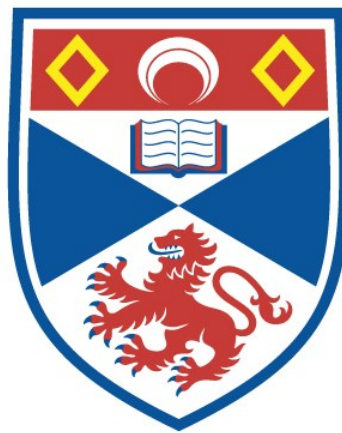# Mission 'Mare Nostrum', 2013–2014: a framework of analysis for maritime search and rescue operations

Maurizio Carmini

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

2022

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Abstract

The Mediterranean Sea has long been a stage for complex interactions between the requirements of maritime security and the dynamics of irregular migration. This interrelationship has recently become more pronounced, with the unfolding of the refugee and migrant crisis on the doorstep of the European Union. Despite the support for missions at sea, EU stakeholders have shown conflicting interests in supporting different models of maritime operations. Mission Mare Nostrum, a purely Italian state-led initiative, was enacted in 2013 to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and reduce migrant smuggling and trafficking. This research seeks to examine the effectiveness of combining search and rescue maritime missions and pro-security operations in order to save lives and reduce migrant smuggling. Mare Nostrum combined the two approaches in response to the migration crisis, and thus was a suitable case study to highlight the value and efficacy of maritime security operations and their interconnection with irregular migration. Through an analytical framework which could be applied to evaluating similar missions, this study assessed how Mare Nostrum has shaped subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea since 2013, and redefined policies around such operations. Using a qualitative case study method guided by an abductive approach and interpretive paradigm, data gleaned from documentary analysis and interviews show that Mare Nostrum was effective in reducing fatalities at sea, smuggling, and trafficking of migrants. The findings of this research also illustrate that, although the operation was sufficiently funded, it could not eradicate migrant smuggling and trafficking because other underlying aspects – such as political instability, civil insecurity, and socioeconomic issues – were critical push factors for irregular migration. The main conclusion drawn from this study is that more collaboration amongst stakeholders in the EU and neighbouring countries is needed to find lasting solutions because deploying maritime operations alone is not an adequate response to end the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis. In the hope of ultimately contributing to knowledge regarding European maritime security studies, this thesis recommends new policies at the international level for addressing irregular migration by sea through maritime operations.

To my parents Rita and Lodovico.

Acknowledgements

30 July, 2021

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFPs	Agencies, Funds, and Programmes of the United Nations [UN]
AII	Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
AMET	Aeromedical Evacuation Teams
APHRD	EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union (UMA from French, '*Union du Maghreb Arabe*')
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIMSEC	Center for International Maritime Security
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EMN	European Migration Network
EMP	European Mediterranean Partnership
EMSA	European Maritime Safety Agency
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EUAFR	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
EUBAM	EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya
EUROSUR	European Border Surveillance System
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LCGA	Libyan Coast Guard Agency
LRMP	Long Range Maritime Patrol
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PAM	Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
SAR	Search and Rescue
SBC	Schengen Borders Code
TFM	Task Force Mediterranean
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN-CTCED	United Nation Counter-Terrorism Committee, Executive Directorate
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Your enemy is not the refugee.

Your enemy is the one who made him a refugee.

— TARIQ RAMADAN

INTRODUCTION

Europe and Africa share proximity and history, ideas and ideals, trade and technology. You are tied together by the ebb and flow of people. Migration presents policy challenges – but also represents an opportunity to enhance human development, promote decent work and strengthen collaboration.

― Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon[1]

Recent terrorist outrages have highlighted the importance of securing Europe's southern borders, notably the natural 'blue frontier' of the Mediterranean Sea. Meanwhile, many migrants are allegedly trafficked by organised criminal groups, presenting criminological as well as counter-terrorism challenges (Mili & Townsend, 2008; Nail, 2016). Weighing against this is the challenge of solidarity, with Europe's human rights values and its obligations under the Refugee Convention mandated in 1951 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] (UNHCR, 1951; Evans, 2011; Hathaway & Foster, 2014). Vessels in the Mediterranean also have obligations to save lives at sea, as mandated by the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS] and the International Maritime Organization [IMO]. To tackle these issues, national governments and the European Union have adopted multiple approaches, resulting in diverse search and rescue maritime operations. These include mission *Mare Nostrum*, which was launched in 2013 and concluded in late 2014 (Ministero della Difesa[2], n.d.).

Mare Nostrum was a humanitarian search and rescue [SAR] operation[3] mandated by the Italian Navy (Amnesty International, 2015a; Marina Militare[4], n.d.). It launched in October 2013 to respond to the hundreds of deaths that occurred when a migrant boat sank off the coast of the island of Lampedusa in Italy in 2013: the incident was a mass drowning that took the lives of more than 350 people (Coppens, 2013; Bern, 2016). Mission Mare Nostrum encompassed both military and humanitarian missions, as it operated to save lives and fight human trafficking.

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[1] UN Secretary-General's remarks to Opening of the Fourth EU-Africa Summit, Brussels, 2 April 2014 (United Nations – UN, 2014).
[2] From Italian, 'Ministry of Defence'.
[3] Search and rescue operations are a critical part of any Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) setup (Jonathan, 2020).
[4] From Italian, 'Italian Navy'.

An area of an estimated 70,000 km^2 was patrolled by the Italian Navy, within which migrants at sea were to be rescued under the operation. More than 150,000 migrants and refugees were saved thanks to Mare Nostrum's efforts between October 2013 and October 2014. The mission was deemed necessary for rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, but only Italy pursued this effort, as other EU member states did not support it (Katsiaficas, 2014).

Since the onset of highly publicised mass migration, smuggling, trafficking, deportation, rising terrorism threats and humanitarian intervention activism, the Mediterranean Sea has been the site of numerous operations to neutralise security threats and reduce fatalities at sea. The intricate nature of the issue was the fundamental idea behind Mare Nostrum. Only a few countries were initially committed to curbing the high influx of irregular migration, smuggling, and the loss of lives at sea amongst other detrimental aspects of the Mediterranean migration to the EU. Specifically, Italy was amongst the pioneers in enacting measures, with Mare Nostrum being one of the most lauded operations in the Mediterranean Sea (Savaryn, 2018). The mission, however, encountered many challenges, chief amongst them inadequate funding and stakeholder buy-in amongst EU countries, which subsequently led to the adoption of EU-collaborative maritime operations (International Organization for Migration – IOM, 2017). The operation had significant ramifications for cross-Mediterranean migration (Savaryn, 2018), and migration was on the rise again after the closure of the operation. As such, due to the chronic nature of mass migration and other illegal activities in the Mediterranean Sea, there is a need to comprehend the impacts of such operations.

This study explores the subject using the specific case of mission Mare Nostrum enacted by the Italian administration to comprehend the extent of its effectiveness and impact on foreign policies in maritime operations. The impact of Mare Nostrum on cross-Mediterranean mass migration, smuggling, and trafficking are assessed in this study. The ensuing section explains the research problem that prompted this study, the knowledge gaps, and challenges faced by previous and subsequent maritime operations to tackle the issue.

The Research Problem: Situation Analysis and Knowledge Gaps
The academic works of Till (1994; 2018), Murphy (2007), Lehr (2011; 2019), and Bueger (2015a) are seminal in the domain of maritime security and provide the foundation for maritime security studies. A review of this literature shows, however, that the insights offered by these

studies apply mainly to the region of the Horn of Africa and less so to other geographical areas, such as the Mediterranean region. However, while some parallels may exist in relation to Somalia, a different situation could be seen in the Mediterranean: *smuggling* is the issue being signified, whereas in Somalia it is *piracy* or armed robbery at sea. In consideration of this, information about Somalia is emphasised in current maritime security theory, whilst the Mediterranean is being overlooked. Although the ensuing chapters of this study reveal an abundance of work on this topic and region, the current literature does not offer, at the time of writing, a view from the field on naval SAR operations in relation to maritime security. Policy making has not hitherto envisioned a unified and integrated response through maritime security operations to the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Using ideas from the abovementioned case studies as a point of reference, this research aims to fill this gap by investigating Mare Nostrum in order to respond to the current migrant crisis in Europe and contribute to the existing body of work in the fields of maritime security studies and international relations.

In response to the growing security challenges and advocacy for interventions to save the lives of migrants and curb human trafficking and smuggling, governments and the EU have undertaken numerous operations in the Mediterranean Sea. Italy was amongst the pioneering countries in enacting the Mare Nostrum operation in 2013–2014. Mare Nostrum, not the first operation to be enacted[5] but the first to be hyper-publicised and utilised as a response to the mass migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea, was brought about following a call from the international community to reduce the impact of migration in the Mediterranean Sea and to prevent loss of lives and foster security. Mission Mare Nostrum was launched in 2013 by the Italian government, considering that the country has one of the highest influxes of irregular migrants mainly through the Mediterranean Sea. According to Panebianco (2016a), mission Mare Nostrum attracted international attention primarily based on its emphasis on humanitarian interventions to search for and rescue irregular migrants stranded at sea or facing the risk of capsizing due to vessel overloading.

Mare Nostrum prioritised a SAR approach over border control measures that instead could potentially involve sending migrants needing humanitarian assistance back to their countries of origin. The migrants would then be assessed and vetted for security and residency

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[5] Mission *Constant Vigilance* had been conducting operations since 2004 (see Appendix I for a complete chronological timeline of maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean from 2001 to 2021).

compliance later, once safely ashore (Panebianco, 2016a). The joint operation was sourced and conducted by the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea to search for and rescue irregular migrants, and was funded exclusively by the Italian government. The mission mandate was aimed at responding to the increase in loss of lives in the Strait of Sicily between Italy and Tunisia (Marina Militare, n.d.). Mare Nostrum was enacted to reinforce already existing operations that were assigned to monitor irregular migrations through the Mediterranean Sea, such as operation *Constant Vigilance*, which had been in existence since 2004. Mission Mare Nostrum had two primary objectives: (i) to protect the life of people at sea, and (ii) to prosecute human traffickers and smugglers, and ensure justice for the migrants (*ibid.*). Those represent the criteria against which the effectiveness of the mission will be assessed in this study, particularly in the empirical chapters Four and Five. Mare Nostrum heightened attention on the Mediterranean migration crises across Europe, placing it amongst the top EU migration crises. This increased level of awareness convinced the EU to acknowledge cross-migration-related issues – such as the smuggling of weapons and drugs, and human trafficking – as threats to European security and stability (Vacas Fernández, 2016); therefore, there was an *urgent* need to address the vulnerabilities through which these threats could have materialised. It is noteworthy that, except for the East, Europe has *de facto* geographical maritime borders – or *maritime margins*, as defined by Germond (2010); therefore, managing maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea, and securing Europe's 'blue borders' are crucial for the EU Common Security and Defence Policy [CSDP].

Through Mare Nostrum, Italy made significant progress in creating awareness of the importance of controlling Mediterranean migrations, considering that the crisis affected not only Italy but also other European countries (Panebianco, 2016b). However, the mission did not convince the EU and specific countries to support it through funding, thus leading to its early closure in October 2014 (Marina Militare, n.d.). Nonetheless, amidst the security concerns for irregular migrants at the perilous hand of the stormy sea, *passeurs*[6], and traffickers, the EU responded with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency 'Frontex'[7]. Consequently, mission Mare Nostrum was taken over by Frontex-operations *Triton* and *Poseidon*, and EUNAVFORMED *Sophia*, mandated with military and humanitarian

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[6] From French, 'smugglers'.
[7] From French, Front*ières* Ext*érieures*, which means 'external borders'.

approaches and supported by the European Union to safeguard coastal borders and save lives at sea (Vacas Fernández, 2016).

Other partners employed in support of Italy's moves to deal with Mediterranean migration challenges included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] in the Aegean Sea in 2016 with operation *Sea Guardian* (Vacas Fernández, 2016). The illegal trafficking and smuggling associated with irregular migration were magnified in the regional discourses by the international community as a threat with detrimental security implications. Based on such premises, it is therefore fundamental to examine the effectiveness of the Mare Nostrum operation on smuggling and trafficking, and its implications for humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants at sea, border control, and foreign maritime policies. Accordingly, the precise research questions of this thesis are enunciated in the section below.

Focal Theory: The Research Questions

The main research question that guided the study was the following:

> *To what extent was Mare Nostrum effective in reducing the loss of lives at sea and migrant smuggling?*

The question above is supplemented by the following sub-questions to ensure a comprehensive assessment by the study:

1. *To what extent were Mare Nostrum's capacity and resources adequate to deliver its mandate?*
2. *How did Mare Nostrum (and subsequent operations) balance in policy the obligations to save lives at sea with incentive effects on migrants? What were the legal, judicial, and operational implications?*
3. *To what extent was Mare Nostrum's mandate relevant to the challenges during its operation? What related challenges – if any – did Europe face at the time, which Mare Nostrum was not mandated to address?*
4. *What lessons should be drawn for asylum seekers and refugees, and the management of migrants?*

The research questions above are critical in maritime security discourse and policies, especially for Mediterranean maritime SAR, anti-smuggling, and anti-trafficking operations. Ultimately, the research will provide an enhanced understanding of whether maritime SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum have an impact on altering migration patterns in the Mediterranean context. The efficiency and effectiveness of Mare Nostrum will be particularly addressed in Chapters Four and Five, respectively through: (i) exploration of what is found in the literature, in terms of legal and operational mandate of the mission; (ii) subsequent corroboration and validation of those findings through the primary data collected from interviews with a selected panel of practitioners. It is noteworthy that this study interprets the effectiveness of Mare Nostrum against the criteria set as aims and objectives in its operational mandate, as presented in Chapter Two.

The questions are relevant considering the controversy surrounding the growing activism and advocacy for humanitarian interventions to respond to the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis on the one hand, and pro-security offensive operations aimed to combat smuggling and trafficking on the other hand. At present, migrants are being transported by sea towards Europe in broad daylight, when it could be detected and prevented. Thus, a need to develop an effective framework for maritime operations is imperative, as this aims to save lives and decrease the level of risks involved in unregulated migration towards Europe. Furthermore, the choice of this research topic relates to the professional interest of the researcher, who served in Libya from 2013 to 2015 as a senior security officer with an international organisation mandated to assist the Libyan government with border management and irregular migration. Additionally, by achieving the Master of Letters [MLitt] degree in Terrorism Studies at the University of St Andrews, the researcher then developed a personal interest in investigating further the issue of SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea as a future idea for research from his master's dissertation (Carmini, 2015).

It is hypothesised that migration in the Mediterranean Sea involves a complex web of illicit actors that flourish with the smuggling of clandestine migrants on the one hand, and legal actors who attempt to thwart the smuggling amidst growing criticism from humanitarian intervention groups on the other hand. The research maintained that the deployment of SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum is effective in reducing smuggling and loss of lives at sea. However, the

outcomes are short-lived as other driving forces (*i.e.*, international advocacy, sociopolitical and insecurity issues, and legal frameworks) reduce the effectiveness of these operations.

The findings of this investigation will be relevant in informing maritime security management practices in respect to Mediterranean mass migration, smuggling, and trafficking to Europe and Italy in particular. The findings will also illustrate the challenges of the process, highlight its strengths, and describe previously used approaches that bore positive results. Considering that cross-Mediterranean mass migration – along with smuggling and trafficking – is correlated with a highly clandestine *nexus* that requires multifaceted approaches, this research study will highlight how maritime security operations such as Mare Nostrum, Frontex-operations, and EUNAVFOR MED missions could be utilised in service of optimal anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking outcomes. Ultimately, the outcomes of this research are expected to enhance an understanding of how sea operations can mitigate the risks of unregulated mass migration into Europe as well as to enrich the understanding of the role of coordination at the supranational level when facing mass migration phenomena. The formulated recommendations on current policies and practices for supranational organisations and national policymakers will be significant in informing future considerations for asylum seekers and refugees when enacting anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations. The discoveries of this assessment will be significant to future research on maritime security, cross-Mediterranean migration management policies, and humanitarian advocacy and intervention policies for international migration, amongst other issues. Finally, this study will provide a crucial foundation for research works and highlight research gaps for further scrutiny.

Study Purpose, Scope and Delimitations

This research investigation aims to assess the extent to which Mare Nostrum was an effective maritime SAR operation, and how it has impacted foreign policies in subsequent missions in the Mediterranean since 2013. The study compares the operational mandates, actions, and impacts of Mare Nostrum and subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean such as Frontex-operations Triton, Poseidon, and Themis, Sophia and Irini, as well as NATO-operations (see Appendix I).

Utilising insights from the aforementioned case studies in the existing literature and academia as a point of departure, the research intends to fill the existing gaps by addressing the research

problem. The assessment intends to identify the contributions of migration management operations through an examination of a maritime search and rescue operation – such as Mare Nostrum – as a response to the recent migrant crisis into Europe. The study aims to make an original contribution to the existing body of work and the fields of maritime security and international migration management applied to the European security discourse by focusing on migration, trafficking, and smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea; different operations deployed by Italy and the EU; implications for policy on migrants; legal frameworks; and finally, joint maritime operations policies. A critical background and assessment of all fundamental aspects such as drivers, activities, maritime SAR operations, actors, and alternatives are explored in Chapters Four and Five to offer a robust foundation for the subject of this investigation. It is critical to highlight that, although an inter-disciplinary approach was adopted, and a range of sub-disciplines were consequently explored, this thesis has the potential to contribute to maritime security studies in primis, with particular regard to the integration of SAR operations – such as Mare Nostrum – as a critical component to maritime security policies. The distinctive contribution of this research therefore addresses the current literature available on maritime security, through the utilisation of a novel and more concrete account in relation to the insights gathered through the interviews from practitioners with relevant experience, presented in Chapter Five.

In line with the concept of abductive reasoning advanced by Tavory and Timmermans (2014), this study intends to embark on some limited theory-building as well, by marrying maritime governance theories to migration theories through the application of SAR operations as a crucial component of the maritime security risk equation. The justification for that is that while maritime governance does not normally include migration aspects, migration theories do not discuss maritime governance. However, since migration is done via sea (*i.e.*, the Mediterranean), and thus the phenomenon straddles both theories, this guided the theoretical approach for this thesis, and was identified as a gap in the theory that needs to be filled in order to achieve effective maritime operations policies.

The study does not intend to cover the root causes of migration, nor how to mitigate the push and pull factors which lead people to leave their countries of origin, for a distinct and thorough political analysis of those would be required, which is beyond the scope of this research. Similarly, the temporal and spatial boundaries of this study are delimited by the analysis of

SAR maritime missions in the Mediterranean Sea, operating during the same period as Mare Nostrum: 2013–2014.

Overview of Research Process

A qualitative research design was used to address the research questions of this thesis. The qualitative study relied on interpretivist ontological and epistemological underpinnings. The data was interpreted and theoretical postulations formulated, using an abductive approach to the reasoning and scrutiny of data for theory-building (Mercier, 1917; Ayer, 1956; Dancy, 1985; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). The study has two sets of data, namely primary data collected from semi-structured interviews involving 16 participants, and secondary data gathered through an extensive documentary review of credible sources with information on cross-Mediterranean migrations, anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking activities, and maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea, including their implications on current policies and the related legal frameworks. The use of these qualitative techniques is consistent with the description of the qualitative design, which uses a multi-method approach for triangulation and corroboration of the findings (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007). In consideration of the complexity of the topic being researched, and in line with the research question, a qualitative approach was deemed the most sensible and appropriate (Neuman, 1997; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). According to Silverman (2004: 137), the '[…] *strength of qualitative interviewing is the opportunity* […] *to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of the social worlds*'. Hence, the study was able to explore how Mare Nostrum operated as a SAR strategy in the Mediterranean Sea using a qualitative research design after abductive formulation of the research questions and assumptions.

Key Terminology: (Legal) Definitions Matter

Before turning to Chapter One and the discussion of the migration issue as conceptualisation of the research topic and background of the research, the key terms used throughout the study need to be outlined and defined:

 Mare Nostrum – A maritime military-based operation enacted on a humanitarian approach to search for and rescue migrants at sea in the Strait of Sicily and to prevent loss of life at sea and smuggling into Europe (Marina Militare, n.d.). Concurrently, '*mare nostrum*' (from Latin: 'Our Sea') was the name used in ancient times by the Romans to indicate their ownership – and dominance – of the Mediterranean Sea.

Trafficking – 'Trafficking' broadly refers to activities of manufacturing, importation, or exportation and distribution of illegal commodities such as weapons and drugs. Concerning humans, trafficking is defined as the forced movement of human beings domestically or internationally for exploitation purposes (Mann, 2018).

Smuggling – 'Smuggling' refers to the unlawful movement of controlled or illegal commodities within the country or across borders, while evading custom duties where it applies. However, 'human smuggling' refers to procuring illegal entry of an individual into a country where the person has no legal right of residence to obtain material or immaterial benefit (Mann, 2018).

Migrant, Emigrant, Immigrant – The term 'migrant' refers to a person who relocates from one location to another in search of a better economic and social life in another country (Moore, 2015). Merriam-Webster (n.d.) noted the varied definitions of people who count as a migrant and differences between 'migrant', 'immigrant', and 'emigrant'. Migrants can be defined according to their nationality, country of birth, or length of stay in the destination country. The main difference between 'migrant' and 'immigrant' is that 'migrant' is often used to refer to an individual who voluntarily leaves a country and temporarily resides in another country either through legal or illegal means and could even incorporate refugees and asylum seekers. 'Immigrants', on the other hand, move to a country legally, are given permanent residency, and can work freely in that country without restrictions. Immigrants have clear intentions to settle to the country in which they relocate and seek employment. Finally, 'emigration' or 'emigrants' are used to stress the act of moving to another country, viewed from the departure perspective, while 'immigration' or 'migrant' is used to indicate the act of moving into a country and is viewed from the entry perspective (IOM, 2019a).

Refugee[8] – The IOM (2019a) defines 'refugees' as persons who *unwillingly* relocate to another country for fear of persecution for reasons such as race, political affiliation, sexual orientation, and social groupings, and – for such reasons – are not willing to return to their country for fear of their lives. A pervading argument about *refugees* and *migrants* is that they are two separate, distinct categories, as evidenced in jurisprudential practice. Long (2013) argues that looking at refugees as migrants in the past failed to guarantee that they would be protected from prosecution because their admission relied entirely on economic criteria. Taking

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[8] From Latin, '*Refugium*' came from the verb *refugĕre* ('to run away' or 'to escape'), itself formed from *fugĕre* [*fugio, fugis, fugi, fugitŭm, fugĕre*] ('to flee' or 'to go into exile') (Dizionario Latino, n.d.).

each of the concepts separately in the 1950s – through the provision of an exceptional right to refugees to cross borders and process asylum – helped to tackle this protection gap.

Asylum seeker – IOM (2019a) defines an 'asylum seeker' as a person who legally or illegally enters a country to seek protection from persecution, but such claims have not yet been determined by the immigration authorities of the receiving state. All refugees begin their status as asylum seekers in that country. However, not all asylum seekers would end up as refugees in the country. It is noteworthy that, according to Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins (2016), one of the underlying controversies emanates from the difficulty in distinguishing refugees and asylum seekers from migrants in search of better socioeconomic opportunities.

Clandestine – Refers to services or actions undertaken secretly because of their illegal nature. In the migration context, 'clandestine migration' refers to any movement of persons from one country to another that is done secretly and contrary to the migration laws of the country of origin, transit, or destination (IOM, 2019a).

Similarly, it is important to define what 'migration' is. According to Browne (2015), there is no universally established definition of *irregular* migration, which is often used interchangeably with *illegal* migration, although the latter has been increasingly restricted to human trafficking and smuggling cases (Lopez Lucia, 2015 as cited in Browne, 2015). The three main modalities through which individuals can enter a country irregularly are: (i) clandestine entry, in which the person enters without proper authority or with fraudulent documents; (ii) authorised entry, but followed by on an overstaying status; and (iii) deliberate abuse of the asylum system (Kuschminder, de Bresser, & Siegel, 2015).

Structure of the Thesis

After definition of the relevant key terms, this section presents an overview of the structure of this study. The thesis is composed of seven chapters; this introductory chapter has described the background and significance of the study, problem statement, research question, methodology overview, and aim and objectives of the research. Chapter One presents an overview of the refugee crisis in Europe, providing a historical perspective of smuggling, trafficking, and terrorism in the Mediterranean Sea, with a focus on how irregular migration affects the geopolitical dimension of maritime security. The chapter also presents the theoretical framework adopted for this research: to this end, Lee's theory of migration is described in detail, and its suitability for this study is discussed. Chapter Two represents the

literature review of this study by providing insights into Italian security and foreign policy in the Mediterranean, cross-Mediterranean migration management operations for SAR, offensive military operations for security purposes, legal frameworks for such missions, and the implications of the above. Both chapters include a critical review of discussions, arguments, and findings in the current body of literature derived from peer-reviewed articles, reports, policy documents, law and regulations documents, and other academically credible sources. Chapter Three, constituting of the methodological section, examines the research approach and methods that the researcher adopted, and the reasons behind the choice. It is in this chapter that ethical issues, bias, research limitations and past problems are covered. The fourth and fifth chapters are the data chapters, which present the findings from the documentary review and the semi-structured interviews, respectively. Chapter Six thoroughly discusses the data analysed and proposes a new analytical framework, based on the findings from this study, which could be applied to other similar research contexts. The same chapter concludes the study and recommends actions for maritime security policies and international migration management best practices, before restating its distinctive contribution and relevance for the literature and providing suggestions and ideas for future research work on maritime security operations and responses to irregular migration.

CHAPTER ONE: MARE NOSTRUM OR MARE *ALIORUM*? THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

> *It's strange, how you go from being a person who is away from home to a person with no home at all. The place that is supposed to want you has pushed you out. No other place takes you in. You are unwanted, by everyone. You are a refugee.*
>
> — Clemantine Wamariya[9]

The first chapter of this thesis is important to establish the study's theoretical framework and identify models, theories, and studies relevant to the topic of investigation (Mertens, 2015). This study uses the theoretical framework to establish the rationale for the research questions and identify what is known about the context of mission Mare Nostrum. The purpose of this chapter is also to review discussions, statistics, and arguments by previous researchers on the refugee crisis in Europe and the drivers behind it; cross-Mediterranean migration challenges; and the contributions to maritime security and international relations, amongst other topics. In this section, a historical perspective on trafficking and smuggling of drugs, human beings, and arms through the Mediterranean Sea is discussed, with particular focus on the implications of human smuggling and trafficking for maritime security. The drivers and implications of the migration crisis, along with the role of armed conflicts on cross-Mediterranean migration, are also reviewed, followed by a discussion of alternative approaches to migrants at sea at the international level. The researcher is aided by prior research and theory in determining the necessary information that must be gathered, on account of other researchers having found it to be relevant to the topic (Swanson & Holton III, 2005).

Theoretical Framework: Everett Lee's Theory of Migration

As the notion of 'migrants' was considered in the formulation of the research questions and plays a major role in the investigation, the concept of migration is an essential issue to be analysed through *theory*.

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[9] Human Rights advocate and author of 'The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After' (Wamariya, 2018: 29).

Migration is a complicated issue. Apart from a variety of social, economic, political, and environmental reasons, the perception and behaviour of individuals in any region determines migration of population to a considerable extent. As a result, there is no unique theory of migration, despite attempts to include migration into economic and social theory, spatial analysis, and behavioural theory have been made (Hassan, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the four main models of migration were perused and analysed, notably (i) Ravenstein's laws of migration, (ii) the gravity model, (iii) Stouffer's theory of mobility, and Lee's theory. Ravenstein's model is based on generalisations of the population, and its focus is mainly on inland movements from rural areas to rapidly growing towns. The gravity model, based on Newton's law of gravitation, assumes that migration is directly proportional to the product of the population size, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance separating the point of departure and arrival. Stouffer's model is an adaptation of the gravity model, insofar that there is no necessary relationship between mobility and distance (*ibid.*). In contextualising the topic to this research study and the Mediterranean Sea, all four theories were analysed; however, while the first three set the foundation of migration studies, they focus on limited variables, such as generalisation of the population and predominance of studies on inland movements; thus, it would have been challenging to contextualise them in global issues such as the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. Therefore, the researcher considered them less useful in the context of this study. Conversely, Lee's migration theory (1966a) was selected on account of the consideration of the reasons behind people's decision to relocate from one place to another, described as factors associated with the place of origin, destination, and intervening obstacles. Moreover, the *push–pull* factor perspective used by Lee (1966) has been vastly found in the contemporary narrative on migration across the Mediterranean. Therefore, the theoretical framework underpinning this research is Lee's model of migration, complemented by Castelli's model (2018), as discussed and explained later in this section of the chapter. The model and its theoretical constructs help explain the phenomenon of cross-Mediterranean migration from the push–pull factor perspective to more fully understand the forces compelling people to move out of their countries and the factors attracting them to relocate to new areas. The theory was proposed by Everett Lee in 1966 as a rigorous theoretical framework to illustrate the migration phenomenon by scrutinising the reasons behind immigration and emigration, and how they are interrelated (Barman & Lumpkin, 2015). It is also noteworthy that, over recent years, the push and pull theoretical perspectives have become critical in unravelling some of the complex overarching factors of transnational migration. Therefore, Lee's theory of migration was

deemed to be central to the aims of this study and it helped providing a robust conceptual foundation of this research.

According to Lee (1966a; 1966b), a direct correlation exists between the size of a migration flow and the receiving area's force of attraction, whilst an inverse difference exists linking the distance between the sending area and the receiving area (Rosenblum & Tichenor, 2012). This theory is, in fact, an extension of Ravenstein's discussion on 'The Laws of Migration'[10] and highlights factors such as migrants' places of origin, preferred destinations, prevailing obstacles, and personal factors that modify the relation between the sending and the receiving areas. The theory also stresses the geographical feature of *space*, and highlights that the leading force amongst related features is the choice of an 'economic destination'. In contextualising the topic to this research study and the Mediterranean Sea, it is important to note that research on migration has been dominated by the push–pull model, wherein economic growth in the new destination, such as Europe, *pulls* migrants towards such a point of arrival. In contrast, economic stagnation *pushes* migrants away from their places of origin (*ibid.*). Lee's theory of migration provides the basis for considering the social and economic reasons for people's intention to migrate, with an implicit *push–pull* perspective. In other words, the theory hypothesises that migrants are being attracted to the decisive factors in their destinations and repelled from the negative ones in their places of origin. When a significant difference occurs between push and pull factors, the likelihood of migration ensuing increases significantly. It is interesting to note that the personal characteristics of prospective migrants, such as gender, education, race, *et cetera*, determine their disparities in terms of the impact of the intervening obstacles and the impacts at the places of origin and destination (De Jong & Gardner, 1981).

Theoretical Perspectives of Lee's Migration Theory
Lee's theory was conceptualised under four predominant factors: (i) origin countries aspects, (ii) destination countries aspects, (iii) personal issues, and (iv) intervening aspects. According to the Information and Library Network Centre [INFLIBNET] (2015), the predominant perspectives from this theory are that a specific place has incentives that attract people to it, factors that compel people to move out, or factors that encourage or hold people in that area. In addition to the factors above, Lee theorised that intervening factors determine the migrant's

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[10] From 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, LII (June 1889), 288 (Ravenstein, 1889).

decision to leave or stay, regardless of the potential incentives in the country of destination. According to the INFLIBNET (2015), Lee conceptualised four types of intervening factors, as illustrated in figure one.
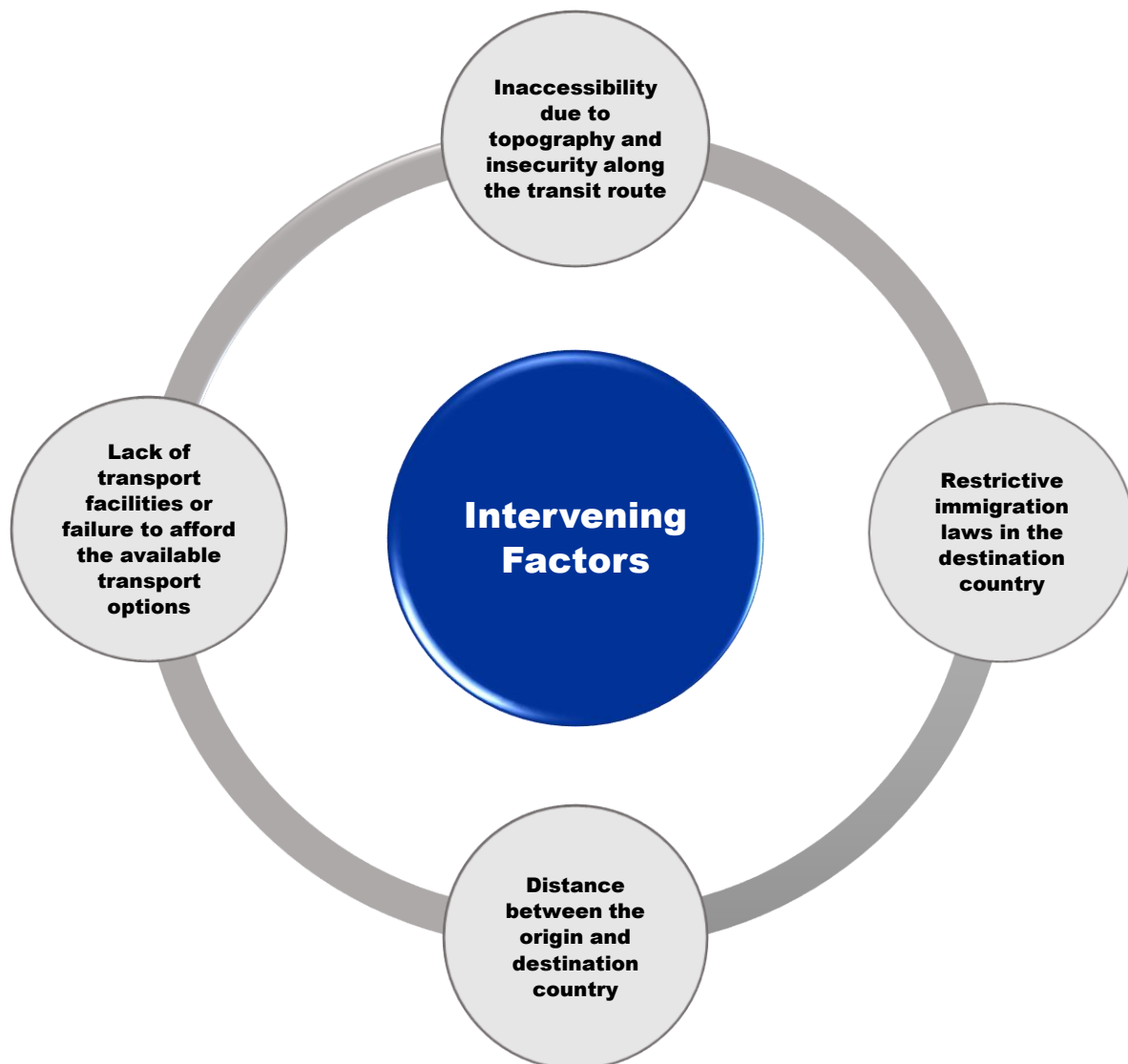
Source: (Adapted from Information and Library Network Centre [INFLIBNET], 2015: n.p.).
Figure 1. Types of Intervening Factors According to Lee's Migration Theory.

According to Lee (1966a), the intended arrival country could have stringent rules that make it difficult for people to migrate to those countries. Such requirements could be proof of funds, and lengthy – and often costly – processes to obtain the required legal permits to reside and work in those countries (Wimalaratana, 2017). In addition, the geographical distance between the countries has a significant impact on the financial *cost* of moving and the *time* required to relocate. The transit route could also be filled with dangers and unfavourable terrain, such as mountain barriers, deserts, and large bodies of water such as lakes or *sea* – notably, the

Mediterranean Sea. For instance, people wishing to migrate from Eritrea to Spain who have not secured the necessary legal papers to board an aeroplane may find themselves devising ways of migrating through Northern Africa first and then illegally to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. If such migrants did not have reliable ways of transportation through the Mediterranean, then the sea would represent an *intervening factor* (*i.e.*, inaccessibility due to topography and insecurity along the transit route). Consideration for intervening factors and whether a person could surmount those obstacles is a critical factor for irregular migration. Barman and Lumpkin (2015) highlighted that one of the overarching arguments is that intervening factors could curb – or even hinder – irregular migration. It is therefore in this framework of Lee's theory that mission Mare Nostrum needs to be assessed as an intervening factor for cross-Mediterranean migration, as further explained in the empirical chapters Four and Five of this study .

Lee's theoretical model of migration is fundamental in this research because it provides a framework for scrutinising the cross-Mediterranean irregular migration phenomenon from a push–pull and neutral factor dimension (Ramos, 2017). Though it is noteworthy to highlight that Lee's theory has not evolved to consider contemporary ways of managing migrations at sea (case in point, maritime SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum), this perspective enabled the research to investigate and determine whether mission Mare Nostrum could be considered as an intervening factor and whether the mission affected migration dynamics and patterns in 2013–2014. An examination of how Lee's migration model is suitable for this research begins by illustrating the driving factors that made the cross-Mediterranean migration chronic, causing the previous measures taken to fail to stop further fatalities at sea, or curb irregular migration. Lee's theory is critical in explaining the overarching micro and macro factors in the environment, as well as other neutral factors. Through scrutinising in Chapter Six the 'intervening factors' envisaged in Lee's model, the theory provides a foundation for understanding which of those factors could be implemented as obstacles to hinder the phenomenon of mass migration. As such, the theory – in combination with maritime governance theories, as introduced earlier – provided an overarching framework for analysing the relationship between different push, pull, and intervening factors, and to comprehend how these different factors conjugate to form a 'migrate or stay' decision (Lee, 1966a).

Analysing Mission Mare Nostrum Through the Lens of Lee's Migration Theory

According to Lee's migration model, push and pull factors represent the fundamentals for initiating a migration; these factors are critical in this research because they provide a conceptual framework through which the phenomenon of cross-Mediterranean migration and its articulated variables could be explored in the investigation and comprehended. Issues to consider include Lee's push and pull factors, as well as the facilitators, to understand why the migration crisis remained persistent, and to determine whether SAR operations conducted at sea were effective in saving lives, as further discussed in Chapter Six. By understanding in this chapter the migration patterns – and the forces behind them, it becomes possible to introspect on whether different measures enacted to deal with the migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea – such as the enactment of mission Mare Nostrum – were effective. Lee's theory, in the context of Mare Nostrum, elucidates a complex connection of issues between push, intervening, and pull factors on the one hand, and suitability of the SAR mission's response in relation to its operational mandate on the other hand. The theory offers a lens through which it is possible to scrutinise cross-Mediterranean migration from a push and pull factors perspective, to understand why migrants are willing to risk their lives to reach the EU. As such, the theoretical perspective fosters scrutiny of the Mediterranean migration phenomenon and the implication of mission Mare Nostrum in alleviating the challenges and the intervening factors at sea.

Castelli's (2018) decision-making model, adopted from Lee's migration theory, has also been fundamental in comprehending how migrants decide to migrate or stay, based on the interrelationships and influence of push, pull, and intervening factors. He further explained that the push and pull factors are a complex nexus of macro and micro factors, both within – and beyond – the control of the migrants. According to Castelli (2018), push and pull factors could be environmental, political, social, economic, demographic, individual characteristics, obstacles, and facilitators, as explored and investigated further on in this chapter. All factors that make the current living conditions of the migrant in the country of origin difficult, deplorable, or dangerous – such as discrimination, war, civil unrest, ethnic or civil conflicts, political instability, religious persecution, exposure to hazards, unemployment, and low economic opportunities – represent push factors for migration. In contrast, pull factors – such as favourable prospects of employment, better social amenities and infrastructure, political stability, and safety – encourage migrants to move to that location.

Nevertheless, the primary consideration in decision-making is *safety*. Thus, any country that offers that safety nearby is chosen as destination. In this respect, it is important to assess whether Mare Nostrum could have acted as an intervening factor by providing an effective safety net for migrants through its SAR operations at sea.

The Refugee Crisis in Europe: The Need for Intervention

The Mediterranean Sea has become a conduit through which irregular migrants, as well as consignments, find their way to African, European, and Middle Eastern countries neighbouring the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2017). A report by the IOM on irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea disclosed that more than 2.5 million people had been smuggled to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea in only four decades: the report also illustrated that such illegal migration, human trafficking, smuggling of arms, and other contraband consignments had exponentially increased since the 1970s to around 2010 since more stringent measures to curb the growing problem were implemented (*ibid.*). According to the same international organisation, the increasing response towards growing illegal mass migration and smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea made the smuggling routes evolve in response to the enactment of measures in the region (IOM, 2015).

An Overview of Routes, Flows and Commodities

Three Mediterranean Sea main routes for migration are apparent, *viz.*, the (i) western route involving Senegal, Spain, Mauritania, Morocco, and the Canary Islands; (ii) the eastern route involving Greece and Turkey; and (iii) the central routes involving North African countries to Italy and Malta (BBC News, 2014; Kuschminder *et al.*, 2015; IOM, 2017). The IOM report further revealed that increasing cross-Mediterranean migration made the Mediterranean coastal line the most volatile and perilous, and consequently a threat to EU security (IOM, 2017, MacGregor, 2019). Between 2000 and 2017, more than 33,761 immigrants were reported to have gone missing or died during the voyage in the Mediterranean Sea as they attempted to enter the EU. The dynamics of mass migration through the Mediterranean Sea can be attributed to illegal activities, insecurity, and socioeconomic causes resulting from critical push factors, such as the search for better living opportunities in Europe (IOM, 2017).

