

**Italy and the *Mare Nostrum* Operation.
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Mihaela Mustăţea¹

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Abstract

Migration from poor countries is constantly increasing, but at the same time it is becoming more difficult to legally enter and seek asylum in the European Union. Fences were erected in several countries, such as Hungary, Slovenia, Macedonia and Austria. Due to the lack of opportunities, thousands of desperate people are forced to embark on a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea, considered one of the deadliest seas in the world.

For the past fifteen years, Italy has been increasingly affected by the phenomenon of migrants and applicants for international protection arriving by sea, departing from the coasts of Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. These flows incremented significantly in 2011 related to the political changes in the countries of North Africa (especially in Tunisia and Libya), called the "Arab Spring," and with the intensification of the conflict in Syria. Since the Arab uprisings, the Mediterranean region has been confronted with unprecedented refugee and migratory fluxes: in 2014 over 170.000 people arrived by sea, of which more than 42.000 Syrian citizens fleeing the war.

As a consequence of their geographical position and the implementation of the Dublin Regulation – which sets the procedures for asylum applications in the European Union –

¹ Research assistant, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies, University of Bucharest, PhD in History.

countries of first arrival such Italy, Greece, and, to a lesser extent, Spain have been most affected.

This paper analyses the Italian's center-left government decision to launch the Mare Nostrum operation, opening the path for the Search and Humanitarian missions. Mare Nostrum was a year-long naval and air operation initiated by the Italian government on October 18, 2013 after the greatly mediatized Lampedusa shipwrecks of 3rd and 11th of October 2013 near the island of Lampedusa when 636 migrants died off the Italian coast. The Italian operation aimed to identify boats in distress and to launch a proactive "Search and Rescue" operation with a policing and anti-smuggling component, covered an area of 70.000 square kilometers, and operated close to the Libyan coast.

Leading this military-humanitarian operation, Italy succeeded in raising the awareness of EU member states' governments and public opinion that the Mediterranean migration crisis affects all EU member states - not just Italy or other South-European countries.

The Mare Nostrum operation ended suddenly, after a series of harsh critics, largely because of a lack of European Union supported being considered a „pull factor" for migration, but its consequence was that it paved the way for a greater humanitarian response to this complex phenomenon that affects the economic, social and security aspects of Europe in the world of mass human movements. It was superseded by Frontex's Operation Triton, an operation which had no naval or air force of its own, instead, it had to rely on the help of the EU countries. The aim of the new European operation led by Italy as host state was not to save human lives but, basically it was a border control operation. Triton replaced also two old operations the agency used to coordinate in the South of Italy, Hermes which controlled the border along the Italian coastline, and Aeneas which controlled migrant flows from Egypt and Turkey (via Greece) to Italy. Another mission under Italian naval command and headquartered in Rome was the Sophia Operation, launched in June 2015, an anti-people smuggling mission in the Mediterranean Sea, ended in March 2019. The ending decision relates to Italy's reluctance to allow rescued people to disembark in its own ports.

Nowadays, the European Union is facing a severe migrants and refugees crisis,² despite its increased efforts to reduce illegal land and sea migration. The growth in the number of arrivals has created the perception of an unmanageable humanitarian crisis and made the public increasingly aware of the issue. At the same time, there is an explosion of scholarly research, there are many think-thanks and specialists of the field, migration is at the top of the global political agenda and media interest for this issue is constantly expanding.

Despite strong evidence that migrants contribute positively to economies and cultures alike, many European governments have focused on containing and reducing migration at all costs. With a growing anti-immigration sentiment in Europe, governments are still struggling to reach a consensus on how to handle the continuing refugee crisis. Attempts to introduce quotas for the distribution of refugees among EU member states have largely failed. Conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere show no signs coming to an end, and the death number from refugee sea crossings is on the rise.

There are three main illegal migratory routes towards the European Union, but the Central Mediterranean route has remained for a long time the primary entry point to Europe,³ putting Italy under great pressure and reaching a

² The terms refugee and migrant are often used interchangeably, but their meanings are quite different, legally speaking: The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which took effect in 1954, defines a refugee as someone who is fleeing conflict or persecution (for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinions) and is seeking refuge across international borders. Moreover, an asylum seeker is someone who has submitted a request for asylum in a country other than his own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. If the request is denied, the person must leave the country and may be expelled. On the other hand, the migrant is someone who makes a conscious choice to leave his home country for a better life or for economic gain. It is a choice rather than a matter of life and death. An irregular migrant is someone who lacks legal status in a transit or host country because of unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry or an expired visa. In reality, these two groups overlap, that's why we use migrant as a generic term for all groups. For more details see [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-managing-the-eu-migration-crisis/\\$FILE/ey-managing-the-eu-migration-crisis.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-managing-the-eu-migration-crisis/$FILE/ey-managing-the-eu-migration-crisis.pdf)

³ Migrants and refugees reach Europe via three primary routes: Central Mediterranean route is the main migratory route into the EU, departed from North Africa (Libya, Tunisia or Egypt). It still remains an extremely dangerous route and it dominated migration flows during 2014. In

breaking point in its ability to meet the European Union standards for receiving and processing migration applications so-called Dublin Regulation.⁴ (Figure 1.)

