

MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY: ITALIAN, UNITED STATES, NATO, AND NORTH  
AFRICAN NATIONAL INTERESTS FROM A GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE.

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## **Italy at the center of the Mediterranean Sea**

Italy plays a pivotal role being at the geopolitical center of vital security partnerships and as a result has also been challenged by the instabilities in not only the eastern Mediterranean but in the south of the Mediterranean sea. It is important to look at security from a multidisciplinary perspective looking at security from a NATO, EU, as well as Italian, American, AU, and North African security geopolitical perspective. The Mediterranean Sea is a crucial crossroads for European hydrocarbons, with numerous gas pipelines connecting Italy to North Africa and the Middle East. These pipelines were built in cooperation between several nations, with the United States of America consenting to the construction of these pipelines, referred to as "the gas pipelines of peace."<sup>1</sup> Italy is positioned as a major trade route, and significant marine straits make it a pivotal region for energy relations. However, Italy needs more raw materials and hydrocarbons, making it impossible to control the Mediterranean Sea for stability and energy security. As the only nation naturally located in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, Italy needs help controlling the space due to its lack of maritime power. Italy needs more maritime authority and has significant challenges dominating the Mediterranean waters.<sup>2</sup> Adding to the complexity of the issue, it is worth noting that the Italian people, who one would expect to have a solid connection to the water, significantly have restricted contact with it. Italians primarily prioritize Europe and want to identify as Central European, sometimes overlooking their coastal identity despite Italy possessing exceptional port facilities such as Genoa, Trieste, Gioia Tauro, Taranto, etc., along with a well-developed road and railway network spanning the country.<sup>3</sup> An attitude that contradicts your geographical location might result in strategic failure, especially if you live on a peninsula and identify as a Central European person. In Italy, the Mediterranean Sea is mostly discussed in relation to the migration patterns originating from Africa.

### **Italy Tries to Take Back Libya.**

In 2008, the Italian government, led by Silvio Berlusconi, signed a treaty of friendship, partnership, and cooperation with Libya under the dictator Gaddafi.<sup>4</sup> The agreement recognized the damage inflicted on the Libyan population under colonial domination, guaranteed parity between the two countries, arranged many economic and infrastructural investments for Libya, and reaffirmed Libya's position within its area of control. As a result of this agreement, Italy secured a cost-effective supply of oil and natural gas by agreeing to enforce the blockade of

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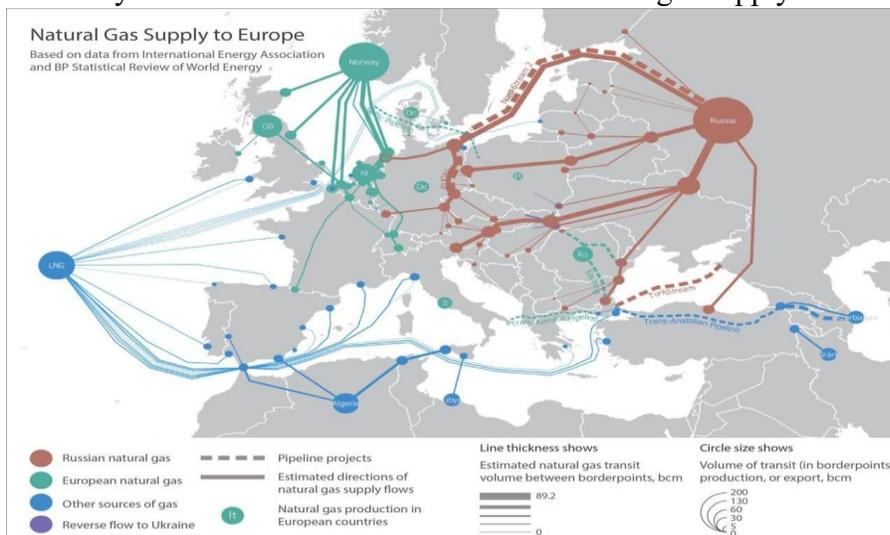
<sup>1</sup> Silvio Labbate, "Italian Mediterranean Policy in the Early 1980s in the Light of National Archive Documents," *International History Review* 12, no. 32 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1658615>.