The central Mediterranean route has been described as the most notorious route in smuggling of contraband goods and migrants. Research findings of Kassar and Dourgnon (2014) showed

that the central route recorded the highest number of fatalities in 2011–2013: the period when the Arab Spring was at its peak. The patterns of smuggling and trafficking along this route depend on the push and pull factors of the consignment being smuggled (Kerwin, 2016; Camarena *et al.*, 2020). For instance, migrant smuggling and human trafficking follow the southern-to-northern pattern, meaning that majority originate from African countries and exit through the southern Mediterranean coastline neighbouring North Africa countries to access Europe through Spain, Malta, Italy, or Turkey (Cusumano, 2017).

Figure two below shows that the fatalities at sea also varied depending on the route, with the central route recording the highest number of fatalities.
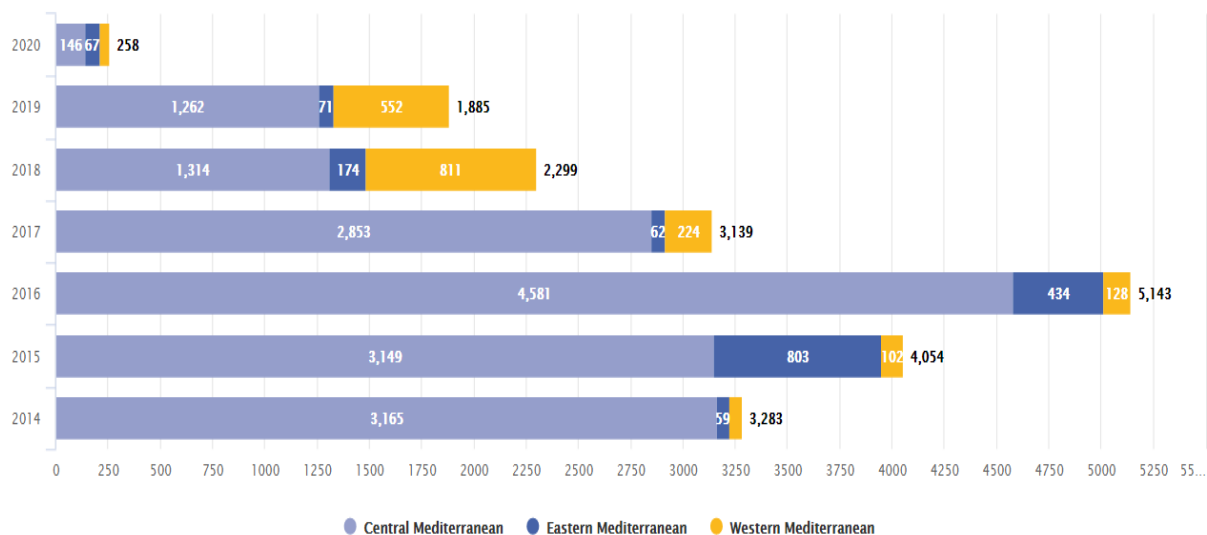
Source: (IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, 2020: n.p.).
Figure 2. Mediterranean Sea Journey (see text for explanation).

The high number of fatalities witnessed in the central route – mainly used by *passeurs*, traffickers, and migrants from African countries – were attributed to the poor condition of vessels and overloading (Clendenning & Gera, 2015; Hennessy-Fiske, 2016; Kingsley, 2017; Hauswedell, 2017). Dovi (2017) referred to the boats as '[…] *rickety* (*ibid.*: n.p.)'. Fadel (2015) also referred to the vessels as rickety and overloaded while attributing the fatalities to poor conditions of vessels used by smugglers to maximise their profits. BBC News (2016), CBC News (2018), and Reuters (2018) reported that migration was aided by highly organised criminal groups who control smuggling and trafficking activities across the Mediterranean Sea.

According to the UNHCR (2020a), approaches taken to deal with the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea should be informed by scrutiny of the nature of migrants arriving if they are to determine the push and pull factors outlined in Lee's migration theoretical model. In support of Panebianco (2016b), the UNHCR (2020a) emphasised that migrants arriving at the Southern European maritime borders are a blend of refugees, smugglers, traffickers, criminals, and asylum seekers, thus requiring a collaborative effort to determine the measures and approaches to apply to each case. The arguments above were supported by the observation that some cases of migration by sea were because of a desperate need to flee for safety, thus requiring help and not retribution or deportation to the war-torn countries (Panebianco, 2016b). The statistics in figure three depict the nature of arrivals in Europe from chronic conflict zones in 2020.

Country of origin	Source	Data date	Population	
Afghanistan		29 Feb 2020	23.2%	2,396
Syrian Arab Rep.		30 Apr 2020	16.1%	1,661
Others		30 Apr 2020	9.6%	991
Bangladesh		30 Apr 2020	6.7%	693
Sudan		30 Apr 2020	6.7%	688
Côte d'Ivoire		30 Apr 2020	4.8%	496
Somalia		30 Apr 2020	3.7%	383
Dem. Rep. of the Congo		29 Feb 2020	3.5%	359
Algeria		30 Apr 2020	3.3%	337
Iraq		30 Apr 2020	2.9%	300

Source: (UNHCR, 2020a: n.p.).
Figure 3. Arrivals of Migrants from Chronic Conflict Zones in 2020.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], and Sudan have a history of perennial civil conflicts and political instability, thus confirming that there is a link between the migration crisis in Europe and instability in other regions (UNHCR, 2020a). The statistics above affirm that conflicts and instability are the leading causes of migration across the Mediterranean Sea, as the Afghan and Syrian conflicts were the main drivers of migration (UNHCR, 2020a). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees found that the migrants knew that they were embarking on the perilous journey, but the desperation for safety and a better future compelled them to embark nonetheless (UNHCR, 2017; 2018). The

following picture shows how perilous human smuggling has potentially been once migrants reach Europe and how desperate refugees are to enter the EU.

Source: (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2011: 44).
Figure 4. Migrants being Smuggled under a Car in Ceuta (Spain).

The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] reported that the increased deaths and dire situation of migrants opened discussion on other facets of the migration crisis apart from the primary humanitarian intervention to reduce fatalities (UNICEF, 2019). Issues of security implications on the EU became more prominent, considering that illegal organised crime groups supported the illegal and perilous migrations (Musarò, 2016a). According to Garelli, Sciurba, and Tazzioli (2018), debates over the need for humanitarian over military responses, and vice versa supported a joint approach in which both operations were implemented to secure Europe from illegal activities of smuggling and trafficking while reducing fatalities and helping refugees and asylum seekers.

According to Moretti and Eralba (2014), the Mediterranean Sea has been a continuous route for migrations in and out of Europe in ancient and modern civilisations. Increasing mass migrations through the Mediterranean Sea resulted in more frequent accidents where migrants died at sea when vessels capsized due to overloading. One of these significant sea accidents occurred in October 2013, when a boat capsized off the Italian coast in Lampedusa, killing over

350 asylum seekers and other irregular migrants (Moretti & Eralba, 2014). It is noteworthy that this tragical event was the catalyst for the launch of mission Mare Nostrum, as thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two. The deceased migrants were mainly of Somali, Eritrean, and Libyan origin and had departed for Europe from a Libyan town, Misratah. The incident occurred when some of the sailors decided to light a fire in an attempt to seek help after motor failure. The ensuing panic amongst the passengers made most of them move to one side of the boat, thus making it capsize. The Lampedusa incident is one of the many tragedies that have occurred in the Mediterranean Sea, considering that over 2,000 passengers lost their lives at sea when five vessels capsized in 2015 alone (Moretti & Eralba, 2014). The loss of human lives prompted European leaders and the European community to take action, considering how these accidents were highly publicised because of the underlying factors of asylum-seeking migrants perishing at sea in the hands of human traffickers and smugglers (Dourgnon & Kassar, 2014; Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014). Volkel (2015) revealed that 2015 witnessed the highest number of sea fatalities amongst migrants destined for Europe via the Mediterranean, with 3,371 fatalities based on UNHCR computations for the year. According to the IOM (2017), the number of migrants drowning in the Mediterranean Sea had exceeded 3,000 by November 2017 alone, despite the reduced number of migrants attempting the journey by sea. The figure below shows the statistics of irregular migrants to Europe and fatalities at sea in 2016–2017.

TOTAL ARRIVALS BY SEA AND DEATHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN 2016-2017

Country of Arrival	1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2017		1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2016	
	Arrivals	Deaths	Arrivals	Deaths
Italy	119,310	2,832 (Central Med. route) (as of 20 December)	181,436	4,581 (Central Med. route)
Greece	29,595	61 (Eastern Med. route) (as of 20 December)	173,561	434 (Eastern Med. route)
Cyprus	1,067		345	
Spain	21,663 (as of 28 December)	223 (Western Med. route) (as of 20 December)	8,162	128 (Western Med. route)
Estimated Total	**171,635**	**3,116** (as of 20 December)	**363,504**	**5,143**

Source: (IOM, 2018: n.p.).
Figure 5. Deaths and Arrivals in Southern Europe in 2016–2017.

Figure five shows that 2017 witnessed 3,116 fatalities and nearly 172,000 arrivals in Europe by sea (IOM, 2018). The statistics above revealed that Italy bears the most onerous burden for illegal cross-Mediterranean smuggling and trafficking, in line with Adler's (2018) argument. Similarly, other EU countries – such as Spain and Greece – received a significant proportion of illegal migration, considering that Europe represents the preferred destination for migrants (UNHCR, 2018). Most of the migrants to Spain and other European countries come from North Africa, while most of the migrants to Greece come from Afghanistan and Syria. Focusing in particular on Italy's migrant arrivals, statistics show that the aggregate number of migrants varied across years due to different measures taken to curb irregular cross-Mediterranean migration. Since 2018, the rise in fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea has been evident and recorded (Infomigrants, 2019; 2020a; 2020b).

A report submitted to the European Union Parliament by Cogolati (2015) emphasised the need for intervention following the high number of children and women fatalities during these crossings, hyper-publicised, and portrayed as '[…] *desperate journeys* (*ibid.*: n.p.)'. The fatalities decreased in 2016, increased again in 2017, and decreased again in 2018 as revealed by an analysis of the trend in illegal migration and smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea from 2016 to 2018 (National Public Radio – NPR, 2019). The IOM (2018) noted that the illegal immigration and fatalities at sea dwindled in 2019 compared with the previous four years due to increased maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean amongst other security measures enacted by the EU. According to the IOM (2019b), the decrease of such incidents accounted for a 16% reduction in the total. However, a UNHCR report relayed in January 2019 also showed that, despite the reduction, an average of six migrants lost their lives at sea each day while attempting to access Europe, while other deaths occurred at detention centres for illegal immigrants (Bermejo, 2018; UNHCR, 2019). In brief, European member states are faced with significant challenges with the phenomenon of migration by sea, whereby finding a realistic and suitable solution is necessary.

Mass migrations affect the socioeconomic dynamics, stability, and security aspects of the destination countries (Gerbeau, 2017). A report by the Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC] in 2017 explored the migration crisis through the Mediterranean Sea and found that it involved push and pull factors that accelerated the migration to Southern European countries (ESRC, 2017a). The report explained that most of those who crossed the Mediterranean Sea

were escaping from their countries of origin due to security reasons, or had a firm conviction that their lives were better in European countries than in their home countries. The ESRC report attributed mass migration to Europe by sea to increased conflicts in Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, Western Africa, and Somalia, considering that these regions accounted for the highest percentage of migrants (ESRC, 2017a). The statistics in figure six below illustrate the nationalities of smuggled immigrants to Italy, one of the nations with the highest migrant burdens in Europe.

Comparison of the period 1 Jan-30 Apr, 2017/18

■ 2017 ■ 2018
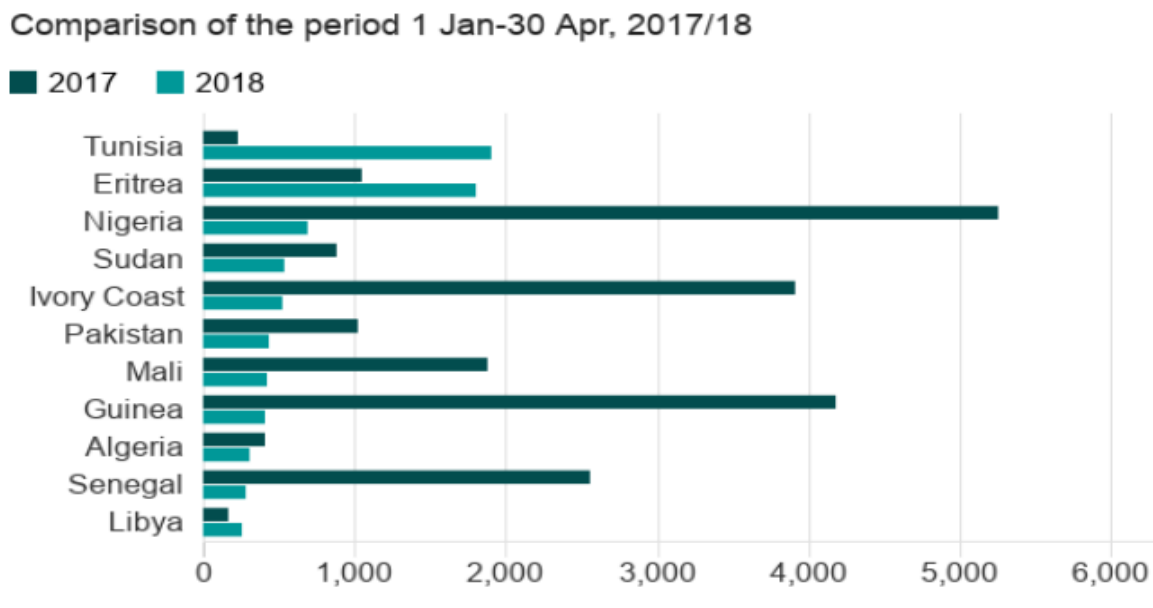
Source: (IOM, 2018: n.p.).
Figure 6. Main Nationalities of Migrants Smuggled to Italy by Sea (see text for explanation).

The statistic suggests that countries with ongoing conflicts, significant degrees of lawlessness, political tensions, and social and economic challenges recorded the highest number of smuggled migrants. For instance, Western African countries have high numbers, which can be attributed to the effects of Boko Haram and other local insurgencies. Infomigrants (2020a), Saman and Dokoupil (2020), and Campbell (2020) also revealed that the central and western routes from mainly African countries comprised the largest share of migrants crossing to Europe. Asia and the MENA[11] regions also contributed to migrant smuggling and trafficking through the Mediterranean Sea, considering ongoing conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan, Yemen, Ukraine, and Syria (European Council on Foreign Relations – ECFR, 2020; UNHCR, 2020a; 2020b). Conflicts and political instability were the major push factors for human

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[11] Middle East and North Africa.

smuggling and trafficking because, with instability and war, residents must flee to other countries for safety and stability (UNHCR, 2020a). For instance, the scrutiny of immigration into Italy from 2014 to 2020 revealed that migration varied depending on the sociopolitical and military operations. Although different measures have been applied, human smuggling and trafficking to Europe remain significant concerns to date, considering that 2020 witnessed a significant number of cross-Mediterranean migrations, with the UNHCR recording 18,787 migrants smuggled by sea. De Vries, Carrera, and Guild (2016) argued that the focus on transit journeys and stations depicts the migrants as subjected to smugglers and traffickers, and the movement as an intricately interconnected web of smuggling and trafficking as opposed to original assumptions of lineal transits.

Finally, different routes evolved periodically in response to actions and maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea, depending on whether the operation favoured smuggling and trafficking or enacted punitive measures for human smugglers, commonly referred to in Italy as *scafisti*[12] (Patanè *et al.*, 2020). Leggewie (2016) argues that the Mediterranean plays an essential role for Europe because the future of the entire continent – not only of those countries on its shores – relies on it. Hence, for the purpose of this research, it is critical to understand and address the migration dynamics in the Mediterranean.

Drivers of Trafficking and Smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea: 'Crimmigration'

Guild and Acosta (2015) found that mass migration through the Mediterranean Sea was a multifaceted issue with several players and drivers such as refugees, asylum seekers, job seekers, smuggling, trafficking, and – *inter alia* – terrorism, regardless the typology of political violence present in the country of origin (Marsden & Schmid, 2011; Schmid, 2016). Guild and Acosta (2015) argued that all these factors required different humanitarian and military response tactics, which often resulted in crises because of conflicting agendas and modi operandi in response to the mass migration phenomenon and its drivers in the Mediterranean Sea.

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[12] *Scafista, i* (from Italian, 'people smuggler' or 'human trafficker' [by boat]).

The Role of Armed Conflicts in Cross-Mediterranean Migration

Armed conflicts in the Mediterranean region have been on the forefront as antecedents of unregulated migration by Sea (Doraï, 2018; Chulov, 2020). The Arab Spring is cited as the genesis of most of the conflicts witnessed in the last decade in the Mediterranean neighbourhood countries (Larivé, 2015). Therefore, it is critical to comprehend its ripple effect on peace and political stability in the Mediterranean neighbourhood to understand the proliferation of other conflicts in the Middle East. Subsequent to the Arab Spring in 2010–2011, the uprisings in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria had a significant causal sequence effect on other Mediterranean neighbourhood countries of Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, and Iran, where similar protests against the government were witnessed throughout 2011. Small-scale protests escalated to full-scale protests (Larivé, 2015; Brownlee, Masoud, & Reynolds, 2015), contributing to worsening the already volatile political environment in the Mediterranean North African region. The Syrian conflict has been regarded as the most disruptive and prolonged civil conflict with the greatest impact on emigration in recent times considering that it began in 2011 and is still in progress in 2021, despite concerted efforts to end the conflict (Doraï, 2018). Consequently, thousands were displaced, the majority of whom fled to the EU across the Mediterranean Sea. According to the UNHCR (2016), the Syrian conflict is responsible for the highest number of asylum seekers in other Mediterranean neighbourhood countries. The UN agency further found that some countries in the Middle East where the refugees flee for safety have internal conflicts that finish by pushing the refugees out into other countries, primarily EU countries (*ibid.*), consistent with the conceptualisation of push factors found in Lee's migration theory and previously discussed.

The aforementioned conflicts are cumulatively responsible for displacing millions of citizens: the majority of the displaced persons fled to the relatively safer EU countries since neighbouring places that could have offered a haven were also experiencing internal conflicts. Similarly, displaced persons in Syria could not flee to conflict-ridden neighbouring countries and thus had to escape to the EU by sea. Monzini, Aziz, and Pastore (2015) added that the need to evacuate migrants because of the increased violence in their countries of origin created more difficulties in the international community, including mixed migration flows. The mixed migration flows include refugees, trafficked humans, separated children, and irregular immigrants. According to Reitano (2015), at least 80% of crossings were facilitated by smugglers, who demanded large amounts of cash for the dangerous crossing. The 'Global

Report on Trafficking in Persons', compiled and published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] (2018a), mentioned forms of human trafficking in armed conflicts zones as trafficking for sexual exploitation, slavery, forced marriage, forced labour, and trafficking of children into armed groups.

Timothy Hammond, a Mediterranean affairs analyst and expert in cross-Mediterranean and refugee crisis in Europe, analysed the unregulated migration in the region and found that the Arab Spring events contributed to the influx of irregular migrants to the sea aboard smugglers boats destined for the EU through Italy, Malta, Spain, and Turkey (Hammond, 2015). The expert also found that over 80% of the irregular migrants accessing Italy and Malta originated from Tunisia and Libya, especially in the period between 2011 and 2014, following the Arab Spring events in Northern African countries. The expert clarified that the journeys were not 'illegal' but rather 'irregular'[13], noting the need for the EU to change its migration control policies and mediation to avert the crises that were leading to the forceful displacement of people and irregular migration by sea (*ibid.*).

Poor Socioeconomic Factors and Political Instability in the Mediterranean Region
Weatherburn (2015) explored the impacts of political instability on trafficking activities, finding that such disequilibrium can cause an increment in trafficking. Changes in politics caused economic crises and mass unemployment, which influenced the engagement of individuals in smuggling and trafficking businesses (Strand *et al.*, 2019; UNHCR, 2020b). Such uncertainty forces people to migrate in search of places with political stability, where traffickers are believed to target migrants. Traffickers and smugglers benefit from such movement because people are often desperate to reach safety in other countries (Weatherburn, 2015). A report of the UNHCR (2020a) also found that a lack of reliable and frequently updated data regarding how many migrants successfully migrated because of political instability could affect the control and management of irregular migration from conflicts areas. According to the European Asylum Support Office [EASO[14]] (2016), *insecurity* is a significant push factor for migration through the Mediterranean Sea, as enunciated in Lee's migration theory.

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[13] Refer to '*Key Terminology: (Legal) Definitions Matter*' in the introductory chapter.
[14] On 1st July 2021, EASO set to become the EU Agency for Asylum [EEAA] with an expanded mandate to support EU member states (EASO, 2021).

The Human Rights Watch (2015) group investigated the Mediterranean migration crisis and the causes behind the migration to craft policy recommendations to the EU and actions to take to tackle the crisis. The group found that the migrations were highest during 2011–2015, with 2013 being the peak for the crisis, considering a high number of fatalities at sea. The workgroup also found that the migration patterns changed depending on the level of political stability and wealth of the countries of origin, EU migration policies, and maritime operations in the Mediterranean. Their report affirmed the findings of Reitano (2015) in attributing the Mediterranean crisis largely to the onset in Tunisia of the Arab Spring, the Libyan conflict, and the Syrian and Yemeni conflicts as the leading sources of migrants to the EU. Poor socioeconomic factors lead to unemployment, poverty, and income inequality amongst individuals, thus influencing migration in search of better socioeconomic opportunities in the nearby countries and the EU (Niewiarowska, 2015). For instance, the recent Arab Spring and conflicts that ensued have been blamed for the increasing migration to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea (Monzini, 2007; Kwon, 2017; Fargues, 2017a; 2017b). Seker and Dalakis (2016) also added that the push factors (such as demand) of labour are driving factors for trafficking and smuggling, in line with Lee's theoretical model on migration. Spain and Italy are amongst the countries that have abundant economic opportunities; on the other end of the spectrum, countries such as Libya, Mali, and Morocco are the countries with economic disparities, thus encouraging citizens to migrate to other countries (Niewiarowska, 2015). The migrants in search of economic opportunities are often trapped by the traffickers and exploited: traffickers' victims are tricked into thinking that they are gaining genuine employment (Seker & Dalakis, 2016). Nevertheless, the desperate motive for a better life in the EU countries is perceived by most migrants as worth the risk of the perilous cross-Mediterranean migration (IOM, 2017; Gerbeau, 2017).

Increased Organised Crime Groups: Human Trafficking as a Profitable Business
The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute [UNICRI]'s (2020) findings revealed that smugglers and traffickers engage in such activities because it is highly profitable. Balarezo (2013) added that traffickers were motivated by the sole goal of making remunerative profits. The human trafficking business is even more profitable than drug trafficking[15] because human beings can be sold several times and repeatedly exploited. The

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[15] From The Guardian, '*Migrants are more profitable than drugs': how the mafia infiltrated Italy's asylum system*', Nadeau (2018: n.p.).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013) and Olson and Gordon (2018) also argued that smuggling and trafficking of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea is a profitable business. The organised crime groups and syndicates were responsible for facilitating this business to maintain their profit margin. It can be argued that smugglers and traffickers are the primary facilitators of cross-Mediterranean migration; thus, they are the critical drivers of the current crisis (UNODC, 2013). The increasing '*crimmigration*', as defined by scholars in the contemporary legal discourse as '[…] *the intersection of crime control and immigration control*' (Van der Woude, Van der Leun, & Nijland, 2018: n.p.), has been cited as a push factor for irregular migration into the EU, on the premise that the mass detention of irregular migrants awaiting immigration processing is a profitable business for immigration stakeholders. Menjívar, Gómez Cervantes, and Alvord (2018) found that the business of 'crimmigration' is closely entangled with profit-based detention of migrants because of possible entrepreneurial motives of supporting services at the detention facilities. Crimmigration is defined as the thin line between immigration and criminal activities, suggesting that irregular migrants could be criminals, thus requiring holding as they wait for legal immigration processing. The term 'crimmigration' seeks to incorporate criminal law and immigration as a collaborative effort to deal with immigration-related security issues (García Hernández, 2013; Majcher, 2013; Mészáros, 2016; Van der Woude & Van der Leun, 2017).

The findings of Achilli (2016) provide a clear connection between irregular migration and organised crime groups, upon which human smuggling and trafficking thrive in African and European countries. Organised crime groups control the smuggling routes through which the migrants pass to the EU – both inland (in Africa and the EU) and at sea – in a clandestine manner to avoid capture by immigration authorities. Such organised crime groups and smuggling rings make Italy and the EU vulnerable to illegal entry of terrorists and criminals who could masquerade as migrants in need of international protection (*ibid.*). Organised crime groups facilitated migrant smuggling to the EU, thus creating debates on the need to crack down on these organised clandestine groups that nourish irregular migration to the EU (UNODC, 2011; European Parliament, 2018; Whittle & Antonopoulos, 2020).

Lacher (2012) explained that organised crime groups are core to smuggling and trafficking, considering that they are the facilitators of these migrations. For instance, the growth of organised crimes in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions in 2012 facilitated migration in the

Northern African regions and regrouping at the Southern Mediterranean shores for the crossing. Lacher (2012) and Balarezo (2013), however, noted that eradicating these crime syndicates is difficult due to lack of unified approaches and a universal legal framework. Balarezo (2013) explained that diminished attention by criminal justice had influenced increased smuggling and trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea, regardless of the challenges faced by the traffickers (*i.e.*, costs of starting up the businesses, risk of being caught, and risk of being convicted when caught). Weatherburn (2015) added that criminals were part of the migrants themselves and engaged in the smuggling and trafficking business themselves as *passeurs*. Weatherburn (2015) also gave an example of money launderers whose profits are used by traffickers to conceal the origin of the money.

According to the IOM (2019c), in 2019, over 37,555 migrants were smuggled to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, and 8,007 were smuggled to Europe through different porous inland borders (Doshi, 2019). In 2020, two more boats capsized, leading to 23 fatalities (Peoples Dispatch, 2020), and another 85 migrants from Libya destined for Europe also died in another shipwreck (Infomigrants, 2020a). Despite the increased number of maritime SAR operations, there is a perennial influx of cross-Mediterranean migrations, thus providing fertile ground to other illegal activities such as human, drug and arms trafficking, and terrorism in the EU region (Outhwaite, 2003; Lutterbeck, 2006; Gatrell, 2013).

Implications for Security: Crime and Terrorism

This section explains how the issues of smuggling and trafficking of drugs, arms, and migrants through the Mediterranean Sea lead to a complex phenomenon of insecurity and increased terrorist activities in the region. A comprehension of the dynamics of the conflicts in the region – and their intersection with smuggling-trafficking activities – is critical to understanding why these conflicts have prolonged support of the legitimate side by other foreign governments.

Persi Paoli and Bellasio (2017) explain that the major threat of the mass migration to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea was smuggling and trafficking of contraband consignments and illegal immigrants. The flow of these illegal consignment moves along different routes depending on the countries of origin, destination, presence of SAR or military operations along the route – as previously discussed in this chapter. Reitano (2018) noted that smuggling and trafficking were the leading cause of corruption, fraudster, terrorism, sex-worker trafficking,

child trafficking, and counterfeiting. Apart from human beings, the primary commodities smuggled through the Mediterranean include arms, drugs, and contraband goods; the menace was under strict surveillance by collaborative task forces such as the EU agency Frontex (UNHCR, 2019).

Commoditisation of migration is one of the challenges facing policies and their implementation through porous borders, especially in the MENA region. A report on smuggling and trafficking in the Libyan context illustrated that commoditisation is a fundamental principle in the smuggling nexus, considering that crossing the Sahara Desert to Europe would be impossible without local support or assistance (Reitano *et al.*, 2018). The concept of legality under the framework proves irrelevant because most migrants embark on the perilous journey knowing that, at some point, they might have to engage in illegal activities, such as bribing the local authorities, to pass the border points. The desperation amongst most migrants is what the smugglers capitalise on through the fees charged for such facilitation. Nwagbo, Abaneme, and Ndubuisi (2018), however, explained that there is a need to define and distinguish between activities that constituted human smuggling and trafficking. The ensuing subsection analyses this difference.

Human Trafficking and Smuggling

Smuggling and trafficking are the lifeblood that nourishes cross-Mediterranean migration from African countries, and the Middle East to the EU (Campana, 2018). Campana and Varese (2016) distinguished the two concepts, noting that smuggling involved voluntary and consented facilitation of illegal movement through paid services to a *passeur*, while trafficking involves forceful and unconsented movement of persons or goods illegally. Both aspects involve illegal movement, but the distinction between the two illegal activities is based on the impacts of the activities on smuggled or trafficked subjects. For instance, Henry and Grodin (2018) argued that human trafficking was a pertinent issue on the humanitarian agenda because of its implication for human rights. In contrast, Campana (2017) depicts human smuggling as a border control issue, considering that the subject of smugglers enters into a mutually agreed relationship to facilitate movement – at a fee – with full knowledge of the risks associated with the journey. Table one summarises the main differences between smuggling and trafficking, as argued by Mann (2018).

Table 1. The Main Differences Between Human Smuggling and Trafficking.

The dimension of the difference	Smuggling	Trafficking
Means	Initial consent and payments for the services offered	Coercion, abuse, intimidation, manipulation, force, and deception amongst others
Purpose	Facilitation of movement with no intention of exploitation	There is an exploitation motive
Crime	Smuggling is a national or international crime because of border violation	Trafficking constitutes a crime against the person being trafficked
Action	It involves crossing international borders	Moving people internally or across international borders
Transnationality	Purely international in nature	Domestic or international

Source: (Adapted from Mann, 2018: 24).

It is noteworthy that Böhmelt, Bove, and Nussio (2019) and Dokos (2020) associated smuggling and trafficking with increased terrorism. An analysis of terrorism, smuggling, and trafficking in Europe showed that an emerging nexus between organised groups (comprised of minor crime groups and terrorist groups) has been operating, where primary recruitment is sourced from a range of irregular migrants (Lutterbeck, 2006; Andersson, 2014; Shelley, 2014; UNODC, 2020). Smuggling and trafficking are closely associated with an increase in terrorism activities because they facilitate the movement of terrorist services and goods to the target destination (Rosenblum & Tichenor, 2012; Olson & Gordon, 2018). Stopping this trade is therefore fundamental for achieving regional security in the EU and the Mediterranean region.

It is apparent that the increased smuggling and trafficking of migrants, drugs, and arms across the Mediterranean Sea to the EU has detrimental implications on regional security and stability because it facilitates organised criminal activities such as terrorism (UNICEF, 2017; UNODC, 2018b). The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, Executive Directorate [UN-CTCED] explored the link between increased migration – particularly trafficking and smuggling – in the EU and security challenges, such as crime and terrorism. A report compiled by the organisation found that smuggling and trafficking are core facilitators for organised crime and terror groups because they facilitate third-party logistics of the resources necessary

for their activities, such as the acquisition of weapons. Furthermore, trafficking and smuggling are facilitated by organised crimes groups willing to go to great lengths to smuggle things or people to facilitate their operations (UN-CTCED, 2019). The report also found that there is an intergroup dependency on smuggling and trafficking because they thrive based on interdependency and mutual support. For instance, in most migrants' journeys from Africa to the EU, migrants pass through the hands of several armed groups' operations in different regions along the route.

A *Europol* report expressed concern that terrorists have been accessing Europe through smuggling and trafficking (Europol, 2016; 2018), supporting the claim that smuggling and trafficking were the main ingredients in the recruitment of migrants to terror groups in the EU (UN-CTCED, 2019). According to Bensman (2019), an estimated 104 terrorists accessed Europe through cross border smuggling between 2014 and 2018, then applied for asylum and lived for an average of 11 months before plotting and carrying out terror attacks; 28 were responsible for terror attacks that claimed over 170 lives and left over 878 others injured across Europe. Eighteen civilians lost their lives to terrorism and religious extremists crime groups in 2018 alone while the number of terror attacks both completed, failed, and foiled recorded were 129, excluding minor undocumented terror crimes (Europol, 2019). Smuggling of religious extremists to the EU was a primary concern for security agencies in the region, considering that religious extremist terrorists were the ones responsible for conducting the attacks in Europe (*ibid.*). Jihadist terrorists smuggled into Europe conducted the terror attacks in Paris, Strasbourg, Liege, and Trebes. Antúnez (2019) explored arguments and public debates over the possibility of smuggled terrorists to the EU, finding that the increase in cross-Mediterranean migrations increased the number of religious extremism-related terror attacks across the EU. The focus of Antúnez (2019) was on the vulnerability of humanitarian actions to allowing cross-Mediterranean smuggling of refugees and maritime SAR operations to secure a safe passage to Europe, noting that it increased the volatility of terror attacks in the region. Antúnez (2019) also argued that the increased *exodus* of refugees from major conflict zones such as Syria, Afghanistan, Northern African countries, and Yemen since 2011 could be responsible for homegrown terrorism. Sude, Stebbins, and Weilant (2015) also claimed that an increase in refugees that are not thoroughly vetted has potential for making Europe an incubation hub for terrorism. Figure seven shows statistics for terror attacks conducted by religiously inspired crime groups initially regarded as refugees and asylum seekers.
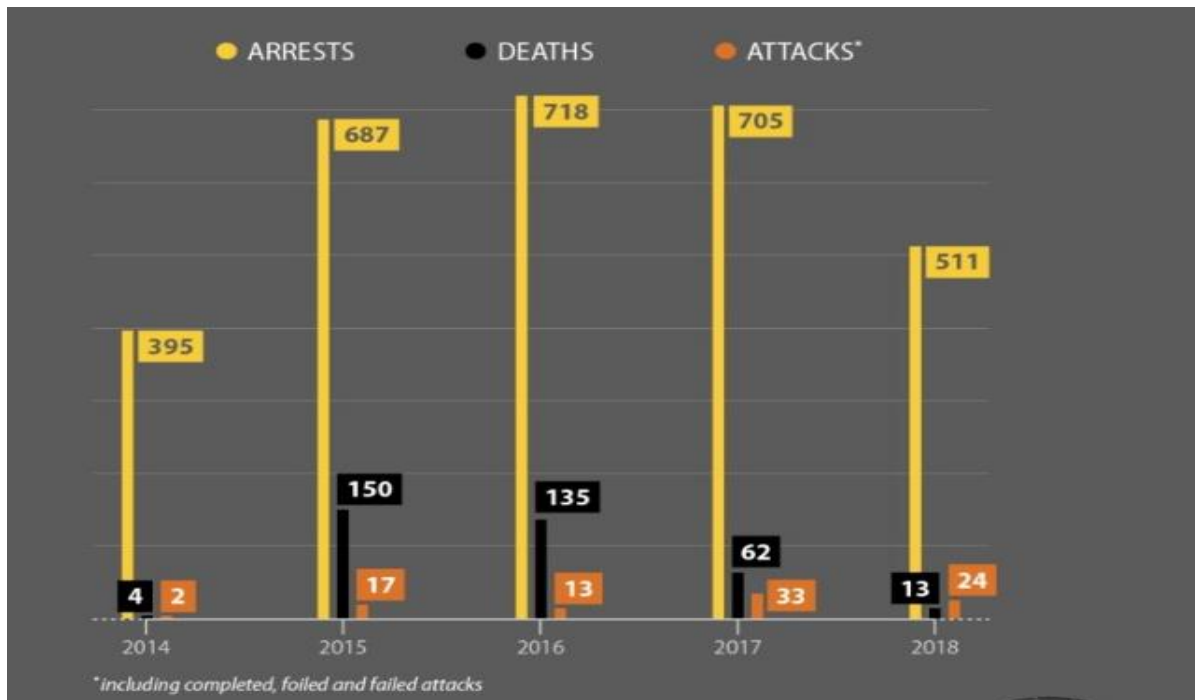
Figure 7. Terror Attacks Conducted in Europe by Religiously Inspired Crime Groups.

A notable feature of the attacks is that they were conducted by Islamic refugees or asylum seekers, thus fuelling the debate on religious extremism of asylum seekers and refugees as a security threat to EU stability and safety (Ishaan, 2015). Andersen and Mayerl (2018) supported these sentiments, arguing that there is a cognitive connection between terrorism and Islamic extremism amongst refugees in Europe. In support of the arguments above, Wike, Stokes, and Simmons (2016) found that EU residents were aggravated because they perceived the increase of refugees and asylum seekers as a vulnerability in the EU that could lead to increased acts of terrorism. Anti-Islamic rhetoric on the possibility of increased terror attacks following an increase in Islamic migrants fuelled debates for possible stringent measures to reduce the migration of Muslim migrants to Europe (Sloan, 2014; Culik, 2015). Sloan (2014) explained that the European community had mixed feelings and perceptions that Muslim residents should not be allowed to the EU region. The statistics in figure eight show that most residents in the EU felt that Islamic extremist asylum seekers and refugees would increase the likelihood of terrorism.

	Increase the likelihood of terrorism	Not increase the likelihood of terrorism
Hungary	76%	18%
Poland	71	15
Germany	61	36
Netherlands	61	36
Italy	60	28
Sweden	57	40
Greece	55	33
UK	52	41
France	46	51
Spain	40	55
MEDIAN	59	36
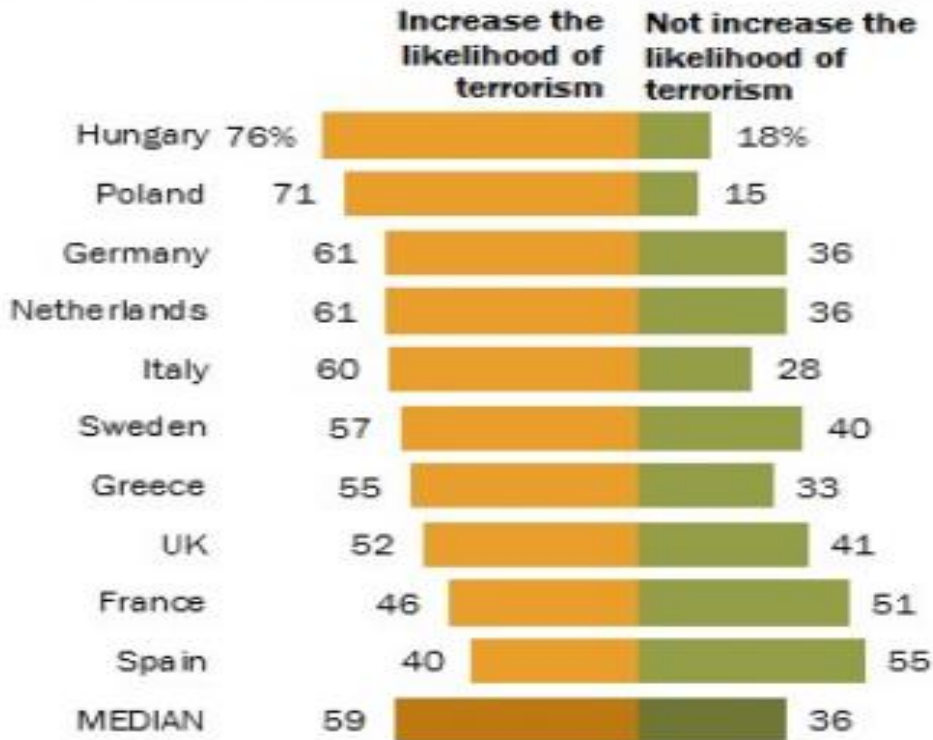
Source: (Antúnez, 2019: n.p.).
Figure 8. Likelihood of Terrorism Perpetrated by Extremist Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

Apart from France and Spain, the statistic shows that most EU residents perceived refugees as a source of homegrown terrorism. Given the increased public debates on refugees being responsible for increased insecurity in the EU region, Krzyzanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak (2018) argued that the perceived threat to security resulted from the politicisation and hyper-publicising of migrant smuggling to Europe by sea, as discussed in Chapter Two and further analysed in Chapter Five. In contrast, Van-Ginkel and Entenmann (2016) blamed the increase in Islamic terrorism on the radicalisation of refugees and asylum seekers due to their vulnerability. Krzyzanowski *et al.* (2018) argued that refugees and asylum seekers smuggled into the EU go through difficult situations, some of which include losing family members to armed conflicts, thus making them vulnerable to radicalisation. Antúnez (2019) explored the connection between terrorism, refugees, and asylum seekers through examining the connection between the number of first asylum seekers and terror fatalities in terror attacks in their respective countries leading in radicalisation. Figure nine illustrates the statistics.
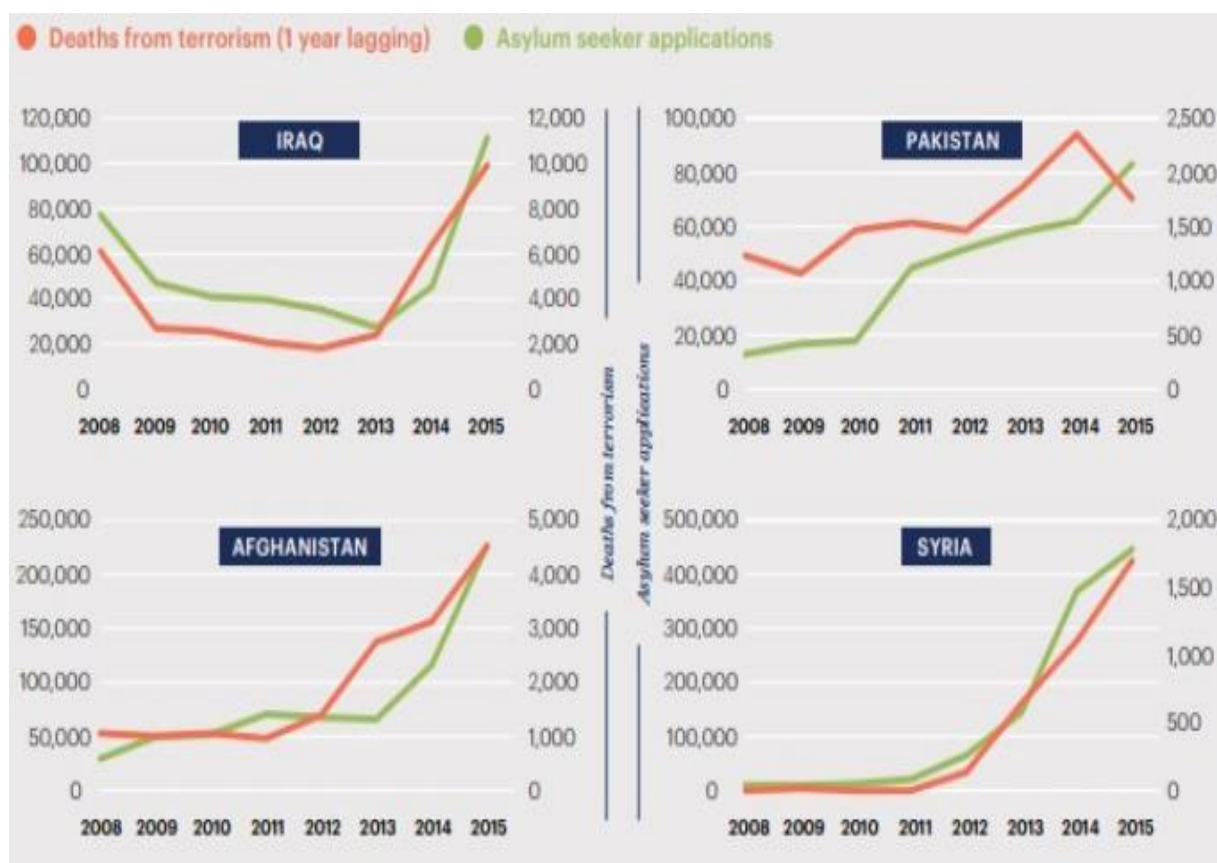
Source: (Antúnez, 2019: n.p.).
Figure 9. The Connection Between Asylum Seekers and Fatalities from Terror Attacks.

