ These arduous overland expeditions, as elucidated by Tuesday Reitano and Peter Tinti, expose migrants to a gamut of perils, including threats posed by marauding bandits and unscrupulous smugglers. These threats encompass incidents of robbery, physical abuse and neglect, often culminating in fatalities.⁴⁸ Disturbingly, accounts of sexual abuse and rape have surfaced consistently in interviews with migrants, where sexual favors are occasionally coerced as a form of currency to facilitate progression along the perilous journey.⁴⁹

⁴³ MMP, 28.228 *Missing Migrants Recorded in the Mediterranean* (Since 2014), *Migration Within the Mediterranean* <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ F. LACZKO - A. SINGLETON et al., *Executive Summary in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. xi.

⁴⁶ B. TARA, *The Middle East and North Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 7.

⁴⁷ M. MICALLEF, *The Human Conveyor Belt: Trends in Human Trafficking and Smuggling in Post-Revolution Libya in The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, Geneva 2017.

⁴⁸ T. REITANO - P. TINTI, *Survive and advance: The economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into Europe*, ISS Paper 289 in *Institute for Security Studies -Global Initiative against Organized Crimes*, 2015.

⁴⁹ MHub, *Survey Snapshot: Italy*, 22nd December 2016.

Deplorably, instances have been documented where smugglers callously abandon injured or ailing migrants by the wayside or callously decline to return for individuals who have fallen from moving vehicles. Tragic events in June 2017, such as the report of 44 Ghanaian and Nigerian migrants succumbing to thirst after their vehicle broke down in Northern Niger,⁵⁰ are grim exemplars of such dire circumstances, which regrettably echo in preceding.⁵¹ Moreover, a limited survey conducted by the MHub has divulged that a quarter of recorded deaths within the Sahara can be attributed to smugglers' refusal to halt vehicles when someone falls off.⁵² Moreover, a significant portion of migrants often engage in strenuous labor activities throughout their odyssey to and within Libya, encompassing roles that extend to aiding human traffickers⁵³ or on certain occasions, succumbing to coercive and exploitative forms of indentured or bonded labor.⁵⁴ All these transnational organized crimes and illicit economic factors collectively contribute to the progressive decline in both physical and mental well-being, occasionally culminating in fatal outcomes.

The Course of Action Necessary to Curb the Phenomenon

In response to the migration crisis of the mid-2010s, EU member states implemented a series of policies aimed at fortifying border controls and mitigating the influx of migrants arriving on European shores. These policies encompass heightened surveillance mechanisms, deterrence strategies, and accords with third countries to curtail migration flows. While the overarching aim is to regain dominion over migration management and safeguard European borders, the inadvertent repercussions have been notably deleterious. Consequently, this has engendered a substantive paradigm shift in migration dynamics. This shift is primarily correlated with the fact that the reinforcement of migration policies has compelled migrants to embrace more perilous routes, entailing protracted and exceedingly treacherous maritime voyages. This alteration in migration patterns can be attributed to a confluence of factors.

Foremost among these is the proliferation of Smuggling Networks: The imposition of more stringent controls has, paradoxically augmented the influence of smuggling networks, which capitalize on the desperation of migrants, impelling them to undertake even greater risks. Many observers contend that the implementation of restrictive migration policies and the concomitant reduction in asylum opportunities effectively legitimizes and emboldens smugglers, leaving those who feel compelled to migrate with no recourse but to resort to the most hazardous means conceivable.⁵⁵ Following this premise, Hein de Haas postulates that one of the four discernible “substitution effects” capable of constraining the efficacy of immigration restrictions resides in categorical substitution, facilitated by a strategic realignment toward alternative legal or illicit channels.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *Over 40 people 'die of thirst' in Sahara Desert*, 1 June 2017; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40118370>

⁵¹ BBC, *Niger says 34 migrants found dead in Sahara Desert*, 16 June 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36545015>

⁵² MHub, *North Africa Mixed Migration Hub - Survey Snapshot - Italy*, January 2017 <https://reliefweb.int/report/italy/north-africa-mixed-migration-hub-survey-snapshot-italy-january-2017>

⁵³ R. KEMP, *The Migrant Slave Trade is Booming in Libya. Why is the World Ignoring it?* in *The Guardian*, 20 February 2017 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/20/migrant-slave-trade-libya-europe;

⁵⁴ M. MICALLEF, *The Human Conveyor Belt: Trends in Human Trafficking and Smuggling in Post-Revolution Libya in The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime*, Geneva 2017.