<sup>2</sup> Silvio Labbate, "Italian Mediterranean Policy in the Early 1980s in the Light of National Archive Documents," *International History Review* 12, no. 32 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1658615>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Matteo Patergnani, "Italy's Mediterranean Jigsaw: Geopolitics of a Sidelined Former Power," *Geopolitical Monitor*, 2023, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/italys-mediterranean-jigsaw-geopolitics-of-a-sidelined-former-power/>.

illegal African immigration to Europe.<sup>5</sup> In 2011, Italy signed a significant deal with Libya, positioning Libya as a strategic location for defensive purposes. The idea is to shield Italy in case of attack from the south, believing that controlling Libya would be crucial since it would shift the battleground to Libyan territory before reaching Italian soil. Despite being pressured by global hegemonies, Italy continues to maintain its position in the area. Currently, Italy solely manages its oil wells in Libya. However, the French, Russians, and Turks share the whole country's management, which becomes a challenge for Italy in obtaining hydrocarbons.<sup>6</sup> Libya and Tunisia became the considerable Italian coastline to deter any direct assault to Italy from the south. In 2011, the intervention against Libya by NATO was a recent operation that the alliance pursued to protect citizens of Libya.<sup>7</sup> Italy considers Libya crucial for its energy security and enormous reserves of oil and methane gas<sup>8</sup>. The Libyan government's cooperation also helped limit illicit African immigration to Europe. It is worth noticing that maintaining strong ties with Libya is essential for Italy's energy supply. The treaty between Italy and Libya also acknowledged the harm caused to the Libyan people during colonialism, promoted equality between the two nations, and ensured significant economic and infrastructural investments from the Italian state and major Italian companies to modernize Libya.<sup>9</sup> Italy reasserted dominance over Libya in return for a favorable oil and natural gas supply.



Sources: (Alessandro Ricci, "Silvio Berlusconi's, 2023)

### The Mediterranean Sea, Crossroads of European Hydrocarbons.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, "Energy Security in the Broader Mediterranean," *European Security* 17, no. 1 (2008): 161–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830802503896>.

<sup>7</sup> Ryan Sherwood, "NATO'S INTERVENTION IN LIBYA: THE POLITICAL REASONING BEHIND NATO'S INTERVENTION," Sherwood, 2021, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/trecms/pdf/AD1150776.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, "Energy Security in the Broader Mediterranean," *European Security* 17, no. 1 (2008): 161–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830802503896>.

<sup>9</sup> Alessandro Gili and Enrico Paolo Gioia, "Blocco USA al GNL: Tanto Rumore per Nulla," ISPI, 2024, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/blocco-usa-al-gnl-tanto-rumore-per-nulla-163231>.

The Mediterranean Sea region is pivotal for Italy due to its central location between Europe, Asia, and Africa, the convergence of major trade routes, the presence of significant marine straits such as Gibraltar, Bosphorus, Dardanelles, and Suez Canal, as well as the abundance of both new and established oil and natural gas reserves. The approval of the United States's construction of gas pipelines or "gas pipelines of peace" ensures a stable and affordable supply of hydrocarbons for Europe and a strategy to prevent conflicts among European nations in the energy sector.<sup>10</sup> The energy dynamics among the Mediterranean bordering states, seen through a geopolitical lens, are crucial for facilitating the flow of energy resources between exporting and importing countries.<sup>11</sup> The strong performance of hydrocarbon exchanges ensures energy autonomy for Europe, leading to energy security for European states and benefiting the economy of European firms<sup>12</sup>. A solid correlation between positive diplomatic ties across countries and economic prosperity significantly impacts the well-being of individuals throughout Europe. Thus, all European countries have a vested interest in implementing a foreign policy focused on ensuring the functionality of this energy supply system. It is important to note that the natural gas supply strategy is intricate due to the costly and challenging nature of transporting natural gas, whether by pipelines or LNG ships. Constructing a gas pipeline requires significant economic expenditures, the use of suitable technology for building a pipeline across the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to the Italian coast, and ensuring the security of the pipeline.<sup>13</sup> To accomplish these goals, a robust and enduring strategy is necessary to guarantee peace and stability in the relevant region and among the countries participating in the project. Gas trade success is greatly impacted by the geopolitical environment in which it operates.



Sources: (Andrea Prontera, & Mariusz Ruszel, 2017)

### **United States of America Replaced Russia as a Supplier of Hydrocarbons.**

The current political instability in Europe due to the war in Ukraine has forced various Europeans to purchase expensive LNG from the United States of America, Qatar, and other