In consonance with Schmid (2016), Murphy (2015) supported the arguments that terrorism and uncontrolled migration to the EU are intertwined. However, the link was not as clear as initially hypothesised by most public debaters in the media: according to Murphy (2015), an increase in regional imbalances, instability, and armed conflicts fuels atrocities, social, economic, and political injustices, and consequently uncontrolled migration to the EU. The migrants are then radicalised to undertake retaliatory attacks on the Western world for the religious differences and alleged invasion of their territories (*ibid.*).

According to Dagi (2017), the refugee crisis and debates around it attracted supranational and intergovernmental interests over the policies to resolve the crisis in the best interest of EU security. Researchers such as Agustín and Bak Jorgensen (2018), Pachocka (2015), and Holmes and Castañeda (2016) found that there was a need for collaborative interventions to the crisis. In contrast, Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017) and Krzyzanowski *et al.* (2018) held that the crisis was overstated and that the euphoria resulted from the hyper-publicising of the crisis. From a divergent perspective, Bojadzijev and Mezzadra (2015) argued that the migration crisis

witnessed in the EU resulted in poor and incomplete migration policies in the EU. According to Bojadzijev and Mezzadra (2015), these policies have loopholes that migrants exploit to gain access to the EU region, such as a lack of collaborative effort in ending human smuggling and trafficking, as thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two. In support of Bojadzijev and Mezzadra's (2015) arguments, Dagi (2017) explained that the refugee crisis in the EU requires collaborative approaches amongst all stakeholders to solve the problem from the root causes. For instance, humanitarian aid organisations, such as *Caritas*, advocated for more humanitarian actions to refugees and asylum seekers, but also emphasised the need for adept vetting and screening to avoid letting criminals and terrorists into the EU (Caritas, n.d.). On the one side, states unquestionably have the freedom to limit entry to their territories by outsiders, in line with the country's right to self-determination. Conversely, this freedom is not unqualified, and the states are only entitled to refuse entry to individuals if they do so in such way that pays appropriate regard to their obligations under suitable laws pertaining to human rights and refugees (Giuffré, 2015; Salvadego, 2017).

The statistics and findings reviewed above showed that an increase in uncontrolled migration through the Mediterranean Sea and other volatile borders to the EU is a critical threat to security and require stringent measures to prevent smuggling and trafficking of arms, drugs, and migrants. While migration is expected to be a continuing issue for most EU nations, the lack of solidarity in combating the harmful activities at sea and the resultant socioeconomic and security disruptions represent a significant concern for the EU community (Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014). The intricate nature of migration and drivers for such migration revealed a highly organised *nexus* of interdependent activities such as smuggling and terrorism that rely on cross-Mediterranean migration, thus posing a threat to EU security. Choi and Salehyan (2013) also noted that there was growing resentment towards irregular migration amongst Italians and other EU residents who demanded action to stop the irregular migration, based on the sentiments that helping the irregular migrants through humanitarian SAR missions threaten EU security, as it made the EU vulnerable to terrorism. In conclusion, irregular migrants have been termed as a backchannel for smuggling terrorists into the EU, arguing that maritime operations such as Mare Nostrum and Frontex-operation Triton were born from these civic discourses and pressures for action (Funk & Parkes, 2016; Zunes, 2017).

Anti-Smuggling and Anti-Trafficking: The Action Plan for the Mediterranean

The smuggling and trafficking of migrants into Europe is the fundamental cause of the deployment of numerous maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea. According to Jumbert (2018), it is critical to comprehend the dimensions and nature of the different debates surrounding the migration issue in the region to comprehend how it affected SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea. Jumbert (2018) noted that there were two crucial – yet opposing – dimensions of the migration issues, regarding whether to search for and rescue migrants to EU shores, or to turn them back to their country of origin for security reasons. Both approaches are analysed and discussed in chapters Two and Four. Cusumano (2019) noted that NGOs, amongst other humanitarian-based groups from civil societies, supported the humanitarian approach; that is, the implementation of SAR operations from the sea to the EU shore. Del Valle (2016) noted that issues about the nature of migrants, whether terrorists, smugglers, traffickers, asylum seekers, or refugees, were pertinent to the political debates surrounding the model of maritime operation to be deployed in the Mediterranean Sea. Fargues and Bonfanti (2014) suggested that a more significant percentage of the migrants were desperate for safety and better socioeconomic life and fleeing armed conflicts in their countries, thus arguing that such migrants required help and protection rather than punitive pro-security treatment. Contrary to the arguments above, Crawley and Skleparis (2018) argued that migration could not be categorised as refugees or migrants in need but as a highly organised number of individuals that pose security challenges to EU. According to Freedman (2016), uncontrolled entry of migrants to the EU – irrespective of their legal status – endangers EU security; thus, it requires a security-oriented maritime operation. Bigo *et al.* (2015), Yates (2015), and Cusumano (2018) argued that the most effective approaches to maritime operation in the Mediterranean Sea should incorporate both SAR and pro-security measures. Consequently, a humanitarian approach towards migrants at sea, and its implications for inland security, informed the nature of mission Mare Nostrum, as further explained in the next chapter of this study.

The study of Tazzioli (2015a) underlines the resultant reshaping of the military-humanitarian maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea, with a specific focus on the Mare Nostrum mission. The key argument is that in order to understand the functioning of the military-humanitarian operations at sea and their impact, it is necessary to look beyond the area of the sea and analyse it the context of the migration regime. Tazzioli (2015a) maintained that the wavering scenario about a rescued migrant arriving in Italy on the one hand, and the picture of

the military and government on the other, are anecdotes that portray the Mediterranean Sea as an area of executive functioning and military-humanitarian intercession. The surfacing of the Mediterranean Sea as a space of perilous mobility and as a *governmentalised* sea dates to the early 2000s, when – due to the increased push for migrants' *legal* entry into Europe – EU member states began to establish military sea operations to hinder their vessels, while concurrently saving migrants' lives as well. Thus, Tazzioli's (2015a) article questions the picture of the Mediterranean as an established referent beyond geographical spaces: it underscores the unclear and constantly changing political borders of the Mediterranean and regards it as a space for government functioning for migration, fashioned through mechanisms of monitoring and control. There is, however, a history of problematisation, focused on the Mediterranean as an *unsafe* place to manage. In contrast, one of the critical ventures consists precisely in determining periods of fissures, transformation, and discontinuities, reshaping the Mediterranean as a hazardous area. The analysis that Tazzioli (2015a) advances is that the tragedy at sea in October 2013 and the launch of Mare Nostrum were used as an occasion to transform the management of migrants' mobility at sea. Mare Nostrum was not designed to be a securitarian operation but a military-humanitarian – and emergency – one, as revealed in the next chapter. The notion of security is only at the backstage of its activities and is not viable for trying to understand the progress of the Mediterranean Sea as an area in which migrants proceed undetected.

In relation to the Lampedusa incident occurred in 2013 off the Italian coast, Chetail, de Bruycker, and Maiani (2016) underlined that the unfortunate deaths triggered the debate about the EU's lack of adequate response to this humanitarian crisis. The European Union launched the Task Force Mediterranean [TFM] as a result, which Chetail *et al.* (2016) describe as being in sharp contrast to Mare Nostrum operation. Chetail *et al.* (2016) also add that the lack of support provided to Mare Nostrum by other EU member states only represented the inadequate level of solidarity amongst these states. This is despite what is being stated in Article 800 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [TFEU][16], according to which EU policies must have the principle of solidarity and fair responsibility sharing on matters of migration, asylum, and border control (Chetail *et al.*, 2016; Mungianu, 2016).

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[16] From '*The ABC of European Union law*' by Professor Klaus-Dieter Borchardt (Borchardt, 2010).

Dimitriadi (2014) noted that a new atmosphere of exigency in the EU emerged from the events in the previous decades relative to the issues of maritime arrivals and the manner of tackling irregular migration and asylum. Dimitriadi (2014) also discussed the recent events and policies about governmental implementations in the southern Mediterranean, intending to establish an adequate and effective border control and save the lives of migrants at sea. Dimitriadi (2014) further noted a need for extraordinary efforts to be undertaken in order to provide a balance between prevention and protection, with an emphasis on establishing policies which aim to direct a multifaceted phenomenon using a security perspective. Particularly, the discussion focuses on how the EU responds to the migrants' situation at sea. In terms of methodology, Dimitriadi (2014) used a descriptive methodology, which reveals *what is*, thus does not determine the principles of causation. His discussion is related to those of Tazzioli's (2015a) and Chetail *et al.*'s (2016), as it supports their views on the situation of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

It can be argued that the increasing migration phenomenon has been revealing an underlying pattern between two contending sides and agencies that ought to work collaboratively to eradicate illegal migration via the Mediterranean Sea. One side is represented by the humanitarian efforts to save migrants at sea, while on the other side are the pro-security contentions that SAR operations should aim at returning the migrants to their country of origin to secure the Mediterranean Sea. Both dimensions represent the core of the debate, and are discussed in the empirical chapters Four and Five. The EU migration debates offer a range of contentious perspectives on the best solutions and policies applicable to the crisis. Opposed to the military approach of deporting illegal migrants found at sea, Kerwin (2016) argues that humanitarian interventions to manage irregular migrants such as asylum seekers require robust policies. According to Kerwin (2016), a humanitarian approach could potentially improve national security. Giupponi (2014) and Albahari (2018) similarly argue that return policies could prove detrimental to regional security. Vietti and Scribner (2013), Den Boer (2015), Takahashi (2015), and Flynn (2017) support the concept that EU operations at sea required a well-considered balance between security and humanitarian operation, where migrants found at sea must be treated *humanely*. From a pro-security standpoint, such counter measures could involve detention, deporting, barring, and asylum provision, depending on the case situation (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2007; Horvath, 2014). However, Horvath (2014), Heidbrink (2016), and Hiemstra (2016) criticise the detention and deportation of migrants, arguing that

some cases are genuinely in need of humanitarian interventions, such as refugee cases. In contrast, Menjívar *et al.* (2018) maintain that in complex immigration scenarios – such as the one in the Mediterranean Sea – such stern measures are necessary to seal the loopholes that *scafisti* and terrorists could use through asylum seekers and refugees to disrupt the security and stability of the region.

In reference to a practical measure that could be undertaken for addressing maritime security while managing the migrant crisis, one recommendation could be extracted from Moraga and Rapoport's (2015) study. Moraga and Rapoport (2015) simulate a system of tradable refugee admission quotas and assignments of refugees to their chosen destinations, as well as EU member states' assignment of destinations to their chosen types of refugees. This approach would purportedly provide more flexibility to member states whilst observing respect for refugees' rights. Additionally, heavy pressure is being loaded on the EU to reform its policies and institutions that handle refugees and asylum seekers. The 'stress-tests' of the Common European Asylum System [CEAS] were represented by the emergency humanitarian context. It is reasonable to claim that the system was generally not able to offer suitable responses to the situation. However, it was postulated that if the EU failed to provide adequate support to refugees and their host countries, and to develop their ability to cope with the continuing pressures of this prolonged refugee situation, it risked further destabilisation of the whole region. At the same time, the strain to act on the situation drew frenzied policy experimentation and a series of often short-lived initiatives, such as mission Mare Nostrum (*ibid.*). Methodologically, Moraga and Rapoport used an exploratory approach in their study, similar to that of Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero's (2015) on the direct relationship between the Italian island of Lampedusa and cross-Mediterranean migration. The focus of Moraga and Rapoport's discussion is also congruent with Dimitriadi's (2014), who also offered similar solutions for solving the refugee crisis.

The following sub-section presents different approaches to migrants at sea at the international level. Different foreign policies and models adopted from other countries are reviewed and analysed, in comparison to the state of play of the EU's perspective *vis-à-vis* the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. This sub-section is important and relevant to the investigation on mission Mare Nostrum, and it will be complemented by empirical data in chapters Four and Five.

Alternative Approaches to Migrants at Sea

'Stop the Boats': the Australian Model

The 2001 'Pacific Solution' (Parliament of Australia, 2012) is the genesis of most Australian models and policies on border control and management of irregular migration, established after a rapid increase in irregular migrants arriving by boat to Australian shores. The increasing influx of migration led to a partnership with Nauru and Papua New Guinea to accommodate the refugees and asylum seekers. Australia used offshore processing facilities before any irregular migrant could access the Australian coast[17]. The model has been criticised as being too expensive for Australian taxpayers, considering that the equivalent sum of €240,000 was spent on running offshore detention facilities annually. In addition, the model had been accused of moral bankruptcy and of being politically and financially unsustainable (Martin, 2015).

Schloenhardt and Craig (2015) explained the establishment of a model by the Australian government in 2013 by barring boats carrying asylum seekers from entering Australia. Similar to Schloenhardt and Craig (2015), Little and Vaughan-Williams (2017) also asserted that the former prime minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, had called on European leaders to respond to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea by 'stopping the boats' and prevent further deaths. In basic terms, it was suggested that the vessels were turned back to the place where they had departed to ensure there was no irregular migration into the country. The policy ensured that any person wishing to visit Australia must hold a visa to ensure that there was no illegal entry (Kneebone, 2010). The Refugee Convention held that no country should impose penalties on asylum seekers who enter the countries with a visa or a passport (McAdam, 2013). Schloenhardt and Hickson (2013), however, explained that the United Nations law that protected smuggled migrants by sea, air, and land – of which Australia was signatory – required states not to criminalise migrants who were subjected to smuggling or human trafficking. McAdam (2013) also found that Australia had no legal framework to protect the refugees' safety, and asserted that it was the right of every individual under international law to seek protection in a foreign country. According to Moreno-Lax and Papastavridis (2016), and McAdam (2013), turning back the migrants' vessels had adverse effects which caused some of

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[17] Since 2008, the would-be immigrants arriving by boat to Australia were sequestered on Christmas Island, which is closer to the Indonesian island of Java than mainland Australia. The detention centre closed in 2018 (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2018).

the refugees to lose their lives. Moreno-Lax and Papastavridis (2016) blamed the Australian model of returning migrants travelling in rickety boats to the high seas, based on the argument that the turning-back approach put the migrants' lives at risk. The campaigns to deter boat migrants from arriving in Australia has, therefore, caused moral panic amongst migrants seeking refuge in Australia (Martin, 2015). Schloenhardt and Hickson (2013) recommended that smuggled migrants should not be punished when seeking refuge through illegal entry in a receiving state.

Policymakers argued that the Australian approach could be ineffective in the complex EU irregular migration (Ghezelbash *et al.*, 2018), as discussed further in Chapter Six. Operation '*Sovereign Borders*' [OSB] has been targeting boat migrants since 2013, arresting them and holding them in detention centres offshore. The international community was concerned over the nature of handling the migrants, because refugees and asylum seekers needed help and not the harsh methods of detention, prior to being turned back towards remote islands. The opposers of this model in the Europe migration crisis argued that the influx to the EU was too high to be financially sustainable. The argument was based on the premise that the number of migrants accessing the EU is high, such that sustaining the migrants at the detention centres – assuming that such a capacity was in existence – would be impractical and unattainable (Martin, 2015).

The Australian model also faced criticism for detaining migrants, with particular regard to health issues such as mental illness (World Health Organization – WHO, 2018). Pearson (2016) described this approach to migrants at sea as hostile and impractical in the context of the EU migration crisis. Data from Martin (2015) showed that the policy led to more anguish of the migrants, instead of giving them the right to asylum and refugee protection, as expected in international law. Data from Bochenek (2017) and Minns, Bradley, and Chagas-Bastos (2018) criticised the Australian model for different reasons, key amongst them the mistreatment of irregular migrants from Indonesia, and argued that the Australian model was not fit for any global migration crisis, particularly the EU crisis in the Mediterranean Sea, as further explained in Chapter Five.

The American Immigration Approach

The United States is obliged by the International Convention of Maritime Search and Rescue to search for and rescue migrants and take them to a safe place: this requires retaining migrants on a guard ship and awaiting directions from the Coast Guard headquarters (Evans, 2011; Hauer, 2017). Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul (2016) explained that the United States have been offering protection to migrants and asylum seekers who gain access to the country's territories through maritime routes. Frelick *et al.* (2016) noted, however, the development of measures triggering entry for asylum seekers and migrants which do not conform to the international obligations for the United States (*ibid.*). Gammeltoft-Han and Tan (2017) explained that refugees and asylum seekers continue to face obstacles in their quest to access asylum rights, as the developed countries close their borders to shift the flow of asylum seekers to neighbouring countries. Gramlich (2020) also explained that the USA's stringent immigration policies had seen many irregular immigrants with no legal documents, and those with criminal records deported to their country of origin. The increases in operations at sea reduced the number of irregular migrants accessing the USA, thus encouraging the irregular migrants to find alternative routes through Mexico by land (Lakhani, 2016).

The American immigration policy supports lawful immigration into the country through different available programmes – such as the 'Green Card' – to become a permanent resident in the USA. However, the USA recently adopted stern measures against illegal migration to the USA that involve deportation, interdiction, detention, and deterrence, especially on the porous southern borders with Central and South American countries. Even when holders of regular Green Cards, migrants in the USA still face the threat of deportation after then President Donald Trump's administration stiffened the immigration policies to foster security in the country. The irregular migration crisis in the Southern USA territories sparked debates over the need to intensify border patrol operations and technology infusion in irregular migration surveillance and management. Data collected from Lakhani (2016) showed that irregular migrants from Central and South American countries had opted for alternative marine routes such as the Caribbean from the Atlantic Ocean and the Baja California from the Pacific Ocean, initially exploited by fishers, smugglers, and traffickers.

As a consequence, the Atlantic Ocean emerged as a common migrant smuggling route due to increased border control inspection on the inland Mexican route (Lakhani, 2016). The poorly managed and uncontrolled southern border facilitates illegal crossing from islands and southern

countries by sea. For instance, data collected from Lakhani (2016) showed that the increased operations to prevent irregular crossing to the USA from the southern territories through Mexico witnessed increased mobility through the Caribbean route to Florida beaches in Miami. There was an emergent trend in which migrant smuggling was masked under fishing activities. Data collected further showed that most migrants accessing the USA through the southern border reached Mexico by crossing the Atlantic Ocean (Averbuch & Sieff, 2019). However, Averbuch and Sieff (2019) also showed that the route had changed and opted to eliminate the inland connection of Mexico to access the USA directly through the ocean. Data from Potter (2014) revealed that a significant number of Cuban and Haitian nationals were risking their lives at sea to access the USA.

The 'Boat People': The 2015 Rohingya Refugee Crisis

The Rohingya are a stateless Indo-Aryan minority and are one of the largest displaced populations in the world. The Rohingya conflict is an ongoing dispute in the northern part of Myanmar's Rakhine State (formerly known as Arakan), characterised by sectarian violence between the Rohingya Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities, and at the same time, a military crackdown on Rohingya civilians by Myanmar's security forces. In 2017, there were an estimated one million Rohingya living in Myanmar before the Rohingya genocide in 2017 (*Médecins Sans Frontières* – MSF, 2020). Gleeson (2017) and Thom (2016) explicated that the Andaman Sea crisis in 2015, where more than 5,000 Rohingya migrants and refugees from Bangladesh were left stranded at sea after smugglers left their boats and nearby countries failed to accept the refugees, prompted Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia to initiate a regional response to protect the migrants. The 'Boat People[18]' crisis highlights the significance of regional approaches to the migration crisis (Kneebone, 2016). Yeung and Lenette (2018) explained that the international community also pledged financial aid to help the Rohingya people. As the international community worked on offering protection to the boat people, the regional governments were also forced to reconsider their roles in addressing the economic deprivation of citizens that drove maritime movement and risking of their lives (Gleeson, 2017; Yeung & Lenette, 2018). Lego (2017) explained that meetings were convened after the inception of the Rohingya refugee crisis to enact policies and measures to protect the migrants.

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[18] Strictly speaking, the term 'boat people' originally referred to the thousands of Sino-Vietnamese fleeing from Vietnam by sea in 1978–1979, following the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975 (UNHCR, 2000).

The meetings, however, did not address abuse and persecution suffered by the Rohingyas (*ibid.*). Another meeting was then held by the Association of South-East Asian Nations [ASEAN], titled 'Emergency ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime Concerning Irregular Movement of Persons in Southeast Asian Region', where the possibility of creating a task force to respond to similar future situations was discussed (Lego, 2017). Lego (2017) also asserted that the Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network [APRRN], an organisation concerned with protecting and assisting refugees, welcomed regional governments' recognition of the need to intensify rescue and search operations, ensure the safety of migrants and refugees, and explore reception arrangements for the migrants. Regarding the Andaman crisis, Moretti (2018) explained that addressing the factors that prompt the movements should be considered to stop the migrant's movements. Chatterjee (2016) also explained that while seeking best practices to respond to future situations like the Rohingya refugee crisis, state security imperatives should also be considered.

The news of Rohingya boat people was hyper-publicised after hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers were stranded in the Aceh maritime stretch in the Andaman Sea, leading to 515,000 migrants helpless at sea (Lim, 2015; Thom, 2016). There were religious frictions that led to the crisis, with a consequent mass displacement of refugees. The increasing persecution of Rohingya people, based on lack of citizenship and illegal migration to Myanmar after they were stripped of citizenship in 1982, lead to mass displacement of Rohingya persons. The refugees were regarded as 'stateless' individuals. The Rohingya migration crisis was fuelled by a complex nexus of human smuggling and trafficking comprised of economic opportunism migrants from Bangladesh and Rohingya refugees fleeing the persecution in Myanmar. Ethnic and religious conflicts and mass killing were reported in Sadao (Thailand), where a mass grave was discovered in 2015 (Lim, 2015). The increasing influx of Rohingya migrants to Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia initiated anti-smuggling operations in the Andaman Sea. Smugglers and traffickers of human beings abandoned the migrants in fear of interdiction, thus causing a crisis where hundreds of refugees were stranded at sea. The humanitarian aid and disaster relief [HADR] missions conducted in response to this crisis adopted a dichotomous approach, combining humanitarian SAR operations and pro-security missions to root out the human smuggling.

To summarise, irregular migration is not a primary choice of any person, but people are being prompted to migrate illegally because of repressive policies relating to legal migration. Amongst the drivers of migration, insecurity and economic factors serve as the primary ones, which are considered broader than poverty and are instead a complex mix of unemployment, low wages, and poor living conditions. Additionally, conflicts and violence are important drivers and may be deemed as tipping points. Therefore, it can be argued that irregular migration is driven by a complex set of factors, including economic and conflict reasons, as well as factors relating to social support and social networks. Consequently, a holistic response to irregular migration must be implemented, in which economic and conflict drivers are being tackled.

This chapter has provided a review of various studies relating to maritime security in relation to the refugee crisis in Europe, centred on the background and the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter also discussed alternative approaches to migrants at sea in other parts of the world, according to different foreign policies. The above review signified that conflicts in the neighbouring regions are major drivers of the increased cross-Mediterranean migration, as migrants move in desperation to search for safety and a better life. Smuggling and trafficking were also found to be significant drivers of increased migration to Europe because they provide means for transporting migrants to the EU. The migration attracted increased criticism from the EU based on its implication in regional security through increased crime and terrorism. Finally, the controversial debates around cross-Mediterranean migration, SAR operations, and military intervention have heightened the politicisation of the matter, thus affecting migration control effects.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EVOLUTION OF MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: *GENESIS* OF MARE NOSTRUM

> *From protecting our natural resources to providing maritime security and national defense, the Coast Guard's duties are broad in scope, and the performance of those duties has never been more important.*
>
> ― United States attorney Russ Carnahan[19]

This chapter represents the literature review of this study and aims to provide a critical exploration of various academic works relating to the implementation of mission Mare Nostrum as a SAR operation in the Mediterranean Sea. This study uses the literature review to identify what is known about the context of mission Mare Nostrum. The chapter reviews results, discussions, and arguments of previous researchers on mission Mare Nostrum and outlines challenges revolving around this operation and its legal and regulatory aspects and requirements. Before doing so, the chapter discusses the dimensions of maritime security in general and specifically reviews the Italian foreign and security policy in the Mediterranean and the country's strategic role in the Mediterranean, with a particular focus on maritime governance. The chapter also reviews the relevant actors in the Mediterranean Sea and discusses the legal and regulatory frameworks for military and humanitarian operations, in accordance with the HADR model of intervention. The literature on operations such as Mare Nostrum, Constant Vigilance, Triton, Poseidon, Indalo, Themis, Hera, NATO-operations in the Aegean Sea, and EUNAVFOR MED Sophia and Irini is also reviewed. This section of the thesis also reviews and explains how the migration challenge affects the discourse on maritime international operations and approaches used to avert such regional crisis, as well as the challenges curtailing the efficiency of the measures taken. Lessons drawn for policymakers and actors in the safeguarding refugees and asylum seekers are also reviewed. The chapter finally reviews the theories, research gaps, and methodologies used in previous research works, specifically on maritime SAR operations.

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[19] Hearing on the 111th Congress on International Efforts to Combat Maritime Piracy, Washington DC, 30 April 2009 (U.S. House of Representatives – Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2009).

Maritime Security in the Mediterranean Sea: An Overview

Maritime security is an evolving discipline in security, considering that it poses equally significant risks to EU stability, especially regarding terrorism, organised crime, trafficking, smuggling, and piracy. Regarding this, Lehr (2013) noted that maritime *insecurity* – especially threatened by organised crime at sea – results from poor maritime governance. Lehr (2002) noted that the increase in maritime insecurity thrives under politicisation of marine security issues, so that measures to tackles the insecurity are under-implemented and need to be addressed. Herbert-Burns, Bateman, and Lehr (2008) explained that maritime security evolved rapidly to encompass a range of activities, especially 21st technology-oriented terrorism. Herbert-Burns *et al.* (2008) explicated that the maritime security principle should be based on information sharing, not limited to the 'maritime domain awareness' [MDA], but also including a commitment to security operations, collaboration, and burden-sharing amongst *all* maritime security stakeholders. Bueger and Edmunds (2017) in contrast, argued that maritime security discourses draw attention to clandestine maritime activities that threaten not only maritime security but also security on land. Bueger (2015a) further explained four dimensions of maritime security, as shown in figure 10.
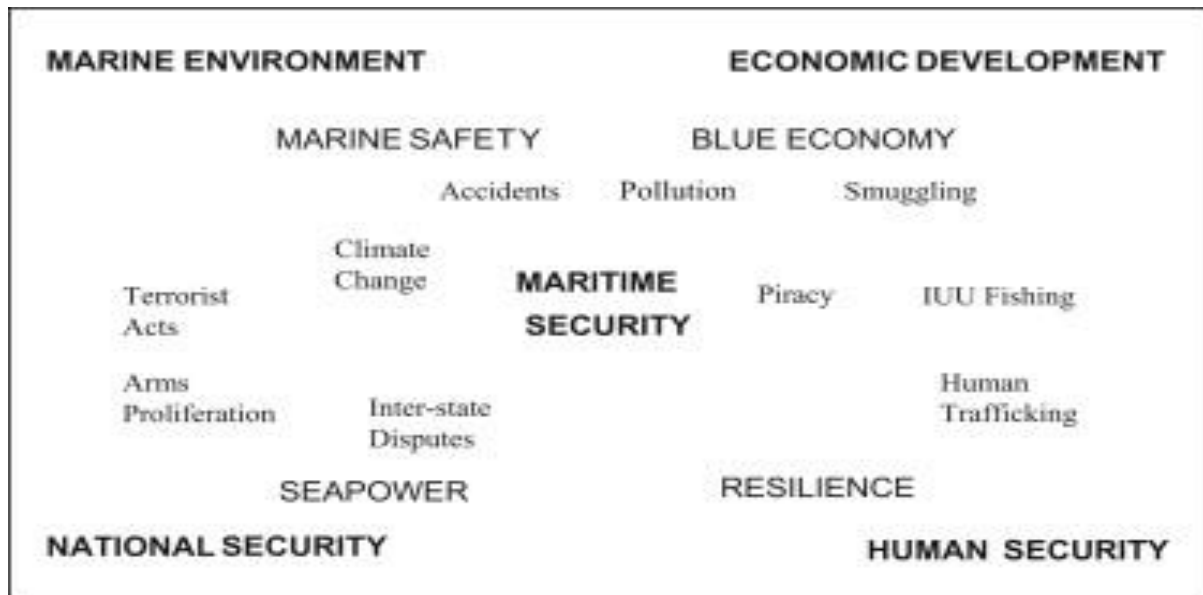
Source: (Bueger, 2015a: 161).
Figure 10. Bueger's Matrix on Maritime Security.

The matrix envisaged by Bueger (2015a) above illustrates a complex interaction of four critical overarching goals of maritime security: human security; marine environment; national security;

and economic development of the country from the gains of economic exploitation of its maritime resources. Under the four main faces of maritime security are four sub-dimensions, *viz.*, (i) blue economy, (ii) sea power, (iii) resilience, and (iv) marine safety. Bueger (2015a) argues that maritime security requires stakeholders to counter those issues that threaten the above domains, such as: smuggling; weapon proliferation; conflicts; Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated [IUU] fishing; marine pollution; accidents; climate change; and terrorism. Maritime security is therefore depicted as a broad and transdisciplinary concept that requires wide collaboration with all stakeholders (Bueger, 2015b). Bueger (2015b) further explained that the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea requires building trust and collaboration amongst stakeholders, explaining that maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea must be aligned with strategic responses from security on land, and adding that information sharing, surveillance and collaboration in operations conducted at sea are crucial for combating organised crime activities (*ibid.*). Bueger, Edmunds, and Ryan (2019) also explained that political engagement is fundamental in maritime security because most of the operations conducted at sea require political goodwill and support to increase their operational effectiveness. Bueger *et al.* (2019) advanced the ideologies of maritime security dimension in the research article in which the same authors referred to maritime security as the '[…] *uncharted politics of the global sea*' (*ibid.*: 971) to depict the complexities of maritime governance issues.

The next section of this chapter presents an overview of the Italian foreign and security policy in the Mediterranean region, providing a historical perspective of the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for the country, followed by a brief discussion on the Italian maritime governance through the lens of the dimensions of maritime security. This information is necessary for comprehending the birth of mission Mare Nostrum and therefore understanding to what extent Mare Nostrum was effective in reducing the loss of lives at sea and migrant smuggling.

Italian Foreign and Security Policy in the Mediterranean Before Mare Nostrum
The Mare Nostrum Dogma: Historical Perspectives
The origin of the expression 'mare nostrum' [*sic*] can be traced to the ancient Roman Empire as it was used to refer to the Tyrrhenian Sea, a part of the modern Mediterranean Sea under the Italian territory (Agbamu, 2019). Originally, 'mare nostrum' meant 'our sea' to symbolise the

ownership of the territory after winning and conquering Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily. The modern application of the term is deeply rooted in the ancient Roman doctrines on the control of the Mediterranean Sea. In the period following the Punic Wars, the Roman Empire's influence spread across Northern Africa; the terminology was used to describe the whole Mediterranean Sea as it fell under the Roman Empire (*ibid.*). The hegemony of the Mediterranean Sea perceived as mare nostrum was a well-treasured dogma amongst the Romans until the eighth century, when the Saracen pirates put an end to it (Lehr, 2019). Following the cases of migrants' boats capsizing off the coast of Lampedusa in separate incidents killing over 350 migrants cumulatively in the sovereign maritime territory of Italy, the Italian government invoked the antique dogma of mare nostrum to launch a humanitarian-military operation to avert the crises (Hess, 2015). The application of 'Mare Nostrum' as the name of the maritime SAR operation was a civic invocation of the ancient Roman imperialism and dominion over the Mediterranean Sea (*ibid.*).

The fascist application of the term *mare nostrum* is associated with the perspectives of Benito Mussolini during the fascist era of Italy being the most influential power regime in the region to justify further conquests of territories neighbouring the Mediterranean Sea (Fogu, 2020). Driven by his fascist beliefs of Italian supremacy over the region, Mussolini formed a powerful navy resource to control the entire Mediterranean fuelled by the mare nostrum dogma. During the Second World War, Mussolini sought to establish an Italian empire anchored on the ancient Roman Empire hegemony to make the Mediterranean Sea a '[…] *Roman lake*' (Agbamu, 2019: 254). Mussolini also sought to project the Italian naval influence further to include not only the Mediterranean Sea but also the Indian Ocean stretch of Somalia and eastern Kenya (Fogu, 2020). Corradini, a renown Italian nationalist who later became a crucial supporter of Mussolini's ideologies, supported the mare nostrum dogma of having an imperial Italy with absolute control of the Mediterranean Sea (Joshua, 1996). The mare nostrum ideology flourished during this era as the Mediterranean Sea was a strategic resource for pursuing economic, political, and military interests. Slaves and other trade commodities from Northern African territories conquered during the wars were shipped to Italy and Europe by sea, thus explaining the importance for Italy of having absolute hegemony over the sea (Agbamu, 2019).

Decades later after the fall of Fascist Italy and the expansive Mussolini's Italian Social Republic, the mare nostrum ideology seemed to sink to the bottom of history until the onset of

21st-century civil wars and mass migrations (Cox & Zaroulia, 2016). As thoroughly discussed in Chapter One, the Libyan civil war and Arab Spring events contributed to mass migrations to Italy by sea, where the main departure points were situated across the Libyan coasts. The hyper-publicising of the Lampedusa shipwreck in 2013 created the debate to save the lives of migrants from the unscrupulous hands of smugglers and to protect the Italian Mediterranean territory from other illegal activities (Coppens, 2013; Binotto & Bruno, 2018). Italy could not abnegate its responsibilities of helping migrants at risk of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea (Pinelli, 2017). The Italian government equally needed to avert the ongoing smuggling of humans and other contraband goods to Italy and the EU through its maritime territories of the Mediterranean Sea (Agbamu, 2019). At the time, there was a dire need to become involved in the refugee crisis to protect the lives and stop migrant smuggling from Northern African countries and other leading eastern routes.

Considering that mission Mare Nostrum was launched only a month after the hyper-publicising of the Lampedusa incident of mass drowning of irregular migrants at sea, Agbamu (2019) concluded that the operation was launched in haste and without adequate planning, as also discussed in the empirical Chapter Four of this research. Koller (2017) shared the arguments above in her assertions that Mare Nostrum, in comparison to Frontex-operation Triton, did not undergo due diligence in planning for its sustainability as a SAR-military operation. Fogu (2020), however, argued that the Italian government had advanced the initial mare nostrum philosophy of protecting the sea from security threats to the use of military operations in what Fogu (2020) referred to as *'mare aliorum'*[20], considering the persistent refugee crisis. The perceptions around the antique theme of the Mediterranean Sea as a mare nostrum depicting 'our sea' notion influenced the subsequent decisions made by the Italian government following the hyper-attention of the media on the ongoing refugee crisis, particularly the aftermath of Lampedusa shipwreck. The sections below dissect the circumstances under which mission Mare Nostrum, conceived from the mare nostrum dogma, was created and launched.

Italy's Strategic Role in the Mediterranean Sea
The Mediterranean has always represented the main source of opportunities and challenges for Italy's domestic and foreign policy. This strategic importance has also stemmed from the role

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[20] 'Mare Aliorum' (from Latin, 'Their Sea'), as defined in the introductory chapter.

that the region played in the construction and integration process of the European Union. Italy is traditionally linked to both continental Europe and the Mediterranean. The country's foreign policy has always been based upon three pillars: (i) Europe, (ii) the Mediterranean, and (iii) the transatlantic partnership (Astarita, 2015). All three are still important nowadays, although they need to be revised or reinterpreted significantly. In many ways, the Mediterranean is a higher priority than it once was. Italy's concern about migration, energy[21] security, and the need of combating terrorism and organised crime – as well as a broader interest in a peaceful, prosperous, and secure mare nostrum – all point to the increased importance of the Mediterranean in Italy's security and foreign policy agenda. Yet, the Mediterranean is no longer what it once was. The geographical heart of the new Italian presence in the world is the Mediterranean Sea, with its hinterland, from the Persian Gulf to the Horn of Africa, to the Sahel. The Mediterranean region has served as the arena for contending national interests amongst single nations, friendly state power groups, or groups with contrary perspectives for over two millennia. Dogmatic perceptions on instability, refugee crises, and insecurity threats often dominate discourses revolving around the significance of the Mediterranean Sea to the Italian interests, with the most dominant discourse being the unregulated migration to Italy through the Mediterranean Sea. Astarita (2015) further argued that despite the challenges arising from the refugee crisis, the Mediterranean offers a commercial hub for Italy which she associated with the growing interventions of the Italian government in securing the sovereignty of its Mediterranean maritime territory.

The significance of the Mediterranean Sea and its strategic role in the Italian foreign policy can be traced in the antique doctrine of Mediterranean Sea as our sea (*mare nostrum*), as illustrated in the previous section of this chapter. The Mediterranean persistently remains a focal point for Italy in the power and control discourses of its internal and foreign politics and policies – and actions – taken in response to different international issues such as unregulated migration (Colombo & Palm, 2019). Although medieval discourses on the strategic role of Italy in affairs in the Mediterranean region revolved around protecting the sovereignty of the present Italian[22] maritime territory and its interests from encroachment, the contemporary discourses have metamorphosed to incorporate far-reaching humanitarian responses to the refugee crisis

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[21] *Eni*, abbreviation of *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (from Italian, 'State Hydrocarbons Authority'), is an energy company operating primarily in petroleum, natural gas, and petrochemicals. Established in 1953, *Eni* is one of Europe's largest oil companies in terms of sales (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi – Eni, n.d.).

[22] Then Venetian, Genoese, Pisan, Amalfitans, and Ragusan city-states and merchant republics (Gallo, 1997).

(Varsori, 2016). In dissecting the strategic role of Italy in the Mediterranean Sea, it is crucial to comprehend the complex political alignments – and realignments – of EU and non-EU actors in Mediterranean geopolitical issues. According to Grygiel (2020), the strategic role of Italy and the relevance of the Mediterranean region to external actors are contingent on whether the political dynamics and composition of Italy are of relevance to securing their interests and projecting their influence over the region. The argument above was in tandem with the explanations of Tziarras (2019) that the interests and involvement of external actors in the Mediterranean Sea influence Italy's strategic importance and interest in the region. Grygiel (2020) further argued that Italy's strategic role in the Mediterranean should be viewed from the perspective that regional stability is contingent on one sovereign power or an amalgamation of friendly powers controlling the sea and its borders. The argument above was based on the observation that without such hegemony, the sea was regarded as a turbulent and unsafe frontier maritime territory, bringing to mind the definition of '[…] *uncharted politics*' (Bueger *et al.*, 2019: 971) presented in the previous sub-chapter. Furthermore, Grygiel (2020) contended that the geopolitical cooperation between Italy and other actors was diminishing due to internal crises and political instabilities in the EU neighbourhood countries, thus threatening the strategic value derived from the maritime territory.