2015 this route has diminished in use partly due to increased instability in Libya, but remained the primary entry-point for sub-Saharan nationals, like Eritreans and Nigerians. In 2016, 181.376 migrants were detected on the Central Mediterranean route, which was the highest number ever recorded in the region. Most of the migrants departed from Libya, a transit country, where the smuggling and trafficking networks broke out. In 2018, Tunisia replaced Libya as the main country of departure for migrants detected on this route. Since February 2018, the EU Operation *Themis* (who replaced operation *Triton*) supports Italy with border control, surveillance and search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean. The other route is the so-called "Balkan Route" that involves Greece. The Eastern Mediterranean route became the primary maritime route in 2015, when 885.000 used it, being considered "a safer" and certainly much shorter than the much longer Central Mediterranean route. The implementation of the **EU-Turkey** statement in **March 2016** was a response to the refugee crisis created by Syrian war, providing financial resources to Turkey (two tranches of €3 billion, the first one was set up in 2016) to improve the socio-economic situation of Syrian refugees (3, 5 million people). Also this agreement played a key role in reducing irregular arrivals from Turkey to the EU. The effects were immediate, the illegal arrivals decreased significantly with 97% lower than the period before the agreement. Finally, the third route, the Western Mediterranean route (the area stretching between Spain and Morocco) is the most frequent route into Europe in 2018 with Morocco as the main departure point for migrants, willing to reach the southern coast of Spain. For more information see <https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/western-mediterranean-route/>

⁴ The intergovernmental cooperation between the EU member states in the area of migration and asylum was institutionalized by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 under the third pillar on justice and home affairs. Before this date, the policy of immigration and asylum was integrated as an element of Community external policy, namely a joint approach to combat, first of all, the illegal immigration. Following that, in 1994 the European Commission emphasized the need for a comprehensive policy approach to migration on the supranational level that embraced all phases of the migration process. In 1999, with the Treaty of Amsterdam entered into force, the EU received the competences to legislate in the areas of migration and asylum, adopting the legislative instruments on visas, border control, and other policies related to the free movement of persons. On this basis, a European common migration policy was developed. In 2005, it was proclaimed the so-called Global Approach to Migration, which means cooperation with third countries on migration and asylum matters, covering three dimensions of this phenomenon: legal economic migration, irregular migration, and migration and development. In 2011, the Global Approach to Migration was transformed into the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), adding "the international protection and asylum" as a fourth dimension. The European Commission stressed the need to establish a partnership with third countries in the field of migration under the GAMM. The aim of the new policy was to outline the new aspects of migration dynamics and the links between migration trends and the search for more adequate methods of analyses of new migration trends. Until the Arab Spring, the role of the North African countries were to make up a sanitary cordon, providing security against illegal immigration along Europe's southern periphery. Moreover, the result of this policy was the emergence of new forms of "international-migration relations" between EU member states and the ten Middle Eastern and North African countries (MENA) that have entered into an agreement with the EU within what is known as the European Neighborhood Policy (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia). For more information about this cooperation see Andrew Geddes, *The European Union's international-migration relations toward Middle Eastern and North African countries* in Michael Bommers, Heinz Fassman, Wiebke

Therefore, Italy became, first of all, a transit country for thousands of migrants whose purpose is to reach wealthier nations, such as France, Germany, United Kingdom or Nordic countries. Faced with an emergency situation in the fall of 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel opted for an open Europe, but the perception of migrants in many European societies tended to be negative, and the public response seems to show that the migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped.

Figure 1. Routes for irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea.



Source: Médecins sans Frontières.

The so-called Arab Spring has affected the delicate balance on which the Euro-Mediterranean border-control regime has been built. Since then the Mediterranean region has been confronted with unprecedented refugee and migratory fluxes. At the same time, the European free movement arrangements

Sievers (eds), "Migration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe," Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2014, pp. 139-140; Furthermore, in 2013 the Dublin agreement makes member states of first entry in the Mediterranean the sole states responsible for processing asylum applications. EU Regulation no.604/2013, known as Dublin III Regulation suggests that the country where non-EU persons first enter the EU is responsible for accepting and examining their asylum applications in <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0604&from=en>.

which enable citizens to cross internal borders without being subjected to border checks are facing great challenges, and in the past several Schengen Member States temporarily reintroduced border controls. The massive maritime arrivals threaten to undermine confidence in the European legal order and the Dublin Convention. These also represented a key catalyst of the EU migration and border control regime crisis.

In April 2011, at the European Justice and Home Affairs meeting, the German Interior Minister Hans Peter Friederich accused Rome of violating the Schengen spirit because of the Italian government's unilateral decision to issue the temporary-residence permit for humanitarian reasons to the Tunisian migrants, and thus tens of thousands of migrants had the opportunity to reach other European states thanks to the European free-movement space:

"We cannot accept that economic migrants come through Italy. We have taken note of the fact that Italians are issuing temporary-residence permits, in effect allowing illegal immigrants to travel across Europe. The French are strengthening their border controls, Austria is thinking about it. It is not in Europe's best interest if member states are forced to resume internal border controls. We hope the Italians will fulfill their obligations."⁵

In fact, the Italian attitude in the face of the migratory crisis was to unilaterally activate the temporary-protection instrument the European institutions were reluctant to resort to. Moreover, the European institutions rejected the humanitarian-emergency reading of the Tunisian influx on Italian shores, choosing instead to present it as an ordinary case of mixed irregular

⁵ Giuseppe Campesi, *The Arab Spring and the crisis of the European border regime: manufacturing emergency in the Lampedusa crisis*, Florence, European University Institute, 2011, p. 15, in https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/19375/RSCAS_2011_59.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

migration⁶ to be handled by way of the regular police procedure for identifying and repatriating illegal immigrants.⁷ Also, the Italian request was turned down on the grounds that the inflows to Italy and Malta could not be regarded as a „massive influx” because the numbers of asylum-seekers were not large enough to meet the TPD’s criteria.⁸ Approximately 18. 000 humanitarian permits were issued by the Italian authorities which permitted most of the Tunisian migrants who arrived in Italy between 1 January and 6 April 2011 to get a six months temporary residence. Many of them drifted into irregularity and moved on to other European countries, as the permits granted by Italy, allowed for travel within the Schengen zone.⁹

The political tensions between the Italian government and the European partners regarding the Schengen system, and the Italian permanent request for a broader sharing solidarity and responsibility in the migratory management crisis keep going until today.