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<sup>10</sup> Tolga Demiryol, "Between Security and Prosperity: Turkey and the Prospect of Energy Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 3 (2018): 442–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2018.1534204>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Andrea Prontera and Mariusz Ruszel, "Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 3 (2017): 145–62, <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12296>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Persian Gulf nations.<sup>14</sup> The strong European dependence on American LNG has put the spotlight of European nations on American domestic politics. The decisions taken by the American government regarding the export of hydrocarbons to Europe inevitably affect the performance of the economy and the lives of all European citizens. President Biden's recent decision not to grant further concessions to LNG exports has caused concerns across Europe.<sup>15</sup> Despite these statements, the current international LNG market does not have drastic changes, at least in the immediate future. The United States remains the world's leading exporter, producing 93 million tons of LNG per year (MTPA) after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine<sup>16</sup>. The United States of America intends to almost triple its current LNG production by 2025 to be sold to European nations. In 2023, seven LNG terminals were established in Europe to streamline the acquisition of LNG from the United States, Qatar, and other nations. Germany has the largest GLN storage and conversion plant at Brunsbuttel, capable of handling 5.9 million metric tons per year.<sup>17</sup> Italy has enhanced the LNG storage and transformation facility in Piombino city to 3.7 MTPA capacity, while other European nations are also improving their facilities to increase LNG storage capacities. Adapting existing infrastructures to import green hydrogen has proven to be more difficult than expected due to inadequate technology and the high costs needed, which would affect the product's final price.

### **Enrico Mattei Italian Plan**

The Italian government, led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, has developed a strategic geopolitical plan called the Mattei Plan in honor of Enrico Mattei.<sup>18</sup> This plan aims to ensure Italy's new energy security and break away from dependence on Russia. The plan includes energy agreements with African and Persian Gulf nations, such as Algeria, which has always been a supplier of hydrocarbons to Italy and Europe. The plan also involves intensifying diplomatic relations with sub-Saharan Africa, where Italy is committed to donating technologies to African nations and extracting hydrocarbons.<sup>19</sup> Most of these hydrocarbons remain in the nation of extraction, and only a small part belongs to Italy. This prompted Italy's primary focus on cooperating with African countries on an equal basis, diversifying hydrocarbon imports, and transforming Italy into a crossroads for hydrocarbons entering Europe. Italy uses the two large state companies, ENI and ENEL, to make the Mattei plan operational in Africa. ENI specializes in the diversification of hydrocarbon supplies and has been collaborating with Algerian company Sonatrach for many years, providing a significant strategic advantage on the African continent<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Matteo Villa and Antonio Villafranca, "Sicurezza Energetica Europea: Solo l'Unione Può Fare La Forza," ISPI, 2023, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/sicurezza-energetica-europea-solo-lunione-puo-fare-la-forza-11501>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

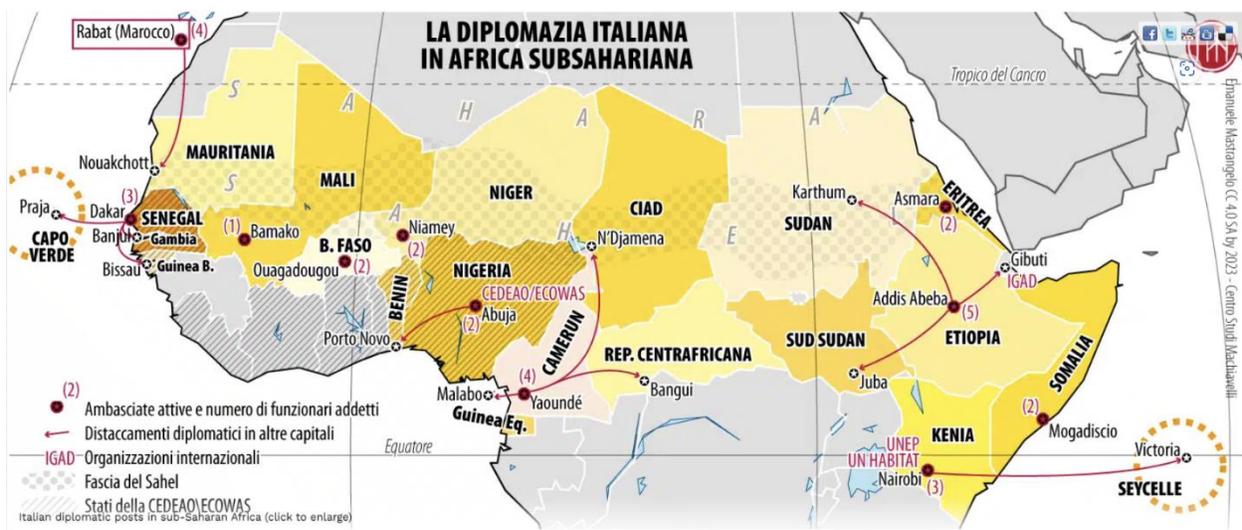
<sup>17</sup> Alessandro Gili and Enrico Paolo Gioia, "Blocco USA al GNL: Tanto Rumore per Nulla," ISPI, 2024, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/blocco-usa-al-gnl-tanto-rumore-per-nulla-163231>.