⁵⁵ R. TINTI - T. REITANO, *Migrant, Refugee, Smuggler, Saviour*, Hurst and Company, London 2016; ACHILLI, L. - G. SANCHEZ, *What Does It Mean to Disrupt the Business Models of People Smugglers?* in *European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Migration Policy Centre*, April 2017.

⁵⁶ H. DE HAAS, *The Determinants of International Migration: Conceptualising policy, origin and destination effects*. Working Paper 32, April 2011. DEMIG project paper 2, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford, www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/225/Determinants.pdf

We observe, as elucidated by Chris Horwood, an unmistakable and discernible upward trajectory in the utilization of facilitators, commonly referred to as “people smugglers”, for the facilitation of irregular international border crossings.⁵⁷ Additionally, this trend encompasses the employment of illicit stratagems, including but not limited to document falsification, fraudulent applications, illicit visa procurement, and deliberate visa overstays, to orchestrate transcontinental migration. It is imperative to note that such practices significantly augment the propensity for maritime accidents, given the perilous conditions to which migrants are subjected as they are frequently crammed into overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels.

Secondly, we must consider the prolonged nature of these journeys. The fortification of border security measures and the extra-territorialization of migration controls have compelled migrants to embark on extended and perilous odysseys. Prolonged sojourns at sea inherently escalate the hazards associated with these journeys, encompassing increased risks of accidents, fatigue, and exposure to inclement meteorological conditions. Thirdly, a salient facet to consider is the evolving role of Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations within this context. With the intensification of migration policies, SAR operations in the Mediterranean region have encountered mounting constraints and scrutiny. NGOs that furnish indispensable SAR services have encountered allegations of abetting irregular migration, thereby further constricting their capacity to preserve human lives. Regrettably, the intricate web of more stringent policies has inadvertently contributed to a surge in migrant fatalities.

Horwood’s perspective aligns with our own, as he submits to the overarching argument that these more stringent policy measures not only modify the nature of migration but also fail to reduce the overall volume of migration.⁵⁸ Consequently, many of these policies, albeit unintentionally, engender a pernicious environment in which migrant fatalities become more prevalent. It is worth noting that migrant fatalities and the rampant infringement of human rights experienced by those undertaking these migratory journeys in mixed flows predominantly occur when irregular methods are employed. This is closely associated, albeit not exclusively, with the involvement of people smugglers.

An imperative arises to reassess migration policies. The deployment of more stringent migration policies, distinguished by the repudiation of asylum seekers through pushbacks and the imposition of border closures, conspicuously eschews the sacrosanct principle of safeguarding human lives. Paradoxically, these ostensibly rigorous policies, ostensibly purposed to fortify security apparatuses, often yield counterintuitive outcomes. Reflecting upon several years of emergency policy interventions, wherein the predominant response has been rooted in securitization measures aimed at curbing the influx of migrants, it has become apparent that the compelling factors driving migration far outweigh the often-touted allure of “pull factors.” The implementation of security decrees or assorted forms of blockades is unlikely to effectively deter these arrivals.

When migrants are compelled into the perilous realm of clandestine journeys, they are rendered susceptible to the predations of nefarious criminal networks. By assiduously embracing a more humanitarian ethos, European nations can concomitantly fortify border security by availing migrants of sanctioned avenues for migration. The question of Europe’s solicitude for her international standing looms large. The current migration policies, akin to a pall of ignominy, obfuscate the reputation of European nations on the global stage. Through

⁵⁷ C. HORWOOD, *Sub-Saharan Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 24.

⁵⁸ C. HORWOOD, *Sub-Saharan Africa in Fatal Journeys Volume 3 PART 2, Improving Data on Missing Migrants*, IOM, p. 24.

the conspicuous demonstration of unwavering fealty to humanitarian values, they stand poised to rekindle their stature as bastions of hope and paragons of human rights.