But it became obvious that the Mediterranean migration represents a global issue, connecting all Europe with sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa), with people attempting to enter

⁶ The mixed migration flows refers to both forced migration and economic migration which follow similar migratory routes and use the same networks and routes to get to Europe.

⁷ Temporary protection (TPD) in the EC/EU has its origins in the Yugoslav wars of dissolution. The European states introduced different schemes to admit displaced people temporarily during the conflict, but there was not a common approach concerning quotas for temporary protection permitted length of stay, and the rights and entitlements to be provided to the Bosnians under temporary protection. The Treaty of Amsterdam opened the way for harmonization in immigration, asylum, visas and external borders. In 2001 it was adopted as a Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC), comprising 9 chapters and 34 articles. The principle of solidarity is treated under Chapter IV, in Articles 24-26. Article 24 refers to the European Refugee Fund while Article 25 notes that “The Member States shall receive persons who are eligible for temporary protection in a spirit of Community solidarity. They shall indicate [...] their capacity to receive such persons” in <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32001L0055&from=EN>

⁸ H. Deniz Genç, Asli Şirin Öner, *Why not activated? The Temporary Protection Directive and the Mystery of Temporary Protection in the European Union* in “International Journal of Political Science & Urban Studies,” March 2019, p. 8.

⁹ <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-EN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

Europe, escaping from wars, persecution and poverty. The Mediterranean migration crisis involves states, international organizations, and non-state actors (especially NGO rescue vessels), deploying its effects beyond the Mediterranean region. Moreover, migration must be understood like a shared responsibility of countries of origin, transit and destination¹⁰

Historically, the movements of people were and still are from overpopulated and underdeveloped world countries towards wealthier ones. In fact, the people's desire to migrate is the sum total of the push factors and pull factors, and the European Union remains one of the most desired destinations worldwide,¹¹ attracting potential migrants from all over the world.¹²

Wars, lack of security, lack of respect for human rights, poverty, lack of economic opportunities, poor governance, corruption and environmental factors are among the drivers of international migration. It's no doubt that there is a tight relationship between human development, economic growth and migration at the global level. Emigration generates large economic benefits for migrants, for their families and for the countries of origin (for example it can reduce

¹⁰ Stefania Panebianco, *The Mare Nostrum Operation and the SAR approach: the Italian response to address the Mediterranean migration crisis* in "EUMedEA Online Working Paper Series", 3-2016, p. 3.

¹¹ According to the United Nations statistics, the number of international migrants in 2017 reached 258 million, up from 248 million in 2015 and 220 million in 2010. The United States has far more migrants than any country, about 50 million, from less than 12 million in 1970. Saudi Arabia, Germany and Russian Federation hosted the second, third and fourth largest numbers of migrants of worldwide, followed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Arab Emirates in United Nations, *International Migration Report 2017* https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf.

¹² The number of people residing in an EU Member State with citizenship of a non-member country on 1 January 2018 was 22.3 million, representing 4.4 % of the EU-28 population. The largest numbers of non-nationals living in the EU Member States on 1 January 2018 were found in Germany (9.7 million persons), the United Kingdom (6.3 million), Italy (5.1 million), France (4.7 million) and Spain (4.6 million). Non-nationals in these five Member States collectively represented 76 % of the total number of non-nationals living in all of the EU Member States, while the same five Member States had a 63 % share of the EU-28's population in https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics#Migrant_population:_22.3_million_non-EU_citizens_living_in_the_EU_on_1_January_2018

unemployment and it can provide significant financial capital flows). On the other hand, the immigration can have a positive effect on the guest labor market by increasing labor supply in sectors and occupations suffering from shortages of workers, and it can also help with easing pressures on pensions systems of high-income countries with rapidly aging populations.¹³

In 2011, as a result of Arabic Spring and the collapse of the political institutions in North Africa, combined with the beginning of the Syrian war, a massive wave of migration took place towards Europe, via the Mediterranean Sea, becoming the largest migrant waves known in Western Europe.

Due to its geographical location, with a coastline and frontier of over 7.000 km at Europe's southern borders, Italy has the greatest exposure to these migratory flows. Italy alone represents about 16% of the Mediterranean coastline. (from a total of 46.000 km of coastline and with 22 coastal States). Its proximity to the North-African countries, Tunisia and Libya in particular, two main migrants' departure countries, Italy confronted a mass irregular migration. Since the 1990s, Italy, and the Trapani and Lampedusa coastlines in particular, have been landing points for thousands of African immigrants. Most of these migrants were from the Horn of Africa (mainly Somalia and Eritrea), with considerable numbers from other African countries such as Nigeria or Sudan.

It should be noted that, historically, the migration flows toward Southern Europe were favored, among others, because of the less regulated migration restrictions in these countries, unlike the countries with tradition in managing the issue of immigration where the restrictions were firmly introduced after the 1973 oil crisis. The foreign migration flows towards Italy developed in a specific economic context characterized by a benevolent attitude towards illegal

¹³ *** International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2018*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 2017, pp. 3-4, in https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

immigrants, increased demand for low-skilled workers, a substantial sector of the underground economy and a new demand for domestic and care services, often informally hired, so-called Mediterranean version of guest workers system.¹⁴

Since 2011, Italy was confronted with serious difficulties, the boat arrivals increased due to the collapse of the government of Libya and Tunis. The number of new migrants from Tunis, Libya and Syria have increased dramatically. According to the statistics provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior, in 2011 the arrivals in the context of the Arab Spring, reached a record value with a total of 62. 692 persons landing on Italian shores compared with 2010, the year before the start of the Arab Spring, were a mere 7.300 people.¹⁵

In 2011, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated, more than 1.500 people drowned or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. This made 2011 until then the deadliest year for this region since UNHCR started to record these statistics in 2006. The previous high point was in 2007 when 630 people were reported dead or missing.¹⁶