Grygiel (2020) added that the instabilities resulted in three modern breaches to the perceived geopolitical unity, *viz.*, (i) mass migration; (ii) Russia's re-entry to the Mediterranean affairs; and (iii) the gradual – yet powerful – penetration of Chinese influence in the Mediterranean region. Italy's strategic role in the region has recently been threatened by the entry of these external actors; however, the country has remained adamant despite persistent encroachment by countries such as Turkey, France, and Greece (Sotirovic, 2014; Tanchum, 2020). According to Cacciaguerra (2020), Italy requires a radical 'rethink' of its strategic role in the region, considering the complex evolution of issues in the Mediterranean and meddling from external parties. Italy's strategic standpoint of adopting a less confrontational approach can be traced to its geopolitical affiliation with France and their support for different civil factions in Libya, in turn deeply rooted in their strategic interests in Libyan oil. From another viewpoint, though, Barbara (2019) argued that numerous external actors have strong interest in oil; thus, it cannot be concluded that the strategic role of Italy is dependent on oil alone. Barbara (2019) further argued that the political influence over the oil-rich Mediterranean neighbourhood also influences the strategic importance of the region to Italy's interests (*ibid.*). An outstanding

strategic role of Italy in the region was the support of the Libyan Tripoli-based government, but it would later be dislodged as the main ally by Turkey. As a result, Italy relinquished its political and economic interests in the region to Turkey and was cast into irrelevance by other external players in the context of EU-Mediterranean issues (Cacciaguerra, 2020). As discussed in the preceding chapter, in the case of unregulated migration, Italy bore the largest burden thus explaining its decisive and confrontational involvement in the Mediterranean Sea affairs through mission Mare Nostrum (Taufer, 2016; Clingendael Organisation, 2016). The implementation of Mare Nostrum, funded and supported by the Italian government, is a clear indication that the Italian government comprehended its strategic role in Mediterranean geopolitics and economic interests (Agbamu, 2019). Further, Mare Nostrum was an indication that Italy does not hesitate in implementing drastic measures to safeguard its interest and strategic role of influence and control over the Mediterranean Sea (Panebianco, 2016a).

Italian Maritime Governance: Dimensions and Politics of Maritime Security

It is evident from a variety of perspectives including concepts, philosophy, or practices, that maritime security and geopolitical aspects are intertwined (Germond, 2011; 2015). The Mediterranean maritime *geospace* includes actors that conduct illegal activities and those that endeavour to police, govern, and secure the sea from such activities. Italy is one of the major players in Mediterranean geopolitics, especially following mission Mare Nostrum. According to Germond (2015), maritime security implicates states differently depending on the nature of disruptive illegal activities occurring, and their location. Germond (2015) illustrates that Italy and its islands of Sicily and Lampedusa are impacted more directly than northern EU countries in the case of maritime security issues revolving around irregular migrations (*ibid.*). Germond (2015) also explains that – in the case of arms trafficking – the Strait of Gibraltar, Malta, and Italy are the primary destinations in the EU even though the final destination may be the United Kingdom or other countries in Northern Europe. Evidently, Italy needs to spend more financial and human resources on maritime security than most other EU nations (Suárez-de Vivero & Mateos, 2014). The high involvement of Italy in maritime security was the main reason that Italy requested the assistance of the EU for Mare Nostrum in dealing with maritime security challenges. Italy has national laws that govern operations in its sovereign maritime territory of the Mediterranean Sea, which is anchored within the broader international maritime governance laws such as the UNCLOS, amongst others (Teodoro, 2019).

Italian maritime governance includes the management of ports and all other maritime entry points, such as coastal beaches (Ferrari & Musso, 2011). Researchers in the BLUEMED Italian White Paper Working Group (2018) noted that Italy has fragmented maritime governance, and although human resources exist, they are regarded as inadequate. Maritime governance, especially on issues revolving around maritime security in the Mediterranean, require the integration of port governance in the maritime governance policies, considering that ports represent the major entry points for illegal activities in Italy (Teodoro, 2019). Maritime security governance in Italy, however, operates within the four dimensions of maritime security as described in detail by Bueger (2015a) in his maritime security matrix, previously introduced in this chapter. Additionally, Bueger and Edmunds' (2017) perspectives on maritime security echo the complex maritime security operations and their governance in the Italian context, considering that Italy has been at the epicentre of global discourses on the Mediterranean maritime security issues and the refugee crisis.

Migration-related issues dominate politics of Mediterranean maritime security, especially from two opposing perspectives of stopping illegal migration to avert the crisis *versus* helping the irregular migrants at risk of drowning to prevent the mass fatalities. Findings of Camarena *et al.* (2020) showed that Italy's political interests and discourses on the Mediterranean Sea are primarily swayed by irregular migration issues and measures to combat them. Scrutiny of the Italian politics of the Mediterranean Sea reveals irregular migration and combating the refugee crisis as the dominant political perspectives (Musarò, 2016a). One side of this dual conversation supports the notion that unregulated migration through the Mediterranean Sea threatens the maritime and inland security of Italy, and thus should be combated using pro-security measures. The other side supports the notion that interstate or civil conflicts in the EU neighbourhood are responsible for the irregular migration at sea and mass drowning of refugees fleeing for safety; thus, humanitarian approaches are the most suitable to combat the crisis. Tazzioli (2015a) noted that the political debates on the Mediterranean Sea operations are more heated around the thin line between the engagement of the military operations and amount of humanitarian assistance rendered to irregular migrants without endangering Italy's security. These political debates were particularly heightened around Mare Nostrum (Savaryn, 2018), as also revealed in the empirical Chapter Five from the interview data. Kuru (2019), however, held contending views that the politics of the Mediterranean – especially those around Mare Nostrum – are critically contingent on Italy's foreign policies on maritime security. Kuru

(2019) also argued that the politics in the region in the perspectives of Mare Nostrum depended on international relations of Italy and other countries affected by the issues in the Mediterranean region. In support of Kuru's (2019) argument, Pierini (2020) explained that Mediterranean politics is a multifaceted affair with multiple actors pursuing similar or contending interests. The Mediterranean Sea politics consist of intricate power struggles between states who strive to maintain their influence – such as Italy – and others that aspire to project their influence over the region – such as Turkey (Pierini, 2020). However, Italy, as a mid-sized power at best, is simply too small to deal effectively with a global Mediterranean and a complex and conflictual multipolar world. In such a world, only continental-sized powers could realistically strive to achieve their strategic objectives. This is where the European Union, Italy's third and crucial pillar of its foreign policy, comes into play.

In conclusion, the disasters that involved Syria and Iraq, the continuing anarchy into which Libya has fallen, the unsolved problems of Egypt, and the instability of the Sahel were all determining factors for irregular migration at Italy's doorstep; on the eve of the Arab Spring, and with a paralysed EU unable to develop a common foreign policy. In this scenario, Italy needs to reconfigure its foreign policy based on this reorganisation, working to relate to numerous actors – where in the past it related to only one – and enhancing its geographical position, which is a reason for vulnerability but also great opportunity.

A (Brief) History of Mare Nostrum: The Birth of the Mission

As seen in the discourses above, Mare Nostrum was conceived just weeks after the Lampedusa shipwreck in October 2013. However, a single case of shipwreck was not a sufficient reason for the Italian government to deploy an extensive military-humanitarian operation engaging enormous financial and human resources such as Mare Nostrum. Although the refugee crisis, motivated the rapid deployment of the mission, other complex factors were in play before the Lampedusa case compounded the crisis, insofar that the incident sealed the fate of the already existing debates on Italy on the country's involvement. A look at the case from a historical perspective reveals a complex interaction of external and internal factors that motivated the decision to deploy an agile maritime SAR operation as soon as it was feasible. Therefore, it is critical to scrutinise how different scenarios, actors, and variables in Italy, Europe, and the Mediterranean neighbourhood proliferated and implicated the formation of Mare Nostrum from a critical research perspective.

Findings of Musarò (2016a) show that the widespread humanitarian outcry did influence the actions taken by the Italian government to deploy Mare Nostrum. Musarò (2016a) explained that two opposing discourses emerged at the time: one supporting humanitarian intervention to rescue migrants; another supporting a robust pro-security military operation to arrest migrant smugglers. Although the humanitarian outcry cannot be singled out as the sole factor behind the genesis of Mare Nostrum, it can be argued that it is directly linked to the formation of the mission, since saving lives was part of its mandate, as thoroughly argued in chapters Four and Five of this study. The high influx of migrants flocking to Italian shores brought to light the implications of irregular migration and it was associated with increasing crime in the EU (Humphrey, 2013), as evidenced also in the preceding chapter. Gattinara (2017) also found that some of the measures taken by the Italian government to combat irregular migration were pressured by public opinion and hyper-publicised discourses of migrants as a security threat. On this sensationalism, Musarò and Parmiggiani (2017) examined the role of the public media in portraying the refugee crisis in Italy and its application on Italian security, and found that it influenced the policies adopted in combating irregular migration and migrant smuggling to the EU. In a divergent perspective, Geddes and Pettrachin (2020) argued that Italy's migration policies were crafted from political, civic, and expert discourses on refugees as a source of threat to EU security that required combined efforts of military and humanitarian efforts to stop. The Italian and German media played a critical role in initial debates for action to avert the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea and Europe in general (Galantino, 2020). Nicolescu (2017) also attributed EU security challenges to the unregulated influx of migrants to the EU from neighbouring Mediterranean countries and recommended actions to tackle the worsening migration crisis. The role of irregular migration and human smuggling to the EU as a security threat that required urgent measures to eliminate it eventually entered the limelight following the Paris attacks, whose perpetrators were refugees or former asylum seekers (Nail, 2016).

Following the increasing politicisation of the irregular migration and humanitarian activism surrounding the mass drowning cases of migrants, there was pressure for the Italian government to become involved not only to save lives but also to stop illegal smuggling activities in its maritime territories (Baubock, 2019). After the Lampedusa shipwreck in 2013, the Italian government intervened through Mare Nostrum to save migrants from drowning while simultaneously attempting to stop human smuggling that was facilitating the irregular

migration flow. According to Hammond (2015), the maritime operation provoked mixed reactions based on its effects, considering that irregular migration arguably *increased* despite its presence, and mass fatalities were still witnessed in 2014 through 2015; thus, it was termed as a 'pull factor', as depicted in Lee's migration theory discussed in Chapter One. Sentiments amongst EU residents that some countries had high terror levels and radicalisation influenced the perception of the European public on refugees from those countries and represented a push for Mare Nostrum to stop irregular migration through thwarting migrant smuggling (Böhmelt *et al.*, 2019). In fact, the necessity to avert national security threats associated with irregular migration can be traced to the genesis of Mare Nostrum and was based on the objective to improve Italian national security and protect the country from organised crime-related threats associated with migrant smuggling into the EU (Musarò, 2016a). Based on the aforementioned premises, the debate over the operational effectiveness of Mare Nostrum contributed to the formulation of the main research question that guided the study (*i.e.*, 'To what extent was Mare Nostrum effective in reducing the loss of lives at sea and migrant smuggling?'), as presented in the introductory chapter of this study.

As seen in the findings reviewed in the preceding chapter, the Arab Spring and the prolonged Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni conflicts resulted in a high influx of asylum seekers into European countries (Chetail, 2014). The civil unrest resulted in mass displacement of the people, where the majority – who could afford the cost – were smuggled to Europe mainly through the Strait of Gibraltar and the Maltese and Italian coastlines. Initially, specific countries bore the burden individually, but some countries – such as Italy – were burdened by the increasing number of migrants flocking to European shores, especially in 2011 and 2012 (Savino, 2016). The Italian government pioneered the discourse on the need to share the burden of the refugees through the relocation of migrants to other EU countries (McQuirk, 2018). However, the high influx of the migrants to Italy was the genesis of the controversial debates that repatriation and other humanitarian help rendered to irregular migrants was an enabler of irregular migration. Discussions of more stringent measures to stop it emerged, with military intervention being amongst the dominant propositions. At the time, there were existing maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea (see Appendix I), but these were mainly conducted as SAR operations. Operation Constant Vigilance, Aeneas, and Hermes existed but did not have the capacity and resources to combat the complex smuggling syndicate (Giusti, 2018). Therefore, following the call for action to stop smuggling blamed for mass fatalities and the ballooning refugee numbers

in the EU, the Italian government enacted mission Mare Nostrum. Although the refugee crisis in the EU was not a primary determinant in the launch of the mission, it did play a pivotal role in influencing the decision to enact a military-humanitarian operation at a large-scale to reduce irregular migration.

Mare Nostrum had two critical mandates designated in its operational framework: the mission was expected to conduct extensive SAR operations to identify vessels at risks of capsizing, overloaded vessels, and those stranded at sea (Panebianco, 2016a). This mandate had the objective of saving lives of irregular migrants from the possible risk of drowning or starvation at sea. The second operational mandate was to combat human smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea through arresting migrant smugglers and preventing undocumented irregular entry into the Italian territory (Musarò, 2016a). This mandate was a combined effort between the military, judiciary, the police, humanitarian organisations, human rights groups, and immigration authorities. It is against these two operational mandates that this thesis intends to assess the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum, as enunciated in the research question and explained in the introductory chapter. Although the two objectives listed were the main goals of Mare Nostrum, from a broader perspective, the operation was highly – and mistakenly – expected to avert the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and thwart migrant smuggling into the EU.

The research of Panebianco (2016a) offers valuable insights into the Italian decision to launch Mare Nostrum a month after the Lampedusa incident and the broader issues that led to the decision to scrutinise the preparedness of the Italian government for the mission. The Italian government, as the most burdened by the migration crisis in the EU, has been at the forefront of increasing awareness of the Mediterranean migration crisis impacts on the EU (Garelli & Tazzioli, 2016). Italy had on several occasions reiterated that the crisis affected *all* EU countries and not Italy or southern EU countries alone, thus attempting to bring it on top of the EU agenda in the previous decade. Panebianco (2016a) also noted that most EU countries were reluctant to openly support a maritime SAR mission to rescue irregular migrants to the EU, but rather weigh their support behind the implementation of stringent measures to stop irregular migration. Despite the political discourses of then Italian prime minister Matteo Renzi in appealing to the EU, Italy was not successful in securing EU support for a SAR mission to avert the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean Sea (Colombo, 2018). However, a unique *momentum* in the civic and political pressure for action was noted in October 2013, after the

institutionalisation as a national day of the mourning following deaths of over 500 migrants in two shipwrecks near the Italian islands of Lampedusa and Maltese maritime territory (Panebianco, 2016a). The then Maltese prime minister Joseph Muscat criticised the EU's cold actions towards the crisis in what he metaphorically described as having a '[…] *cemetery within our Mediterranean Sea*', while the rest of Europe has been providing merely '[…] *empty talks*' (Monar, 2014: 141).

According to Panebianco (2016a), the Italian government launched Mare Nostrum to search for and rescue migrants '[…] *to prevent other similar disasters*' (*ibid.*: 12). The arguments and revelations of Panebianco (2016a) disclose that the operation was launched as an emergency measure and therefore not strategically planned, stating that mission Mare Nostrum '[…] *was initiated under the direct responsibility of the* [Italian] *government: there was neither a parliamentary debate nor a parliamentary vote*' (*ibid.*: 12). The emergency-like planning and implementation of the mission were useful to the Italian government because it allowed an immediate response to the crisis. Panebianco (2016a), however, argued that the hastened implementation and exclusion of the Italian parliament in the decision-making process led to parliamentary debates around the operation. The parliament debates witnessed rifts, where one group argued on existing events and circumstances that prompted the creation of a thoroughly and strategically planned Mare Nostrum, while another supported the emergency nature of the operation as an ad hoc measure and therefore pushed for immediate deployment (Dinmore & Segreti, 2014). Panebianco (2016a) reveals that the government move to implement the mission without paper consultation with the public through their parliamentary representation backfired on the government itself. The Italian opposition eventually used the allegations to claim illegitimacy for the operation, and divisions in parliament formed along the lines of the need for humanitarian response and more stringent security and border control measures (Patalano, 2015; Musarò, 2016a).

Despite fulfilling its two objectives of saving lives and combating smuggling and organised crime, mission Mare Nostrum was the epicentre of political tensions and debates over its relevance and effectiveness in averting the crisis. The opposition capitalised on the high financial burden borne by Italy alone, yet the migration crisis affected the entire EU: it was alleged that Mare Nostrum acted as a pull factor for irregular migration, with migrants starting the journey hoping to be rescued instead of the operation stopping the journeys from starting

at all (Carbone, 2015). Carbone (2015) also argued that Mare Nostrum became economically, politically, and financially unsustainable, with a heavily criticised monthly budget of €9 million, alongside other national and EU criticism based on the undesired pull effect. Such criticism and lack of financial funding led to its premature closure in October 2014 and the alleged takeover by the EU-supported Frontex-operation Triton (Vacas Fernández, 2016; Tazzioli, 2016). A relevant discussion on these issues follows in Chapter Four. The main challenges faced by Mare Nostrum, as revealed in the findings, were lack of support from the EU, dwindling support from Italian nationals based on the undesired pull effect, over-politicisation of the mission by the Italian parliament, and lack of funds to further the mission.

The role of international maritime law is covered in Marin and Krajčíková's (2016) article, illustrating that a vessel 'in distress', regardless of the type (*i.e.*, private, commercial, or governmental) *must* be assisted. However, some states, such as Italy and Malta, contend the issue of the nearest place of safety where migrants should receive shelter. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [EUAFR] reported that the reason why such problems persist in the Mediterranean Sea is that migrants, when being disembarked, must be attended to and offered the chance to apply for asylum at the first port of disembarkation due to unequal and inadequate sharing of responsibilities amongst states. Shipmasters are also mandated to report distress cases and are hence obliged to save migrants at sea. However, in the case of commercial vessels – who at times would also conduct their own rescue operation, where to disembark the rescued migrants is often a problem, knowing that states are generally not willing to take in those migrants. The same is experienced by military vessels along the Mediterranean. For commercial boats, participating in rescue operations has been both costly and dangerous, and this has resulted in them failing deliberately to report to the authorities any migrants in distress at sea. It is noteworthy that then Italian prime minister, Enrico Letta, who proposed the launch of mission Mare Nostrum, stated that spotting migrants at sea does not necessarily mean bringing them to an Italian port but that this would be decided based on where the rescue occurs (*ibid.*). The concept of the 'nearest safe port' is discussed further in Chapter Five. The methodology used by Marin and Krajčíková's (2016) in presenting their article is descriptive, similar to that of Dimitriadi (2014), and Fargues and Di Bartolomeo (2015).

Tazzioli (2015a) argued that the launch of mission Mare Nostrum reflected a significant shift in the way governments were dealing with migrants at sea. Mare Nostrum, a military-

humanitarian operation framed in the HADR model, established the 'scene of rescue', shifting the attention from the border landscape of 'migrant incursion' to humanitarian pursuits assumed by military agents, as they adopted the responsibility of saving the lives of people at sea. Coluccello and Massey (2015) emphasise that since Mare Nostrum's launch in 2013, an unparalleled growth of illegal migrants crossing the Mediterranean was witnessed, alongside an equivalent growth in the number of deaths. Coluccello and Massey (2015) mention that with the EU's attempt to reduce the search and rescue efforts in the southern Mediterranean, the result was an increased number of irregular migrants traversing from Libya to Italy. With this in mind, Coluccello and Massey (2015) note that the focus of the EU's strategies in addressing regular migration flows remains *securitisation*, rather than humanitarian responses. In terms of methodology, Coluccello and Massey (2015) presented their study descriptively but did not make use of primary data.

The EU foreign policies offered momentum to review the appropriate approach to be employed, and an overdue attempt to settle the conflicting policy interests at stake. Italy took an initial step in this direction, specifically in the pressing aftermath of the Lampedusa incident in 2013. *Vis-à-vis* the consequential international and domestic outcry, Italy initiated mission Mare Nostrum, which was portrayed as a preventative measure whose purpose was to avoid any new humanitarian disaster at sea, instead of a conventional operation for controlling the flow of migrants. Borelli and Stanford (2014) noted that the prevention of illegal migration ought to remain the primary goal over the protection of life and human rights, when the context of migration control is to be considered. This has been the foregoing scenario despite the presence of clear obligations for European countries, specifically under the international law of the sea, the Refugee Convention, and the European Court of Human Rights [ECHR] (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2007; Evans, 2011; Hathaway & Foster, 2014). Borelli and Stanford (2014) claimed that the method used by Frontex and EU member states engaged in joint migration control activities is crucial to guaranteeing that the creditable principles underlying the new draft regulation convert into viable and practical protection measures before more lives are claimed.

Trauner (2016) also argued that Mare Nostrum's costs were shouldered by Italy, and the Italian government struggled to convince its EU partners to take on these costs. The EU home affairs commissioner stated in 2014 that she admired and praised Mare Nostrum's efforts but that it

was simply not possible to replace it with a Frontex-operation due to the lack of funds. As a compromise, the fusion of operations 'Aeneas' and 'Hermes' – the existing EU operations at the time – into Triton attempted to replace Mare Nostrum. The Triton operation nevertheless had a significantly smaller monthly budget of €2.9 million and had its concentration exclusively on the northern borders of the Mediterranean. A comparison between mission Mare Nostrum and Triton is visually displayed and analysed in table three of Chapter Four. A change occurred in early 2015 when the operation's budget was tripled as a response to a growing number of migrants dying at sea on their way to Europe (*ibid.*). Methodologically, Trauner's study made use of an analysis of primary and secondary data, as well as a number of semi-structured interviews of subject matter experts. In terms of structure, the argument was developed in two steps: it began by examining the way EU member states have altered their patterns of managing refugees post-2008; it then moved its attention towards analysing the decision-making practices of the EU under the shape of the economic crisis.

Mission Mare Nostrum employed both naval and coast guard vessels appropriate for SAR operations, including amphibious vessels, patrol crafts, a floating hospital, and frigates, which are used for escorting other vessels into ports. Searching the sea for suspicious vessels and for monitoring activities is also conducted through reconnaissance aircraft. The analysis of incoming data in real-time was done in a control centre in Poggio Renatico[23] (Italy), wherein the daily priorities of the mission were correspondingly allocated. Mare Nostrum was also able to engage and apprehend smugglers and human traffickers who were potentially equipped with arms and would be subject to 5 to 15 years of imprisonment in Italy if found guilty of aiding irregular migration. Despite its mainly military features, around 150,000 lives were saved under Mare Nostrum in less than a year. It would take subsequent Frontex-operation Triton a monumental effort in order to attain something similar: whereas the agency Frontex had an annual budget of only €90 million for its operation to support border control across the whole Schengen region, operation Triton's setup costs alone amounted to about €20 million. It is noteworthy that the increased expenditure on these subsequent maritime operations with few benefits caused lawyers Shatz and Branco to file a private lawsuit on 3 June 2019 against the EU at The Hague, following increased fatalities at sea and humanitarian crisis (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – PICUM, 2019). Frontex-operation

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[23] Poggio Renatico hosts the '*Space Situational Awareness (C-SSA)*' and provides to the Italian Air Force '*Space Situational Awareness (SSA)*' and '*Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST)*' capabilities (Difesa, n.d.).

Triton also did not own any marine or airborne equipment; thus, member states contributed with vessels and aircraft based on the calls for '[…] *mandatory solidarity*' (Brady, 2014: 2).

According to Relief-Web (2014), the IOM recognised and applauded the efforts of mission Mare Nostrum for preventing additional migrants' fatalities. Additionally, the IOM stated that the mission did not act as a migrant pull factor, repeating the official line that the operation did *not* encourage more people to come (IOM, 2014). Baubock (2019) found that Mare Nostrum was highly effective in achieving its objectives. However, the same could not be said for the succeeding operations, especially those in 2015 and 2016, considering that human migration and sea fatalities increased exponentially during those two years. Baubock (2019) attributed the low performance to the politicisation of the agenda of the operations and inadequate equipping and funding.

The abrupt engagement in averting the crisis is the basis on which it could be argued that Mare Nostrum was an impromptu operation, launched in haste to respond to an emergency and to prevent further incidents of drowning such as the case of Lampedusa. However, when viewed from a broader perspective, the allegation becomes contentious because Mare Nostrum was a resource-intensive operation, signifying that the need for intervention to this humanitarian crisis had long been established within the EU framework, when the refugee crisis was recognised as an urgent matter that required collective attention. The literature review discloses factors leading to the formation of Mare Nostrum as complex and interrelated. Scrutiny shows that these factors had a shared goal in averting unregulated migration to the EU. However, exact factors that prompted the creation of the mission are often contentious, especially when viewed from a historical perspective and the trajectory of the scope of the refugee crisis. The findings have shown that the genesis of the Mediterranean and the refugee crisis in Europe can be traced to the armed conflicts in the Mediterranean region. Other peripheral issues and practices that nourish the irregular migration to the EU sprouted from the increasing demand for smuggling services to the EU.

Chronology of other *Military-Humanitarian Operations in the Mediterranean Sea*
EU Mediterranean Operations Before 2013: Operation Constant Vigilance
Italy and other Southern EU countries such as Spain, Malta, Greece, and France have long been involved in maritime security operations, mainly as state-led security coast guard agencies.

According to Strik (2012), such agencies have no mandate to search for and rescue irregular migrants at sea but rather to enforce border control measures. According to Vacas Fernández (2016), the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR recommends a distinction of maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea to comprehend the appropriateness of the operation for the migration issues in question. Vacas Fernández (2016) explained that maritime operations – either be they SAR or border control – are also known as 'surveillance operations', and distinguished that SAR operations are primarily designed to reduce or avoid fatalities of migrants at sea by saving them, while security-oriented operations are designed primarily to enforce border control and implement maritime security measures to prevent irregular migration.

In 2004, mission Constant Vigilance was the pioneer in modern maritime security operations, although its mandate was limited in both scope and resources. The mission had been operational before Mare Nostrum, but was mainly involved in surveillance of migration patterns in the Strait of Sicily (Marina Militare, n.d.). The operation's primary purpose was to monitor the migration traffic in and out of Italy and was conducted exclusively by the Italian Navy. During the operation, the Italian Navy realised that there still was a high number of fatalities from irregular migrants at sea, and that trafficking and smuggling activities were yet predominant in the area (*ibid.*). Although officers could identify irregular migration, the operational capacity and mandate of the mission limited the actions that the Navy could take, especially border control measures and adequate SAR operations. The mission statistics collected from 2004 to 2013 provided fundamental data on the need for a large-scale operation, considering that humanitarian calls for intervention reached a peak in 2013, particularly following the Lampedusa incident (*ibid.*). The shortcomings of operation Constant Vigilance provided a fundamental starting point for the planning and implementation of mission Mare Nostrum. The operation succeeding to Mare Nostrum is reviewed in the ensuing subsection.

Frontex-Operations

Mission Mare Nostrum was replaced by Frontex joint operations Triton and Poseidon, which utilised a military-humanitarian approach supported by the European Union to safeguard the EU coastal borders and reduce migrant fatalities at sea (Vacas Fernández, 2016). Frontex-operations were aimed at addressing a range of issues thought to constitute shortcomings of previous operations and critical factors for cross-Mediterranean migration crises. Operations

under Frontex have evolved from operation Triton in 2014 to Themis in 2020 (see Appendix I). Frontex is an EU agency, endorsed by all EU member states, to patrol the Mediterranean Sea with three main objectives: (i) supporting coast guards; (ii) guaranteeing the safety of EU borders from irregular migration; and lastly (iii) reducing the vulnerability of the EU borders from piracy, terrorism, and irregular migration (Neal, 2009; Léonard, 2010; Bohnenblust, 2017; Giannetto, 2019). Vacas Fernández (2016) found that although the operation was SAR-based – and informed by its predecessor Mare Nostrum – Triton lacked the resources, capacity, scope, and mandate to conduct the needed SAR missions in the Mediterranean Sea and thus be as effective as Mare Nostrum in searching for and rescuing migrants at sea, as evidenced in the empirical chapters of this study. Vacas Fernández (2016) further explained that, in addition to Triton-conducted SAR missions, operation Poseidon complemented Triton in border control missions and combating irregular migration maritime crimes such as piracy. Frontex-operations Poseidon and Triton were mainly concentrated on the southern Mediterranean route and the Italian coast (Vacas Fernández, 2016; Bohnenblust, 2017). Likewise, Frontex-operation Indalo was initiated in Spain to counter the increasing migration to the EU region through the western route from Morocco, which increased in response to the increasing central route operations (Frontex, 2020b). Figure 11 below illustrates the operational framework for operation Indalo conducted in the EU.

Source: (Frontex, 2020b).
Figure 11. Operational Framework and Mandate for Operation Indalo.

Operation Indalo had a broader scope of operation to improve the security and safety of the EU regions through eliminating irregular migration, trafficking, and smuggling of contraband consignments in the western Mediterranean Sea (Frenzen, 2012; Frontex, 2020b). The mission incorporated a comprehensive inland and maritime security mechanism aimed at combating drug and weapons trafficking and smuggling. The operation also collaborated with immigration officials to identify counterfeit immigration documents (Frontex, 2020b). In addition to Triton, Poseidon, and Indalo, Frontex also conducted operation Themis (Frontex, 2020a). Themis replaced operation Triton to target smugglers and traffickers, while simultaneously saving lives (Frontex, 2020a; 2020c). Figure 12 below illustrates its mandate and operational framework.

Source: (Frontex, 2020c).
Figure 12. Operational Framework and Mandate for Operation Themis.

The figure shows that operation Themis was aimed at incorporating a range of issues previously thought to be the shortcomings of preceding maritime operations and affecting the critical drivers of the Mediterranean migration crisis. Operation Themis took over in 2019, but 2020 witnessed political debates around its management, with regard to more stringent measures taken against refugees and asylum seekers (Frontex, 2020a). According to the agency, although the operation was anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling mandated, the migration crisis required

a more comprehensive approach to addressing the political and economic factors in migrants' origin countries, humanitarian interventions, and border control issues (*ibid.*). Nováky (2018) argued that although Themis was motivated by anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling, migration crises require a more comprehensive approach to addressing the political and economic factors in migrants' origin countries, as well as humanitarian interventions and border control issues. This concept is discussed further in the final chapter of this thesis. In addition, Frontex ran operation Hera in Atlantic Ocean waters between North-Western African countries and the Canary Islands, while operation 'Nautilus' 2009 was conducted in the central Mediterranean (see Appendix I). Nováky (2018) also revealed that operation Nautilus was effective in reducing the number of irregular migrants arriving at Maltese shores. At the same time when Nautilus was in operations, Hermes – conducted in the central Mediterranean in 2009 – lasted only 184 days.

EUNAVFOR MED and NATO

Other partners employed in support of Italy's moves to deal with Mediterranean migration challenges included the NATO support in the Aegean Sea with operation Sea Guardian in 2015 (Vacas Fernández, 2016; Garelli & Tazzioli, 2018). In May 2015, Frontex-operations were reinforced by yet another EU-supported EUNAVFOR MED operation, dubbed *Sophia*[24], based on similar approaches as Frontex but with a wider scope to address the root causes and take more punitive measures against trafficking and smuggling (Faleg & Blockmans, 2015; Vacas Fernández, 2016). Under Sophia's framework of operations, traffickers' and smugglers' vessels could be turned back to their ports of origin – if it were deemed safe for a return journey – for subsequent prosecution in their home countries. It is noteworthy that the operation priority was apprehending smugglers rather than rescuing the migrants at sea (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017). This operation ran in parallel to Frontex-operation Triton and mission *Themis*, which commenced in 2018 but ended in March 2020 (see Appendix I). EUNAVFOR MED also enacted operation *Irini*[25], taking over from Sophia in March 2020 (Zaptia, 2020).

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[24] '[*I*] *will suggest to Member States that we change the name of our Operation: instead of calling it EUNAVFOR MED, I suggest we use the name: Sophia. To honour the lives of the people we are saving, the lives of people we want to protect, and to pass the message to the world that fighting the smugglers and the criminal networks is a way of protecting human life*', speech by Federica Mogherini (then High Representative of the European Union for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Operational Headquarters, Rome, 24 September 2015 (European External Action Service – EEAS, 2015: n.p.).
[25] Eirēnē, from Greek (Ειρήνη) and means 'Peace', whereas Sophia (Σοφία) means 'Wisdom'.

Mare Nostrum and Triton: A Tale of Two Maritime SAR Operations

Regrettably, economic and policy issues at the EU level, alongside mission Mare Nostrum's alleged encouragement of further migration, meant that the operation lasted for only a year. In that respect, Del Valle (2016) argued that an important point that must be considered is that the European states who were against the continuation of Mare Nostrum argued that the main reason why the mission should be stopped was because of its unintended impact – acting as a pull factor by calling even more migrants – rather than its lack of financial resources. The same European states further reasoned that the implementation of SAR activities at sea sent a wrong signal to prospective migrants, as they were encouraged to cross the Mediterranean because of these activities, which they perceived would help them cross safely. Conversely, Coluccello and Massey (2015) stated that the British government, amongst others, had no basis in saying that Mare Nostrum was the cause of the growing migration in Europe. Another argument is that these crossings were making the smuggling business thrive. There was, therefore, a lack of political support for Mare Nostrum, aside from lack of funding, leading to its halt (*ibid.*). Coluccello and Massey (2015) – using a descriptive method – had a different assertion from Trauner (2016), who noted the relevance of mission Mare Nostrum. According to Brady (2014), the replacement of Mare Nostrum by Triton was a significant challenge for Frontex, described as a '[…] *small border agency* (*ibid.*: 1). The support of individual EU member states to the Triton mission would demonstrate the EU's position in relation to overall border security. Brady (2014) further argues that, even with the assumption that the Triton mission would receive adequate resources and funding, a robust set of objectives aligned with EU foreign policy was needed a priori in order for it to succeed. Furthermore, the EU foreign aid and technical assistance must be targeted by governments to countries in Africa and the Middle East through which migrants are crossing. Similarly, Borelli and Stanford (2014) cite in their article that the Triton mission was established as a result of the increasing willingness within the EU to fortify co-operation on matters of migration and asylum. Specifically, its establishment was intended for the application of EU community measures in relation to the handling of external borders. Al Rousan and Al-Tikriti (2015) argue that the EU policy orientation took a stronger position as the incidents of refugees crossing the Mediterranean increased from several thousands to several hundreds of thousands per year. Al Rousan and Al-Tikriti (2015) also cite the replacement of Mare Nostrum by Triton, describing it as being '[…] *more modest, cheaper, and multi-lateral*' (*ibid.*: 192), adding that Triton operation

seldom ventured closer to Northern Mediterranean coasts – where most of the Western Mediterranean deaths happen. The same authors add that this silent bloodshed on the high seas since the end of mission Mare Nostrum had not been given attention by civil society (*ibid.*), similar to what Reinisch (2015) claims. The article adopted a descriptive and investigatory approach to analysing the refugee problem.

Although Frontex replaced mission Mare Nostrum with Triton, the latter was focused primarily on preventing migrants from crossing the Mediterranean, rather than on saving lives. It is noteworthy that Triton's sea rescues and interventions were limited to only what was required by maritime obligations, and that the operation had *no* dedicated and proactive search and rescue operations (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017), as detailed further in Chapter Four. Triton received outright criticism because of this. After the loss of lives of around 300 migrants in the Mediterranean in February 2015, Triton was resultantly described as '[…] *a woefully inadequate replacement for Italy's Mare Nostrum*' (Reinisch, 2015: 4) by the UNHCR. The European Union, facing criticisms particularly from the United Nations and humanitarian NGOs, escalated Triton's financial resources three times and likewise increased the number of sea patrol ships, which were in fact only a restoration of mission Mare Nostrum – this time based on EU rather than on Italian assets. Rinelli's (2016) analysis was similar to that of Coluccello and Massey's (2015), as the former claimed that despite the criticism around Mare Nostrum, such a mission was able to fulfil its objective of saving lives. Worth mentioning is that Mare Nostrum was *entirely* funded by Italy, which compelled the EU to launch a new operation that would allow sharing the costs and responsibilities. However, Moreno-Lax and Papastavridis (2016) noted that Triton failed miserably, with a budget placed at only €2.9 million – equivalent to less than a third of Mare Nostrum's budget – and a scope of only 30 miles off the Italian coasts patrolled by its ships, although this was later extended. Similarly, Fargues and Di Bartolomeo (2015) show in their article the insufficiencies of the EU's response on the issue, citing the death of 800 migrants when a smuggling boat capsized in April 2015, which elicited various responses across Europe. There was a concurrence amongst the European Council to improve SAR activities at sea to the same level as that of Italy's achievements with mission Mare Nostrum.

Worthy of note is that the human implications of the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean Sea have drawn certain controversies, as the number of migrants taking the perilous crossing from

Africa to Europe has risen tremendously. A 2015 accident where a Tripoli boat destined for Italy with 850 passengers capsized was by far the deadliest incident, despite increased sea operations such as the Frontex-led operation Triton (BBC News, 2015; UNHCR, 2015). The EU agenda prominently features the question on how this problem should be tackled, considering that after the defunct Mare Nostrum, the subsequent operation Triton did *not* aim to respond to the humanitarian challenges, as it was not designed for this purpose (Patalano, 2015). Patalano's study could be significantly linked to Cox and Zaroulia's (2016), which focused on the need for a more humanitarian approach to managing the migrant crisis. According to Chetail *et al.* (2016), the replacement of mission Mare Nostrum by operation Triton led to a shift in the political context, since the primary goal of the former was to pursue SAR operations, whilst that of the latter was to enforce border control. Moreover, compared to Mare Nostrum, Triton was designed to have significantly more limited geographical scope and resources. However, international maritime and human rights law states that ships crossing the Mediterranean Sea are duty-bound to help migrants in distress at sea; thus, it appears that operation Triton was also obliged to save migrants at sea (Chetail *et al.*, 2016). Figure 13 shows additional differences between mission Mare Nostrum and operation Triton, which will be expanded in the archival research portion of this study in Chapter Four.

	MARE NOSTRUM	TRITON
Cost	9 m. Euro a month 0.21 cent a year per EU citizen	2.9 m. a month 0.07 cent a year per EU citizen
Range	70.000 km^2 of the Mediterranean	No more than 30 Miles from the cost
Assets	5 Naval Vessels, helicopters, 5 aircraft, 2 submarines	7 Vessels, 1 Helicopter, 4 aircraft
Manpower	900 military personnel	65 officers
	Mare Nostrum was set up to tackle the increase of migratory flows and consequent tragic ship wreckages off the island of Lampedusa.	To support member states towards effective border control in the Mediterranean region.

Source: (Diker, 2015: 17).
Figure 13. Differences between Mission Mare Nostrum and Frontex-Operation Triton.

In contrast to Mare Nostrum, which rescued an estimated 150,000 migrants, Frontex-operation Triton which succeeded it, saw a rise in fatalities at sea by 30%, thus showing that it was not as effective as Mare Nostrum (PICUM, 2019). More in-depth scrutiny of performance and effectiveness show that mission Mare Nostrum was well funded and equipped with a three-fold higher budget than Triton (*ibid.*). Mare Nostrum had 900 staff, while Triton had 65 staff. Furthermore, Mare Nostrum covered 20,408.734 nautical miles, while Triton covered 30 nautical miles off the coast of Lampedusa (PICUM, 2019). In support of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants [PICUM], Benton (2014) similarly found that, after Mare Nostrum was replaced by Frontex-operations Triton and Poseidon, cross-Mediterranean migration increased from 2014 to 2016.

Other Key Actors in the Mediterranean Sea

International and Regional Partnerships Actors

International organisations – such as the United Nations Agencies, Funds, and Programmes [AFPs] and the IOM – have taken a humanitarian interest in sea migrations, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, the UNHCR (2020a) revealed that such agencies are instrumental in data collection on the migration situation in the sea. Similarly, Pries (2018) explained that international actors are instrumental in shaping the migration discourse in the Mediterranean Sea, considering that they are vocal in policies and in supporting different operations, particularly SAR missions. A joint report on cross-Mediterranean migrations revealed that such organisations are influential for the nature of operations conducted to deal with migration issues in the region (UNHCR *et al.*, 2015). Correspondingly, the IOM is instrumental in addressing migrations globally: the agency has played a critical role in collecting data on migration and advocating for policies on migration, such as humanitarian SAR operations at sea (IOM, 2015; 2017). A discussion on these two agencies – and their relationship and level of interaction with mission Mare Nostrum – will follow in Chapter Five. On a regional standpoint, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency [EBCGA] has been responsible for Frontex-operations that took over SAR operations of migrants at sea after the closure of Mare Nostrum in October 2014 (BBC News, 2015; IOM, 2017; Frontex, 2015; 2016; 2020c). The European Council has also been instrumental in Mediterranean SAR operations through the European External Action Service [EEAS], an organism of the EU that supports humanitarian actions for the migration crisis at the EU, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea

(Biscop & Coelmont, 2012; Helwig, Ivan, & Kostanyan, 2013; Martins & Strange, 2019). The role of the EU is therefore significant in managing cross-Mediterranean migration, primarily through the CSDP, a body of the EU that supports security measures in full respect of the current human rights legislation, and the European Neighbourhood Policy [ENP], which advocates for the accommodation of migrants as refugees and asylum seekers (Biscop & Coelmont, 2012; Eris, 2012; Attinà, 2016). Carrera, den Hertog, and Parkin (2012) argued that the aforementioned EU agencies are fundamental in influencing migration policies regionally and globally, particularly through the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility [GAMM] policies.