It is imperative to recall that the act of seeking asylum is firmly ensconced within the auspices of international law. Diverse mechanisms and institutional configurations are currently operational to manage various categories of human mobility. However, it is manifestly evident that all individuals involved in these movements necessitate protection. This resonates with the concept of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), an idea that numerous scholars contend should encompass every conceivable manifestation of both natural and human-induced catastrophes. Questions emerge regarding how the international community's imperative of the R2P can be effectively operationalized within such a scenario. This quandary pertains to the absence of a normative framework conducive to safeguarding individuals who, in their quest to evade alternative forms of physical or psychological demise, succumb to fatality. Evidently, addressing this issue necessitates adopting a proactively constructive and preemptive approach, underpinned by the comprehensive transformation of conditions in the regions of origin. This transformation ought to encompass bolstered security measures, the upholding of human rights, the establishment of robust political participation mechanisms, the generation of employment opportunities, and the cultivation of a peaceful environment.

The international community must jointly bear the collective responsibility of providing assistance to the victims of numerous ongoing conflicts. Funds constitute a requisite component, albeit insufficient in isolation. The essential prerequisite for comprehensively encompassing the prevention of forced displacement tragedies within the ambit of the R2P is the presence of political determination. The primary onus of executing R2P rests with governments, as they are tasked with safeguarding their citizens against circumstances that precipitate migration. Consequently, the imperative shift should pivot from conflict to the avenues of dialogue and the respectful preservation of human rights. A culture predicated on the ethos of protection necessitates a dynamic progression of normative frameworks, which, in their evolving nature, serve to foster amicable relations and advance the collective welfare by steadfastly upholding the dignity and rights of individuals in jeopardy.

This explication offers a more nuanced perspective on the protective role assumed by the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its associated 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Europe, bearing the mantle of human rights advocacy, ought to assiduously uphold these juridical tenets by proffering safe and legal avenues for migrant ingress. This may encompass the augmentation of resettlement quotas, the streamlining of visa application procedures for refugees, and the establishment of humanitarian corridors. However, it is incumbent upon Europe to undertake these endeavors with unwavering recognition of the indispensability of international cooperation. The resolution of the Mediterranean migration conundrum necessitates a concerted, multinational effort. European nations should ardently liaise with Mediterranean and North African counterparts to engage in multifaceted endeavors aimed at redressing the etiological factors of migration, ameliorating border control modalities, and dismantling the pernicious infrastructure undergirding human trafficking networks.

The significance of addressing the root causes of migration looms conspicuously. Sustained solutions must concomitantly pivot towards the amelioration of the foundational triggers of migration. Substantial investments in economic development, efficacious conflict resolution mechanisms, and the zealous promotion of human rights within countries of origin hold the potential to mitigate the despair propelling individuals towards perilous sojourns across the Mediterranean. Eradicating criminal networks that have spawned a surge in migration

presents a formidable challenge, one that necessitates a concerted effort to align with the UN 2030 Agenda. These nefarious activities exert a deleterious influence on the realization of sustainable development across the social, political, economic, and environmental dimensions. African nations, in collaboration with their international partners, NGOs, and the corporate sector, must forge a collective endeavor to attain the 17 SDGs outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A heightened commitment from various stakeholders will yield both direct and indirect consequences, granting Africans improved access to essential provisions such as nourishment, quality education, healthcare, gender parity, potable water, fair labor conditions, environmentally responsible practices, and bolstered confidence in institutional structures, thereby emancipating them from prevailing challenges within their homelands.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that engendering localized change of this magnitude remains contingent upon the active participation of the international community. This collaboration must manifest through the facilitation of more organized and expansive legal pathways for the movement of people, alongside the implementation of equitable agricultural, financial, and trade policies. Such policies should be meticulously crafted to avoid deleterious repercussions on economically disadvantaged nations, which could otherwise precipitate involuntary displacement.