At the beginning, the response of the Italian authorities was to announce a "state of emergency" (February 2011), meaning the substantially central government funding provided for a network of reception centers in Sicily and on the Italian mainland in which migrants could be housed. In October 2011, the

¹⁴ Tiziana Caponio, Paolo R. Graziano, *Towards a security-oriented migration policy model? Evidence from Italian case* in Emma Carmel, Alfio Cerami, Theodoros Papadopoulos (eds.), "Migration and Welfare in the new Europe. Social protection and the challenge of integration", Bristol, The Policy Press, 2011, pp. 106-108; Running parallel to these factors, Italy experienced, among the others Southern states, but first Italy and later Spain, Greece and Portugal in this order, a consistent decline of fertility rates, from 2,4-3,1 to 1,4-1, population aging and a dramatic labor shortage in Marek Okólski, *Transition from emigration to immigration: Is it the destiny of modern European countries?* in Marek Okólski (ed), "European immigrations: trends, structures and policy implications," Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012, pp. 33-34.

¹⁵ ***Council of Europe, *Report Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons The arrival of mixed migratory flows to Italian coastal areas*, p.5 in <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-FN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

¹⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/4f27e01f9.html>

so-called “North African Emergency” was extended until 31 December 2012. This emergency response was in fact insufficient, for example, the receiving center in Lampedusa, the tiny island with a capacity of 800 beds, in March 2011 suffered a serious deterioration of public health conditions due to approximately 500 migrants arriving daily during that period.¹⁷ From January to May 2011 some 30.000 migrants landed on Italian shores, many of them on Lampedusa, which for years has become a symbol of European fight against irregular migration in the Mediterranean region.

From 2003 until 2007, an increase in the arrival of migrants on the island of Lampedusa has been registered, with 8.800 people in 2003; 10.477 in 2004; 15.527 in 2005; 18.047 in 2006; and 11.749 in 2007. The peak of this immigration phenomenon was reached in 2008 with 31.250 migrants arriving on the island (86% men and 14% women). The flow of migrants was interrupted in 2009 with a bilateral agreement between Italy and Libya. But soon after, in 2011, the political crisis affecting northern Africa has prompted very large numbers of people to migrate, initially between countries within this geographic area, and then towards the Mediterranean shores of Europe.¹⁸

Due to limited capacities and delays in transfers, the Italian Interior Minister Roberto Maroni faced accusations by local majors of racism and creating a “Guantanamo” prison for irregular immigrants on Lampedusa island. NGOs also complained of the very poor conditions in which many immigrants were held, but the response of the authorities was that the immigrants who arrived at Lampedusa would remain until the repatriation.¹⁹ Moreover, the extension of the maximum period of detention (18 months) didn't resolve the issue of

¹⁷ Andrew Geddes, *The European Union's international-migration relations toward Middle Eastern and North African countries* in Michael Bommers, Heinz Fassman, Wiebke Sievers (eds), “Migration from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe,” Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2014, pp. 139-140.

¹⁸ http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/182137/e96761.pdf?ua=1

¹⁹ João Carvalho, *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy. Comparing Britain, France and Italy*, London and New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 166.

irregular migration management and raised serious human rights challenges, including the problem that the detention facilities were not adapted to long term detention. Only in mid-March 2011, when the situation had deteriorated to the point that it became unmanageable, the Italian authorities effectively started to regularly transfer thousands of migrants by ship or military planes to Sicily and other locations in Italy. This allowed the situation to improve.²⁰

A few years later, in 2015, another exceptional year, **over one million** refugees and migrants undertook dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to enter the EU, with **140.000** people arriving in Italy.²¹

This unprecedented number caused panic among the European politicians, most of the EU Member States reacted emotionally, the right-wing parties gained significant ground almost immediately, and last but not least, in June 2016 the United Kingdom chooses to leave the European Union in the Brexit referendum. It's no doubt that the migratory crisis added more fuel to the "Leave" vote, creating the perception that immigration to the EU is unchecked and the UK must "take control of its borders."²²

At the same time, the issue of migration has had a great influence on elections held in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, and other European countries in the past year, boosting support for populist and eurosceptic parties. Ever since coming to power in June 2018, the frictions between the new Italian cabinet, so-called the "government of change" and the European institutions, especially on the EU migration policy, it seems to be another sign of weak cohesion within the European Union, Italy becoming one of the strongest voices of

²⁰ <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-EN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

²¹ ***The United Nations Refugee Agency [hereafter ***UNHCR], *Operational Portal Refugee Situation* in https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean#_ga=2.4166768.1398968325.1555571129-1918985514.1555415270

²² For more information on the link between the migration crisis and the Brexit see Karolina Follis, *Maritime migration, Brexit and the future of European Borders: Anthropological previews* in "Český lid", vol. 104, no.1, 2017, pp. 5-32.

Euroscepticism current from Western Europe. Italy's interior minister and the country's most popular politician, Matteo Salvini has closed its ports to migrant rescue boats, saying that the risk of terrorists infiltrating migrant boats is a real one and the efforts to manage the refugee crisis must be shared and financially supported by all the European member states, not only by the most exposed Southern European countries.

For many decades, Italy was primarily a country of emigration, up until the late 1970s, a large number of Italians, namely over 25 million had emigrated to work in the North and Western Europe.²³

Relatively late, Italy became a receiving country and the migratory inflows from the non-EU countries to Italy became significant, starting with the late 1980s. Nowadays, Italy is facing with a new migratory dynamic: after having transformed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration, now finds itself at the center of complex flows of immigration, emigration and transit in an era of globalization, a moment quite different from the one that marked the experience of the north-western countries.²⁴

As far as the origin of nationality in Italy, up to the early 1990s there was certain heterogeneity of presence, with the only particularly significant incidence relative to the Moroccans. At the end of the 1990s, the Moroccan presence was

²³ Emanuela Paoletti, *The migration of power and North-South inequalities. The case of Italy and Libya*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 60-61; For more information about the migrant workers in the context of the great post- Second World War migration in Western Europe see Cheryl Benard, *Migrant workers and European Democracy* in "Political Science Quarterly", vol. 93, no.2, (Summer 1972), pp. 277-299.