The GAMM policies are widely debated strategies with perceived benefits in migration management (Lavenex, 2008; Paczynski, 2009; Browning & Christou, 2010; Matrakova & Wolfschwenger, 2018). Eris (2012) and Boschma *et al.* (2017) argued that the ENP was viewed as a tool that would unite EU stakeholders on migration issues. Ghazaryan (2012), and Bicchi (2014), however, explained that the ENP had encountered numerous challenges such as poorly coordinated transition, low support from EU stakeholders, and increased criticism. Martins and Strange (2019) suggested that the ENP has been also criticised based on its shortcomings in addressing EU migrations, especially the SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea migration crisis. Smith (2005) also noted that the ENP increased the attention on migration issues through coordination amongst the relevant stakeholders in the migration crisis. Researchers such as Gillespie (2008), Balfour (2009), Calleya (2009), Bicchi (2011), and Holden (2011) explored instead the role of the Union for the Mediterranean [UfM] in the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The findings of the researchers above affirmed that the UfM supported specific resolutions and initiatives for migration in the Mediterranean region. Gillespie (2008), however, argued that the UfM had been 'infiltrated' by the EU to the extent that stakeholders perceived it as 'Union for Europe', instead of 'Union for the Mediterranean'. Altermir and Hernández (2014) argued that the lack of full co-operation of stakeholders is a challenge of the achievement of the UfM. Elistania, Nurmeiga, and Permadi (2019) also suggested that the UfM is a critical international actor in the Mediterranean migration crisis.

The Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] countries, such as Saudi Arabia and MENA countries, are significant sources of sea migrants from the south-eastern routes through Greece and Malta (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019). For instance, refugees and asylum seekers in Lebanon –

especially those of Syrian origins – were deported, apprehended, and their labour exploited in some GCC countries. Colombo (2012) claimed that the GCC is influential in migration issues affecting irregular migrants originating from its regions, especially regarding security-related effects of migration and discourses surrounding Middle Eastern migrants depicted as security threats to the EU due to potential risk of radicalisation. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, commonly referred to as EUROMED, is also fundamental in devising and implementing migration policies and operations conducted in the Mediterranean region (Youngs, 2015; Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 2020a; 2020b).

The Proliferation of International Parliamentary Entities in the Mediterranean

On a regional level, there are numerous parliamentary actors in the Mediterranean migration politics; therefore, to comprehend the role in an orderly manner, the review is divided into five regional parliamentary actors and a contingent reflection on each actor's subcategorisation. These actors will also be reviewed in depth and discussed in Chapter Four. Established in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU] represents the views of international parliaments on migration issues and thus influences the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea (Inter Parliament Union, 2017a). For instance, an IPU conference held in 2017 in Malta discussed human migration management of the crisis in the Mediterranean Sea (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017a; 2017b; 2018). The Commonwealth Parliament Association parliamentary body also influences migration in the Mediterranean Sea through advocacy. Cofelice & Stavridis (2017) mapped the proliferation of the actors involved in the Mediterranean regional affairs; they grouped the parliamentary actors in EU and Mediterranean affairs according to regions and universality, as illustrated in figure 14.

Universal	Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 1889
	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) 1911, 1948
	Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) 1967, 1998
	Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States 1999
	Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund 2000
	Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy 2001
	Parliamentary Forum for Democracy 2010
Northern	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) 1949
	European Parliament (EP) 1952
	NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) 1955
	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) 1990
	Inter-parliamentary Conferences [CFSP/CSDP, euro] 2012/2013
Northern-Southern	Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM) 1998, 2010
	Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) 2005
Southern	Arab Inter-parliamentary Union (Arab IPU) 1974
	Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) 1989
	Association of Senates, Shoora and equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA) 2002
	Pan-African Parliament (PAP) 2004
Mediterranean-related	Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) 1993
	World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association 1996
	Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) 2001
	Parliamentary Association of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) 2002, 2014
	African Parliamentary Knowledge Network 2010

Source: (Cofelice & Stavridis, 2017: 11).
Figure 14. Parliamentary Actors in the Mediterranean Sea.

The figure shows that northern parliamentarian actors in the Mediterranean migration and other related affairs include the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [PACE], NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] and inter-parliamentary conferences such as the CFSP and the CSDP (Cofelice & Stavridis, 2017). In the northern-southern region, parliamentarian actors in the EU and Mediterranean affairs include the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean [PA-UfM] and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean [PAM], while actors in the southern region include the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union, the Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union [CCAMU], the Association of Senates *Shoora* and equivalent Councils in Africa, and the Arab World and Pan-African Parliament (*ibid.*).

Although not all countries with a Mediterranean coastline are directly involved in migration crisis management, most countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece, France, Malta, Libya, and

Egypt have been notable actors in Mediterranean migration politics (Cofelice & Stavridis, 2017). Italy has been fundamental in shaping the response to mass migration into the EU region through the Mediterranean Sea, considering it is one of the primary EU contacts for migrants due to geographical reasons alone (Panebianco, 2016a; 2016b). The Italian government pioneered maritime SAR activities at sea through mission Mare Nostrum, which was followed by numerous SAR operations in the region (Kersch & Mishtal, 2016). Italy has been witnessing high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as being the first contact for traffickers and *passeurs* into the EU (Giudici, 2013; Belloni, 2016; Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2017). Spain also reported high numbers of migrants coming in by sea for asylum-seeking (Fullerton, 2005; Carling, 2007). Malta has also been instrumental in searching for and rescuing migrants as part of common initiatives to reduce fatalities at sea and simultaneously improve security by reducing smuggling and trafficking to the EU region (Klepp, 2010; Carrera & Cortinovis, 2019). Although these countries have been vocal in the EU-Mediterranean crisis and engaged in different governmental efforts, there have been conflicting views regarding issues such as the mandate, scope, legality of SAR operations (Farrugia Vella, 2019). Mainwaring (2012) argued that Malta and Cyprus have influenced EU migrations through their stern immigration policies. Some of the measures undertaken by the Maltese government include legal punishment of extra-legal immigrants (Gerard & Pickering, 2012). Lutterbeck and Mainwaring (2015), however, contend that Malta's 'soft' immigration policies are acting as an easier route for migrants to access Europe in what they metaphorically termed as '[*T*]*he EU's "Soft Underbelly*"' (*ibid.*: 1). France also receives a relatively high share of sea migrants, and in response has enacted several measures to deal with sea migration, including supporting SAR operations and robust border control mechanisms (Brice, 2018; Aljazeera News, 2019). According to Bassets, Martin, and Abellán (2019), France has been stern in reducing illegal activities associated with sea migration, such as smuggling and trafficking of migrants and arms. Libya has also been named as a major exit point for migrants in the sea destined for the EU; thus, operations to reduce cases of migrants leaving the African region from the Libyan coast have been in place since the onset of Mare Nostrum (Baldwin-Edwards & Lutterbeck, 2019). Immigration experts identified Libya as the key to resolving the cross-Mediterranean Sea migration crisis (BBC News, 2018b). Similarly, Toaldo (2015a) revealed that Libya is a fundamental source of sea migrants, and argued that solving the Mediterranean migration required stakeholders to stop migrants from going to sea in the first place, considering that most migrants into the EU used the southern route and Libya as a point of departure (McMahon

& Sigona, 2016). Libya, as a source of migrants from the African region, has been key in managing migrants at sea through collaboration with other actors in the Mediterranean Sea (Hamood, 2006; Lutterbeck, 2009; Koser, 2005; Koser, 2011; Paoletti, 2011). Mediterranean migration affairs attract the interest of state actors that have no coastline in the Mediterranean Sea but are a critical source of migrants destined for the EU region. African countries, such as Nigeria and Eritrea are sources of migrants using the Mediterranean Sea to access Europe (Geddes, 2005). Kassar and Dourgnon (2014) explained that Morocco represents a major point of origin used by migrants to access Europe through the southern, central, and western Mediterranean Sea routes. Abderrezak (2009) supports the argument that Morocco is a crucial converging point for migration to the EU via the western Mediterranean route. McMurray (2001) found that Morocco has been a significant smuggling and trafficking hub to the EU through the western Mediterranean Sea, where most of the migrants originate from Western Africa.

Mare Nostrum: Legal and Regulatory Framework for Action

From a broad perspective, a framework is a set of beliefs, rules, systems, and structures set to guide some action in dealing with an issue objectively. A legal and regulatory framework therefore comprises a set of rules, rights, responsibilities, and legal provisions guiding the conduct of actors in different capacities and contexts, as laid down in constitutions, policy, and legislation documents (Harris, 2007). With regard to maritime security, a legal and regulatory framework provides regulations and legal guidance for how different maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea such as mission Mare Nostrum should respond to crises at sea and at what level the different actors should engage in such affairs.

International Framework

The international framework gives all states in the world the right to territorial integrity and national sovereignty (Mann, 2016; Okonkwo, 2017). Musarò (2016a) and Tazzioli (2016) asserted that the migration crisis in Europe sparked a need for a security and humanitarian response. Mission Mare Nostrum was mandated to arrest the smugglers and rescue the migrants, tasks that were enforced by the Italian Navy, as per the international law requirement to protect the fundamental human right to life (Musarò, 2016a). Okonkwo (2017) also noted that the European Commission (*i.e.*, the executive body of the European Union) introduced Task Force Mediterranean [TFM] to stop the deaths on the southern European border, thus

indicating that the human rights of the sea migrants who risked their lives in search of better economic opportunities were recognised and protected. Regarding Mare Nostrum and its objective of rescuing migrants at sea, Carrera and den Hertog (2015) argued that the smugglers used the opportunity to release even more people at sea with less food, water, and fuel on the boats, with the assumption that the migrant would be rescued somehow. However, Mare Nostrum ended in 2014 after the introduction of Triton, a maritime operation mandated by the EU that focused instead on intercepting migrants' vessels, rather than implementing SAR activities at sea. As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, Frontex-operation Triton was criticised by politicians and human rights activists because its main objective was not to rescue the migrants but to control the EU maritime borders (Tazzioli, 2016). Koller (2017) also asserted that the operation did not achieve similar success in saving the lives of sea migrants as Mare Nostrum. From the perspective of humanitarian international law, the interception of boats carrying migrants is a core concern. Borelli and Stanford (2014) explained that the push-backs (*i.e.*, pushing back the migrants to their points of origin) practised in the Mediterranean Sea were legal and in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR], and that the European Union worked to ensure that the migration operations in the Mediterranean Sea guaranteed the protection of human rights and human life. Every person, according to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, has the right to protection from another country, as long as they have no criminal records or are found engaging in criminal activities (Evans, 2011; Hathaway & Foster, 2014; Okonkwo, 2017). Athorough discussion on legal frameworks pertinent to maritime security and SAR operations will follow in Chapter Four of this research.

Regional and Nation-based Frameworks

The UNODC implemented a regional strategy for countries in Central and West Africa to combat migrant smuggling and persons trafficking to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea (UNODC, 2016). Regions such as Europe, some parts of Africa, and America have developed significant regional legal frameworks that protect children, men and women against smuggling and trafficking, thus complementing the international legal framework for migration. Regional institutions were consulted during the development of the regional strategy to ensure that the strategy was in line with the vision of ensuring regional integration and security (*ibid.*). Kartas and Arbia (2015) also added that the smuggling and trafficking trade in the Sahara and North Africa influenced the regional governments to hold security meetings in order to curb the threat.

The threat posed by the criminal groups, however, is a chronic one, despite regional governments enacting measures to find a solution to the problem (*ibid.*). Regional governments adopted policies such as the African Common Position on Migration and Development [ACPMD] and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa [MPFA] to eradicate human trafficking, smuggling, and other criminal migration-related problems (Anichie & Moyo, 2019). In support of Kartas and Arbia (2015), Anichie and Moyo (2019) also asserted that human trafficking is still on the rise despite the move to ensure regional integration. Anichie and Moyo (2019), therefore, recommended that Africa should embrace new strategies to improve regional integration and curb those criminal activities.

The European Migration Network [EMN] maintains that the nation-based legal framework entailed enactment of legislative policies addressing the trafficking and smuggling of migrants at the state level (EMN, 2010; 2015). The United Nations (UN, 2018) reviewed the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya and explained that the Libyan national law interdicts irregular entry and stay in the country. However, The UN contended that the implementation of such laws was dismal and not effective. The United Nations also added that the Libyan national law does not discriminate against refugees, migrants, trafficking victims, and asylum seekers. Libyan Law No. 6 that regulates residency, exit, and entry was amended only in 2004, while Law No. 2 that ensured visa requirements were tightened, and smuggling was penalised (UN, 2018). The EMN (2015) similarly explained that member states of the EU had criminal laws enacted to impose penalties on irregular residency and unauthorised entry. Despite EU member states having such criminal laws, some member states did not make a clear distinction between *passeurs*, traffickers, and the migrants in need of humanitarian assistance (*ibid.*).

Challenges of the Legal and Regulatory Frameworks
Anichie and Moyo (2019) explained that the Mare Nostrum legal framework presented challenges when tackling the EU migration crisis because it was one state-led operation guided by Italian laws, as also evidenced from the interview data in Chapter Five. Laws that protect the maritime territories of other countries were problematic because such laws required the Italian government to seek the authorisation of other governments before operating in their territorial waters. The international framework was faced with a threat, as smugglers took advantage of Mare Nostrum to release even more persons with less food, fuel, and water in the

boats, with the assumption that they would be rescued (Carrera & den Hertog, 2015). Frontex-operations did rescue migrants, but intercepting the boats carrying the refugees was the priority of the mission (Tazzioli, 2016), which contradicted the internal human rights regulations and immigration regulations: to save and welcome refugees and asylum seekers at sea. Tazzioli (2016) also added that the legal framework did not distinguish clearly between rescue operations and security patrolling operations regarding the interception of migrants' vessels. With regard to the regional framework, laws appear to be ineffective because there has been a constant rise in smuggling and trafficking of humans, thus influencing the enactment of improved measures to enhance the vision of regional security (Anichie & Moyo, 2019). Kartas and Arbia (2015) also asserted that the threat posed by the crime rates increased, despite the enactment of regional legal frameworks, translating into the need for improved regional strategies. For instance, Cuttitta (2014) reviewed the French 'illness clause' that allowed residency for undocumented migrants who were affected by life risk or illness and would not get proper care in their home countries. The illness clause, however, experienced a challenge where authorities reduced the recognition of asylum seekers with dangerous illnesses because of the increased suspicion of 'fake' asylum seekers who were not fleeing persecution (*ibid.*). Cuttitta (2014) added that some EU member states' legal frameworks entail proving financial benefit from the smuggling and trafficking business as criminal evidence, in order for perpetrators to be brought to justice. This requisition, however, challenged prosecution because it was not simple to prove such claims, considering the 'cash in hand' nature of the smuggling and trafficking business (EMN, 2015; Patanè *et al.*, 2020). The nation-based legal framework also did not distinguish between human smuggling and trafficking, despite the establishment of criminal laws to impose penalties on irregular entry-exit and residence.

Synthesis of Methodologies and Literature Gaps

This literature review showed that most of the studies were based on secondary data from documentary reviews of statistics from international organisations, such as the UN, UNHCR, UNODC, IOM, and international NGOs. The review also showed that there were primary data-based studies on different dimensions of the cross-Mediterranean migrations and its implication both to migrants and the EU region. However, those primary data may be inadequate to the purpose of this study, for they fail to analyse the effectiveness of Mare Nostrum. This limitation was addressed by the researcher in providing new insights from practitioners with relevant experience, as presented in Chapter Five. The review also revealed

that there is insufficient scientific research on the role of information and data in the success of maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea. There was sufficient literature on different operations and aspects of cross-Mediterranean Sea migration. However, the review revealed the inadequacy of literature on SAR maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea: the available literature reveals a scarcity of studies that focus on lessons for maritime security operations such as Mare Nostrum in terms of asylum-seeking and refugees' fate amidst migration crisis management measures. Most importantly, the studies reflect a significant degree of consensus on the fact that the EU has been inadequately addressing the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean hitherto, and that the EU is more concerned with the securitisation rather than with the humanitarian aspect of the migrant problem. This research aims to fill these gaps by investigating mission Mare Nostrum in order to respond to the current migrant crisis in Europe, and contributing to the current maritime security literature on SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum.

This chapter concludes the literature review for this study. Various academic works relating to the implementation of mission Mare Nostrum as a SAR operation in the Mediterranean Sea have been explored and critically reviewed. Specifically, the roles of actors and stakeholders in the Mediterranean Sea have been discussed, along with the legal and regulatory framework for military and humanitarian operations at sea. The challenges revolving around Mare Nostrum and other subsequent operations were identified and reviewed. Lessons drawn for policymakers and actors in the safeguarding of refugee and asylum seekers were also reviewed. Lastly, the chapter reviewed the theories, research gaps, and review of methodologies used in the previous research works on maritime SAR operations.

CHAPTER THREE: A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

— Rudyard Kipling ('The Elephant's Child')[26]

This chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the methods of research that were adopted in the empirical part of the study to fully answer the research questions and objectives. The chapter discusses the specific research design and strategy, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and issues of reliability and validity. It also explains the abductive approach and its suitability for this study, as well as the adequacy of a qualitative case study design. Subsequently, the explanation of the framework relied upon for data analysis is provided, as well as a description of the level of bias and ethical issues and provisions that were considered throughout the study. Finally, the limitations to the research and the problems that were encountered in undertaking the study are presented.

Research Design: Choice and Strategy

Saunders listed eight design strategies distributed amongst quantitative, mixed, and qualitative design choices (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2014). In the context of this research, the investigator chose a qualitative design, in consideration that qualitative designs are adopted because of their flexibility and application of multi-perspectives in examining a subject (Lune & Berg, 2016; Leavy, 2017; Green & Thorogood, 2018). Pertaining to this specific research topic, this design supported the researcher to get extensive insights on mission Mare Nostrum's efficacy in anti-smuggling and preventing drowning of migrants. The case study of Mare Nostrum complemented the research design, in line with Yin's (2009) argument on the suitability of case studies for enhancing the objectivity of the research. Yin (2009) and Phelan (2011) explained cases study strategies as the empirical investigation of a research subject of interest using a phenomenon or subject within the context as an example. The following graphic illustrates the framework of the research methodology of this study.

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[26] From the poem '*The Elephant's Child*' found in 'Just So Stories' (The Kipling Society, n.d./n.p.).
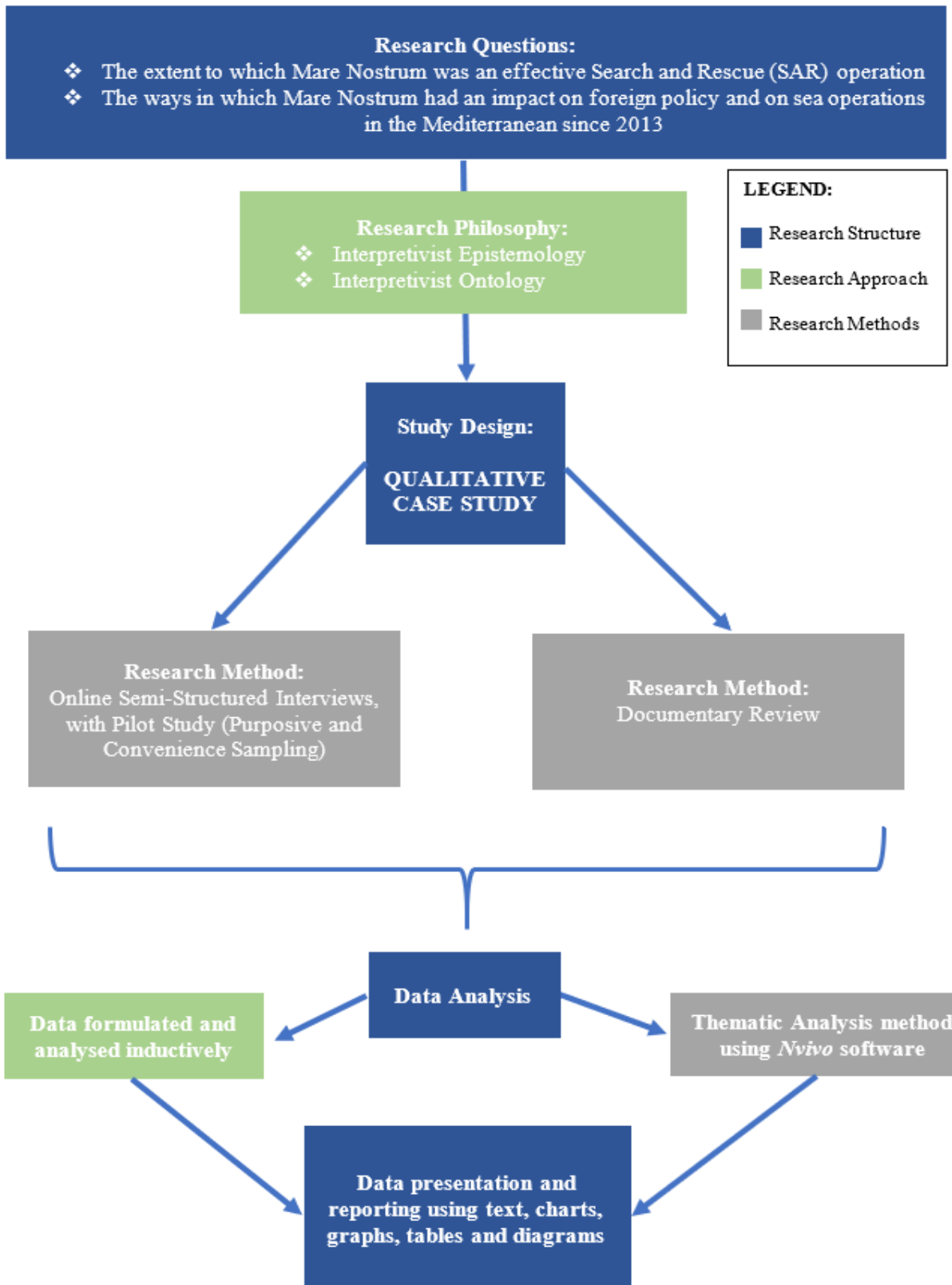
Source: (researcher).
Figure 15. Methodological Framework.

The justification for using the qualitative design for this study is that it was able to explore and analyse the research questions in an in-depth manner, as it offers a description of the data in a manner that quantitative design may not provide. The nature of the research questions was also mainly considered in the decision to select this suitable research design (Lune & Berg, 2016). Notably, a research question as '*To what extent was Mare Nostrum's mandate relevant to the challenges during its operation*' could not be suitably addressed using quantitative methods, for it is characteristic of a qualitative nature, thereby requiring a qualitative analysis. Hence, the flexibility feature of qualitative design made it the most suitable in exploring how Mare Nostrum operated as a search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean Sea through the collection of extensive information about the efficiency of the operation and its effectiveness in preventing smuggling and fatalities at sea.

Documentary Review

In accordance with Saunders *et al.* (2014), the open-ended nature of the inquiry in the research design earlier discussed allowed the collection of diversified data, especially from multiple perspectives – as guided by the interpretivist philosophy. The research methods in Saunders' model refer to the instruments used to collect data from the field. Notably, this study had two types of data, namely secondary and primary data. The primary data collection technique deals with collecting original or first-hand data for a specific purpose (Lockstrom, 2007), whilst the secondary data collection technique deals with collecting non-original or second-hand data, which are used for the specific purposes set by the researcher (Walliman, 2016). Complementary to the interviews presented in Chapter Five of the thesis, the researcher made use of documentary reviews (see Chapter Four). This research method – also known as 'documentary analysis' – is a qualitative approach that requires the researcher to review data and statistics from credible published secondary data sources (Bowen, 2009; Bretschneider *et al.*, 2017; Smulowitz, 2017). Although a documentary review is mostly utilised in legal proceeding contexts, Sutton and Austin (2015) argue that this method proves beneficial to the research because it provides rich summarised data. In support of O'Leary's (2014) argument on the credibility of documents relied upon for data review, the study utilised exclusively open-source material (*i.e.*, documents, reports and statistics published by reputable organisations, governmental agencies or leading news agencies) that were freely accessible to the public. Although the researcher, due to the nature of his occupation, holds a high-level security clearance to access classified and sensitive information, exclusively open-source data were

used, in order to prevent the thesis from being embargoed and also to facilitate replicability of this study. With regard to this study, the researcher perused published articles by the United Nations Agencies, Funds, and Programmes [AFPs] and other international organisations to parse and analyse the extent of relevance of Mare Nostrum's mandate, as well as the extent of adequacy of the capacity and resources of the mission. In aid of addressing the research questions using the documentary review, the study conducted a comparative analysis between Mare Nostrum and the subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean, determining whether and how Mare Nostrum's mandate and actions shaped these operations.

Global repositories, archives and databases for reports, news articles, journals and other published credible materials were explored for possible documents. Considering the high volumes of data on these *e*-libraries, the researcher used the keyword technique to get credible sources of data. First, the researcher used search engines such as Microsoft Academic, Air University Library's Index to Military Periodical [AULIMP], Google Scholar, *science.gov*, Directorate of Open Access Journals [DOAJ], Journal Seek, World Wide Science, and SAGE journals to explore the internet for relevant documents. The data process involved the use of key terms as the search strategy for obtaining relevant documents. The table below enumerates some of the key terms that were used.

Table 2. Key Search Terms.

Mission Mare Nostrum, Frontex, Triton, Poseidon, NATO, EUNAVFOR MED, Themis, Indalo, Sophia, legal framework for migration, Constant Vigilance, Europe coast guards, UNODC, UNHCR, IOM, actors in the Mediterranean migration crisis, Mediterranean sea migration, American immigration, stop the boats, the Australian migration model, the 'Boat People', 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis, immigration policies, state actors in the Mediterranean sea, migration countries with no coastlines in the Mediterranean, humanitarian intervention in the Mediterranean Sea, military interventions in the Mediterranean sea, humanitarian-military, human smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea, trafficking and smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea, irregular migration in the Mediterranean Sea, loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea, effectiveness of Mare Nostrum, effectiveness of Frontex, operational capacity of mission Mare Nostrum.

Source: (researcher).

The researcher considered documents published between 2000 and 2021. However, the precise subject being researched influenced the search inclusion criteria based on the year of

publication. For instance, the search for information of Mare Nostrum and Frontex-operations included documents published between 2013 and 2020. In Chapter Four, the data collected through documentary reviews are presented in tables and organised in three sections. The use of tables including the document title, author, type, and publication year allow an organised recording of data collected for future analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews: The Audit Trail

Qualitative designs are founded on the principle of understanding a research subject based on the multiple data collected. The primary data which are used in this research were derived from a series of online semi-structured interviews as a method for gleaning primary data from respondents. The use of online interviews through (i) *Skype*, (ii) *Microsoft Teams*, (iii) *WhatsApp*, and (iv) *Zoom* for this investigation was critical because of the containment measures against the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 [2019-nCoV[27]] and global regulations for physical distancing purposes (Williams, 2020), with the ultimate objective of mitigating the risk from contamination to the researcher and the interviewees. The researcher obtained the sample for this investigation using purposive sampling to ensure that participants had expert knowledge on Mare Nostrum and other military or humanitarian operations deployed by the Italian government's remit to curb the growing migrant smuggling issue in the Mediterranean Sea. The panel of subject matter experts and key figures, mixed in terms of gender, nationality, and ethnicity, was comprised of senior management officials from the field of maritime security, whose expertise is specifically related to security and humanitarian maritime operations. The selection of the participants was based on the fact that they functioned as elite personnel responsible for strategic decision-making at the time when Mare Nostrum was in operation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Davies, 2007). Such was deemed beneficial in developing a thorough understanding of the subject. Drever (2003) and Adams (2015) note that the emphasis of semi-structured interviews is on the subjective experiences of people who have had an actual encounter with the event. Therefore, the target participants needed to encounter a similar, practical situation regarding mission Mare Nostrum. For this study, a set of 16 interviewees were canvassed. The sample size selected for this research is acceptable, as 'data saturation', *viz.,* the point when '[…] *no new information or themes are observed in the data* (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006: 59)', was reached after 11 interviews.

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[27] Novel Coronavirus 2019-nCoV acute respiratory disease (World Health Organization – WHO, 2020).

One of the main elements of the semi-structured interviews that encouraged their consideration in this study is that they allow the researcher to

> *ask major questions the same way each time, but it is free to alter their sequence and probe for more information. […] People often also provide answers to questions we were going to ask later* (Gilbert, 2008: 246–247).

Max Weber (1864–1920) argued that a comprehensive understanding of society requires examining the aspects of the structural and social action pertinent to society's makeup (Swedberg, 2018). Weber's social theory argued that *empathetic* understanding, which he referred to as *Verstehen*[28], is critical in gaining insights about a phenomenon through his extensive discussions about the rationalisation of society (Bruun, 2016; Sica, 2019). Weber insisted that no understanding is complete without including the moral and political dimensions of the concerted activities of human agents. The traditional rationalisation of sociology constitutes the critical foundation for this study because it helped the researcher to set the basis for conducting this research and its importance in illustrating the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum in relation to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, Max Weber's philosophy provided the theoretical foundation for collecting and analysing the primary data obtained from the interviews.

Immediately following the granting of ethical clearance (see Appendix II), a pilot study involving two security managers involved in maritime SAR operations was conducted. The aim of this pilot study included verifying the clarity of the subject and subsequent amendments on the formulation of the interview questions (Bryman, 2004; Dörnyei, 2007). The questions originated from the main themes covered in the literature review, while other questions were generated to cover the information not found in the current literature. The ordering of the interview questions was logical, as the general inquiries were asked before questions touching on more specific issues (Bryman, 2004; Brace, 2004). All questions formulated for this study were open-ended (see Appendix III). Efforts were made to observe neutrality by using 'probes' and 'prompts', in order to ensure that respondents were free to '[…] *say whatever they want'*

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[28] Wilhelm Dilthey's *Verstehen* (from German, 'to understand') is a method for comprehending the meaning of a human expression, such as words or actions (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020).

(Drever, 2003: 23). Prompts were applied to ask subordinate questions, viewed as a means of encouraging interviewees to answer and to provide them with an environment in which they could disclose as much as they wished or could. Alternatively, probes were relied upon to have the interviewees elaborate on their answers in detail or provide a further explanation (*ibid.*).

Abductive Reasoning and Thematic Analysis: Techniques and Procedures

The data collected through documentary review and online interviews were analysed abductively through thematic analysis using *Nvivo* software for coding and theme formulation. With particular regard to interviews, abduction[29] was of fundamental importance to construct descriptions and explanations that are grounded in the gathered data from the responses given by the research participants in this study (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004; Rambaree, 2014). The technique enabled a creative unfolding of the investigation on Mare Nostrum, and involved coding the data text to reveal underlying patterns, similarities, and synthesis for the formulation of reliable conclusions. Another advantage offered by abductive reasoning is that this perspective allowed the researcher '[…] *to move back and forth between data and theory iteratively* (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012: 168), therefore introducing new ideas to the advanced linkage of maritime governance theories to migration theories through the application of SAR operations. (Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that the significance of this type of analysis lies in identifying information that addresses the research questions, whereas raw qualitative data does not directly achieve this goal. Therefore, the data must be further synthesised through coding for easier scrutiny of the responses to the research questions through themes. The adoption of this analytical method generated a clearer picture of the implementation of mission Mare Nostrum. The justification for the use of the thematic analysis in this study lies in its appropriateness to the nature of the research since thematic analysis is a qualitative method. It also offers an abductive approach to data analysis and is therefore suitable for the nature of the study (Maykut & Morehouse, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Azungah, 2018). The data to be analysed thematically were not grouped according to some predetermined categories, but according to the relevant ideas emerging from the data themselves, using the abductive approach (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). In analysing the data thematically, the researcher familiarised himself

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[29] '*Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new ideas; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely involves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis* (Peirce, 1934 in Burks, 1946: 303)'.

with the data; generated initial codes; identified, reviewed, and reported the patterns or themes; and, finally, incorporated the findings into the thesis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interview data were synchronously distilled and interpreted (Morse, 1991). In line with the concept of abductive reasoning advanced by Tavory and Timmermans (2014), a navigational map for theorising qualitative research was implemented: a coding paradigm ('open coding') was developed at an early stage of the research. During this phase, data were reduced to a manageable amount. Ten main themes arose from such reduction of data ('axial coding'), reflecting the primary points of the research and positively addressing the research question and sub-questions of this study. The subsequent selective coding enabled the researcher to make final comparisons (Neuman, 1997; Bryman, 2004; Saldaña, 2009). The main guideline adopted for data analysis initially included a paper-based indexing approach, combined with content analysis (Bryman, 2004). Frequency, intensity, and direction of the messages contained in the text were observed and marked to facilitate data comparison and to prove that multiple cases of empirical data strengthen the connection existing between a theme and data (Neuman, 1997; 2011). After transcription of the raw interview data, the use of *Nvivo* software was instrumental for the research using the auto-code, query, analyse, *word frequency* (as illustrated in the word cloud in Figure 16), text search, relationship, and visualisation features. After conducting early analysis, word trees were critical for the researcher to visually display those patterns emerged – particularly during the interviews phase reported in Chapter Five – in the reporting stage.

Source: (researcher).
Figure 16. Nvivo-Generated Interview Data Word Frequency Cloud.

Figure 16 shows that a query run on the '*Mare Nostrum*' expression frequency showed that the two words were the most frequently used. Similarly, the word tree for '*mare*' and '*nostrum*', and the context they were used in, is showed in the word tree in figure 17.
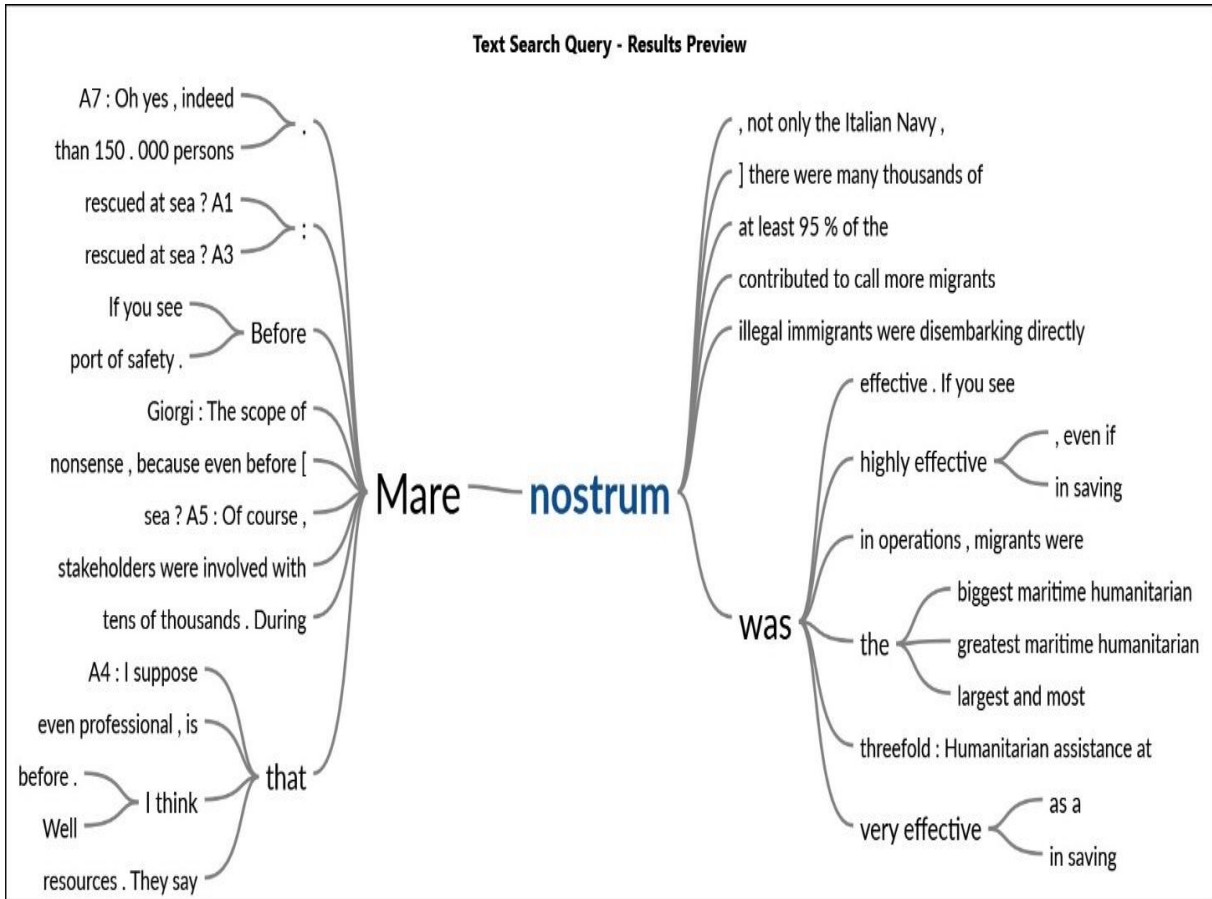
Source: (researcher).
Figure 17. Nvivo-Generated Interview Data Word Frequency (Tree Map One).

A wider coding and scrutiny of the word *'effective'* was essential, as it carried the weight of each interview question. Similarly, the query analysis showed that this word was used in the context of '*Mare Nostrum*', and '*search and rescue operations*', as illustrated in figure 18.
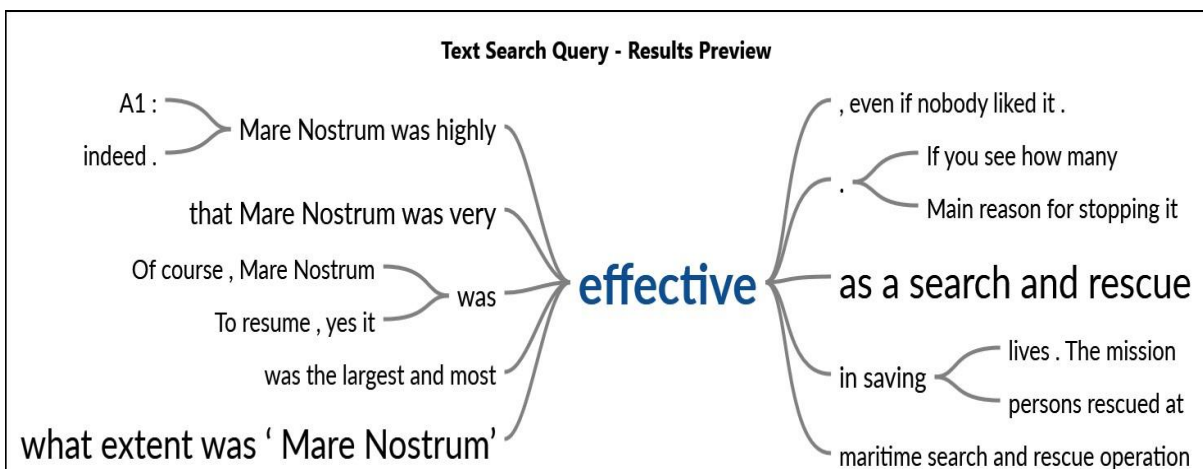
Source: (researcher).
Figure 18. Nvivo-Generated Interview Data Word Frequency (Tree Map Two).

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Problems Encountered and Research Limitations

Accessing interviewees in the first place was challenging. One mitigation measure that proved to be effective in facilitating the recruitment of participants was the 'snowball sampling' technique, also referred to as 'chain sampling' or 'referral sampling' (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, finding subjects with the willingness to co-operate proved difficult. This is mainly because of the fear that subjects have of losing their job for disclosing their activities and policies. Furthermore, espionage issues arose; from a practitioner's standpoint, such fears are understandable when considering the natural reluctance that military institutions or international organisations may exhibit when asked to disclose any information to strangers. As a means to counter these concerns, the researcher carefully explained the study purpose (see Appendix IV) and produced the ethical approval form from the University of St Andrews (see Appendix II) to respondents, in order to gain their confidence and trust (Pat, 2006; Grady, 2015).

With regard to the limitations of this study, qualitative research lacks generalisability because it does not involve statistical-probability generalisability for inferring the data collected and because studies are often difficult to replicate. Statistical-probability generalisation is, however, not significant for qualitative research because the methodology entails studying peoples' real-life experiences; thus, in the context of this research, only a small population of respondents was chosen through purposive and convenience sampling. Even though the study findings are valid, they do not qualify as universal generalisations (Bryman, 2004) because of the limitation of the study to the mission Mare Nostrum only and the application to one institution, that is, the Italian Navy. Nonetheless, with the aforementioned conditions in place, it becomes possible to assure confirmability by following a similar path of reproducing the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Joppe, 2000 as cited in Golafshani, 2003; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Ensuring Reliability and Validity

The last decade has witnessed numerous research discussions on validity and reliability, and their significance in qualitative research. Ali and Yusof (2012) clarified that, although reliability and validity are fundamental precepts in research, the reliability tenet in qualitative studies is discussed as transferability, confirmability, credibility, consistency, or dependability,

while validity is discussed as trustworthiness, cogency, rationality, or legitimacy (Elo *et al.*, 2014). The support of Noble and Smith (2015) for the arguments above is based on the notion that qualitative study techniques have no statistical means or approaches for measuring validity and reliability; thus, the aspect above cannot be directly adopted in qualitative studies. Therefore, the discussion in this study considered alternative and related aspects to explain the measures taken to ensure consistency and trustworthiness of the findings (Carcary, 2009). The techniques for fostering credibility include review of the data, respondent checks and verification for the suitability, researcher and respondent reflexivity, saturation of the research subject, prolonged contact with respondents, and triangulation (Leung, 2015; Hayashi Junior, Abib, & Hoppen, 2019). In the context of this study, the researcher triangulated data collection methods and corroboration of the findings (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007).