Addressing the migration challenge mandates the meticulous execution of comprehensive strategies that adeptly target the foundational determinants of migration within a tripartite framework encompassing economics, politics, and climate change, in conflicts, poverty and the dearth of opportunities. Neglecting to undertake such comprehensive measures may precipitate a profound migration crisis, impervious to mitigation through the mere allocation of resources to coastguard financing.⁵⁹ The focal point of public opinion within the typical African context is directed toward the financial market crisis, the prevailing structure of the economic organization, and the recklessness and avarice of certain managerial and political figures responsible for its onset. The repercussions of this exceedingly intricate crisis bear substantial repercussions on marginalized segments of society, offering a tangible testament to the interdependence and lack of equity prevalent in the contemporary global landscape.

The inaugural query poses the following conundrum: Where do Africa's abundant natural resources find their ultimate destination? The recent series of coup d'états in Africa, spanning from Mali in 2021 to Burkina Faso in 2022 and further to Niger and Gabon in 2023, serve as a compelling testament to the growing discontent among the impoverished masses with systems they perceive as puppet governments, frequently imposed by erstwhile colonial powers. The jubilant reception and enthusiastic support shown by civilians during these military takeovers, often materializing in exuberant street celebrations, underscore the elation of a populace now unshackled from a history of resource exploitation that has left them mired in abject poverty and despair. An anti-colonial vision has taken root deep within the hearts of these people.

It is virtually unquestionable, particularly in the fervent chants of the demonstrators, that they subscribe to the belief that a globalist-neoliberal agenda seeks to facilitate the systematic draining of Africa's resources for use in the European continent and America, serving as an indispensable instrument for the capitalist economic agendas of a neoliberal and globalized world. A discerning individual may ponder: Does some semblance of truth reside within these sentiments? To whom do Africa's treasures rightfully belong? Where should Africa's vast resources be allocated? What impediments have hindered Africa from adopting a unified

⁵⁹ K. MEZRAN – A. PAVIA, *Giorgia Meloni's Foreign Policy and the Mattei Plan for Africa: Balancing Development and Migration Concerns*, in Istituto Affari Internazionali 2023.

currency akin to the Euro or the Dollar? Who assumes the role of currency issuance in select African nations, and who governs the valuation of the said currency?

The resounding query persists: Where should Africa's natural resources rightfully reside? What perplexes observers is that even after the exploitation of African resources, reports persist that African countries remain indebted to these exploiters on an immense scale under the guise of foreign debts. Africa continues to channel its resources back to countries that should, in theory, have utilized these funds for development, thereby mitigating the impetus for mass emigration. Contemplate a child toiling in a gold mine somewhere in Africa; the gold extracted by this child predominantly finds its way into the coffers of western nations. Why cannot these individuals be allowed to prosper from their resources? Alternatively, consider a miner extracting uranium somewhere in Africa to fuel nuclear reactors in western nations, while their populace languishes without access to electricity. Africans forsake their homelands for foreign shores, driven by such inequities, in search of a better life.

Acknowledging the historical injustices, devastations, and errors perpetuated in the past, along with the detrimental consequences of the capitalist-neoliberal economic paradigms, would facilitate and steer a structured and gradual advancement of African economies. This approach would involve the active participation of its people in initiatives necessary to redress the wrongs committed against them, ensuring the recognition of their full and equal dignity and equality. If Africa is unable to secure its true freedom and autonomy, safeguarding its right to economic development and the well-being that its people have hitherto been denied, then prospects for stemming the tide of migration remain bleak.

There appears to be a transient disinterest on the part of major multinational corporations, who remain skeptical about fostering economic development within the African continent, consequently eschewing it as a preferred locus for their investments. Such a disposition seems to be rooted in a neo-colonialist ethos, characterized by a steadfast determination to evade the cultivation of African technocrats who could, over time, supplant their European counterparts. It begs the question: how can one explain that, notwithstanding more than six decades of independence, African countries, blessed with abundant mineral resources and a sizable labor force, persist in their state of impoverishment? Where do the mineral riches of Africa go?