<sup>18</sup> Aldo Liga, "Gas All'UE: Promesse Mantenute?," ISPI, 2023, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/gas-allue-promesse-mantenute-117759>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Carbone, "L'Italia in Africa: Ragioni, Progetti E Interrogativi Sul Possibile Rilancio," ISPI, 2023, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/litalia-in-africa-ragioni-progetti-e-interrogativi-sul-possibile-rilancio-135182>

Italy has been present in Egypt since the 1950s, using the IEOC company owned by the ENI company. Italian companies operating on Egyptian soil have produced 60% of the hydrocarbons produced in Egypt and will actively participate in the search for new deposits on the Nile River Delta. In Mozambique, ENI has built a floating natural gas liquefaction plant with 3.4 million tonnes of LNG, creating many jobs for local people and helping Mozambique obtain the technologies needed to exploit its hydrocarbon deposits.<sup>21</sup> From a GREEN Power perspective, Italy supports African nations like Morocco, South Africa, and Ethiopia in building photovoltaic and wind power plants to obtain clean energy. To achieve the success of the Mattei plan, it must be supported and ratified by the European Union, strengthening the credibility of the Italian strategy and increasing financial and infrastructural resources. Strengthening diplomatic activity in the Sahel region, one of the world's most armed conflicts, terrorism, drug dealing, and human trafficking, could finally stabilize the region.<sup>22</sup>



Source: (Guglielmo Picchi, 2023).

### African's Immigration/Migration Security Concerns in the Mediterranean Region

The Central Mediterranean region, which connected the Northern African states, such as Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt, has been used as an immigration route to the European regions of Italy, Malta, and Greece, respectively. The route has been used since 2000, with a notable surge of immigration/migration flow in more recent years. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there was a significant increase in the number of refugees and migrants attempting to cross the central Mediterranean from Tunisia to Europe between January

<sup>21</sup> Lorenzo Somigli, "Towards a New 'Mattei Plan' for Africa," MACHIAVELLI, 2023, <https://www.centromachiavelli.com/en/2023/06/07/africa-toward-a-new-mattei-plan/>.

<sup>22</sup> Guglielmo Picchi, "Immigration and Mattei Plan: Italian Diplomatic Network in Sahel Insufficient," MACHIAVELLI, 2023, <https://www.centromachiavelli.com/en/2023/09/29/diplomacy-italian-africa-mattei-plan/>

and August 2023, with a total number rising to 102,000, or 260% compared to the previous year.<sup>23</sup> Out of these, more than 45,000 individuals embarked on the same journey from Libya, with 31,000 people being either rescued at sea or intercepted and disembarked in Tunisia. In contrast, according to the sources, another 10,600 were rescued or repatriated back to Libya. From January to September 24, 2023, a cumulative number of 186,000 immigrants were received by Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, and Malta via maritime routes.<sup>24</sup> The migratory population in November 2022 included over 680,000 labor migrants, mostly hailing from Niger, Egypt, Sudan, Chad, and Nigeria<sup>25</sup>. In addition, there were 43,000 refugees and asylum seekers who were officially registered, 143,000 persons who were displaced inside their own country, and 4,500 individuals who were being held in detention.<sup>26</sup> Between 2014 and 2017, around 600,000 persons attempted illegal migration from North Africa to the European regions using maritime routes across the Central Mediterranean.<sup>27</sup> Back in 2008, Italy received a total of 36,951 migrants, of which 11,834 originated from East African nations, 11,304 from North African countries, including Egypt and Libya, 9,739 from West Africa, and 867 from different Asian countries.<sup>28</sup>

Those who immigrated to European Lampedusa regions on plastic boats were citizens of various African nations, including Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Guinea, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Mali.<sup>29</sup> Many of these people had been living and working in Tunisia for a considerable amount of time before making the choice to begin their trip to Europe. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that more than sixty percent of the immigrants who embarked on the perilous sea voyage during the first five months of 2015 originated from civil conflicts nations such as Syria, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup> Such massive

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<sup>23</sup> United Nations, “Conflicts, Disasters Driving More Migrants to Risk Mediterranean Crossing, Briefers Warn Security Council ahead of Libya Mandate Decision | UN Press,” press.un.org, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15427.doc.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, “WEST AFRICA, NORTH AFRICA, and the CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN,” ArcGIS Story Maps, 2023, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5ddae6aa5af1da3>