Research Bias

As previously discussed, this study used purposive and convenience sampling techniques that do not give all members of the population an equal chance of being selected. Although data collection bias and measurement bias are common research preconceptions (Smith & Noble, 2014), particular care was observed and exercised to mitigate the level of bias. The issue of bias arose because of the researcher's role as a senior security manager, who served in Libya from 2013 to 2015 and frequently interacted with mission Mare Nostrum. However, the researcher considered the working knowledge amassed on the subject, coupled with his strong professional interest and background, to be of significant assistance in the entire thesis process and helpful in validating the study (Ridley, 2008; Robson, 2011). Furthermore, the potential extent of bias amongst all study participants was considered, thus avoiding its reflection in data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, it would still be impossible not to bear any bias. According to Stanley and Wise (1990), researchers' assumptions and beliefs are bound to arise in their studies and knowledge tends to irreversibly have marks that exhibit its origins '[…] *in the minds and intellectual practices of those who give voice to it*' (*ibid.*: 39). In other words, '[…] *interviewers are human beings and not machines*' (Selltiz & Jahoda, 1962: 41). Consequently, the researcher provided minimal guidance during the interview phase by ensuring that the language remained neutral and carefully avoiding misleading and closed questions. Such an attitude was facilitated by the researcher's past experience as a criminal investigator while working with the military police forces, trained in maintaining objectivity by using empathy – but not sympathy – when interviewing people. Thus, the study findings are

reported as they were found, with no data being altered or concealed (Walliman, 2016). In relation to qualitative research, the concepts of credibility and dependability promoted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were observed in the transcription process, which explains the choice of the researcher to report the interviews *verbatim*. Overall, the researcher firmly believes that the level of bias was negligible and did not affect the objectivity of the study (Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, 2002).

Ethics and Integrity

In line with the University of St Andrews' guidelines on research, strict ethical consideration was observed in the conduct of this study. These ethical considerations are the anonymity of the research participants, data confidentiality, informed consent, and permission to withdraw from the study. The study fostered informed consent by notifying the participants about the study in which they would be participating, including its purpose and why their participation was needed (Pat, 2006; Grady, 2015). Upon considering [online] interviews, the researcher observed the '*no harm principle*' of research (Bryman, 2004). After receipt of formal approval from the University of St Andrews to undertake the research (see Appendix II), the permission of conducting the study was sought and obtained by discussing the study's purpose and scope with the respondents (see Appendices IV and V). A *sine qua non* condition for this study to be conducted was for the respondent to remain anonymous and the dataset to be safeguarded. In response, formal communication to the experts was made to guarantee to them that any information that they provided as part of the research was to be treated with strict confidence and employed for the specific study only (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Rather than use the respondent's name, identities were alphanumerically pseudonymised and coded as follows: A1 through A15, to preserve complete anonymity of the respondents and to ensure that any person that accidentally heard the conversation during the transcription process could not identify participants in any way. The sixteenth interviewee was Admiral [Adm] Giuseppe De Giorgi. Admiral [Retired] Giuseppe De Giorgi was the Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy at the time when mission Mare Nostrum was in operation (2013–2014); he agreed to be cited in the thesis (see Appendix VI for full interview transcript). In relation to protecting and storing data, the researcher performed single-handedly the roles of data collection, transcription, and analysis. Digital encryption of the data results on physical storage was undertaken at military-grade

equivalent level (AES-256[30]). Data was stored in the researcher's personal filing cabinet in a room with restricted access. Finally, no sensitive or confidential information was disclosed or discussed in any way (*e.g.*, detailed plans exhibiting specific military tactics used by mission Mare Nostrum at sea).

Criticism

Travel and social restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have taken a toll on academia and scientific research worldwide. The containment measures of social and physical distancing, movement cessations, and partial and total lockdowns throughout the entire world made field research not possible; this unprecedented break in data gathering led the researcher to explore and identify alternative methods of obtaining primary and secondary data necessary to this study, *viz.*, online interviews and a thorough documentary review of relevant documents. However, perhaps on account of his service with law enforcement, and his adherence to Max Weber's *Verstehen* tradition, the researcher would have preferred to interact in person with every single respondent, as non-verbal communication and other *nuances* in response to each question posed by the researcher could not be captured or perceived remotely through a computer screen. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), to achieve completeness in the oral discourse, '[…] *speakers use visual cues provided by paralanguage, kinesics, and synchrony to complement verbal language (ibid.*: n.p.)'. This explains why the researcher had initially opted for focus groups as the main research method for this study, to only complement the semi-structured interviews selected, as advanced in the research proposal of this doctoral programme compiled in 2016. The researcher had also considered using the *Delphi*[31] method, a technique for eliciting ideas and judgments from a group of experts who may be geographically dispersed (Helmer-Hirschberg, 1967), because of his familiarity with the method, as it is frequently utilised in intelligence analysis for prioritising, ranking, or scaling lists of information – while maintaining the anonymity of the panel of experts. However, once the online interviews were established, the researcher focused only on this method due to time constraints and on the widespread uncertainty about how long academic research would be allowed at all, on account of the increasingly stringent measures in response to COVID-19. Each of these critiques was mitigated by the research design and the choice of

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[30] Advanced Encryption Standard with 256-bit key length (ATP Electronics, n.d.).
[31] A method of research, analysis, decision making and forecasting, originally developed in the 1950s as a systematic, interactive technique which relies on a panel of experts, also called the *Delphi Technique* (Helmer-Hirschberg, 1967).

methodology considered in answering the research questions and in suggesting future ideas for research.

This chapter has provided a review of the methods of research that were adopted to tackle the research questions and objectives of this study. The specific research design and strategy, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and issues of reliability and validity were discussed. The abductive approach – and its suitability for this study – were explained, followed by a presentation of the framework for thematic data analysis. Finally, the limitations to the research and the problems encountered during the study were outlined, in consideration of the related bias and ethical issues.

CHAPTER FOUR: MISSION MARE NOSTRUM DATA [1]
THE *ARCHIVAL* RESEARCH

There needs to a return to the seas of an EU State search and rescue operation. Naval assets alone are not enough. Previous naval missions in the past, such as Mare Nostrum, have saved thousands of lives and should return.

— UNHCR spokesman Charlie Yaxley[32]

This chapter is divided into three sections and presents an analysis of secondary data emerged from the documentary review and collected from published sources, such as reports, legislation documents, mainstream news articles and magazines, books, and journal articles on the subjects of this investigation. The first section presents and analyses data on maritime operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea to deal with irregular migration through either saving lives or border control measures. Missions such as Constant Vigilance, Triton, Sea Guardian, and Sophia, amongst others, are discussed and analysed (see Appendix I); however, the bulk of the work focuses on the data related to mission Mare Nostrum. Section Two examines data on the numerous actors in the Mediterranean Sea who interacted with Mare Nostrum – such as international bodies, regional partners, states actors with and without a Mediterranean Sea coastline – and the civil societies organisations and NGOs involved in cross-Mediterranean migration issues. Several issues – and their impact on mission Mare Nostrum – will be revisited also in the respondents' comments in Chapter Five. Finally, the third section presents and analyses the legal and regulatory framework guiding maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. Each of the three sections is followed by a summary of the key findings. The significance of this chapter lies in it being the evidence base to inform the reader of the practical, operational, and legal elements defining mission Mare Nostrum by focusing on the complex nexus of partnership actors, policies, and legal challenges revolving around maritime SAR operations.

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[32] Statement posted on *Twitter* on 1 October 2019 (Yaxley, 2019: n.p.).

SECTION ONE: Mission Mare Nostrum and Other Maritime SAR and Pro-Security Border Control Operations in the Mediterranean

This section presents secondary data on state-based and supranational maritime SAR missions conducted in the Mediterranean Sea, notably Frontex-supported operations, EUNAVFOR MED naval missions, and NATO-operations. Particular focus is placed on mission Mare Nostrum. Furthermore, a more in-depth comparison of Mare Nostrum and its successor Frontex-Operation Triton, in terms of scale of operation, mandate, budget, resources at disposal, objectives, and outcomes will follow (see Table 3). The key terms used to search for data on maritime operations conducted in the EU from 2013 (*i.e.*, prior to mission Mare Nostrum) until 2021 included '*maritime security in the Mediterranean*', '*migration challenges in the EU Mediterranean crisis*', '*EU foreign migration policy*', '*Mediterranean humanitarian policies*', '*Mediterranean security operations*'.

The EU response to the migration crisis: Task Force Mediterranean [TFM]

Even prior to the launch of mission Mare Nostrum, there was an ongoing dilemma regarding the nature of maritime operations that should be enacted in the Mediterranean Sea, where questions on whether to search for and rescue migrants at sea or to bar them from accessing the EU shores were key (Mészáros, 2013). The increasing irregular migration by sea route necessitated a response in 2013, considering that migration was causing loss of lives, economic disruption of EU labour markets, and security concerns. As discussed in Chapter One, the Arab Spring was responsible for the increasing influx of migrants to the EU, mainly from African countries such as Egypt, Eritrea, Tunisia, Libya, and the Middle East. The Arab spring was a series of uncontrolled protests, insurgencies, uprisings, demonstrations, and armed rebellions that ravaged the Arab world in 2010–2012 starting with upheavals in Tunisia. In other countries, such as Morocco, Djibouti, Afghanistan, Sudan, Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Mauritania, riots and armed insurgencies prolonged the conflict and led to mass displacement of people. Data collected and analysed by Mészáros (2013) established that the Arab Spring's events lead to massive migration to the EU and presented the onset of the broader EU's global approach to deal with irregular migration. The data confirmed the hypothesis that Arab Spring insecurity challenges – such as political instability, conflicts, and civil skirmishes – acted as the major push factor for cross-Mediterranean migration, thus establishing the pull factors for the EU, as discussed in Chapter One, and in line with Lee's theorisations in his migration model. Mészáros' (2013) data suggested that the measures taken by the EU to control

irregular migration – such as country-based coast guard agencies – were not sufficient, thus required broader co-operation between the EU states, considering that the migrations crisis affected the entire EU. Lastly, the data analysed by Mészáros' (2013) found that the irregular migration was hyper-publicised to portray a perceived migration crisis equal to a modern *casus belli* in order to invoke a war declaration towards irregular migrations.

The response to the crisis was to be achieved through the implementation of long-standing '*Schengen acquis*' regulations to temporarily manage the abolition of internal Schengen borders and empower border control measures – and operations – in the Schengen region. Concurrently, the European Union created Task Force Mediterranean [TFM] in response to calls for humanitarian responses to the loss of lives after the Lampedusa incident in 2013 (European Commission, 2013). The move was affirmed by the EU parliament and stakeholders based on burden-sharing responsibility in preventing further loss of lives at sea. On 18 November 2013, the Foreign Affairs Council [FAC] supported broader political dialogues with third countries that were responsible for the migration crisis at sea, in line with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility [GAMM] policies, as outlined by the literature review in Chapter Two. Task Force Mediterranean had five operational mandates: the first involved initiating actions for co-operation with third countries, especially those contributing to the influx of irregular migration by sea. Informed by the GAMM, the EU enacted mobility partnerships with Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan. Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Algeria were also approved for a dialogue aimed to create effective partnerships to control emigration from those regions. The European External Action Service [EEAS] – discussed later in Section Two of this chapter – was fundamental in the implementation of these actions. Humanitarian issues were addressed through the EU strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy [APHRD] framework. Notable initiatives in this area include Frontex-operations, the European Union Border Assistance Mission [EUBAM] to Libya, the Sahara-Mediterranean project supported by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [EUAFR], the European Asylum Support Office [EASO], *Europol*, and the European Maritime Safety Agency [EMSA]. The second operational mandate of TFM involved preventing organised crime, such as piracy, trafficking, and smuggling through the Mediterranean Sea by saving those migrants facing the risk of drowning, and planning for their safe return to the safest point of departure. This directive was key for the planning and pre-deployment of mission Mare Nostrum. The third operational mandate involved resettlement of migrants through the implementation of a legal

framework by strengthening the existing Regional Protection Programmes [RPP] with Kenya, Tunisia, Djibouti, Egypt, and Libya. The fourth operational mandate involved improving border control surveillance and preventing further migrant drownings. Under this mandate, Frontex was strengthened, while the European Border Surveillance System [EUROSUR] was operationalised on the 2nd of December 2013. Mission Mare Nostrum was informed by the guidelines of the TFM, advised in turn by the GAMM and ENP policies discussed in the next section of this chapter. Finally, the fifth operational mandate involved providing assistance and solidarity with member states dealing with high migration pressure (European Commission, 2013; 2015). Other researchers and documents that contributed to this documentary review on state-based maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea include the following: Tsardanidis and Guerra (2000); Campesi (2011); Nascimbene and Di Pascale (2011); Morehouse and Blomfield (2011); Fargues and Fandrich (2012).

Mission Mare Nostrum

As previously discussed in the literature review of this study, the Arab Spring in 2010–2011 resulted in mass migration from North Africa, thus prompting the Italian government to enact mission Mare Nostrum in support of coast guard agencies. The Marina Militare (n.d.) described Mare Nostrum as an Italian Navy operation conducted in 2013–2014 with two primary goals: (i) protecting migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, and (ii) bringing to justice migrant smugglers and traffickers exploiting those migrants. Its primary mandate was to deploy SAR operations and prevent smuggling. It was conducted by the Italian military (navy) and closed one year later in October 2014 (Musarò, 2016a; Savaryn, 2018). Mission Mare Nostrum was a joint operation supported by the Italian government, national stakeholders in maritime security, and other government agencies such as the Navy, *Carabinieri*[33], *Polizia di Stato*[34], *Aeronautica Militare*[35], *Guardia di Finanza*[36], Coast Guard, Harbour Masters Corps, Italian Red Cross, military units, and the Italian Ministry of Interior (Marina Militare, n.d.). This multi-agency approach was critical in dealing with the complex nexus between smuggling, organised crime, terrorism, and the exploitation of migrants (Pinelli, 2017). Taufer (2016), who examined the maritime security HADR interventions in the Mediterranean Sea with a focus on past events,

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[33] *Carabinieri* Corps are the Italian military police force (Carabinieri, n.d.).
[34] *Polizia di Stato* is the national police force of Italy (Polizia di Stato, n.d.).
[35] *Aeronautica Militare* is the Italian Air Force (Aeronautica Militare, n.d.).
[36] *Guardia di Finanza* is an Italian law enforcement agency under the authority of the Minister of Economy and Finance, and is responsible for dealing with financial crime and smuggling (Guardia di Finanza, n.d.).

found that Mare Nostrum was the first large-scale maritime SAR operation in the region. Musarò (2016a) explored mission Mare Nostrum in the context of the migration politics in the region and found that Italy's priorities in enacting the maritime operation were not only to save lives but also to arrest smugglers and traffickers. Musarò (2016a) further explained that arresting traffickers and migrant smugglers would reduce irregular migration because it would stifle the *modus operandi* of most migrants using the Mediterranean route to reach Europe (*ibid.*). Bigo (2014), however, explained that there were debates concerning the appropriateness of the naval operation to save lives and bring smugglers to justice. Tazzioli (2015a), Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins (2016), Musarò (2016a), and Crawley and Skleparis (2018) attributed the controversy and debates to politics, noting that a subsection of the politicians supported pro-security measures of border control that would involve turning back irregular migrants to their countries of origin. In support of Musarò (2016a), Akar (2019) noted that increasing fatalities of irregular migrants, especially following the Lampedusa incident in 2013, required more strategic approaches to resolve the issues that fuelled the irregular migration crisis witnessed in the Mediterranean Sea.

While researchers, such as Del Valle (2016) and Stierl (2016; 2017), argued that Mare Nostrum was mainly a humanitarian intervention in the migration crisis, others, such as Garelli *et al.* (2018), viewed the mission as a military security operation. Despite the divide in perceptions regarding Mare Nostrum, Garelli and Tazzioli (2017) and Musarò (2016a) agreed on the fact that the mission was instrumental in dealing with the migration crisis and influencing subsequent maritime operations. Musarò (2016a) suggested that Mare Nostrum cut across the two objectives of conducting humanitarian SAR missions and – simultaneously – arresting traffickers and smugglers. Mission Mare Nostrum enjoyed collaboration from all government agencies involved in the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis such as: security personnel; health personnel; immigration officials; humanitarian NGOs; the Sea and Air Border Health Department; Order of Malta's Italian Relief Corps; the Italian red cross; and Francesca RAVA Foundation[37]. The naval operation functioned under strict instructions to search for and rescue migrants at sea (Perrone, 2019). Concurrently, mission Mare Nostrum made arrests and

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[37] Fondazione Francesca Rava – N.P.H. Italia is an independent, non-political, charitable non-profit foundation whose mission is to help children in serious need, in Italy and worldwide, through children sponsorship, fundraising projects, volunteers and educational programs (Francesca Rava, n.d.).

forwarded the suspects to the relevant government agencies for prosecution, while the rescued migrants were forwarded to the immigration department ashore for processing.

The Marina Militare (n.d.) stated that mission Mare Nostrum was adequately funded – during the time that it was in operation – and equipped with all needed resources. Mare Nostrum was mandated to patrol 70,000 km^2 of the Mediterranean Sea stretch from Italy to Libya, Tunisia, and Malta. Its resources included six aircraft, two submarines, 900 military personnel, border police, immigration, and coast guard personnel, one helicopter and five ships. With regard to capabilities and resources, specifically, the Marina Militare explained that the Italian government supplied the mission with the following assets: one amphibious vessel with command and control functions (equipped with advanced medical facilities), two *Minerva* Class corvettes, two *Costellazioni/Comandanti* Class patrol vessels with seven aircraft and military helicopters with aeromedical evacuation teams [AMET] capacities, one *Breguet* Atlantic with long range maritime patrol [LRMP] capabilities, military radar installations, and automatic identification system [AIS]. The Marina Militare (n.d.) further explained that the sea and air navy personnel were commanded by an Admiral (*ibid.*).

Akar (2019) argued that mission Mare Nostrum was a fundamental pacesetter for the subsequent operations in the Mediterranean Sea to deal with the migration crises. The Marina Militare (n.d.) also found Mare Nostrum to be effective in SAR missions and anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations in its area of responsibility. Musarò (2016a) supported the above findings with the argument that Mare Nostrum was effective in reducing fatalities at sea, but also noted that statistics on irregular migration in the Mediterranean Sea increased. According to Musarò (2016a), mission Mare Nostrum reduced smuggling and trafficking, yet the number of migrants increased in the subsequent years compared to the years before the operation was initiated. Amnesty International (2015b) argued that the discontinuance of mission Mare Nostrum may be associated with an increased number of deaths at sea, highlighting that, in the first two quarters of 2015, there were 900 estimated deaths at sea – which is 53 times higher than in 2014, when Mare Nostrum was still operational. Whilst the 2014 death rate during Mare Nostrum operation was 1 in 50, it was 1 in 23 in the first quarter of 2015 (*ibid.*). Musarò (2016a) clarified that maritime SAR operations increased the survival rates of migrants reaching the

EU shores compared to previous years, when most migrants would drown at sea in the hulls of boats overloaded[38] by smugglers to maximise their profits.

Vacas Fernández (2016) also added that Mare Nostrum was effective in SAR missions and reduced fatalities at sea during the period it was conducted. Vacas Fernández (2016) explained, however, that the operation faced financial and political challenges (in terms of support), leading to its closure in 2014 after EU-supported Frontex operations Triton and Poseidon were initiated. According to the Center [*sic*] for International Maritime Security [CIMSEC] (2020), challenges facing the Mediterranean Sea, *viz.*, irregular migration, maritime terrorism, and trafficking and smuggling require extensive EU collaboration in military-humanitarian operations. The CIMSEC (2020) also maintained that the support of external actors is needed to stop those challenges in the origin countries. Patalano (2015) argued that Mare Nostrum provided valuable lessons that influenced subsequent EU operations to tackle migration issues in the region. Borelli and Stanford (2014) illustrated that the hyper-reactions revolving around interception and push-back of migrants at sea, as opposed to SAR, informed future maritime operations centred on reducing entries to the EU. However, Panebianco (2016a) and Pinelli (2017) found that, despite the politics around mission Mare Nostrum and achievement of its mandate, the operation was effective in reducing fatalities at sea through SAR missions conducted on a daily basis. Pinelli (2017) also explained that the operation was effective in anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking.

Vacas Fernández (2016) found that Mare Nostrum had more reach for migrants at sea and a larger operational capacity than subsequent Frontex-operations. Despite such accolades, Mare Nostrum and subsequent Frontex-operations operated based on SAR principles and anti-smuggling approaches, obtaining controversial results. In favour of the Mare Nostrum SAR approach, Tobias Pietz, assistant head of Analysis division at the Centre for International Peace Operations in Berlin, expressed his disapproval as operation Sophia – a security-oriented maritime operation – was approaching to its launch (Pietz, 2020). Pietz (2020) also argued that a military approach with more punitive measures for sea migrants – such as detention, deportations, and turn-back measures – was not the ideal solution to complex international

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[38] The overload was quantified as up to *five*-fold the standard capacity of the boat. With such overcrowding, those vessels are to be considered 'in distress' from the moment they launch, according to European legislation and international conventions such as the SOLAS (discussed later on in Section Three), and therefore assisted and rescued (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017).

migration issues in relation to the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis. He also advocated for solving the root causes of the issue through a collaborative operation to save lives and eliminate smuggling. Despite the deployment of mission Mare Nostrum for the better part of 2014 and the Frontex-supported operations, the number of irregular migrants through the Mediterranean Sea increased exponentially from 2014 to 2016 (UNHCR, 2020b), thus leading to more concerns on the effectiveness of the SAR approaches used in these two operations. For instance, mission Mare Nostrum was expected to reduce irregular migration by preventing smuggling and trafficking of migrants through the Mediterranean Sea. Based on these objectives, it was anticipated that the data would show a reduction in the number of irregular migrants on account of their primary modus operandi (smuggling and trafficking) having been halted. In contrast, the data revealed a significant increase, thus putting into question the effectiveness of Mare Nostrum operation.

A hypothetical attempt to dissect the scenario reveals four underlying hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of the mission. The first hypothesis is that the pre-existing operation Constant Vigilance (see Appendix I) was not effective in collecting real-time information and data on irregular migrants. Considering the clandestine modus operandi of smuggling and trafficking, the likelihood of many cases being unaccounted for is high only if the control measures and operational taskforce mandated with keeping such data and monitoring are not adequately equipped. This assumption is contingent on yet a second presumption that mission Mare Nostrum's course of actions and methods were instead quite effective in collecting data and information about irregular migrations, thus explaining the high number in 2014 and 2015. A third hypothesis is based on the existing data on the massive loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea, so that high numbers represent irregular migrants perished at sea. The last hypothesis, intertwined with the third one, claimed that mission Mare Nostrum saved more lives, thus leading to a high number of migrants who safely reached Italy. While these are mere hypotheses, it is critical to evaluate the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum and its impact on the subsequent SAR operations in reducing trafficking and smuggling into Italy and other European countries.

Mission Mare Nostrum was provoked by the need to save lives after two accidents at sea one week apart that led to the loss of over 350 lives in Lampedusa in 2013. The Italian government declared a national day of mourning in respect of the dead. Photos of hundreds of coffins lined

up were hyper-publicised. Following this event, the then Italian prime minister Enrico Letta launched Mare Nostrum as a humanitarian operation jointly with national coast guard agencies and the Italian Navy. Its success records included 241 missions that rescued over 150,000 migrants, and had 500 smugglers and traffickers arrested and detained between October 2013 and October 2014 (Panebianco, 2016a; Okonkwo, 2017). The mission was budgeted at €9 million per month. The data collected show that Mare Nostrum was effective in SAR activities and preventing smuggling in the territories it patrolled, but the cost of the operation was too high for Italy to bear alone. The high cost of the mission led to its closure in October 2014 and reduced their operation to normal coast guard duties, while the major operations were taken over by Frontex-operation Triton (Motta, 2014; Pinelli, 2017). The Italian cabinet and national government agencies portrayed Mare Nostrum as a success and effective in achieving its mandate in conducting SAR missions, saving lives at sea, and arresting and detaining smugglers and traffickers (Koller, 2017). However, the contentious aspect of the operation was evident in debates on unplanned repercussions of acting as a pull factor, as intended in Lee's migration theory. In 2014, the migrants reaching EU countries through the central route increased, thus making many EU countries blame mission Mare Nostrum for the increasing entry of irregular migrants to the EU. The controversy revolved around its negative impact of increasing irregular migration (*i.e.*, acting as a pull factor) instead of reducing it.

The contending hypotheses suggest that most migrants intending to access the EU believed that the risk of drowning involved in the journey through the Mediterranean Sea had reduced on account of the presence of SAR maritime missions; thus, more of them embarked on the journey, in favour of the '*crimmigration*' phenomenon, as discussed in Chapter One: to maximise their profits, all human smugglers needed to do was to launch boats of questionable quality[39] offshore, get them out to international waters, and abandon them there[40]. Although the notion is prevalent amongst the opposers of SAR missions in the Mediterranean Sea, the numbers of migrants sharply rose in 2015 and 2016, long after mission Mare Nostrum was shut

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[39] Human traffickers have been utilising '*High Quality Refugee Boat*' rubber dinghies – non-compliant with navigation safety standards – which are available over the internet via the *Alibaba* e-commerce website (Alibaba, n.d.) at inexpensive prices (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017; Middle East Eye, 2017; Deiana, Maheshri, & Mastrobuoni, 2020). The same boats are procured by smugglers in the English Channel (iNews, 2021). In other words, traffickers and smugglers wilfully put lives at risk by packing migrants into unseaworthy boats.

[40] Similarities with respect to modus operandi could be found with the English Channel crossings: boats of migrants hold sufficient fuel to get out to sea, but not enough to make the route to the UK across the Dover Strait (Davies *et al.*, 2021).

down, thus revealing that other factors were responsible for the irregular migration (Cuttitta, 2014). The contending side argues that those who opposed mission Mare Nostrum based on the hypothesis that it was a pull factor (in congruence with Lee's migration theory) argued that Mare Nostrum and other SAR-based operations encouraged illegal access to EU for migrants. The dominant argument was that illegal access to the EU increased the insecurity in the region. On the other hand, another faction argued that mission Mare Nostrum did *not* encourage migration (Patalano, 2015). It is the researcher's opinion that the migration was instead fuelled by the political instability and conflicts in African and the Middle East, such as the Arab Spring. The argument is based on the fact that most of the irregular migrants accessing the EU by sea were from Eritrea, Palestine, Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, Morocco, Sudan, South Sudan, Pakistan, and Somalia – as discussed later in Chapter Five.

FRONTEX-Operations: Challenges and (Missed) Opportunities

The expansion of the EU policies and creation of a regional partnership for integration, fostering freedom of mobility, security, and justice, encouraged debates on border control and security from 2001 onwards until 2010–2012, when the debate heated up due to the Arab Spring. The research paper by Jorry (2017) on the creation of EU agency Frontex in 2007 critically examined its necessity and effectiveness in regional integrations and border control to deal with the EU migration challenges. Jorry (2017) noted that the changing nature of migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea – and the EU at large – called for integrated maritime and internal border controls, which Jorry (2017) refers to as a '[…] *cornerstone*' in dealing with migrations challenges (*ibid.*: 7). The agency Frontex was created as an integrated response to migration issues that promoted sharing of migration control burden, mutual trust amongst EU member states, and EU internal border controls. The EU parliament and commission supported the creation of European border agencies to monitor migration flows. The agency was crafted by the council resolution 2007/2004/EC through the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in Warsaw in 2004 (Argomaniz, 2009) and, through the institutionalisation of already existing information border control structures, such as coast guard forces. Contrary to its predecessors which were state-based, the agency Frontex was centralised interdependently with the EU on border control measures. Frontex had no specific mission: the agency was mandated to only coordinate the international border across the EU, thus raising the question of whether it fulfilled its mandate as assigned by the EC and the Hague programme regarding the creation of an integrated area with mobility freedom, justice, and

security. Jorry (2007) compared Frontex with existing structures to determine whether it added any value promoting accountancy, efficiency, integration, and co-operation in border management.

Back in 1985, the border management approach in the EU led to enact the *Schengen acquis* treaty, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. The agreement established the abolition of internal border controls within European countries. Abrogation of the internal control process had begun back in 1968, when border control tariffs and customers were removed, and the Schengen Treaty was enacted to guide abolition of border controls. The creation of Frontex was an institutionalisation of Schengen politics on border control, but Jorry's (2017) data found that the agency had operational challenges which needed to be solved to enhance the efficacy of Frontex in responding to irregular migrations and mobility in the EU. The Schengen agreement was adopted by 15 European countries, each with divergent administrative and legal structures that made integration difficult due to conflicting regulations and national interests. There were operation challenges due to lack of trust that saw EU countries adopt border police instead of their national police, thus showing that the EU countries preferred to adopt bilateral agreements, such as the Kehl Cooperation[41] between France and Germany. This lack of trust presented practical challenges due to the complex nature of regional border control structures. After the Schengen treaty, Frontex was the major large-scale attempt to reinstall mutual trust in the implementation of its mandate to integrated border management.

Frontex was conceived based on the spatial concept of burden-sharing in dealing with irregular migration within, but its mandate was confined to inland operations and its capacity restricted to surveillance, showing that Frontex missions before 2013 were limited in their operational mandate (European Council on Refugees and Exiles – ECRE, 2014). Additional data suggested that the enactment of Frontex paved the way for maritime missions and informed the implementation of subsequent operations in dealing with irregular migration, concluding that it had challenges that affected the seamless implementation of integrated border control. Frontex's main challenge included constricted budget and operational resources, poor

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[41] The Kehl Cooperation is a Franco-German Cross-Border Cooperation Committee established on 23 December 2020 which […] *aims to support and strengthen border cooperation by providing concrete solutions to the difficulties which inhabitants of the border regions may encounter in their daily lives* (France Diplomacy, n.d./ n.p.).

demographic screening and control, bureaucratisation, and limited operational capacity to comprehensively deal with migration, considering that maritime borders were emerging as the significant face of irregular migration in the EU. Frontex started operating with the core aim of facilitating the securitisation of migrants and refugees in the sea borders with the coordination of the European Union member states. Léonard (2010) concluded that the core Frontex activities fell into traditional practices that are considered as pro-security measures to reduce security threats from the influx of unvetted migrants into the EU. According to Vacas Fernández (2016), the Frontex joint operations Triton and Poseidon did not address the root cause of irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea but instead chose to offer a *reactive* approach of saving migrants at sea and rescuing them safely to their European destination. From Vacas Fernández's (2016) viewpoint, Mediterranean cross-migrations display a complex web of political, socioeconomic and security factors that drive mass migration and therefore ought to be addressed. Furthermore, Frontex has been facing criticism for years by the international community on account of its '[…] *exclusively security-oriented approach* [that] *has guided European migration policies* (FRONTEXIT, 2020: n.p.), depicting the agency as a 'guard dog' for Fortress Europe against migrants, rather than a 'watch dog' for the protection of their human rights (*ibid.*). Frontex-supported maritime operations have also received criticism because of failing to respect human rights while conducting maritime surveillance (Toaldo, 2015a; 2015b). This lack of responsiveness to the fate of migrants and refugees is symptomatic of a securitised phenomenon (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh *et al.*, 2014).

In sum, the data demonstrate that the EU migration policies needed to change, especially following the mass migration aftermath of the Arab Spring. Other researchers whose data and conclusions support Jorry's (2007) include the following: Jeandesboz (2008); Behr (2012); Hamchi (2013); Cassarino and Tocci (2011); Moreno-Lax (2011); İçduygu (2012); Pace (2013); Gillespie (2013); Zapata-Barrero (2013); Bialasiewicz (2012); Alessandri and Altunişik (2013); Zhyznomirska (2013); Celata and Coletti (2013); Fernández Arribas, Pieters, and Takács (2013); Jumbert (2013); Seeberg (2013); Trauner and Deimel (2013); Di Filippo (2013).

Triton and Poseidon Operations

After a meeting with Angelino Alfano, Italian Interior Minister at the time, and Cecilia Malmström, the then European Commissioner for Home Affairs [ECHA], the European Union

announced that it would launch operation Frontex '*plus*' (later changed to *Triton*) on the 27th of August 2014 to take over mission Mare Nostrum's role and responsibilities (Vacas Fernández, 2016). The operation comprised of two missions – Triton and Poseidon – which existed in parallel with Mare Nostrum until October 2014 (see Appendix I). According to Vacas Fernández (2016), operation Triton was launched on the 31st of October 2014 to take over from Mare Nostrum, and it had two main objectives. Firstly, the operation aimed to increase coordination in the EU border surveillance and support for the Italian maritime missions in the EU. Secondly, Triton was formed to also conduct SAR operations – *when circumstances warranted*. Factually, Triton emphasised surveillance and border protection from illegal migration threats rather than conducting SAR missions at sea. The primary objective of Triton was the development and implementation of integrated border management systems (Vacas Fernández, 2016). Initially, Triton aimed to patrol the EU borders efficiently, deal with migration pressures, and protect EU borders. In 2015, the operation's resources were expanded, and its SAR interventions in the Strait of Sicily increased. Vacas Fernández (2016) argues that the main challenges to the mission were its limited operational mandate because it was restricted to a limited portion of the EU-Mediterranean Sea – unlike its predecessor mission Mare Nostrum, which was mandated to patrol 70,000 km^2 of sea surface, as previously discussed. According to the European Commission (2016), Triton had a monthly operational budget of €2.9 million, significantly lower than mission Mare Nostrum, and a broader mandate. It had three Maltese coast guard ships, nine Italian coast guard ships, 10 ships provided by the EU, two UK helicopters, and one Finnish aircraft. No reliable data on personnel availed for this operation were found. Data also show that Triton rescued over 4,000 migrants and was responsible for 13% of operations conducted at sea in 2016. In 2016, 4,579 migrants were either found dead or were reported missing, while 181,436 accessed the EU by sea (*ibid.*).

Seven months after mission Mare Nostrum's closure in October 2014, Poseidon was relaunched as an improved version of the existing Triton operation, also mandated by the EU agency Frontex. Mission Poseidon had a €6.6 million budget. Although it had a broad operational mandate, data from the European Commission (2016) show that the Frontex-operation Poseidon was not as effective as expected, due to the operational limits imposed by its budget. The difference between operation Poseidon and Triton was that the former operated in the sea stretch between Greece and Turkey, while the latter focused on supporting operation off the Italian coast. Under Poseidon, migrants could be returned to their origin, while those

that befitted asylum and refugee status[42] were admitted to the EU. In comparison with Triton, Poseidon had much higher resources, including personnel, vessels, and a broader operational mandate. However, Triton, with fewer resources, was expected to conduct its missions in a wider territory, estimated at 138 nautical miles south of Sicily (*ibid.*). Figure 19 below presents data collected on resources allocated to Frontex-operations Poseidon and Triton.

Poseidon   Triton

Poseidon	PEOPLE RESCUED BETWEEN JANUARY AND AUGUST 2016 with the involvement of Frontex	Triton
37,479		38,750
667	← FRONTEX GUEST OFFICERS → DEPLOYED	523
19	← VESSELS →	9
1	← AIRCRAFT →	3
2	← HELICOPTERS →	2
	DEPLOYED	
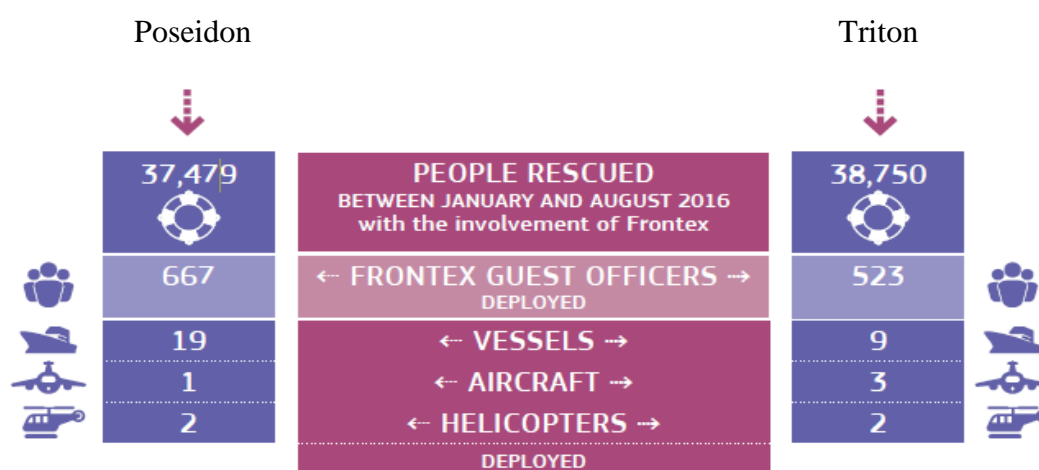
Source: (Adapted from European Commission, 2016: n.p.).
Figure 19. Secondary Data on Resources Deployed to Frontex-Operations Poseidon and Triton.

After an in-depth comparison of missions Mare Nostrum, Poseidon, and Triton, followed by acrimonious discussions, the EU deliberated on the best way to move forward, based on which model of operation was considered an effective method of dealing with the migration phenomenon (European Commission, 2016). The EU had deliberated that deploying SAR-based operations could not address the migration challenges completely. The first EU method was empowering border control agencies to improve regulation of migrants' entry and exit. Moreover, the challenges to the pro-security operations targeting border control were that some countries, that were the most significant source of irregular immigrants, had dubious practices regarding protecting human rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Focusing on border control and pro-security measures presented a potential challenge, where human rights could be violated in such cases as turning back irregular migrants who were fleeing their countries due to insecurity and conflicts. The second option for the EU was to enact programmes to address the push factors in the country of origin. The third option available for the EU in response to

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[42] Refer to '*Key Terminology: (Legal) Definitions Matter*' in the introductory chapter.

the crisis was to increase the asylum processing centres to welcome *genuine* asylum seekers and turn back those who did not qualify with such legal status (*ibid.*). Although this research is not intended as a comparative study between mission Mare Nostrum and Frontex-operations, it is however important to highlight the main differences between the two missions, in terms of scale of operation, mandate, budget, resources at disposal, objectives, and outcomes. The table below shows and contrasts the primary characteristics of mission Mare Nostrum and its successor Frontex-operation Triton, demonstrating the challenges that the latter had to face after replacing the former in October 2014.

Table 3. Comparison of Mission Mare Nostrum and Frontex-Operation Triton.

OPERATION	MARE NOSTRUM	TRITON
Actors or supporters	Italian government through military and other related state agencies (Musarò, 2016a)	EU member states (Koller, 2017)
Scale of operation	Italian air space and nearby maritime territory, the Italian Navy patrolled a 70,000 km^2 of the Mediterranean Sea (Davies & Neslen, 2014)	Air, land, and maritime EU territories
Objectives	1. SAR missions 2. Identify, arrest, and take punitive measures against smugglers and traffickers at sea (Vacas Fernández, 2016; Musarò, 2016a; 2016b).	1. SAR missions 2. Anti-trafficking of drugs and weapons 3. Anti-smuggling of migrants on land, air, and sea 4. Prevent maritime pollution 5. Prevent illegal fishing 6. Border control 7. Immigration processing of migrants' rescue at sea 8. Collaboration with coast guard agencies in different EU countries. 9. Identify, track, and arrest traffickers and smugglers both inland, and at sea (Koller, 2017)
Mandate	• Narrow mandate compared with Frontex because it only had two objectives • It was simple and straightforward (Koller, 2017)	• A wide mandate to act on a range of migration and related issues on land, sea, and air • Complex mandate, considering the numerous actors (Koller, 2017)

OPERATION	MARE NOSTRUM	TRITON
Budget	• Bigger than the amount allocated to one single Frontex-operation (Koller, 2017) • €9 million monthly (Davies & Neslen, 2014)	• Triton's budget allocation was less than a third of Mare Nostrum , while having a smaller geographical area of responsibility and operations (Koller, 2017) • Triton: €2.9 million per month (Davies & Neslen, 2014)
Effectiveness in SAR operations	More effective than Frontex-operations (Koller, 2017)	• Less effective than Mare Nostrum due to limited scope, resources, and funding (The Economist, 2015) • Triton operation was primarily focused on border control than SAR, due to a lack of capacities and resources to conduct SAR operations (Koller, 2017)
Assets at its disposal and resources	• Five ships and two submarines, six aircraft (five planes and one helicopter) and 900 military personnel (Davies & Neslen, 2014) • Mare Nostrum covered a larger area than most Frontex-operations, such as Triton • It was effective in covering larger territories with minimal resources (seven sea vessels and six aircraft)	Triton had larger resources allocated to a small area (22 sea vessels and three aircraft) (Koller, 2017)
Cost-Effectiveness / Burden	Born by the Italian Government alone. The financial burden became too high for the Italian government, thus leading to its termination	Cost shared by the EU member states
Outcomes	Rated as effective in achieving its mission considering over 100,000 migrants were found and rescued, while over 500 migrant smugglers and traffickers were arrested and prosecuted (Koller, 2017)	There are arguments that its effectiveness in its broad mandate is murky, but majority argued that it was less effective than Mare Nostrum in reducing irregular migrants, considering that the number of irregular migrants increased (Koller, 2017; PICUM, 2019)

OPERATION	MARE NOSTRUM	TRITON
Criticism	• Costs-related criticism: *too expensive* • Bearing the burden of securing EU borders by Italy alone, instead of soliciting support from EU member states • Search and rescue migrants at sea to the EU countries destabilises labour market and EU security at large • Failure to enact stern border control measures, and instead, adopting a 'welcoming' approach	• Less effectiveness compared to other operations with less scope and mandate • The mandate was too broad, thus affecting the effectiveness of its operations • Limited resources

Source: (researcher).