²⁴ Actually, the field researchers consider that the old distinction between sending and receiving countries is no more applicable at the level of the European Union and it can be said that all countries are sending, receiving and transit countries at the same time. Some countries are primarily immigration-receiving ones and others are, above all, sending ones. For more information see Joaquin Arango, *Early starters and latecomers Comparing countries of immigration and immigration regimes in Europe* in Marek Okólski (ed), "European immigrations: trends, structures and policy implications," Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012, pp. 44-63. Only a part of the 43.000 landed in 2013 had submitted an application for international protection in Italy. Many have preferred to transit without being registered, taking advantage of the lack of various institutions in charge, to go and ask for asylum beyond the north of the Alps, in countries such as Germany, France and Sweden.

linked to the Albanian presence which, over the course of 5 years, increased by 200% to become, in 2003, the first nationality in quantitative terms. A further turning point is achieved starting with 2007 when, following the entry of Romania into the EU, the high number of foreigners from this country grew by over 300% in 5 years, thus exceeding those of the Albanians. Today, overall, Romanians, Albanians and Moroccans are over 40% of nationalities present in Italy.²⁵

According to data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) on January 1, 2019, 5. 144. 440 foreign residents were registered on Italian territory.²⁶

For several years, Italy has been fighting irregular migration at its borders, including by implementing a push-back policy aimed to block migrants' boats on the high sea and returning them to Libya. Until the Arab Spring, the role of the North African countries, was to represent a sanitary cordon providing security against illegal immigration along Europe's southern periphery. The cooperation between Italy and North African countries in maritime border control began as early as in the 1990s. The Italian approach to the migration issue was to reinforce bilateral cooperation with African countries that were main points of migrants' departure. Italian military vessels and aircraft carrying out both rescue missions and security activities were not a novelty either when Mare Nostrum was launched in 2013. Since December 2000 it had been signed a cooperation agreement regarding irregular migration with Libya, and in 2004 an Italian unilateral mission was launched, named „Constance Vigilance Mission“ in the Strait of Sicily to prevent irregular entries.

Over 2004 Libya's transformation from a destination country to a transit country received increasing visibility as it gained recognition as a key point of

²⁵ ***Ministero dell'Interno, *20 di migrazioni in Italia*, p.6 in http://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Guida_20-anni-di-immigrazione-in-Italia_pdf

²⁶ <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=19103>

entry to Europe by sea. In October 2004 the European Council decided to lift the EU arms embargo on Libya, in effect since 1986. The decision was taken after considerable pressure from Italy who were keen to enable Libya to acquire the necessary military equipment required for border surveillance.²⁷

Then, in July 2008, the Italian center-right government led by Silvio Berlusconi presented a new agreement with Libya as a manifestation of the will of both parties to lead "a struggle against criminal organizations (...) who exploit ruthlessly illegal migrants." The cooperation agreement was heavily criticized, both internally and internationally, because of the well-founded fear that increased cooperation with the Libyan regime would result in increasing violations of migrants' human rights by authorities and smugglers alike.²⁸

Due to a lack of distinction between refugees and migrants under Libyan law, the absence of an asylum policy, the denied right to seek asylum, and the lack of adequate protection and ill-treatment, Libya wasn't considered a safe country for many returnees. However, the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya was signed in August 2008. The pact allowed Italy's coast guard to deport incoming immigrants back to Libyan shores, skipping procedures for filing potential asylum claims. In the process, Italy agreed to pay Libya \$5 billion USD in 25 years, formally for colonial reparation, but in practice was a price for the illegal repatriations.²⁹

²⁷ Sara Hamood, *African transit migration through Libya to Europe: the human cost*, The American University in Cairo, January 2006, pp. 7, 72 in <http://www.migreurop.org/IMG/pdf/hamood-libya.pdf>

²⁸ Paolo Cuttita, *Delocalization, Humanitarianism, and Human Rights: the Mediterranean Border Between Exclusion and Inclusion* in "Antipode," vol.50, no.3, 2018, p. 787.

²⁹ Fabrizio Tassinari, *The disintegration of European Security: Lessons from the refugee crisis in "PRISM"*, vol.6, no.2, 2016, p. 73; <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-libya-italy-idUKLU1618820080830>; The leader of the Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi, judged positively the agreement reached between Italy and Libya: "The agreement with Libya is fine because Libya will stop illegal immigrants instead of sending them here - said Bossi speaking at a Lega a Melzo demonstration - because from there all the non-EU citizens arrive. It seems to me that there is an action by Libya for the illegal immigrants who come here. This would be an unexpected and positive help," Bossi added in *Corriere della Sera*, https://www.corriere.it/esteri/08_agosto_30/berlusconi_libia_gheddafi_bengasi_478ee3f4-767e-11dd-9747-00144f02aabc.shtml; see also

It was added the fact that the Lisbon Treaty, adopted a few months before, allowed the EU states to conclude international agreements on terrorism with other countries and support third countries in the fight against terrorism, and the bilateral treaty was shaped exactly on this line.