The time for substantive action has arrived, transcending mere rhetoric. It is imperative to counteract the globalization of migration with a corresponding globalization of philanthropic and cooperative efforts. The cultivation of an augmented global partnership, founded on principles of human solidarity and altruism, has the potential to address the predicament of the overwhelming influx of individuals seeking to migrate at present. This sense of solidarity is not merely an ethereal concept but rather a palpable moral obligation stemming from the undeniable reality that collectively, we constitute a singular human family.

Consequently, the imperative lies in devising a long-term solution: the relocation of a segment of production, manufacturing, or processing industries, with a particular emphasis on the agri-food sector, to Africa, thereby addressing the root causes prompting individuals to leave their countries of origin. Africa must attain the capacity to independently cultivate and process its raw materials, especially in the initial stages of the production chain. The era of relying solely on commodity rents has become inadequate, and it is perceived by the local populations as entrenched in exploitation, paternalism, and neo-colonialism. African States must assume authentic roles as partners in their development. Predominantly agrarian-based African economies beckon greater involvement from the Global North, facilitated by technologically innovative partnerships and localized product processing. An African agri-food industry should be cultivated, even if it entails some adjustments to the European Common Agricultural Policy. While other sectors like energy, tourism, and construction hold relevance,

agribusiness undeniably emerges as the most strategically pivotal sector from a migratory standpoint. Such a transformative undertaking necessitates both time and patience.

Contemplation of extensive infrastructural projects is also warranted. Nevertheless, one should not exclusively envision grandiose ventures. Africa experiences a dearth of medium-sized infrastructure, encompassing connecting roads, mid-sized ports, airports, secondary corridors, and their associated logistical networks. Gigantic endeavors alone do not suffice; indeed, while major corridors linking Atlantic Africa to the Indian Ocean, the north-south arterial routes, and the extensive West and Central African coastal road networks are indispensable, equal attention must be granted to secondary routes servicing the inland regions of African nations, where potential migrants often originate.

Then, in order to impede the perpetuation of mass migration, it is imperative that the colonial exploitative paradigm, frequently emblematic of the Global North, undergoes a profound transformation into a framework predicated on mutual benefit. A paradigm shift is warranted in the approach of Europe and America towards third-world nations. It is of utmost importance that a strategy emphasizing technical-economic cooperation supplants the erstwhile practices of colonial exploitation or the proliferation of armament, which precipitate civil strife and conflicts. The judicious development of Africa's vast reservoir of resources is a *sine qua non* for the continent's sustainable advancement. Empowering Africa to harness its latent growth potential will not only attenuate the exodus of its burgeoning youth population but also catalyze the region's prosperity. Migration, in its current trajectory, portends detriment to Africa, as it entails a depletion of its youthful vigor that could otherwise be harnessed for the enrichment of this expansive and resource-endowed territory.

The overarching principle governing the dynamics of Global North versus Global South politics and trade, particularly the interplay between Africa and Europe, as well as America, should be predicated on cooperation rather than exploitation. A policy framework that is meticulously designed to preclude any neo-colonialist inclinations should be actively aligned with the interests and welfare of the African populace. Such policies, first and foremost, must evince an unwavering commitment to the unequivocal right of all nations to embark upon their unique trajectories toward political, economic, and social rejuvenation. This commitment extends to the assertion of sovereign dominion over their indigenous natural resources. This paradigm presents a framework in which industrialist culture should serve as an emancipatory apparatus, encompassing technology, to emancipate nations from both historical and contemporary hegemonic influences. Only through this multifaceted approach can a virtuous cycle of development be established in Africa. A Marshall Plan-style aid package, while valuable, falls short of the requisite long-term industrial vision.

Inextricably intertwined with the economic quandary lies the intricate political conundrum. The exponential surge in the volume of individuals necessitating international protection can be attributed to the burgeoning occurrence of failed States and the resort to violent means for conflict resolution. This, in turn, underscores the deficiencies in global governance, with global powers assuming roles as passive bystanders or exerting remote, manipulative influences in the conflicts driving a substantial populace from their homelands. The pivotal variable required to halt the bloodshed and the coerced displacement of populations is the presence of political determination to attain a concrete resolution. Unfortunately, such resolve appears to be lacking, especially when conflicts are manipulated to serve the economic interests of specific nations. An array of national and regional interests obstructs both the essential political discourse and the contextualization of displacement as an outcome of confrontational international relations.