<sup>26</sup> <sup>26</sup> United Nations, “Conflicts, Disasters Driving More Migrants to Risk Mediterranean Crossing, Briefers Warn Security Council ahead of Libya Mandate Decision | UN Press,” press.un.org, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15427.doc.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> UNODC Observatory on Smuggling of Migrants, “WEST AFRICA, NORTH AFRICA, and the CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN,” ArcGIS Story Maps, 2023, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9b5bd3d4d6624d44b5ddae6aa5af1da3>.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Smuggling of Migrants Into, through and from North Africa a Thematic Review and Annotated Bibliography of Recent Publications,” 2010, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant\\_smuggling\\_in\\_North\\_Africa\\_June\\_2010\\_ebook\\_E\\_09-87293.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant_smuggling_in_North_Africa_June_2010_ebook_E_09-87293.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Renata Brito and The Associated Press Posted, “What’s behind the Surge in Migrant Arrivals to Italy?,” Winnipeg Free Press, 2023, [https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/2023/09/15/whats-behind-the-surge-in-migrant-arrivals-to-italy?utm\\_source=ground.news&utm\\_medium=referral](https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/2023/09/15/whats-behind-the-surge-in-migrant-arrivals-to-italy?utm_source=ground.news&utm_medium=referral)

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York, and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, “The Mediterranean Migration Crisis | Why People Flee, What the EU Should Do,” Human Rights Watch, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>

migration/immigration issues pose significant challenges to the peace and security of the region, requiring extensive measures and international cooperation for an adequate settlement.

### **Risk of Mediterranean Immigration Route**

The Mediterranean is considered the most dangerous migration route globally, with an estimated 22,400 migrants and asylum seekers losing their lives since 2000 while attempting to reach European nations by water, according to the International Organization for Migration.<sup>31</sup> In the first five months of 2015, it is anticipated that at least 1,850 fatalities occurred in the Mediterranean, compared to 2014, when more than 3,500 people died while traveling by water, making this route one of the most lethal pathways on record.<sup>32</sup> From 2014, an estimated 6,048 individuals have perished or been unaccounted for while traversing the Sahara Desert en route to Libya and Algeria.<sup>33</sup> Since the year 2020, a substantial cumulative sum of 10,351 individuals have met their demise or been formally reported missing in the ocean.<sup>34</sup> In 2017, at least 4,579 persons, including almost 700 children, perished while journeying across the Mediterranean Sea from Libya<sup>35</sup>. The prominence of maritime migrations to Italy and Spain has garnered greater public interest, whereas land migrations from East, Central, and West African nations via the Sahara Desert to North Africa and the Sahel to West African coastal states receive comparatively less attention.<sup>36</sup> Devastating human lives are incurred by any route traversed. UNICEF's research data from 2016 reported that amongst 256,000 migrants, 30,803 were women and 23,102 children, one-third of whom were unaccompanied from Libya and other parts of North Africa, were abused throughout the migratory path<sup>37</sup>.

The route to the Mediterranean region remains perilous for a growing population of migrants and asylum seekers, as shown in the chart below.

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<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York, and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis | Why People Flee, What the EU Should Do," Human Rights Watch, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>.

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York, and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis | Why People Flee, What the EU Should Do," Human Rights Watch, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>.

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR Global Focus, "Western and Central Mediterranean Situation," Global Focus, 2024, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/western-and-central-mediterranean-situation#:~:text=2024%20situation%20overview>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Unicef for every child, "A Deadly Journey for Children: The Migration Route from North Africa to Europe," www.unicef.org, 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/deadly-journey-children-migration-route-north-africa-europe>.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR Global Focus, "Western and Central Mediterranean Situation," Global Focus, 2024, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/western-and-central-mediterranean-situation#:~:text=2024%20situation%20overview>.

<sup>37</sup> Unicef for every child, "A Deadly Journey for Children: The Migration Route from North Africa to Europe," www.unicef.org, 2017, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/deadly-journey-children-migration-route-north-africa-europe>.

| Sea Movements 2022 - 2023* |                             |              |                             |              |                                  |              |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| *January - September       |                             |              |                             |              |                                  |              |
| Route                      | Central Mediterranean route |              | Western Mediterranean route |              | North-west Africa Maritime route |              |
|                            | Year 2022                   | Jan-Sep 2023 | Year 2022                   | Jan-Sep 2023 | Year 2022                        | Jan-Sep 2023 |
| Departures*                | 139,802                     | 175,590      | 21,794                      | 15,752       | 16,951                           | 19,473       |
| Disembarkations**          | 52,299                      | 47,061       | 7,581                       | 4,389        | 1,269                            | 4,268        |
| Sea arrivals***            | 87,503                      | 128,529      | 14,213                      | 11,363       | 15,682                           | 15,205       |
| Dead and missing           | 1,368                       | 2,235        | 259                         | 219          | 630                              | 421          |

Source: UNHCR, Global Focus, (2024)