During 2009 and 2010, the co-operation of border control policy reduced significantly the number of arrivals in Italy. In 2008, nearly 37.000 people arrived on Italian shores. In 2009 and 2010, strengthened border control measures and increased co-operation with the southern Mediterranean countries to prevent departures and to return irregular migrants led to a significant decrease of arrivals to Italy and numbers went down to less than 9.600 and 4.400 respectively.³⁰

In the European debate, the negotiations between the governments of Italy and Libya for the control and prevention of irregular migration and migrant smuggling networks have been one of the most frequently discussed issues at the academic and human rights levels in recent years. This issue represents a classic case of the securitization practices to externalize migration controls. In fact, the member states of the EU have continued to appeal to nearby third countries that serve as points of origin for illegal migrants, or allow them to transit through their territory, to participate in the fight against illegal immigration, with the promise of important financial assistance for doing so.³¹

While this policy has proven successful in reducing arrivals by sea, it has been questioned in terms of conformity with international human rights and refugee law. Italy's policy of returns of alleged irregular migrants to Libya,

https://www.corriere.it/esteri/08_agosto_30/berlusconi_libia_gheddafi_bengasi_478ee3f4-767e-11dd-9747-00144f02aabc.shtml

³⁰ <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-EN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

³¹ For more details see Olivier Clochard, Bruno Dupeyron, *The maritime borders of Europe: upstream migratory controls* in Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly (ed), „Borderlands. Comparing borders security in North America and Europe,” Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 2007, pp. 19-40 <https://books.openedition.org/uop/1596>

without an adequate screening process brought it the condemned by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Hirsi and Others versus Italy* and the practices of “push-backs” to Libya were stopped in 2012.³²

According to Amnesty International, the negotiations between the Italian and Libyan governments lasted actually until July 2013, a few months before the worst accident in the Mediterranean Sea in October 2013.³³

The EU’s operation *Mare Nostrum* was launched on 18 October 2013, after a series of dramatic shipwrecks that shocked the world’s public opinion. Two shipwrecks on the 3rd. and on the 11th of October 2013 near the island of Lampedusa,³⁴ caused the death of 636 people. Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta tweeted at that time that it was “an immense tragedy” and the government of Rome has declared a day of national mourning.³⁵

Initially, the EU response to these tragedies was to establish a Frontex Joint Operations. The former EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström suggested this by calling for “an extensive Frontex search and rescue operation that will cover the Mediterranean from Cyprus to Spain” announcing that the member states should consider making available additional support for Frontex to carry out this operation. However, the Italian government went ahead with

³² The case concerned Somali and Eritrean migrants travelling from Libya who had been intercepted at sea by the Italian authorities and sent back to Libya. Returning them to Libya without examining their case exposed them to a risk of ill-treatment and amounted to a collective expulsion. Two of refugees dies soon after, but the Italian Minister of the Interior stated that the operations to intercept vessels on the high seas and to push migrants back to Libya were the consequence of the entry into force, in February 2009, of bilateral agreements concluded with Libya, and represented an important turning point in the fight against clandestine immigration. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-109231%22%7D>

³³ http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/italy/2012/06/14/Immigration-Amnesty-Italy-Libya-deal-stop-migrant-flow_7033534.html

³⁴ The island of Lampedusa is located at 205 km from Sicily, 167 km from Tunis and 355 km from Libya.

³⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24380247>; moreover, “Barca Nostra,” the wreck of the fishing boat symbol of the massacre of migrants that took place in 2015 in the Sicilian Channel, was an integrated part of the 2019 Biennale of Art-Venice, as an attempt to commemorate the tragedies on the sea in <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/media/Biennale-Arte-2019-barcone-naufragato-esposto-Arsenale-di-Venezia-784ea627-b7ef-4197-b70c-db6df01529a1.html#foto-1>

the Mare Nostrum mission. It became clear from interviews that Frontex and the Commission were largely unaware of the launch of Mare Nostrum, in what they considered a clear unilateral member state action.³⁶

Thus, the Centre-left coalition, led by the Democratic Party, attempted to assume a protagonist role inside the EU and to impose a “humanistic” narrative about migration, combined with an idea of efficiency guaranteed by the role of the military Navy – “military- humanitarian,” launching *Mare Nostrum* operation. This rescue operation was an Italian initiative, a short military and humanitarian operation, working in the channel of Sicily.

The operation involved the units of Italian Navy and Italian Air Force, the main actor driving the entire operation was the Italian Navy under the Ministry of Defense, with more than 900 personnel dedicated to this operation. Mare Nostrum was presented by the Italian government as a “military-humanitarian” action aimed at tackling the humanitarian emergency in the Straits of Sicily, due to the increase in migration flows.

The operation ended on 31 October 2014 coinciding with the start of the new European operation called Triton (1 November 2014), and launched under the auspices of Frontex. The Italian government shut down the Mare Nostrum project after just one year, because many critics came also from the Council of Europe, Italy being accused of poorly prepared for what it seemed to be a new surge of mixed migration flows.³⁷

Moreover, in October 2014, the UK Government announced, by way of a written question in the House of Lords, that it was withdrawing its support for

³⁶ Sergio Carrera, Leonhard den Herog, *Whose Mare? Rule of law challenges in the field of European border surveillance in the Mediterranean* in „CEPS Paper in Liberty and Security in Europe”, no.79/January 2015, p. 3 in http://aei.pitt.edu/60717/1/LSE_79.pdf

³⁷ ***Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, *Report on the arrival of mixed migratory flows to Italian coastal areas, 2013* in <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-EN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

Operation Mare Nostrum, as it believed that the rescue service was a 'pull factor' for migrants.³⁸

At least, at the beginning, more or less everyone was aware of the fact that something had to be done, to avoid the repetition of such disasters. Also, because just a day before the tragedy, a report from the European Committee on migration and refugees was issued in which Italy was defined as "ill-prepared" to face the migratory wave and landings on its shores.³⁹

The Italian government decided to act immediately saying that "it is intolerable that the Mediterranean is a sea of death. It's our sea and we cannot tolerate what just happened." said the former Prime Minister Enrico Letta.⁴⁰

In fact, Mare Nostrum operation was not a completely new one, but rather a serious upgrade of the ongoing naval operation "Constant Vigilance" which the Italian Navy has been conducting since 2004, permanently deploying a ship in the Strait of Sicily along with maritime patrol aircraft. The Italian government opted in 2013 less for a qualitative than for a quantitative change, by strongly increasing the already existing patrolling activities.⁴¹