Amidst the ongoing and escalating crisis of individuals compelled to dislocate from their domiciles, the intricacy of the challenges at hand, coupled with a potential deficit in political resolve, serves to impede the feasibility of viable resolutions. It is aptly contended that this dilemma is predominantly constituted by the challenges of upholding democratic principles. I refrain from embarking upon an exhaustive enumeration of African "democracies" that have adroitly manipulated their constitutions to perpetuate their hold on power or those that have effectively transitioned into de facto monarchies, wherein power is seamlessly transferred amongst familial lines. Regrettably, their prolonged tenures do not ameliorate the living conditions of their fellow citizens; instead, they consign them to what appears to be an enduring state of destitution and wretchedness. The corollary of such governance is glaringly manifest in the form of pervasive conflicts, protracted wars, and frequent coup d'états.

In addition to these entrenched political woes, events ranging from the Arab Spring to recent coups across Africa serve as poignant manifestations of the populace's mounting frustration with a dysfunctional governance system. It is imperative for Africa to wholeheartedly embrace the tenets of democracy and cease the pernicious practice of tailoring constitutions to cater to the proclivities of incumbent leaders and their Western benefactors. This regrettable trend has engendered civil strife, instigating mass migrations that reverberate across the continent. Forcibly displaced individuals possess the potential to serve as a valuable asset in the endeavor of their home country's post-conflict reconstruction and political reconciliation, thus fostering an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. Their intellectual acumen and skill sets can be harnessed to play a constructive role in forging a shared destiny that accrues benefits to the entire populace.

A world where human rights are violated with impunity will never cease engendering refugees of all kinds. Uprooted by conflicts, political upheavals, ethnic purges, religious persecution, and myriad other human rights transgressions, refugees serve as both the conspicuous clarion call of alarm, underscoring profound societal and political deficiencies, and an imperative reminder of their harrowing plight.⁶⁰ No individual, granted the opportunity to reside in their country of origin with due dignity, would experience the compulsion to seek refuge elsewhere. Our endeavor should be directed towards the establishment of a propitious environment within one's homeland.

The inescapable theme of climate change permeates our discourse. The salient role assumed by climate change and other environmental determinants in the migratory dynamics of individuals is incontrovertible. Now, more than ever, the burgeoning apprehensions revolving around climate change imperatively necessitate a revitalized scrutiny of its concomitant implications on human mobility. Currently, a conspicuous dearth of consensus persists regarding the precise characterization of individuals impelled to dislocate owing to environmental degradation or climate change. Nevertheless, the imperative emerges for a term that faithfully encapsulates this phenomenon, which will proffer a robust rationale for the formulation of the requisite framework to ensure their protection.⁶¹

Neither the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) nor its 1997 Kyoto Protocol incorporates any provisions related to specialized assistance or protective measures for those directly ensnared within the vortex of climate change repercussions. In actuality, while the confection of policies predominantly transpires at the State level, a substantial majority of both internal and international migrants tend to gravitate toward sprawling metropolises, frequently establishing abodes within tenuous informal settlements

⁶⁰ Pontifical Council for 'Cor Unum' – *Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People: Refugee: A Challenge to Solidarity*, Libreria Editrice, Vatican City 1992.

⁶¹ R. FATIMA – A. J. WADUD, et al., *Human Rights, Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration: A New Paradigm*, Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, March 2014.

and slums, manifesting an environment replete with degradation and multifarious challenges. Noteworthy, however, are the circumstances surrounding the 2015 World Conference on Disaster-Risk Reduction in Sendai, the 8th Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2015, and the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, each of which presented auspicious platforms to underscore the fundamental humanitarian facets intrinsic to the phenomenon of migration.