### The Causes of African Immigration/migration to Europe

Numerous factors contribute to the significant influx of African immigrants to Europe and other regions worldwide. The primary factors driving immigration are civil strife and seeking work opportunities. Over the last several years, the Horn of Africa has been plagued by extensive wars, resulting in pervasive instability and large-scale displacements throughout the area. The civil conflict in South Sudan in 2013 resulted in the displacement of a minimum of 383,000 individuals, with approximately 194,000 people leaving their homes in December alone, while the remaining 189,000 were displaced throughout 2014<sup>38</sup>. The April 2023 Sudan uprising has significantly exacerbated the existing humanitarian demands and led to a substantial number of people being displaced both within the country and across its borders, with approximately 825,000 individuals seeking refuge in neighboring nations, while 280,000 individuals internally displaced in Sudan, a situation that has potentially contribute to complex migration issue in the region.<sup>39</sup>.

Between November 2022 and June 2023, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) collected data using its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology to assess that over 4.38 million individuals were internally displaced in Ethiopia, and more than 3,300 from 11 other countries, including Tigray region for the first time since September 2021<sup>40</sup>. Furthermore, the instability in the Sahel area is primarily fueled by the coup d'état in Burkina Faso and the problem of jihadist insurgencies in Mali and Niger, respectively. Extending throughout the territory from Senegal to Eritrea, positioned between the Sahara Desert in the north and the tropical regions of Africa in the south, the Sahel Region has consistently confronted significant

<sup>38</sup> United Nation's Global Overview, "Global Overview 2014: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence - South Sudan," Refworld, 2014, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/idmc/2014/en/99233#:~:text=There%20were%20at%20least%20383%2C000>

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR Global Focus, "Western and Central Mediterranean Situation," Global Focus, 2024, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/western-and-central-mediterranean-situation#:~:text=2024%20situation%20overview>.

<sup>40</sup> Relief Web, "More than 4.38 Million People Displaced in Ethiopia, More than Half due to Conflict: New IOM Report - Ethiopia | Relief Web," relief web. Int, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/more-438-million-people-displaced-ethiopia-more-half-due-conflict-new-iom-report#:~:text=Addis%20Ababa%20%E2%80%93%20Over%204.38%20million>.

and intricate security and humanitarian challenges.<sup>41</sup> Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in violence, conflict, and crime that has spread across national borders.<sup>42</sup> This has created major challenges for countries within and outside the Sahel region. Additionally, the Sahel region continues to serve as a primary route for migrants traveling from sub-Saharan Africa to northern coastal states and eventually to Europe. Islamic extremists are prevalent across the continent, particularly in regions with significant Muslim populations; however, organized militant organizations are mostly focused on certain locations such as the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, northern Mozambique, and the North Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)<sup>43</sup>.

Many Africans, especially the younger generation, both males and females, became the victims of human trafficking, forced labor, and prostitution. According to the U.S. Department of State, 313 individuals were identified as victims of sex trafficking, and 232 were identified as victims of labor trafficking. An estimated thirty-one of the 576 victims were exploited in international trafficking or transit to Italy.<sup>44</sup> Among these labor trafficking victims were 214 individuals who were forced to perform forced labor, seven who were forced to commit crimes against humanity, and eleven were forced to beg<sup>45</sup>. Based on the information provided, the countries from which sex trafficking victims originate predominantly are Brazil, Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, and Romania, respectively<sup>46</sup>. While women comprise most sex trafficking victims, transgender individuals, children, and men are also at risk, albeit to a lesser degree. This results in a significant escalation of human security concerns, a scarcity of employment prospects, and profound food insecurity.

The issue of food security in sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most significant difficulties faced by this generation. The crisis is worsening due to the current economic slowdown and will lead to further humanitarian crises if not addressed via comprehensive and focused action. According to the latest statistics from the World Bank, it is estimated that there are now between 275 million and 350 million people in sub-Saharan Africa who are experiencing food insecurity<sup>47</sup>. This means that almost 60 percent of the population in this region is facing either moderate or severe food security issues. ICMPD reports that Sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia are disproportionately impacted by food shortages and the deteriorating economic conditions in the

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<sup>41</sup> Center for Preventive Action, "Violent Extremism in the Sahel," Global Conflict Tracker, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> IISS, fact, analysis, influence, "Armed Conflict Survey 2023: From Global Jihad to Local Insurgencies," IISS, 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-survey/2023/from-global-jihad-to-local-insurgencies/>.