Operations Hera, Indalo, and '*Minerva*'

Frontex-operations Hera, Minerva, and Indalo supported existing EU maritime operations in the prevention of criminal activities, such as human smuggling and drug trafficking by sea (European Commission, 2016). Missions Indalo and Minerva were conducted in the sea stretch between Spain and Morocco; their mandate included border patrolling, anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling of migrants, seizure of arms and drugs, surveillance of crime groups, and detection of document forgery. All three Frontex-operations aimed to curtail irregular migration in the western Mediterranean Sea, especially migrants originating from Morocco, Mali, Algeria, and Senegal, amongst other migrants from south American countries reaching Western African shores. The data collected from the same report (European Commission, 2016) reveal that the three missions were successful in conducting pro-security operations such as border patrol and drug and weapons trafficking through seizure of goods and with regard to the prosecution of smugglers and traffickers. However, the effectiveness of these missions in SAR operations remains questionable, considering that the number of fatalities at sea did increase notably in 2015 and 2016. Figure 20 presents the data collected on the resources allocated to the three operations in the Spanish territorial waters.
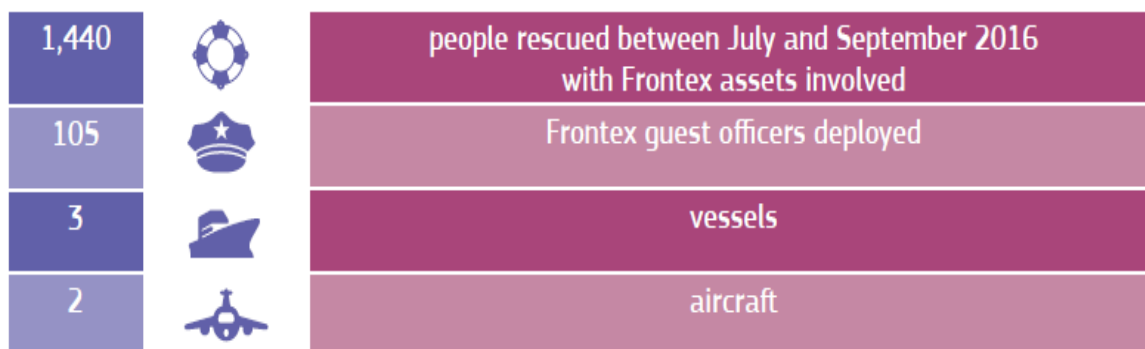
Figure 20. Secondary Data on Results and Resources Allocated to Operations Indalo, Hera and Minerva.

EUNAVFOR MED: Operations Sophia and Irini

Johansen (2017) presented the EU migration crisis as a multi-dimensional issue that required collective efforts of the entire EU collaboratively. Alagna (2020) affirmed that the perceived urgency to change tactics and implement actions to root out maritime insecurity issues requires a collaborative approach. Accordingly, the data establish that the next generation of missions at sea adopted a 'hybrid approach', in which the humanitarian operation was merged with a military operation to save lives, and simultaneously foster maritime and inland security. Consequently, mission Sophia was launched in June 2015 (see Appendix I) to tackle traffickers and migrant smuggling in the central route of the Mediterranean Sea as a joint naval mission called EUNAVFOR MED (Zichi, 2018). Sophia was a military operation to improve maritime security, based on arguments that migration routes by sea to the EU were used, and that the trafficking and smuggling of migrants were perceived as a security threat to the EU. The operational mandate involved SAR, arrest, prosecution, maritime interdiction, patrolling, surveillance, and the turning back of the vessels used by smugglers and traffickers to the respective port of embarkation [POE]. Zichi (2018) also reveal that mission Sophia was launched to tackle some of the security changes presented by the migration crisis, by taking stern measures to control irregular migration. According to Zichi (2018), it can be inferred that the EU had noted that its predecessor mission Mare Nostrum concentrated more on SAR operations and less on pro-security missions such as border control and maritime interdiction and prosecution of smugglers and traffickers. However, it can be argued that EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia drew insights from Mare Nostrum, considering that mission Mare Nostrum was the first large-scale maritime operation in the Mediterranean Sea.

Operation Sophia encountered several challenges, the main one being criticism and objection from the UK. The UK opposed the call effect – in line with Lee's theoretical model on migration – emerging from any operation that supports 'pure' SAR missions. According to the EU Committee (2016), the House of Lords referred to Sophia as an impossible challenge and poorly effective in solving the migration crisis and in ensuring EU security. The UK's primary concern was allegedly the myopic perspective of the mission to respond to what was termed as the symptoms, instead of the root causes. In this perspective, a report compiled by the British House of Lords concluded that '[…] *the Operation Sophia does not, and cannot, deliver its mandate. It responds to symptoms, not causes'* (EU Committee, 2016: 4). The House of Lords and Parliament argued that operation Sophia had a broad mandate with too limited resources at its disposal, which made the achievement of its goals and mission unrealistic. The same report further explained that the goals of the operation exceeded what could be realistically achieved, in support of the argument that operations in the high seas alone could not be effective in combating illegal smuggling and trafficking (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the UK viewed mission Sophia as a costly burden, and affirmed that it could not be the solution to the EU migration crisis at sea alone, because mass migration solutions should have been addressed by tackling the root causes of the issue through collaboration with major sources of irregular migrants at sea (Riddervold & Bosilca, 2017; Riddervold, 2018). The UK deliberation with the EU resulted in a narrowing of operations for mission Sophia, its resources and mandate, as the committee had earlier suggested a smaller realistic operation with a more manageable mandate. Analysis of the effects of the mission showed that the operation would act as a pull factor, in conformity with Lee's migration theory, because it would ease the work of migrants – and consequently of smugglers and traffickers. The argument was that migrants would only need to reach high seas and then, maritime SAR operations would transport them to the EU, as previously discussed in this section.

According to Riddervold and Bosilca (2017), SAR interventions and border surveillance missions under Sophia did not detract from irregular migration flows, because the smugglers and traffickers changed route depending on the concentration and nature of operations conducted in different sea routes to access the EU. The contention around the effectiveness of operation Sophia supported a wider EU outlook on the migration crisis on the premise that the conflicts in the countries of origin were responsible for the increasing EU migration challenges.

Riddervold and Bosilca (2017) also argue that the effectiveness of the mission in SAR activities was marred by not only its limited resources but also by the politics on the need for securing the EU before allowing a high influx of irregular migration to the EU. Data garnered from Riddervold and Bosilca (2017) show that mission Sophia incorporated SAR missions. However, the data concluded that Sophia was not effective in fulfilling its operational mandate, especially when analysed from the humanitarian mission perspective.

Mission Sophia implemented the training of the Libyan coast guard again[43] to increase collaboration in dealing with migration issues for the causative factors dimension. Data collected by Johansen (2017) from 12 qualitative expert interviews showed that the EU had the capacity for tackling migration challenges at sea, but that the wrong approach was enacted. The interview data showed that the EU had poorly implemented strategic action in countering migration-related challenges, arguing that resolving migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea require strategic actions to ease the pressures at origin countries that act as push factors for migration (*ibid.*), as maintained in Lee's migration theory. Considering insights from the data, Johansen (2017) concluded that operation Sophia contributed poorly to the achievement of its formal set objectives, because the root causes fuelling mass migration were supposed to be part of the solutions, but were not considered in the planning phase of the operation. Nonetheless, data collected by the same researcher reveal that operation Sophia showed encouraging results despite limitations emanating from its broad mandate, limited resources, and associated politics (*ibid.*). However, the mission had considerably more personnel, compared to its predecessors, to conduct its mandate. Figure 22 presents data on the results of operation Sophia, achieved using the resources allocated to the operation, as summarised in figure 21.

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[43] The EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya [EUBAM] was deployed under the Common Security and Defence Policy [CSDP] in May 2013 with the aim of supporting the Libyan authorities in improving and developing the security of the country's land, sea, and air borders. EUBAM supported the Libyan Customs and Naval Coast Guard through workshops and seminars organised outside Libya in 2013–2015 (EEAS, n.d.).

Source: (European Commission, 2016: n.p.).
Figure 21. Operation Sophia Outcomes.
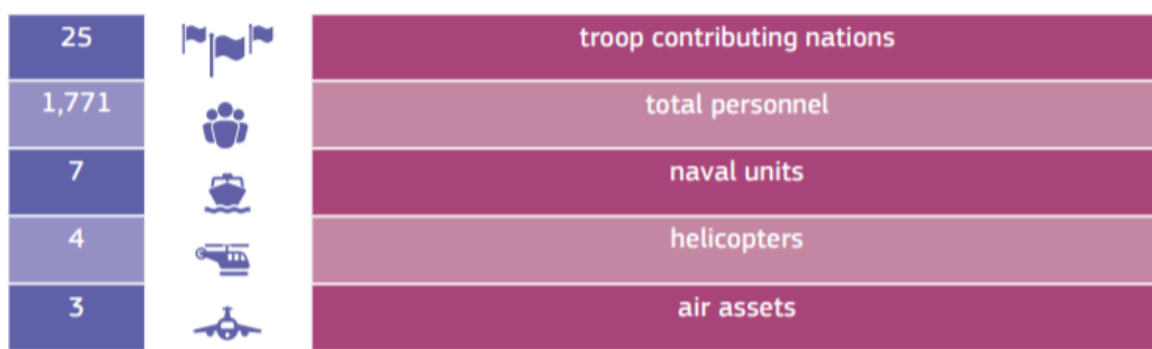
Source: (European Commission, 2016: n.p.).
Figure 22. Resources Allocated to Operation Sophia.

Operation EUNAVFOR MED Irini was launched in March 2020 (see Appendix I) to improve the implementation of UN embargoes by targeting smuggling and trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea (EU Defense Council, 2020). Operation Irini was mandated to search vessels embarking on the sea journey of the Libyan coast, especially those suspected of smuggling and trafficking. The resources deployed included maritime, aerial, and satellite assets for surveillance, in addition to the existing operational assets allocated to mission Sophia. The target of the mission was combating organised crime emanating from Libya and surrounding environs through proactive strategies, such as searching, arresting, and prosecuting smugglers and traffickers found in the high seas; surveillance; and, provision of information on illegal activities embarking for the sea from the Libyan maritime territory. Irini's strategic goal has been to dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks at sea. The mission is also mandated to combat illegal exporting of petroleum from Libya to the EU, and to train the Libyan Coast Guard Agency [LCGA] on marine law enforcement operations.

Mission Irini adopted a pro-security approach to protect the EU by attempting to resolve the causes of mass migration. Mission Irini attempted to achieve this task by deterring migrants and other illicit consignments for embarking on the sea journeys to the EU, in response to the EU political clamouring to approach the migration crisis from the cause perspective. The operation was initially mandated to operate for one year until March 2021. However, the data on the results of this operation are still emerging, considering it is an ongoing operation at the time of writing. Through vessel patrols, air and satellite surveillance, the mission has three major objectives, *viz.*, to (i) spot, (ii) search, and (iii) arrest culprits found guilty of the crimes prescribed in its mandate (EU Defense Council, 2020). Figure 23 presents the data on supporting agencies and resources for operation Irini.

Source: (EU Defense Council, 2020).
Figure 23. Supporting Agencies and Resources for Operation Irini.

NATO-Operations '*Sea Guardian*' and '*Active Endeavour*'

Along with EU-based maritime operations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] has been present in the Mediterranean Sea since 2001 (see Appendix I). The data collected on NATO-operations emphasise the need to distinguish SAR activities from surveillance, border control, and military response to the migration crisis in order to comprehend the nature of NATO-operations, Frontex-operations, and EUNAVFOR MED operations (Vacas Fernández, 2016). As a result, NATO-operation Sea Guardian was a military response to complement existing operations in the Mediterranean Sea. NATO-operation Sea Guardian resulted from the deliberations taken after the NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016, which supported increased surveillance to reduce threats in the sea such as piracy, trafficking and smuggling to the EU. Mission Sea Guardian served to increase the maritime security level in the Mediterranean Sea (Dibenedetto, 2017). The mission aligned its objectives with NATO's agenda, and focused on achieving four of the Maritime Security Operations [MSOs] objectives. Its operational mandate included: (i) anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling of weapons, drugs and migrants; (ii) empowering navigation freedom in the sea; (iii) maritime interdiction of irregular migrants; (iv) combat weapons of mass destruction [WMDs]; and (v) guarding critical maritime infrastructure. Sea Guardian supported mission EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, previously discussed, in maintaining maritime security while monitoring the migration crisis. The operation was commanded by the UK-led maritime allied command [MARCOM] (Dibenedetto, 2017).

The involvement of NATO in the Aegean Sea supported the EU-Turkey agreement to promote maritime security. Mission Sea Guardian covered the entirety of the EU territory and complemented Triton and Sophia in patrolling the southern-central Mediterranean territory. Operation Active Endeavour, launched by NATO in 2001, had a much smaller mandate than its successor, operation Sea Guardian. Active Endeavour also supported Frontex-operation Poseidon while operating in the Greek maritime territory, and was effective in combating maritime terrorism and organised crimes of piracy; trafficking and smuggling of migrants, drugs, and weapons, as well as document forgery and theft. An analysis of NATO-operations Sea Guardian and Active Endeavour reveals the following prevalent distinctions and similarities, as outlined in table 4.

Table 4. Secondary Data on Comparison of Sea Guardian and Active Endeavour.

	Active Endeavour	**Sea Guardian**
Nature of operation	Maritime military response	Maritime military assistance to EUNAVFOR MED Sophia
Operational mandate	• Awareness of situations at sea through surveillance • Combat maritime terrorism and organised crime • Support building capacity for maritime security	• Maritime interdiction • Border patrol, arrest and turning back of irregular migrants • Intercept and combat propagation of WMDs • Guard maritime critical infrastructure • Promote freedom of navigation at sea
Effectiveness	Less effective	More effective in dealing with trafficking and smuggling through reconnaissance, surveillance, and interdiction

Source: (Adapted from Dibenedetto, 2017: 13).

Summary and Analysis of Key Findings

The data presented in the section above show that maritime operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea have operated on related premises, mainly pro-security and humanitarian models. However, the differences in operations are evident in scale, mandate, resources allocated, and focus. In the case of mission Mare Nostrum, the data presented above show that the mission was highly regarded as an effective operation in fulfilling its mandate. However, the data also show existing contention on the operational mandate of Mare Nostrum because it was allegedly too SAR-based, thus having an undesired pull – or calling – effect depicted as encouraging migrants to embark on the dangerous journey. Mission Mare Nostrum rescued many migrants and arrested many smugglers, traffickers, and other illegal actors in the sea.

Mission Mare Nostrum was the first large-scale mission to incorporate both humanitarian and pro-security (anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking) missions; thus, it had a critical influence on the nature of subsequent maritime operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea. The precedent model set by Mare Nostrum was adopted in operations Triton, Hera, Indalo, Poseidon, Minerva, NATO-operations in the Aegean Sea, and Irini. Similarly, the data support that mission Mare Nostrum informed most of the decisions made in subsequent operations Indalo, Triton, Sophia, Sea Guardian, and Themis. The data suggest that Mare Nostrum was relevant in addressing the ongoing migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea, and effective in anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling missions, with over 500 suspects apprehended and

prosecuted during the operation in 2013–2014. However, the EU did not live up to the standard set by mission Mare Nostrum, and instead shifted the focus to reinforcing more security-based missions in the sea to reduce migration. The main challenge for Mare Nostrum was the perception that the epicentre of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea emanated from the operation was its ripple effect of increasing migrants. In comparison with Triton, Mare Nostrum had a narrower operation mandate because it only had two goals: (i) conducting SAR operations, and (ii) arresting smugglers (identified during SAR missions) and detaining them for prosecution. The data affirm that mission Mare Nostrum was an emergency operation to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea because of the Arab Spring aftermath (Tazzioli, 2016).

The statistics show that irregular migrants increased steadily after the closure of Mare Nostrum, partly because of the increased political instability in the neighbouring regions, and partly because the operation allegedly made human smuggling easier and more profitable. The data support that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in saving lives. Although the data support the idea that Mare Nostrum fulfilled its operational mandate, data on contending arguments disagree with the emphasis of Mare Nostrum on SAR instead of military-pro-security missions. It is the researcher's opinion that Mare Nostrum paved the way for broader debates on the most effective solutions to the migration crisis through improvement of the SAR model. Regarding this, the data suggest that operations Triton, Poseidon, Sophia, and Irini borrowed insights and lessons learnt from Mare Nostrum. Sophia and Irini had an operational mandate that was too broad and unrealistic, considering the constricted resources allocated to it. For instance, the data critique operation Triton for being too broad and unrealistic to achieve its mission, hence the subsequent launch of EUNAVFOR MED operations Sophia and Irini. The data also show that adopting pro-security deterrence, detention, and deporting approaches had a negative implication on humanitarian actions through a disregard for human rights and protection of life and safety.

The data reveal that conducting humanitarian SAR-based operations is at present the best approach to saving lives of irregular migrants at sea. However, the humanitarian SAR-based approach alone cannot – and would never be – a long-term solution to migration crises. The argument supporting this finding is that maritime SAR-based operations may encourage and facilitate more irregular migration: smugglers' work is eased, and their illicit business

improved, because all that is required of them is to deliver the migrants to the high seas where such SAR operation exist, and the migrants are rescued. Another supporting argument revealed in the data is that searching and rescuing irregular migrants to the EU shores jeopardises its inland security, considering the possibility of smuggling potential terrorists, criminals, and weapons and drugs into Europe. The data on Frontex as an actor in the Mediterranean Sea also show that the EU-supported agency was effective in conducting surveillance, SAR missions, and military security-led operations to secure the sea from irregular migration. Comparatively, however, Frontex-operations were not as effective as mission Mare Nostrum; thus, the data reveal an underlying controversy over the effectiveness of state-based approaches such as mission Mare Nostrum versus the EU-supported approach materialised by Frontex.

The data disclose that the dominant argument in opposing SAR-based operations is the unexpected pull effect, in accordance with Lee's migration theory. The data also reveal an increased need to focus more on pro-security objectives to make the maritime territory safe and free of irregular migration through anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations. However, military-based operations may harm human rights, revealing that the premise for opposing maritime security-based operations alone is its high potential to disregard humans' rights if the operations do not include humanitarian assistance. Refugees and asylum seekers require humanitarian help through protection and accommodation; however, detention, turn-backs, arrests, and interdiction witnessed in military-based security missions violate the human rights of migrants. The data indicate a thin line between the right balance for military operations and humanitarian SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea to ensure strategic and viable solutions to the migration crisis. The data acknowledge that a maritime SAR operation targeting to solve the migration crisis should save the lives of irregular migrants while rooting out illicit activities such as smuggling and trafficking. Combining the SAR and security approaches to maritime operations, as in the case of mission Mare Nostrum, could not guarantee strategic solutions to the migration challenges, considering that irregular migration continued after its closure in 2014. Data collected from operation EUNAVFOR MED suggest that strategic solutions should encompass a range of models jointly implemented. The combination model is effective in addressing pull, push and intermediary factors. The combined approaches should include surveillance, border patrolling, SAR operations, and military operations to arrest, interdict, and prosecute smugglers and traffickers.

The strategic solutions constitute combined efforts by the EU and countries of origin in Africa and the Middle East to reduce the number of migrants embarking on a voyage to Europe and a thorough vetting system, to ensure only befitting asylum seekers and refugees are allowed. According to the data, mission Mare Nostrum and other subsequent operations suffered challenges emanating from constricted funding, political interference, and low collaboration from some EU member states. Other subsequent operations also faced challenges from an ambiguous and unrealistic operational mandate, such as Frontex-operation Triton and EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia. In line with Bueger's (2015b) and Bueger and Edmunds' (2017) contemporary perspectives on maritime security, the data suggest that a new migration agenda and approaches are required to tackle the issue comprehensively through adopting strategic solutions to address the push–pull and mediating factors for mass migration.

SECTION TWO: International and Regional Partnership Actors in the Mediterranean Region: Implications for Mission Mare Nostrum

The data in this section illustrate the key actors in the Mediterranean region and explore their impact and influence on maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum and maritime security issues. The section reviews supranational organisations such as the UNHCR and IOM as well as the agencies of the European Union and African Union, and the role of civil societies. Key search terms including '*UNHCR*', '*IOM*', '*FRONTEX*', '*EU*', '*CSDP*', '*EEAS*', '*EMP*', '*UfM*', '*ENP*', '*GCC*' were used to search for data relevant to this section, in relation to the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The researcher filtered documents published between 1980 and 2021. Treaties and agreement documents were fundamental sources of data in the ensuing section.

The Role of UN Agencies: UNHCR and IOM

The UNHCR and the IOM work together to provide health services and relief to migrants rescued at sea. While refugees are evacuated from detention centres to emergency transit points by UNHCR, the IOM works to collect data of displaced migrants, with the help of their displacement tracking matrix. The UNHCR and the IOM are relied upon by national governments to aid in migration activities which do not conform to the international standards, that is, mass migration in the Mediterranean Sea. The two humanitarian agencies have faced significant challenges in fulfilling their roles, regarding conflicts of interest and funds of states that provide donations, thus affecting their moral integrity and the people they serve. The data

assessed by Markous (2019) reveal that the UNHCR and the IOM contribute to preventing migrants from being harmed by smugglers and traffickers at sea or drowning in the hands of smugglers who overload their vessels to maximise profits. Markous (2019) found that political instability and insecurity problems had created a challenge in which the UNHCR and the IOM were unable to gain access to the relevant areas of interest. Other governments did not grant access to the same areas either. The agencies have been concentrated in Tripoli and Tunis, thus leading other actors to question the organisations' failure to provide aid to other areas that were critical sources of migrants using the Mediterranean route to enter Europe. The data also indicate that the organisations' coordination to accelerate the process of giving refugees status is, however, determined by each country's criteria, which also influence the practice of asylum-seeking (Léonard, 2010). Data from Markous (2019) show that the two UN agencies implemented policies that were consequently not applied properly, and that the programmes did not completely conform to the humanitarian policies on refugees and migrants. The data from the same author conclude that both the IOM and the UNHCR were also stuck in between the constraints of pressure from donors and refugee receiving states. The empirical review finally indicates that the UNHCR and the IOM did not have robust measures to curb the indirect harm faced by refugees in the process of offering assistance.

The Role of EU Institutions: Common Security and Defence Policy [CSDP] and European External Action Service [EEAS]

The European Union signed the CSDP treaty in 1999 as a counterterrorism tool against the increasing instability in Europe's neighbourhood. Data from Strikwerda (2019) indicate that the EU member states accepted the initiatives from the European Commission regarding the integration of the CSDP in the field of defence and security. The EEAS is a component of the EU which is delegated to conduct the external execution of tasks mandated by the member states as part of the European Defence Union. The tasks delegated to the EEAS entail the EU core interests around the maintenance of a channel for dialogue and negotiations with other non-EU countries. However, not all EU member states had the same view of what they wanted the EEAS to represent (Henokl, 2014). The Czech Republic, for instance, was reluctant to implement an independent EU foreign service, with the view that it would interfere with the countries' national interests. Data analysis by Galariotis and Gianniou (2016) showed that the EEAS service did not live up to the high expectations set. The data supported the hypothesis that the out-of-range policymaking and contacts from the outside of the organisation would be

more significant. Furthermore, data collected from the same authors disclose that the EEAS had created confusion regarding the already existing foreign policies instead of improving their effectiveness. Nonetheless, the EEAS is still expected to reach its goal in the future: bringing closer the intergovernmental and supranational elements of EU foreign policy and enhancing the coherence of the European Union's external relations. This would be essential in terms of supporting maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea. The goal would be reachable depending on the extent of the member states' willingness to delegate more external relations to the supranational level. Doval (2018) and Kostanyan (2016) supported the data presented above.

The Union for the Mediterranean [UfM] and the European Mediterranean Partnership [EMP]

The aftermath of the Second World War necessitated the formation of regional partnerships to foster co-operation in countering common issues affecting the regions, and to ease the burden of alleviating global challenges that a single nation could not tackle single-handedly, such as a migration crisis (Philippart, 2003). The UfM was formed in 2008 to increase the dialogue between member states and deliberate on best courses of action to take with the EU challenges of migration, terrorism, religious extremism, climate change, political instability, internal security, and food security. The UfM is a key actor in the Mediterranean Sea whose roots could be traced to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 for regional co-operation in controlling raw materials and the development of economic co-operation in Europe. Other partnerships that paved the way for the creation of the UfM include the Global Mediterranean Policy in 1972, the Renovated Mediterranean Policy in 1990, and the EMP in 1995 (*ibid.*). The dynamic nature of the EU regional partnerships and challenges noted around the inefficiencies in executing their mandates in other preceding partnership necessitated the formation of the UfM. The UfM represented a rearrangement of the policies and partnerships to increase efficiency in responding to issues facing the Mediterranean region (Balfour, 2009; Calleya, 2009; Gillespie, 2011).

However, the qualitative data analysis by Elistania *et al.* (2019) showed that the EMP had loopholes in the context of managing global crises, such as migration; thus, a collaborative approach was required in formulating and enacting sustainable solutions. The UfM was also formed as a response to the security challenges facing the EU, mainly from the illicit activities

in the Mediterranean Sea, such as smuggling and trafficking (Florensa, 2010; Driss, 2017). Data show that, while the EMP focused exclusively on the EU, the UfM focused on matters facing the EU countries in the Mediterranean Sea, considering that the region presented unique challenges to the Southern EU countries and the entire EU. It can be argued that the UfM is a critical actor in the Mediterranean region because of its three mandate, *viz.*, to (i) offer political guidance, (ii) promote EU economic integration, and (iii) foster security. The UfM was a precise response to global security threats to the EU, considering that the EMP operational mandate was no longer relevant to contemporary security issues of the 21st century, such as terrorism and political violence, in comparison to the aftermath of the Cold War. Data collected from Hunt (2011) affirm that the UfM remains a critical actor in Mediterranean regional politics and affairs.

The European Neighbourhood Policy [ENP]

As an actor in the Mediterranean Sea, the data presented and analysed here explore the efficiency of the ENP in fulfilling the mandates that the EU attempts to pursue through its policy (Sedelmeier, 2007; Gänzle, 2009). The ENP is viewed as a composite policy to foster a healthy relationship with its non-EU neighbours. The ENP advances the interests of the EU through negotiating long-term solutions to the challenges they face as a region (Comelli, 2004). The efficiency of the ENP in addressing the EU goals is rated differently, depending on the context and mandate assessed. Data show that in the years 2010–2016, the policy effectiveness in curbing migration challenges was controversial, because the crisis worsened despite major maritime SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum and subsequent maritime operations (Kostanyan *et al.*, 2017).

However, an enhanced ENP went further in approaching the migration issue, and adopted a collaborative approach with the EU neighbours and countries in the Middle East and North, West, and East Africa to deal with the push factors for migration by sea, as indicated in Lee's migration theory. The data also show that the ENP has been effective in initiating a political dialogue between the EU and its external neighbours surrounding the Mediterranean Sea to combat the issues laid out in its mandate, such as irregular migration and smuggling of goods. For instance, the data illustrate that the ENP was effective in initiating political dialogue and implementation of appropriate measures to stop the smuggling of crude oil from Libyan ports to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea (Weber, Smith, & Baun, 2008).

The Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC]

The GCC is another fundamental actor in the Mediterranean region, especially in the context of the migration issue, considering that its member states are major indirect contributors to the migration crisis due to insecurity and civil wars – such as the Yemeni conflict – that have displaced millions over the last decade (Zaccara, 2015). Since the Arab Spring in 2010–2011, the GCC has increasingly become a critical and assertive player in Mediterranean affairs, especially on migration politics. Initially, the EU worked under USA policies in the Middle East, but the recent shift in USA influence in the Middle East had mandated the EU to rethink its relationship with the GCC countries (Talbot, 2011; Bianco, 2020). The data collected show that the EU realised that there are issues that the USA-EU-GCC nexus cannot address because they require a specific response that only the EU and GCC can address through customised frameworks implemented through the EU and the GCC partnership exclusively (Fürtig, 2004; Abdel & Eissa, 2014).

Data collected from Malmvig (2006) show that the GCC is influential also in the Middle East region. Therefore, an EU-GCC partnership is beneficial to the EU because the GCC could help to address some of the issues which allegedly act as push factors for mass migration. Over the years, the EU – through the ENP – has engaged the GCC and MENA countries for strategic solutions to the challenges faced by these regions, especially Mediterranean migration and political instability issues. In response to such changes, the EU has viewed the GCC as a strategic partner in helping the EU address challenges, such as mass migration. The EU and GCC co-operation is critical to solving crises facing the MENA and Europe through collaborative efforts and partnerships that serve the common interest of the two regions. Furthermore, the GCC is of strategic importance in EU-Mediterranean politics because it comprises the largest share of the EU neighbourhood. Data from Malmvig (2006) show that the EU is likely to be detrimentally affected by negative events in the GCC countries, such as civil conflicts and political instability. In consideration of the data above, the EU security and solutions to the migration issues ought to incorporate the GCC and MENA at large in the adoption of collaborative partnerships to devise strategic solutions to challenges encountered in the Mediterranean region.

International Parliamentary Entities

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean [PA-UfM] (1998; 2010) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean [PAM] (2005)

Steensen (2017) used a case study approach to investigate how the UfM adapted to the increasing numbers of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, with the chief tool of data collection being interviews. The study focused on Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan because of their experiences in receiving and hosting refugees. Greece, Spain, and Italy were also chosen because they have been on the frontline in facing the migration influx to Europe for decades. The research question which the study aimed to answer was: '*How has the UfM adapted to the increasing levels of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean area, and what are the members' motives in advocating for a potential attempt at adaptation?*' (*ibid.*: 2). The interview findings indicate that the secretariat and the secretary-general of the UfM attempted to prioritise the issue of refugees and migrants on the organisation's agenda. The data also indicate that, although the UfM has included the issue of *migrants* on its mandate since its establishment in 2008, the refugee issue[44] was not included. The findings also affirm that the adoption of the UfM roadmap devoted more attention to the refugees. The root causes of the migration crisis – notably, push factors from the countries of origin – were also significantly addressed through the UfM. The findings conclude that the UfM adapted to the increasing numbers of migrants and refugees in a way that ensured the organisation's mandate, initiatives and projects focused on assistance for these two categories (*ibid.*). In the same year, Cofelice (2017) conducted an empirical study to identify the effectiveness of the PAM in managing the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The analysis of data from between 2006 and 2015 shows that 24 resolutions were adopted, where most of the debated issues included the definition and root causes of terrorism, forced migration in the Mediterranean, the fight against organised crime, and equality and gender issues. The empirical data analysis of PAM's activities concluded that the activities of the Assembly focused more on managing the Mediterranean crisis and resolution of conflicts than on human rights and democracy promotion (*ibid.*).

The Consultative Council of the Arab Maghreb Union [CCAMU] (1989) and the Pan-African Parliament [PAP] (2004)

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[44] Refer to '*Key Terminology: (Legal) Definitions Matter*' in the introductory chapter.

The Arab Maghreb Union [AMU] member states border the Mediterranean Sea and have been facing a 2% population increase over the recent years because of the migrants and refugees that enter the countries. Findings by Finaish and Bell (1994) show that the AMU provided employment to more than two million migrants, and that tourism was the core source of foreign exchange for Morocco and Tunisia. The data indicate that the AMU countries are small, with the largest gross domestic product [GDP] being that of Algeria, at $45 billion (USD. The findings from the article by Mashele (2005) indicate that the Pan-African Parliament [PAP], which was amongst the chief development organisms in Africa, has been significant in enhancing security and peace in the Mediterranean region. The initiative also gave ordinary African people the opportunity and freedom to participate in decision-making processes regarding how they wanted to be treated, thus enhancing democracy at the national level.

The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU] (1974) and the Association of Senates, *Shoora* and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World [ASSECAA] (2002)

The article by Volkel (2013) explains that the IPU could play a significant role in transforming Middle Eastern democracies. Findings of a meeting session between the UfM member states in 2013 indicate that a proposal was made for co-operation amongst every parliament around the Mediterranean region – including the IPU – to manage the conflicts at hand and the migration crisis. Cofelice and Stavridis (2017) support the research findings by Volkel (2013). Data by Cofelice and Stavridis (2017) identify the actors in the Mediterranean Sea for conflicts and crisis management, and found that the Association of Senates, *Shoora* and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World [ASSECAA] has been also a fundamental parliamentary actor in the Mediterranean region.

The World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association [WHIA] (1996) and the Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative [AII] (2001)

Data by Stavridis (2018) show that the Hellenic parliament consisted of 72 legislatures in 27 states, where the Mediterranean ones consisted of parliamentarians from Israel, Jordan, Albania, Gibraltar, and France. The results of the research by Stavridis (2018) also indicate that the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association [WHIA] 1996 session supported the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019. Greece was also found to be amongst the 13 International Peace Institute members that dealt with the management of the Mediterranean Sea states out of the 23 surveyed states. Concurrently in the same year, Migkos

(2018) investigated the contributions of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region [EUSAIR] in regional peace and growth of the Adriatic and Ionian coastal countries. The study explored the problems encountered by the initiative, and how they could be addressed. The quantitative and qualitative findings by Migkos (2018) proved that EUSAIR was a necessity for the coastal region by promoting territorial cohesion and the promotion of co-operation amongst countries in conflict. The study utilised a policy-based approach to garner findings for the research, whereas the case study was based on documents and reports that provided data on the Adriatic and Ionian strategies. The findings of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2019) show that the significance of strategic co-operation with the western Balkans countries on border and migration management is essential in combating smuggling of migrants and irregular migration at large. The data garnered by the OECD Trento Centre for Local Development (2019) indicate that the ADRION macro-region resources mobilised in the co-operation for border and migration management were approximately €1.83 billion, of which €1.62 billion were contributions from the European Union alone.

State Actors: Italy, Spain, Libya, Malta, Greece, and Egypt

The data findings from the research conducted in Italy, Libya, and Malta by Klepp (2010) indicate that new parameters were emerging for refugees' and migrants' protection within regional borders by the European Union Refugee Policy. Data from Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore (2015) indicate that the drowning of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea led to increasing advocacy by the UNHCR for the European countries to step up rescue operations in Italy and Spain maritime territories. The findings from Tardif (2017) indicate that the European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR] determined illegal violations of the Greece obligations under Article 3 of the ECHR. According to the data collected, Libya and Egypt appear to be fundamental actors in Mediterranean migration issues because they are sources of irregular migrants to Europe by sea, who later access the EU through Italy, Spain, Malta, and Greece.

The African Union on Cross-Mediterranean Migration

It can be argued that different countries in the African, American, Asian, and Middle Eastern regions have different interests in the EU migration crisis. The management of the EU migration crisis has been a case for other countries to draw valuable lessons from. For instance, data collected from Taub and Fisher (2018), and Fargues *et al.* (2011) show that migrations challenges in the EU and USA are related insofar that the crises are partly fuelled by the

politicisation of proposed solutions to deal with the challenges. Africa is concerned with the management of the crises because most of the migrants travelling to the EU via the southern route originate from Africa. For instance, data by Welz (2016) show that some African countries with no Mediterranean coastline – such as Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], and Somalia – are pertinent to solving the EU crises, considering that the political instability and persistent conflicts in these countries act as push factors and foster migration to the EU via Libya, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Therefore, as part of the initiatives of the EU to curb the migration crisis in the Mediterranean region, such countries are to be involved in collaborative joint efforts – in line with the ENP guidelines previously discussed – to foster political stability and security in order to avoid mass migration. The data compiled by the European Council on Foreign Relations [ECFR] (2020) show that the EU invested heavily in the African countries to facilitate long-term solutions to the migration crisis through capacity building and stabilisation of the African countries, as shown in the next figure.
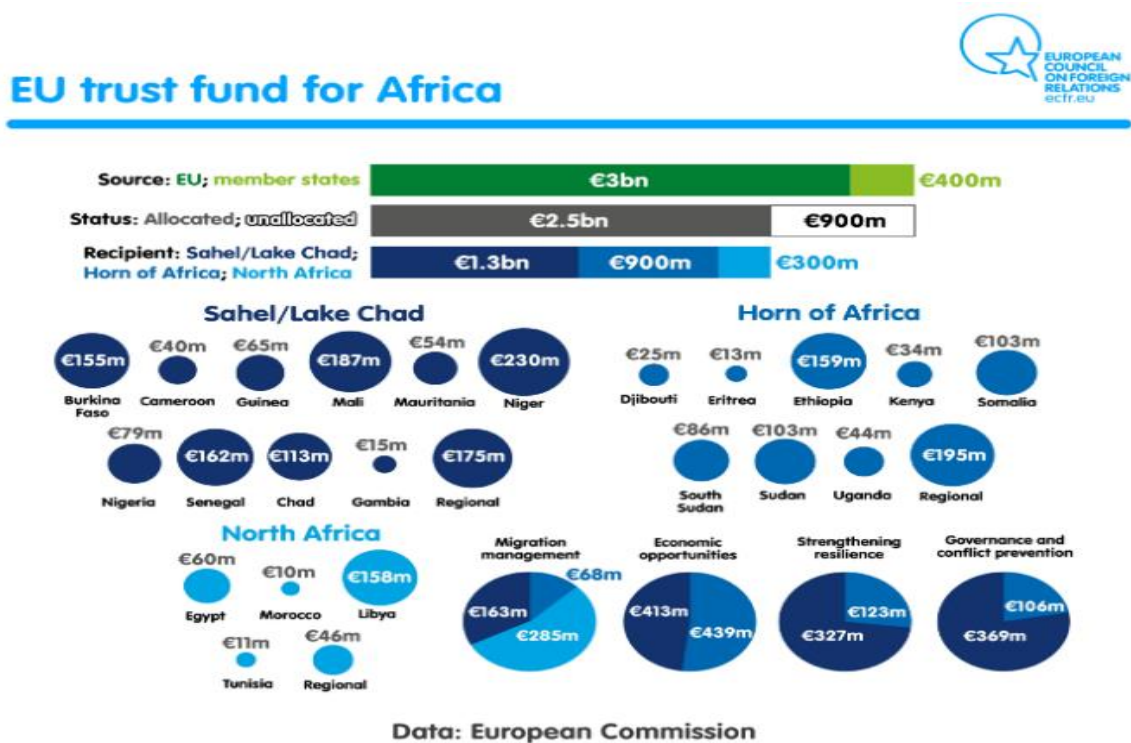
Source: (ECFR, 2020: n.p.).
Figure 24. EU Trust Fund to Africa.

Figure 24 above shows that the EU has heavily invested in attempting to eliminate the push factors for maritime migrations through the Mediterranean Sea, especially in countries with a failed – or failing – government, or chronic civil conflicts. Figure 25 below shows some of the beneficiaries of such policies and the EU-supported operations in the countries in 2020.
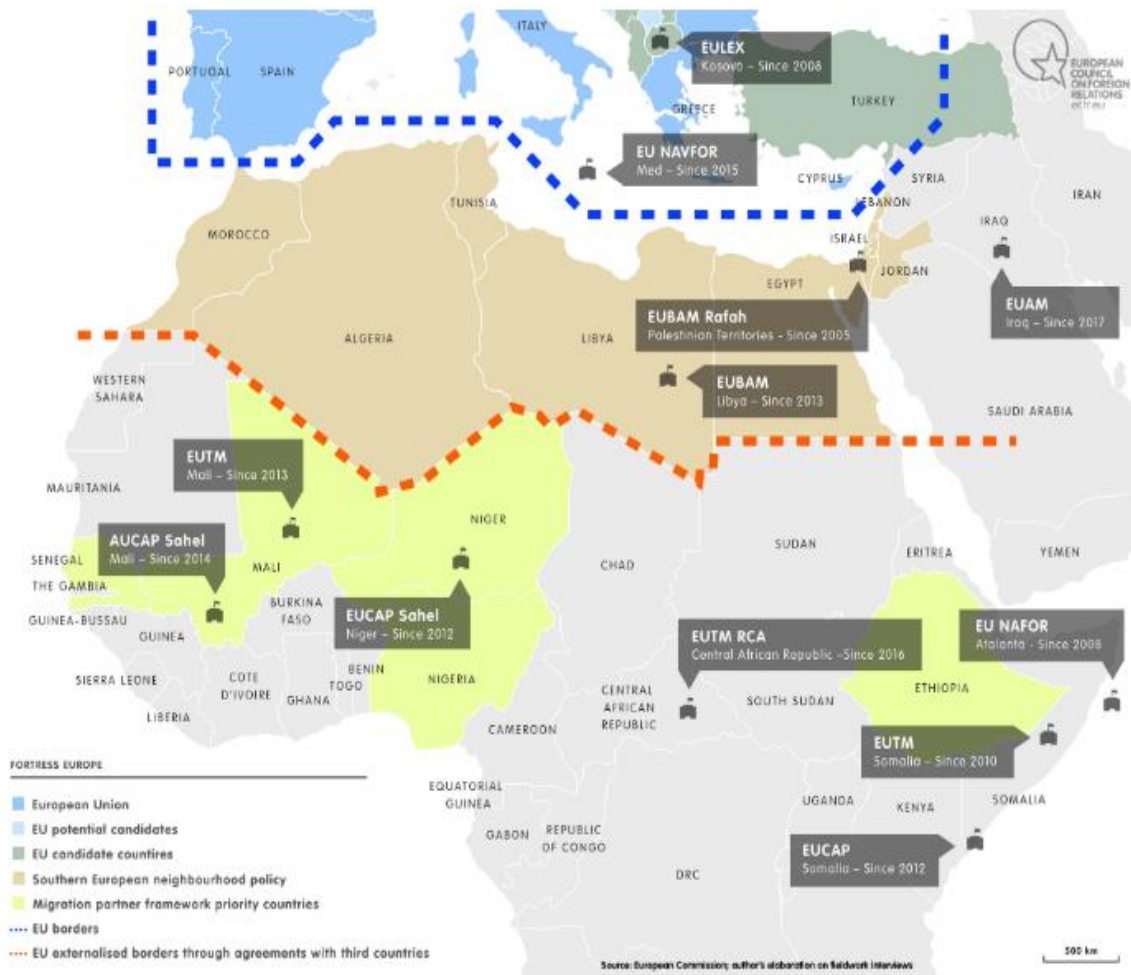
Source: (ECFR, 2020: n.p.).
Figure 25. EU-Supported Operations in Africa, the EU, and the Middle East.