Operation *Mare Nostrum* had, therefore, the two purposes of safeguarding human life at sea and bringing to justice human traffickers and migrant smugglers.⁴² Mare Nostrum enhanced the rescue capacities and made the Italian policy of patrolling international waters not only more effective but also much more visible. At the same time, the operation was the starting point of a new

³⁸ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2014-010564_EN.html?redirect

³⁹ "Italy has, once again, shown that it is ill-prepared for what seems to be a new surge of mixed migration flows. The Government seems to have learnt few, if any, lessons from its experiences in 2011." in Parliamentary Assembly, Report Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons *The arrival of mixed migratory flows to Italian coastal areas*, p.3 in <http://website-pace.net/documents/19863/168397/20131002-RptMixedMigratoryFlows-EN.pdf/426bce45-1258-4773-b961-be69c5bb0f75>

⁴⁰ <https://www.vice.com/it/article/qbgavb/immigrazione-frontex-plus-mare-nostrum-429>

⁴¹ <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>

⁴² <http://www.marina.difesa.it/EN/operations/Pagine/MareNostrum.aspx>

strategy based on a new approach regarding immigration policy in light of humanitarian intervention.

In the beginning, because of its life-saving goal, Mare Nostrum was praised and supported by almost all Italian political parties, the only criticism coming from a part of the right-wing opposition (Lega Nord party) accusing it of attracting more migrants, and therefore also increasing the death toll-which shows that rescuing lives has become a universal argument used to support different political agendas.⁴³ Moreover, Matteo Salvini called the Italian mission as „insane” because it helped smugglers, and the real solution should have been the investment of the financial resources in Africa. In the same line, the party Fratelli d'Italia declared that the entire mission was an „idiocy”, a „taxi for illegal persons”, a „North Africa-Italy ferry.”⁴⁴

The first friction between the Italian Home Secretary, Angelino Alfano and the European Commission began in March 2014, regarding the responsibilities that should have been assumed in the migratory crisis. Since then, the high Italian official had repeatedly asked for an European intervention, threatening to interrupt the mission. Moreover, the Italian requests were to set up the humanitarian reception centers in Africa, in particular in Libya, the sea rescue operations had to be done by Europe through Frontex, the Frontex office should have to be transferred in Italy, not to remain in Warsaw, and finally, since the migrants didn't want to remain in Italy, they should have had the possibility to exercise the right of political asylum also in the rest of Europe, otherwise "we transform Italy into the prison of political refugees."⁴⁵

⁴³ Paolo Cuttita, *Delocalization, Humanitarianism...*, p.789; Umberto Bossi, the leader of the party Lega Nord declared at RaiDue „Do they say to change my law? Hopefully not, it is the only barrier against the invasion of illegal immigrants.. Italy - he added - cannot become the aircraft carrier that welcomes all illegal immigrants in the world" in <https://www.ilsecoloxix.it/italia/2013/10/04/news/boldrini-a-lampedusa-nulla-sia-piu-come-pri-ma-1.37868606>

⁴⁴ <https://www.vice.com/it/article/qbgavb/immigrazione-frontex-plus-mare-nostrum-429>

⁴⁵ <https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2014/05/13/news/immigrati-il-gelo-della-ue-italia-dica-cosa-vuole-a-marzo-non-ci-ha-risposto-86002466/>

Precisely, on the question of asylum claims, Cecilia Malmström explained that "if it is true that Italy, like other European member states, has experienced an increase in migratory flow, other countries receive many more asylum requests, in particular, in 2013 Germany received 125.000, France 75.000, Sweden 54.000, the United Kingdom 30.000, and Italy 28.000. The top three countries alone receive more than 50% of all asylum applications in Europe. The Mediterranean countries are not inundated with requests. Moreover, the failure of the refugees' relocation to other countries due to the lack of European members initiative and we cannot force them to do this."⁴⁶

Italian governmental authorities have publicly and repeatedly declared that *Mare Nostrum* required huge costs, and these costs were unsustainable for a single country.⁴⁷ The Italian Home Secretary, Angelino Alfano, confirmed on 31 October 2014 that the *Mare Nostrum* operation would definitely come to an end on 1 November. The Minister indicated also that, "Mare Nostrum has carried out its work. Responsibility for the Mediterranean frontier rests with Europe. These migrants don't want to come to Italy, want to come to Europe "⁴⁸

The *Mare Nostrum* was costing Italy substantial amounts of money: almost 100.000 euros/day, 9, 5 million euros per month, and 114 million euros until the end.⁴⁹ The Italian financial effort was appreciated as a massively expensive one,

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ Maurizio Albahari, *Crimes of peace. Mediterranean migrations at the world's deadliest border*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015, p. 32; in fact, in October 2013, the Interior Minister Alfano said "to cover the costs of the mission, there will be no need for other funds, the Minister's money will be enough." in https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/10/14/news/letta_a_katainen_intollerabile_mediterraneo_morte-68575070/?refresh_ce

⁴⁸ <https://www.asylumineurope.org/news/13-10-2014/operation-mare-nostrum-end-frontex-triton-operation-will-not-ensure-rescue-sea;>

https://www.corriere.it/politica/14_agosto_15/alfano-l-operazione-mare-nostrum-deve-finire-su-bentri-l-europa-5ea53f04-246d-11e4-a121-b5affdf40fda.shtml

⁴⁹ <http://www.library.coleurop.pl/intranet/documents/ae/2014/ae11189.pdf>

Italian authorities were practically abandoned by the rest of Europe and left to deal with the problem alone:⁵⁰

„Italy financed the Mare Nostrum operation on its own; now it is the European budget and national contributions from every country that will finance the Triton operation. This represents a return to normality. It was not right to leave the financing of the Mare Nostrum operation to Italy alone.”⁵¹

The operation has been considered successful in preventing the deaths of migrants at sea, but its results were controversial. It was also critiqued because some observers, at both the national and international level, considered rescue in international waters a “facilitation” of the smuggling process. But contrary to the expectations of those who believed that Italy’s Operation Mare Nostrum was encouraging refugees and migrants to attempt the dangerous crossing, their numbers continued to grow in the months that followed its termination.