<sup>44</sup> U.S Department of State, "Italy," United States Department of State, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/italy>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Smuggling of Migrants Into, through and from North Africa a Thematic Review and Annotated Bibliography of Recent Publications," 2010, [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant\\_smuggling\\_in\\_North\\_Africa\\_June\\_2010\\_ebook\\_E\\_09-87293.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant_smuggling_in_North_Africa_June_2010_ebook_E_09-87293.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> the Foreign Policy Research Institute, "Rising Inflation Forces Greater Attention to Food Insecurity in Africa – Analysis," Eurasia Review, 2022, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/06112022-rising-inflation-forces-greater-attention-to-food-insecurity-in-africa-analysis/>.

country<sup>48</sup>. This has led many of them to maintain a strong desire to migrate to Europe despite the inflation and potential rise in energy prices. They perceive better job opportunities and access to state support in European job markets compared to Tunisia.

The food security situation in the East Horn of Africa (EHOA) has worsened considerably in recent years, with Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan ranking among the top 10 nations internationally facing severe food emergencies.<sup>49</sup> The situation in South Sudan, particularly in Pibor, was very severe, with 108,000 people facing catastrophic food security consequences.<sup>50</sup> The intensifying war in Tigray, Ethiopia, continues to be a significant concern since it has resulted in over 350,000 people experiencing catastrophic food security results. In 2021, the prevalence of hunger in Africa impacted 278 million individuals, while in Asia, it affected 425 million people, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, it affected 56.5 million individuals.<sup>51</sup> According to the sources, these figures represent 20.2%, 9.1%, and 8.6% of the respective populations in each region. A study from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ensured that access to food is a top priority for migrants in transit worldwide, as this issue was found to be one of the most urgent requirements that remained unfulfilled throughout their journey across the eighteen countries that were examined.<sup>52</sup> Also, of great importance is national security of countries in the Mediterranean region.

US and Italian NATO involvement in the Mediterranean region is important and adding Italy to the 3 Seas initiative would be a good step to connect the region in positive ways even more. Since the 3 Seas Initiative focuses on the importance of building infrastructure and energy resources, Dr. James Jay Carafano, Senior Counselor to the Heritage Foundation President, at the conference "The Three Seas Initiative and Italy", held in Rome on 18th September 2023 wisely said Italy should join the Three Seas Initiative.<sup>53</sup> Italy is important because it could integrate into its plan to become a North-South energy hub. One of the goals of the 3 Seas initiative is building regional connectivity in Central and Eastern Europe to boost economic prosperity and transatlantic security.<sup>54</sup> Admiral Foggo discussed the importance of deterrence, dialogue, and

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<sup>48</sup> ICMPD Migration Outlook Mediterranean 2023 Seven Migration Issues to Look out for in 2023 Origins, Key Events and Priorities for Europe," 2023, <https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/59113/file/ICMPD%2520Migration%2520Outlook%2520Mediterranean%25202023.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N, "Document Card | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations," www.fao.org, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/cc0639en.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> IOM UN MIGRATION WFP, "LIFE amidst a PANDEMIC: Hunger, Migration and Displacement in the East and Horn of Africa," IOM, 2021, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewi269XbnJuEAxXkN0QIHQLTAtA4FBAWegQIExAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdata.unhcr.org%2Fen%2Fdocuments%2Fdownload%2F87687&usq=AOvVaw2T5-a2TamzNX6Pm3HnMrV6&opi=89978449>.

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch | 350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor | New York, and NY 10118-3299 USA | t 1.212.290.4700, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis | Why People Flee, What the EU Should Do," Human Rights Watch, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/06/19/mediterranean-migration-crisis/why-people-flee-what-eu-should-do>.

<sup>53</sup> Machiavelli Center for Political and Strategic Studies, "Why Italy should join the Three Seas Initiative --- James Carafano,"Machiavelli Center, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcfDev\\_80MI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LcfDev_80MI).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

defense in the Mediterranean and NATO serves an important role in deterrence and defense. Admiral Foggo also emphasized the importance of NATO and transatlantic alliance for stability in North Africa and Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>55</sup>