Climate change precipitates desertification, food scarcity, water shortages, environmental degradation, and an upsurge in natural calamities. These multifaceted factors collectively culminate in the heightened incidence of forced displacement. Both natural catastrophes and anthropogenic crises expose countless individuals and families to conditions of acute destitution, rendering it untenable for them to maintain their customary places of habitation, despite their fervent desires to do so. This disconcerting situation is further compounded by the observation made by Alfredo Lonoce, highlighting the egregious practice of numerous Western nations utilizing the African continent as a repository for their hazardous waste.⁶² Such injustice is exacerbated by the stark reality that Africa, despite being the continent most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, contributes a mere 4% of global carbon emissions.⁶³

The remedy for this predicament, in our estimation, may be discerned through the concurrent implementation of the dual constructs of a “Dialogue of Civilization” and an “Ethics of Responsibility”. The reality of our century is eloquently articulated by Mary Evelyn Tucker when she implies that there exists a moral imperative not only to safeguard human beings but also to nurture and protect other species and ecosystems.⁶⁴ This catalyzes a discourse of civilization, wherein engaging in open and constructive dialogues, individuals and societies can bridge cultural divides, mitigate misunderstandings, and unearth common ground on ecological issues. This transformative discourse can propel a transition from social justice to ecojustice. Without the exchange of ideas inherent in a discourse of civilization, the entire spectrum of ecosystems and life faces compromise. To attain this, a novel ethical framework must be instituted to ensure sustainable development and a viable future, a tenet underscored by both the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992 and the Earth Charter of 1997. This new ethical paradigm could be likened to what Emmanuel Levinas in many of his works refers to as the “ethics of Relational Responsibility”. Here, responsibility transcends the confines of codified and individualized norms of duty.⁶⁵

Sustainability underscores the significance of collaboration, which is inherently relational. While relational responsibility cannot be bound by rigid rules, this facet of human commitment can inform decision-making processes geared toward sustainability. Ethical relationality emerges as a linchpin for transcending self-interest, be it on an individual or corporate level, as well as commercial objectives, to prioritize responsibility for the viability of earth's ecosystems across professional domains such as management, education, ethics, and business.

This perspective calls for a rekindling of our commitment to caring for and actively participating in the pursuit of both social and ecojustice. It signifies a shift away from

⁶² A. LONOCE, *The Mattei Formula: Africa for Africa*, August 2019, <https://www.studiolonoce.it/articoli/la-formula-mattei-africa-per-africa/>

⁶³ Al Jazeera, *How much does Africa contribute to global carbon emissions?* 4th September 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/4/how-much-does-africa-contribute-to-global-carbon-emissions#:~:text=Comprising%20about%2017%20percent%20of,emissions%20at%201.45%20billion%20tonnes.>

⁶⁴ M. E. TUCKER, *Ethics and Ecology: A primary Challenge of the Dialogue of Civilisation* in L. KEARNS – C. KELLER, *Ecospirit*, Fordham University Press, Fordham 2007.

⁶⁵ T. K. HOSKINS, - B. MARTIN, et al., *The Power of Relational Responsibility* in *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organizational Studies*, XVI (2011) n. 2, pp. 22-27.

anthropocentric values towards biocentric principles, which are essential for enhancing human-earth relations and serving the broader "community of things on earth."

Conclusion

The persistent loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea serves as a poignant and sobering reminder of the imperative for a comprehensive and humanitarian approach to migration. Addressing the root causes of displacement, establishing secure and legal channels for migration, and upholding the principles of solidarity and human rights constitute pivotal measures in averting further humanitarian tragedies. The Mediterranean migrant crisis underscores the profound interconnectedness of our global community and underscores the paramount significance of concerted endeavors aimed at fostering a more equitable and all-encompassing world order.

To achieve this, it is imperative for Europe and America to desist from viewing the global South through the lens of exploitation, opting instead for a partnership characterized by equitable trade relations that do not entail exploitation but mutually beneficial arrangements. Such an approach will stimulate the economies of Southern nations, thereby alleviating their impoverishment that engenders illicit economies and organized crime. It is a vision that vehemently rejects the colonialist perspective of viewing the South as a resource to be ruthlessly exploited, with no regard for its sustainable development or well-being. The objective should be to transform migration into a voluntary option rather than an obligatory imperative.

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