Overall, in 2014, the route from Libya accounted for the majority of all detected illegal entries to the EU and the majority of the fatalities at sea. The Italian Ministry of Interior estimated a total of 170,100 irregular migrants landed in Italy in 2014, of which 18.190 were women and 13.026 were unaccompanied minors. (Figure 2).

⁵⁰ Slovenia was the only contributor to the operation, providing a patrol vessel to integrate into the Mare Nostrum mission <http://www.difesa.it/News/Pagine/Slovenia.aspx>

⁵¹ Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the debate in the European Parliament on the conclusions of the Special European Council on 23 April, 2015 in <https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/alynsmith/pages/1200/attachments/original/1432911016/SpeechENcrisemig.pdf?1432911016>

Figure 2. Irregular migrants landed in Italy by sea, 2004-2014.

year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	13,635	22,939	22,016	20,455	36,951	9,573	4,406	62,692	13,267	42,925	170,100

Source: Italian Ministry of Interior 2015

When the Italian government announced that Mare Nostrum would end because of financial constraints only a year after its launch, a series of humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International, Médecins sans Frontières, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called on the Italian and European institutions not to reduce the search and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean area.⁵²

Amnesty International warned that FRONTEX Joint Operation Triton (Triton), set up to patrol the European Union's Southern maritime borders from 1 November 2014, was an inadequate response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis at sea, because it did not have sufficient naval resources for search and rescue, it deployed its assets too close to European shores to be able to rescue promptly boats in distress near Libyan shores, and the provision of assistance to refugees and migrants was not its primary objective.⁵³

The European Commission has supported the operation financially with €1.8 million from the emergency actions under the External Borders Fund in November 2013 (support just one month operational costs of Operation Mare Nostrum), and then offered financial assistance for other urgent Italian actions (€ 25.6 million), such as the first aid and primary medical assistance on board the vessels of Operation Mare Nostrum, or internal transportation of migrants.⁵⁴

⁵² <https://www.nextquotidiano.it/lappello-amnesty-matteo-renzi/>

⁵³ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0320592015ENGLISH.pdf>

⁵⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-mig>

The conclusions of the Council meeting in Luxembourg on 9-10 October 2014 stated that the new Operation *Triton* needed to be deployed without delay. It was a big success for the Italian presidency of the EU (July-December 2014), not only because *Mare Nostrum* was considered a model that should be followed, but also because the new operation **Triton** seemed like “would not cost the Italians a single Euro.”⁵⁵

Operation **Triton** was launched in **November 2014**, with a focus on border protection, but also on the provision of support to search and rescue operations. The operational area of Triton activity was within 30 miles off the Italian coasts, while migrants were in need in international waters. In fact, *Mare Nostrum* operated in international waters. But soon after the shipwreck of 19 April 2015, 238 International organizations published a joint statement underlying that EU efforts are not adequate to the current situation. In July 2015, its operational area was expanded southwards, also facilitating the provision of support in search and rescue operations further south. Officers deployed by Frontex support the Italian authorities in the registration of the arriving migrants. The operational focus of Triton has expanded to include cross border crime, such as people smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal fishing and maritime pollution. It operates under the command of the Italian Ministry of Interior. A total of 28 European countries took part in the operation by deploying either technical equipment or border guards.⁵⁶ In parallel, since late 2014, a small but growing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has also started actively pursuing search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean.

[ration/general/docs/sdw_implementation_of_the_communication_on_the_work_of_the_task_force_mediterranean_part_2_en.pdf](#)

⁵⁵ Marco Brunazzo, David Bull, *The Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: a semester of contrasting outcomes* in “Italian Politics,” vol. 30, *The Year of Bulldozer*, 2014, p. 114.

⁵⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20170125_migration_on_the_central_mediterranean_route_-_managing_flows_saving_lives_en.pdf

At the same time, The European Union Naval Force – Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia) was set up in record time in June 2015 to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers, in order to disrupt their business model in the Southern Central Mediterranean, and prevent the further loss of life at sea.

However, the Italian Navy didn't stop its patrolling activity in the Central Mediterranean immediately, but it no longer operated within the framework of Mare Nostrum operation. On Friday 5 December 2014, the Italian navy announced that seventeen migrants had tragically died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean in a small inflatable boat. The deaths on 5 December are believed to be the first since Operation Mare Nostrum began to be phased out in favor of the Triton operation.⁵⁷

Even after Mare Nostrum was stopped, its name remained a symbol of humanitarian border management. After the shipwreck of 18 April 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) requested the resumption of the Italian mission, while the UNHCR and the European Parliament called for a European Mare Nostrum-like humanitarian rescue operation.

Despite domestic and international critics, Mare Nostrum reached notable results, with more 150.000 people rescued. (Figure 3).

⁵⁷ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2014-010564_EN.html?redirect

The Mare Nostrum achievements:Figure 3: Mare Nostrum Operation (18 October 2013 – 31 October 2014).⁵⁸

Migrants rescued by the Navy	156,362
Search and rescue operations at sea	439
Smugglers arrested	366
On-board inspections	15
Captured and seized ships (including 5 mother ship)	9

We are witnessing in today's world an unprecedented level of human mobility. The challenge for the future is how the European community should best respond to the growing global phenomenon of large movements of refugees and migrants on its shores. It is very clear that combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards migrants, and finally guaranteeing dignity and fundamental rights to all human life must be the answer.

⁵⁸ ItalianNavy,
<http://www.marina.difesa.it/cosa-facciamo/per-la-difesa-sicurezza/operazioni-in-corso/Documenti/Dati%20statistici%20Mare%20Nostrum.pdf#search=mare%20nostrum>