The Transatlantic alliance members have some concerns about Russia's relationship with Algeria however Italy is making important substantial progress on deepening its strategic security partnership with Algeria. Russia relies on the Mediterranean naval presence and its relationship with Algeria, which is a strategic gateway into Africa and close to Europe. Between 2002 and 2024, it is believed that around 75 percent of Algeria's arms imports are from Russia<sup>56</sup> However, there is good news on positive security partnerships between Italy and Algeria since both countries are concerned with the spreading terrorist threats from Mali, migration and smuggling issues, and instability in the Sahel that leads to additional migration pressure. So, these countries of Algeria and Italy are starting to work together more. In 2024, the Italian Interior Ministry's leader visited Algeria, Matteo Piantedosi, accompanied by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Edmondo Cirielli. They have worked to expand bilateral cooperation in the field of security, such as in the area of the fight against transnational crime; as well as working as partners on financial support of the hydrocarbon-producing country of Algeria for the Mattei Plan.<sup>57</sup> Author Dr. Prentice enjoyed working at the US embassy Ghana in the 1990's and being able to work with the US Ghanaian navy in her job to forge better US/Ghanaian military relations as well as assist other embassy staff to improve commercial trade and political relations between the US and Ghana so it is really a great step forward that AFRICOM has forged a logistics partnership with Ghana.<sup>58</sup> Developing even stronger relations between Europe, Africa and the United States is vital to promoting security in the region particularly through trade, deterrence, defense and good communication and dialogue. It is very reassuring for American NATO allies to conduct military exercises in the Mediterranean area as well as Africa and there are three major exercises. The Exercise Phoenix Express of 2022 was the 17th iteration of this North African maritime exercise, it occurred between May 23 – June 3, 2022, in Tunisia, Tunisia, and in parts of the Mediterranean Sea. The purpose for the at-sea portion of the exercise involved testing North African, European, and U.S. maritime forces' capabilities to respond to not only irregular migration, trafficking and the movement of illegal goods and materials but to dialogue and work together. It is important for Tunisia, a major non-

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<sup>55</sup> Economist Impact SE Europe Events, "James Foggo on FORGING PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN," Economist 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgKt4TJkMw8>

<sup>56</sup> Foreign Brief and Rory Quick, "RUSSIAN WARSHIP LEAVES ALGERIA," Foreign Brief, 2024, <https://foreignbrief.com/russian-warship-leaves-algeria/>

<sup>57</sup> Agenzia Nova, "Algeria: Italy expands security cooperation and obtains support for the Mattei Plan," Agenzia Nova, 2024, <https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/algeria-litalia-amplia-la-cooperazione-di-sicurezza-e-ottiene-sostegno-al-piano-mattei/>

<sup>58</sup> Defense One and Katie Bo Williams, "AFRICOM Adds Logistics Hub in West Africa, Hinting at an Enduring US Presence," Defense One, 2019, <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2019/02/africom-adds-logistics-hub-west-africa-hinting-enduring-us-presence/155015/>

NATO ally to forge excellent regional Mediterranean sea relations with regional countries and the nations in Phoenix Express 2022 that participated included Algeria, Belgium, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, United Kingdom, and the United States.<sup>59</sup> In addition, recently between Feb. 12-15, 2024 in Naples the US Naval Forces Africa hosted a tabletop exercise Exercise Phoenix focusing on North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. The US's Sixth Fleet and the US Navy was very involved in Naples and hosted leaders from Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and the United States.<sup>60</sup> The two additional exercises that involve US and Africa are OBANGAME EXPRESS and CUTLASS EXPRESS. OBANGAME EXPRESS is designed to improve regional cooperation, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise to improve collective capabilities of Gulf of Guinea and West African nations to counter illicit maritime activity in the Gulf. CUTLASS EXPRESS, on the other hand is designed to improve regional cooperation, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and information-sharing practices to add to capabilities between the United States, East African, and West Indian Ocean nations in order counter illicit maritime activity in the West Indian Ocean.<sup>61</sup>

The EU and the African Union (AU) play important roles supporting NATO in terms of Mediterranean and border issues. The EU has already forged relations and partnerships on maritime security with the United Nations (UN) including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Maritime Organization of the United Nations (IMO), NATO, the African Union (AU), and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Copernicus maritime and border surveillance systems are implemented by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) and through Frontex European Border and Coast Guard Agency which provide space based operations.<sup>62</sup> Viewing Mediterranean security through a geopolitical lens demonstrates the importance of trade, alliance building, and communication.

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<sup>59</sup> US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, "Exercise Phoenix Express 2022 set to begin in Tunisia," US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, 2022, <https://www.c6f.navy.mil/Press-Room/News/Article/3037144/exercise-phoenix-express-2022-set-to-begin-in-tunisia/>

<sup>60</sup> US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, "U.S. Naval Forces Africa hosts Phoenix Express 2024 Tabletop Exercise in Naples, Italy," US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, 2024, <https://www.c6f.navy.mil/Press-Room/News/News-Display/Article/3682545/us-naval-forces-africa-hosts-phoenix-express-2024-tabletop-exercise-in-naples-i/#:~:text=The%20exercise%20focuses%20on%20regional,of%20participating%20North%20African%20nations.>

<sup>61</sup> US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, "EXPRESS SERIES consists of three multinational exercises," US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, 2019, <https://www.c6f.navy.mil/About-Us/Exercises/Africa/>

<sup>62</sup> General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, "Council conclusions on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan, EU, 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/67499/st14280-en23.pdf>

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