The figure above shows that the EU recognised that other countries with no coastline on the Mediterranean may influence migrations to the EU, especially conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East. Promotion of peace and political stability is one of the instrumental EU foreign affairs approaches aimed at curbing unregulated mass migration.

Increased Advocacy for Civil Society Actors: Non-Governmental Organisation [NGOs]'s Humanitarian Engagement in the Mediterranean Crisis

One of the EU's core principles is the utmost respect for human rights, as stipulated by the European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR] (Council of Europe, 2010); thus, the European Union is mandated to provide assistance to asylum seekers and respond humanely to refugees within its borders. Whilst EU authorities acknowledge that immigrants are necessary for the EU's future, member states have varying priorities and concerns relating to policies for migration and asylum. Alternatively, some countries argue that establishing safety measures and SAR operations would encourage crossing the Mediterranean Sea. As an example, the UK refused to provide further support to Frontex-operation Triton (see Chapter Two) because the operation was allegedly pulling the migrants to Europe (Dimitriadi, 2014).

Dembinski, Gromes, and Werner (2019) found that trafficking and smuggling have negative implications due to exploitation and risking of migrants' lives, which may necessitate the implementation of military-humanitarian responses. The increased fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea stirred debates over the need to take immediate action to save the lives of migrants stranded at sea or those at risk of capsizing due to vessel overloading (IOM, 2013). Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and France were at the core of calls for humanitarian action following the loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR, 2018). The high number of fatalities increased calls for action to search for and rescue migrants at sea, while another faction called for aggressive approaches to flush out smugglers and traffickers perceived as the drivers of illegal migration (Musarò, 2016a; 2016b; Garelli & Tazzioli, 2019). Musarò (2016b), Cuttitta (2017), and Agustín and Bak Jorgensen (2018) also referred to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean as a *battlefield* with complex actors resulting from the unfortunate politicisation of migration policies in the broader EU. Cusumano and Pattison (2018) also supported the above arguments but differed in stating that Non-Governmental Organisation [NGOs] were mainly responsible for funding SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea. They also noted that governments such as Italy were pro-SAR but that such operations often faced heightened criticism from pro-security actors and inadequate financing. Subsequent to the increase in the number of migrants dying at sea after the closure of Mare Nostrum in October

2014[45], civil societies stepped in with humanitarian boats to fill this void left by the mission (Arsenijevic, Manzi, & Zachariah, 2017). Non-Governmental Organisations have been instrumental in giving humanitarian aid to migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and reducing migrant smuggling at sea. Figure 26 below shows the NGOs operating the Mediterranean Sea in different capacities, according to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [EUAFR].
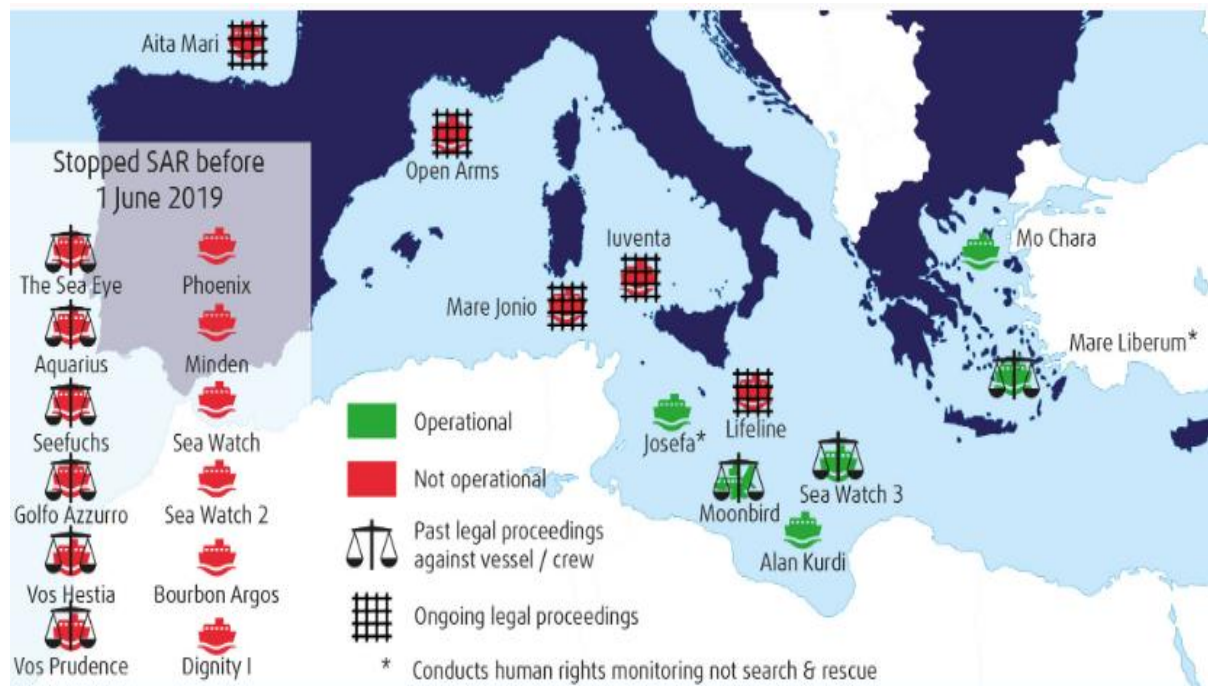
Source: (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – EUAFR, 2019: n.p.)
Figure 26. Map Showing NGO SAR Operations in the Mediterranean Sea in 2016–2019.

There are increasing concerns regarding the reduction in numbers of operations in the Mediterranean Sea, considering that the resulted scarcity affects the availability of humanitarian aid extended to migrants at Sea (Cusumano, 2017; Cusumano & Pattison, 2018; Cusumano, 2019). Garelli *et al.* (2017) found that the central route was the most affected in terms of NGO-operations turnaround. Del Valle (2016) attributed the reduction to political interventions. Schatz and Endemann (2019) also noted that some stakeholders who prefer pro-security anti-smuggling operations over SAR operations extended little co-operation. In support of the above findings, Funke (2018) also argued that NGO humanitarian interventions

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[45] '[*I*]*t was a serious mistake to bring the Mare Nostrum operation to an end. It cost human lives.*', speech by Jean-Claude Juncker (President of the European Commission), debate in the European Parliament on the conclusions of the Special European Council, Strasbourg, 25 April 2015 (European Commission, 2015: n.p.).

in the Mediterranean Sea came under intense criticism from pro-security actors. Smith (2017) termed the controversy around NGO-operations as precarious and detrimental to the milestones in humanitarian interventions and anti-smuggling successes achieved in the area. Similarly, accusations that NGOs performing dedicated search and rescue operations proactively were colluding with migrant smugglers arose (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017). Although Mare Nostrum was the pioneer large-scale operation in the Mediterranean Sea, other operations were initiated by specific governments, NGOs, and the EU (Vacas Fernández, 2016). As a result, the number of NGO operations in the Mediterranean region in response to the worsening refugee crisis and migrants drowning cases at sea increased from 2016–2019 (EUAFR, 2019).

Civil Society Actors: NGO's Humanitarian Engagement in the Mediterranean Crisis

Data collected from Cuttitta (2017) affirm that civil societies and NGOs involved in the Mediterranean humanitarian operations make them critical actors in the migration crisis. The data maintain that the NGOs involved in maritime SAR operations in the central Mediterranean Sea were instrumental in shaping discourses and calls for humanitarian intervention in the region. The data collection from operations of NGOs (i) *Médecins Sans Frontières* [MSF], (ii) Sea-Watch, and (iii) Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) show that NGOs and civil actors – such as activist groups – are critical in a 'watch dog' role, especially on the protection of human rights. In 2015 alone, the three NGOs[46] assessed by Cuttitta (2017) rescued 20,063 irregular migrants out of the 152,343 rescued to Italy. According to Cuttitta (2017), NGOs are critical players in the 're-politicisation' *vs.* 'de-politicisation' discourses of migration crisis management in the Mediterranean region. Non-governmental organisations support other international agencies – notably the IOM and the UNHCR, as previously discussed in this section – in advocating for the humane treatment of migrants amidst maritime security operations in the region. Data gathered from Roman (2018) suggest that a comprehensive migration management approach should incorporate humanitarian and military-security operations to ensure that needy migrants are assisted, while the criminal facilitators of the illegal migration are arrested and prosecuted. Data collected from the Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC] report in 2017 showed that Civil Society Organisations [CSOs] support activities such as first reception of migrants in the EU, SAR operations, legal advice on access to asylum, and education[47] (ESRC, 2017b).

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[46] Migrant Offshore Aid Station [MOAS], *Médecins Sans Frontières* [MSF], and Sea-Watch.
[47] In terms of assistance, training, and mentoring.

The data collected reveal that participation of non-governmental parties in the Mediterranean Sea migration issues – especially maritime SAR operations – attracts controversy with most actors being labelled as criminal groups or facilitators of organised criminal activities of smuggling and human trafficking. This controversy where CSOs are simultaneously labelled heroes and criminals for their operations in the sea is illustrated in the case of Carola Rackete, a German ship captain who rescued irregular migrants stranded in the Mediterranean Sea in June 2019 (Kaschel, 2019). Data collected from Kaschel (2019) show that Carola Rackete was regarded as a criminal but also as a heroine across various sides of the migration discourses. Another German ship captain, Pia Klemp, was facing criminal proceedings and risked being imprisoned after rescuing hundreds of migrants stranded off the Italian coast in 2017 (Schumacher, 2019). In response to those incidents, the Italian government banned civilian rescue ships from operating in the Mediterranean Sea. Yet, Frontex- and other maritime SAR operations in the area were not adequately assisting migrants, thus explaining the continuing episodes of migrants drowning off the Italian coast. Data collected from MacGregor (2020) show that Carola Rackete accused the EU and the Italian government of *wanting* irregular migrants to drown at sea. Despite numerous threats from some of the EU government – such as Italy – to CSOs who rescue people, some ship captains have persisted in rescuing migrants stranded at sea (Tondo, 2019). The banning of non-governmental ships from rescuing migrants at sea revealed a controversial standpoint of the Italian government at that time, which supported maritime SAR operations but banned any support provided by NGOs and CSOs in conducting SAR operations[48].

It is noteworthy that Stierl (2016) conducted a study focused on the development of the *WatchTheMed* 'Alarm Phone', a traveller's phone that functions as a 'hotline' purportedly for migrants when in an emergency whilst on the voyage towards Europe. This phone can potentially raise a 'public alarm', which may pressure state rescue activities to bring help. Stierl

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[48] In 2018, the then Italian interior minister Matteo Salvini escalated the threat to prohibit NGOs from disembarking migrants in Italy by declaring all Italian ports closed to foreign-flag [NGO] vessels carrying irregular migrants and enacting a security decree that criminalised NGOs' activities. These measures, in combination with the confiscation of several NGO ships by Italian courts, caused non-governmental SAR operations to plummet. Although the formation of a new cabinet that no longer included Salvini slightly softened Italy's stance, the European authorities' approach towards NGOs did not change (Cusumano & Villa, 2019).

himself was engaged in the ethnographic project, which he recounted in his article, and portrayed a network of activists that responded to the intent to intervene more directly in a dangerous space which is frequently regarded as a '[…] *maritime void*' (*ibid.*: 561). Stierl argued that the transformative political propensity of the Alarm Phone emerged specifically from its capacity to link its constitutive commitment in '[…] *mobile commons*' (*ibid.*: 561) that aid unauthorised migrants' movement with public campaigns that promote international citizenship. A narrative methodology was adopted by Stierl (2016) to present his article, in an approach of telling a personal story about the subject. His article emphasises that, despite maritime SAR operations, mass drowning did not cease: the shipwreck survivors' calls for help led to an unusual breadth of support, signalling the ripeness of the time to shift beyond political mobilisations into action. Stierl (2016) also cited an incident that occurred in June 2015, in which about 40 emergency cases were being dealt with by the Alarm Phone in the whole Mediterranean region. When migrants in need called the hotline activists for help (such as those aiming to traverse the Strait of Gibraltar), radio interceptions by the Moroccan Army were often encountered and the migrants were returned to Morocco as a result. Two groups of Syrian travellers in the Aegean Sea also called the hotline but were intercepted by Turkish authorities, who fired gunshots in the air and forced them to stop, reverse their route and return to their port of embarkation. In these emergencies, state authorities were allegedly informed by shift teams, who consequently warned a civilian fleet that had established their own border interventions in accordance with humanitarian rescue principles. By directly contacting the crews sent to the Mediterranean, non-state actors – that is, NGO vessels – were being sought for assistance, and the monopoly of state authorities over the sea was challenged (Stierl, 2016). Stierl's article only attests to the complexities of the still prevailing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, for which suitable and effective lasting solutions must be envisioned.

Improved CSO Partnerships with EU Institutions

Data collected from Irrera (2016) and Cusumano (2018) reveal that NGOs supported the EU-led maritime SAR operations, such as Frontex-operation Triton and Poseidon, presented in the previous section of this chapter. However, Cusumano's data revealed existing controversies surrounding NGO's involvement in Mediterranean maritime operations and their operational framework. Data from Pastore and Roman (2020) on the role of civil society actors in the

MEDRESET[49] project show that such actors are influential in migration management policymaking. The data also demonstrate that Civil Society Organisations are critical parties in political dialogues, policy recommendations, and negotiations on how different migration crises could be handled. Data collected from a related study on MEDRESET project in Tunisia (Roman, 2018) show that CSOs have collaborated with maritime SAR operations – such as mission Mare Nostrum – to tackle migration challenges. Figure 27 shows data collected from the European Economic and Social Committee [EESC] (2017) on the eight states of intervention for NGOs in the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea.

Source: (EESC, 2017: 9).
Figure 27. Providing Solidarity, Humanitarian Assistance and Inclusion to Migrants and Refugees – NGO Intervention Phases in the Migration Crisis.

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[49] MEDRESET is a consortium of research and academic institutions focusing on different disciplines from the Mediterranean region to develop alternative visions for a new Mediterranean partnership and corresponding EU policies (MEDRESET, n.d.).

Data from the same report show that CSOs that do not embrace a collaborative approach with the EU were criminalised (EESC, 2017). The data collected also reveal that most interventions of the CSOs are oriented as humanitarian-based approaches that may encourage more migration to the EU, as opposed to a border control approach that may reduce irregular migration. Finally, it appears that Civil Society Organisations deal with migration crisis at its active stage, as opposed to reducing the push factors to avoid migrants embarking on the sea journey to the EU.

Summary and Analysis of Key Findings

The data presented in the section above show that the Mediterranean Sea issues and challenges are a complex nexus of socioeconomic, political, and legal issues. In the context of the migration issues in the region, the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea attracted the interests of international and regional partnership, state-based bodies, and NGOs with varied interests. The scrutiny of the data collected on different actors in the Mediterranean Sea show that the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis has innumerable actors that not only contribute to solutions for ending the crisis, but also make the journey towards the solutions a long road full of complex hurdles. The majority of challenges are caused by politically-oriented issues, co-operation, and collaboration in the implementation of policies.

The data collected on international actors in the Mediterranean Sea show that such actors are critical in shaping the maritime SAR and security operations and responses to the migration crisis. Migration issues represent a challenge that not only affects Southern European countries (factually bearing the largest burden in terms of disembarkations) but also other EU countries, considering that illegal migrants accessed other EU countries through the southern blue borders of Europe. It can be argued that the Mediterranean migration crisis is a complex phenomenon that continues to evolve rapidly, with changes in the push and pull factors in the different origin and destination countries – in accordance with Lee's migration theory – and in migration policies of the EU. The ENP and the EMP international policies on migration were critical milestones in the EU's response to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea and in the planning phase of mission Mare Nostrum. The EU as an international actor through its agencies and different bodies such as the ENP, CSDP, EUAFR, EUROSUR, EEAS, ECFR, and EASO integrates humanitarian, economic, sociopolitical, and legal approaches to tackle the migration

challenges in the area. The data above show that the EMP and the ENP are critical actors in contributing to more lasting solutions to the Mediterranean crisis through seeking political stability, peace, and socioeconomic empowerment of Europe and its Mediterranean neighbourhood members. The EU policy on migration influences the nature of maritime operations such as mission Mare Nostrum for combating migration challenges, their operational mandate, their scope, and the co-operation from the EU member states. Scrutiny of the data collected on the role of integrated actors in the Mediterranean migration crisis and other related issues show that the role of such actors in the complex migration nexus mainly centres on policymaking and supporting maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. The data also show that the EU approach to promoting integration, security, and humanitarian response – jointly with other issues – was more effective in dealing with the Mediterranean Sea migration crisis, rather than implementing one approach only. While the UNHCR is a critical actor in the region – especially on issues of protecting the fundamental rights of migrants, such as rescue and provision of humane treatment when at the EU shores, the IOM mainly manages migration data in the region through surveillance monitoring and record-keeping of data concerning figures and demographics of refugees and asylum seekers.

The findings show that the MENA region has increasingly become a critical source of migrants, especially following the Arab Spring in 2010–2011. The GCC is therefore a critical partner in the migration phenomenon, considering that other peripheral impacts of irregular migration – such as terrorism – were associated with irregular migration from the MENA region and other Arab countries. The data show that different international actors involved in the migration policies have different interests in the issue, where some seek to advance EU maritime security while others seek to pursue humanitarian efforts, as well as secure the EU neighbourhood. The data on the role of the actors in the Mediterranean region above show that migration and security in the EU are intertwined. Therefore, any strategic solution effected to address the problem should involve a hybrid approach where two or more elements – such as SAR, anti-smuggling, and anti-trafficking – are jointly enacted. The migration-security nexus persists as one of the top policies in the EU agenda that demands a strategic solution to address the problem. The data, however, reveal different and controversial standpoints of different actors in the migration issues: some actors take a policy influencer approach; others take an observer political stance. A third faction implements the solutions to the challenges identified through maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. Additionally, the data indicate that,

in several cases, there were controversies over the most appropriate way to resolve the migration challenges: some stakeholders support humanitarian options such as search and rescue as priorities, while others prefer pro-security approaches, such as detaining refugees and asylum seekers.

The findings on state actors with and without a Mediterranean coastline show that southern countries were more active in the Mediterranean Sea migration issues, considering that they represent the first EU destination of the irregular migrants. For instance, in the case of state-based actors – namely Italy, maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum were enacted to tackle the increasing migration crisis to protect the Italian blue borders. Data on cross-Mediterranean Sea irregular migration show that irregular migration is a security challenge that requires the collaboration of all stakeholders. The decisions made by the actors and their engagement in Mediterranean Sea migration issues should be informed by the ENP perspectives on integration and co-operation to stop push and pull factors for the irregular movement through the Mediterranean Sea. The data presented in this section show that civil society members and NGOs play a fundamental role, especially in promoting humanitarian missions. In this sense, the role of NGOs is critical in securing the safety of irregular migrants stranded at sea, or those facing the risk of drowning. Finally, the high number of actors in the crisis also makes finding lasting solutions to the migration crisis difficult and lengthy due to political interference.

Although there is an overarching common interest in searching for and rescuing immigrants, anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations are necessary activities to foster maritime security. The data show that the actors above realised that the measures taken by the EU impacted their policies and, therefore, had to align their views on migration issues with the EU policies, or engage in consultation to find common ground that benefits all sides. In addition, the data reveal that some actors in the Mediterranean Sea have little impact on the nature of operations deployed at sea to counter migration challenges, other than issue policy recommendations. The lack of adequate capacity and operational mandate of some of these actors limited the scope and outcome of maritime SAR operations, in particular mission Mare Nostrum. Most of the approaches adopted by individual actors were short-term approaches that would not yield any concrete solutions.

In sum, the EU and members states seem to have 'Europeanised' the response to the migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea. This appears to be ill-devised, because the crisis is an international issue that requires all stakeholders in the EU and its neighbours to find a long-standing solution. The data illustrate cross-Mediterranean migration as a complex nexus of push and pull factors in origin and destination countries – in conformity with Lee's migration theory, and criminals facilitating irregular migration. The data showed that efforts to address the root causes had varying results that were termed 'questionable'. The data on the role of the actors above show that they are instrumental in strategic solutions to the challenge, but at present, there is poor implementation and co-operation amongst the actors: despite advocating for more implementation, different actors pursue different interests in the region. For instance, some states actors – such as the UK – prefer to support more maritime-security-oriented missions in the Mediterranean Sea, as opposed to pure SAR operations. Relating to mission Mare Nostrum, different actors did not support it; thus, the mission remained a state-led (*i.e.*, Italy) operation. Finally, the data show that an increasing number of actors and interested parties in the Mediterranean Sea's migration policies and politics makes the issue more complex considering the dynamic interests in the region. The principal impact of these political actors is politicisation of the migration phenomenon. Although there are innumerable actors in the Mediterranean Sea, as evident in the data above, only a few are directly involved in managing the migration crises issues. The role of states actors – such as Italy, Spain, Greece, Libya, Malta, Turkey, and Tunisia – is fundamental in addressing cross-Mediterranean migration. However, the data also suggest that in addition to state-based operations, regional integration and co-operation are critical in providing long-term solutions to the Mediterranean migration challenges in the EU.

SECTION THREE: Mission Mare Nostrum: A Legal Framework for Maritime Security and Migration Management in the Mediterranean Region

The migration crisis and issues revolving around the use of maritime SAR operations for solving such crises are subject to different legal and regulatory frameworks, either international, regional, or state-based. The data in this section illustrate how legislation and policies impact maritime SAR operations, particularly those that respond to the migration crisis and maritime security issues such as mission Mare Nostrum. The section reviews regional and international frameworks and their challenges when they are applied in the Mediterranean region. International and regional legal frameworks in migration have become a large

collection of periodical treaties, enacted by different regional and state-based regimes. However, most of the treaties enacted seek to reinforce existing frameworks, and deal with issues that were not previously addressed effectively. The key terms used to search for data on legal framework for maritime security and migration management included '*SOLAS*', '*SAR*', '*UNCLOS*', '[*legal*] *framework for maritime control*', '*International Migration Law at Sea*', '*Dublin Convention*'.

International Legal Framework on Migration and Maritime Security Operations [MSOs]

In order of enactment, the international legal frameworks that guide maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea are the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 [SOLAS Convention], the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979 [SAR Convention], and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982 [UNCLOS]. The three legal frameworks gained overwhelming reception over the years, with UNCLOS having 168 members, SOLAS having 162, and the SAR being endorsed by 107 countries (United Nations, 1982). All EU member states ratified the UNCLOS and SOLAS conventions; at the time of writing, only three EU member states are not part of the SAR Convention. The data show that EU maritime SAR operations are largely guided by these three international legal frameworks, and that maritime search and rescue operations are a critical approach to solving the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis. The three conventions hold that countries that adhered to the treaties have the legal obligation to give succour to any sailor in distress, and search for and rescue migrants stranded at sea, particularly those facing the risk of drowning or capsizing.

The SOLAS (1974) and SAR (1979) Conventions

The Safety of Life at Sea [SOLAS] Convention was adopted in 1974 and entered into force in 1980. This protocol was enacted in response to growing concerns over the lack of clear guidelines in the maritime legal framework on the safety of merchant ships and saving lives at sea (SOLAS Convention, 1974). The earliest version of this convention was adopted in 1914 after the Titanic crisis. The legislation was revised and modified four times, chronologically in 1929, 1948, 1960, and 1974 (*ibid.*). The existing version of this convention is referred to as the 'Amended SOLAS', 1974. Data collected from the World Meteorological Organization [WMO] (2020) show that SOLAS safeguards not only the lives of people at sea, but also machinery, vessels, and marine ecosystems from pollution by maritime activities, as previously

illustrated in Bueger's matrix on maritime security (see Figure 11 in Chapter Two). The convention focuses on the safety of the vessel to ensure that consignments and persons onboard reach their destination safely. It also provides a mechanism for seeking help in distressing times, and provides that vessels must have safe navigation systems and procedures, as well as on board telecommunication devices, safety measures and risk mitigation equipment, such as fire extinguishers and lifeboats (SOLAS Convention, 1974). It is noteworthy that, although the convention enshrined maritime assistance to other vessels in distress, it does not have a clear legal framework for SAR and military operations at sea.

The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue [ICMSR] was formed during a conference in Hamburg in 1979 but became operational only in 1985 as a regulatory and legal framework to guide SAR operations in different maritime territories (United Nations, 1979). This protocol was enacted to ensure that maritime SAR operations could be coordinated by a centralised body designated for that purpose, especially when such cases occur in an 'Exclusive Economic Zone'[50] [EEZ]. Although maritime assistance to ships in distress was provided for in existing international frameworks such as the SOLAS, an international legal and regulatory framework covering maritime SAR missions was lacking until the enactment of the ICMSR. Before its enactment, some countries had elaborated systems and national laws for SAR operations; however, some countries did not meet such conditions, thus necessitating the creation of a centralised body and framework to govern how such missions were conducted. The convention recognises SAR operations as technical and complex endeavours, primarily in the context of multiple stakeholders. The technical necessities of a SAR mission are prescribed in a five-chapter *annexe*, where all parties are mandated to have operational and efficient SAR services as part of their coast guard services (*ibid.*). The Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization [IMO] divided the global oceans into 13 SAR regions, where countries have demarcated SAR territories, in accordance with the SAR Convention (IMO, 2020). The SAR 1979 Convention was revised in 1998 and ratified in 2000. The '*persons in distress at sea*' clause was also amended in 2004 and entered into force in 2006 to provide clarity on persons that qualify for SAR assistance at sea. The convention exhaustively explored scenarios of vessel accidents at sea, such as fire-related accidents or capsizing.

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[50] EEZ is the maritime territory beyond 12 nautical miles from any country's shoreline (see Figure 27). Any country can utilise EEZ maritime territory for their economic or other operational benefits (Silvasti, 2017).

Therefore, the SAR convention's legislative provisions were the legal foundation during the planning and pre-deployment stage of mission Mare Nostrum.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS] (1982)

The UNCLOS provides the legal framework on how different activities in territorial and non-territorial waters should be conducted. The legal requirements for SAR activities and operations at sea is described in Article 98(1) of the UNCLOS Convention (United Nations, 1982). The article provides that every state party to this convention with a ship flying *any* flag shall rescue ships or vessels found at sea that are in danger of being lost, and proceed with missions to search for and rescue vessels in distress at sea (*ibid.*). This clause reveals that the obligation to conduct such missions falls on the flag states and is led by the shipmaster or the ship captain. The appointment of the shipmaster is conducted through domestic legislation. It is noteworthy that, in most scenarios, the shipmasters or captains sometimes must disrupt their scheduled voyages to rescue vessels in distress, thus running the risk of finding themselves in a dangerous situation. Article 98(2) provides that all states with a coastline *must* support the formation, operation, and upkeep of an effective and efficient SAR service (United Nations, 1982).

The clause also provides that such states must co-operate with other neighbouring countries to promote maritime security. Article 99 prohibits smuggling and trafficking of migrants, while Article 100 provides that all states must co-operate in combating piracy and other crime-related activities in the high seas and other non-territorial waters. Article 108 also provides that all UNCLOS states must co-operate in combating the smuggling of narcotics and other illegal commodities trafficking by sea. The UNCLOS Article 110 allows vessels that do not fall under categories of 'prohibited vessels' to visit the EU, while Article 111 allows the pursuit of vessels when there is a good reason that they have violated the international maritime laws or state-based maritime laws of the country trespassed (United Nations, 1982) . Articles 29–32 guide maritime operations by the military and other government marine vessels conducted for non-commercial purposes, thus guided Italy in planning and organising mission Mare Nostrum at its earliest stage. The UNCLOS legislation provides that a state has full economic rights in the maritime territory extending up to 12 nautical miles from its shoreline, while the areas beyond the 12 miles are categorised as EEZ (Silvasti, 2017).

Figure 28 illustrates the UNCLOS framework for maritime control (subdivisions of maritime territories and jurisdictions for such areas).
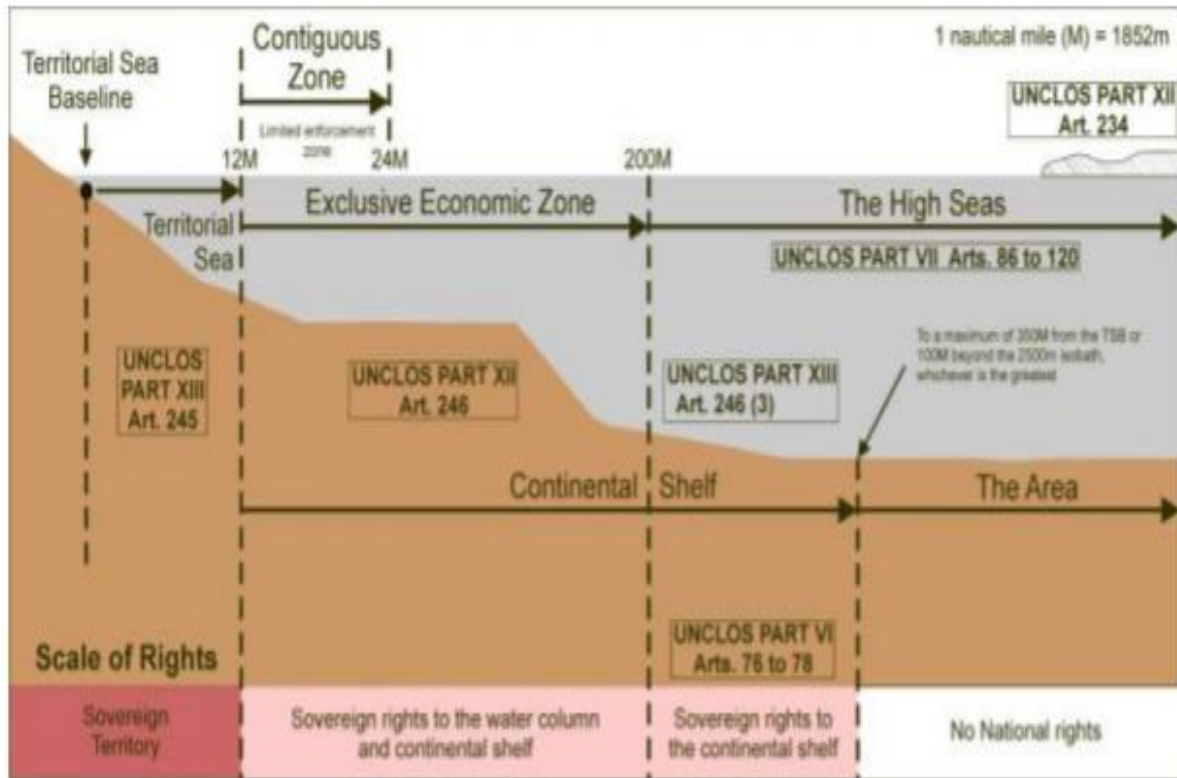
Source: (Silvasti, 2017: 12).
Figure 28. UNCLOS Framework for Maritime Control.

The International Migration Law [IML]

The international migration legal framework transcends issues on migration management to encompass human rights laws. Data collected from Banda (2019) reveal that the international migration law does not refer to a specific law or legal document that guides international migration but rather is a collection of rules, procedures, principles, statutory acts, and other legal provisions that collectively guide international best practices relating to migrants inland or in maritime territories. Such principles are drawn from different divisions of international regulatory and legal frameworks, such as labour law, human rights law, refugee law, maritime law, humanitarian law[51], and consular law. Data collected from the same author show that the IMO, the International Seabed Authority, and the International Whaling Commission are

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[51] '[*H*]*umanitarian law regulates the conduct of warfare (*jus in bello*, as opposed to* jus ad bellum*, which instead determines the criteria and legitimate reasons for engaging in war) with specific regard to the need to protect civilian people and infrastructure, and to treat war prisoners humanely* (Cuttitta, 2014: 3)'.

critical parties in the functioning of the UNCLOS legal and regulatory frameworks on maritime security and migration. The International Organization for Migration [IOM], analysed in the previous section and identified as one of the most critical actors in the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis, is instrumental in the ratification, acceptance, awareness, creation, and implementation of migration rights, considering the legal provisions in such laws. Migrants have fundamental human rights, such as the protection of life, and thus should be accorded such rights, regardless of their legal state (*i.e.*, migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, clandestine[52]). Data collected from Martin (2005) also show that international migration law is broad, as it incorporates legal provisions from different laws. The data from the same author also show that migrants have the right to safety, as prescribed in the legal provisions of international refugee and humanitarian law.

Regional Legal Framework: EU Legal Obligations Towards People in the High Seas

The main regional regulatory and legal framework that guides maritime operations in Europe, especially safety operations such as mission Mare Nostrum, is the EU's legislative and normative system. The EU has different branches that manage different issues pertinent to the EU's economic, social, security, and political welfare. Data collected from Sotiroski (2016) reveal that the EU marine safety policy has four provisions. The policies provide safety in development projects conducted in the maritime territories and enactment of integrated maritime policies for EU integration. The Directive 98/18/EC, adopted in March 1998 and amended on 5 March 2002 by Commission Directive 2002/25/EC, regulates the safety of passenger's vessels. The EU regulations and legal provisions for migration are embedded in existing EU frameworks. Data collected on regional frameworks show that EU regulations and legal provisions for maritime SAR and security operations are guided by international laws on maritime affairs, such as UNCLOS, the SAR Convention, and the SOLAS Convention. The regional legal frameworks and regulations draw insights from the international framework in a bid to reinforce them. Data collected from Veal, Tsimplis, and Serdy (2019) show that migrants and vessels have legal rights of navigation, provided that the vessels are not categorised as prohibited vessels. Veal *et al.* (2019) also explored the legal framework for 'uncrewed' marine vehicles because they had increasingly become instrumental in maritime operations, such as for surveillance or patrolling activities. The data collected show that modern technologies and

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[52] Refer to '*Key Terminology: (Legal) Definitions Matter*' in the introductory chapter.

other resources involved in modern maritime security operations were marred with the controversy surrounding the previous regulatory and legal framework guiding their deployment in maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. Data from Veal *et al.* (2019) show that such resources that do not fall under categories of ships do not enjoy the navigation rights under the UNCLOS Convention legal framework. Directive 2002/59/EC of the EU is also fundamental in maritime security operations, particularly in terms of monitoring of hazardous ships and intervention in the event of incidents and accidents at sea (Usewicz, 2020). Finally, the data collected on the EU regulatory and legal framework on migration issues and maritime operations show that most regional frameworks are enshrined in international regulations.

The Schengen Border Code [SBC]

As previously discussed, the 'High Seas' and 'EEZ' are international maritime territories. The UN rights and privileges for all parties include: the right of navigation; laying pipelines; operating submarines and other water vessels; overflights; fishing; construction of man-made islands and infrastructures; offshore oil platforms; scientific research centres; and other legal utilisation of the 'international' sea under the UNCLOS (United Nations, 1982). Article 89 provides that no states or entities can claim any part of the high seas and any maritime territory that exceeds 24 nautical miles from its shores is its sovereign territory (*ibid.*). The legal framework governing maritime surveillance in the EU has four fundamental legal instruments for border control, *viz.*, (i) EUROSUR, (ii) Frontex, (iii), the Schengen Borders Code [SBC], and (iv) the Regulation on Surveillance of External Sea Borders. Regulation (EU) No. 2016/399 of the SBC is mandated with the establishment of EU regulations to control movements of persons across territorial borders. Article 3 provides that any person wishing to cross the border to another country's territory must declare reasons and follow duly established procedures for such entry. Article 2.12 empowers Schengen border control agencies to conduct an operation that prevents people from circumventing border control checks and immigration protocols. Additionally, Article 13(2) of this regulation also supports that such border control checks should be stationary, and surveillance should be conducted to reinforce border control checks and apprehend irregular migrants trying to evade immigration checks (EUR-Lex, n.d.).

Article 20 of the SBC has provisions for border control that explain measures, how border control checks should be conducted, and who should undergo such process within the Schengen area. EU Regulation (EC) No. 2007/2004 – amended in EU Regulation (EU) 1168/2011 –

provided the legal foundation of Frontex-operations. After mission Mare Nostrum was closed down in October 2014 following pressure for burden-sharing on maritime security and migration management crisis amongst EU members, the legal framework for Frontex was amended to Regulation (EU) 2016/1624 (*ibid.*). The amended legal framework supported the enactment of integrated border management systems.

The European Union also enacted EUROSUR as a legal framework to promote more co-operation amongst EU stakeholders. The emphasis of EUROSUR was on information sharing, especially on surveillance and co-operation in dealing with migration issues. Regulation (EU) No. 656/2014 also supports border surveillance practices (EUR-Lex, n.d.). Data collected from Silvasti (2017) show that the legal instruments that guided the nature of the response to the EU irregular migration include the UNCLOS, the protection of human rights as described in refugee and human right law, the Transnational Organized Crime Convention, the Migrant Smuggling Protocol, and other IMO initiatives. The data collected from the same author also show that the EU, under an integrated border management system, has elaborated systems and technology resources for surveillance and information sharing.

The Dublin Convention

Data collected from Vink (2013) reveal that the Dublin Convention is a collection of different laws and regulations in the EU that illustrate the treatment given to asylum seekers during the asylum-seeking process. The legislation provides a clear guideline on the countries' responsibility for handling asylum applications legislation, and was enacted in 2003 in response to the EU asylum-seeking and refugee crisis resulting from mass migration to the EU, mainly through the Mediterranean Sea and the northern Balkan routes (UNHCR, 2003). This legislation borrows heavily from international human rights law and refugees' law. The legal provision of the convention was that asylum seekers should be granted a fair hearing of their asylum-seeking claim and application, and that they should not be transferred to EU territories that could not guarantee a fair hearing (Tryggvadottir, 2017). Additionally, the legislation provides that asylum seekers should be detained as the last resort after all other options have been exploited. Furthermore, asylum claimants should be accorded a fair and unbiased interview hearing. Dublin III Regulation (604/2013) legislation holds that child welfare during immigration procedure should be the prime consideration when deciding where to settle the child. The legislation provides that children should be settled in countries where they have a

family (European Council on Refugees and Exiles – ECRE, 2019). Data collected from Hurwitz (1999) also provide remedies for asylum-seeking claims that were rejected after an inconclusive immigration vetting, insofar that the country that authorises the entry of any refugees or asylum seekers holds the responsibility for processing the asylum-seeking claims.

Legal and Regulatory Challenges

One of the main challenges associated with the previously discussed UNCLOS legal framework for maritime SAR missions was that the convention did not clearly describe who could be regarded as a person lost, stranded, or in distress at sea, as well as the scope of assistance to be rendered, thus giving room for misinterpretation and disputes (Marchal & Voetelink, 2018). Secondly, this provision faces challenges because ship captains could not be expected to offer assistance at the expense of their ships' safety or be expected to offer assistance if such SAR missions are impractical and unachievable under the shipmaster's operational mandate. To illustrate this challenge, for instance, a ship may be too small – or inadequately equipped, or untrained – to search for and rescue persons stranded at sea. Therefore, in such cases, some persons would not be rescued not because they are not entitled to humanitarian intervention but because the ship could simply not conduct the rescue.

The main challenge to the Dublin Convention lies in finding common ground on burden-sharing of refugees and asylum seekers amongst the EU member states. Such processes are politically sensitive issues, thus making the process of settling for shared responsibility *lengthy*. The existing legal and regulatory frameworks for dealing with migration and related issues are challenging because they have conflicting objectives and agendas (Marchal & Voetelink, 2018). For instance, legal provisions for promoting maritime security could involve punitive measures to irregular migrants that would be contradictory to the international human rights law and refugee law. While this could be seen as beneficial in terms of security, some regional and state-based legal provisions on how irregular migrants and asylum seekers should be treated would differ from what international laws dictate. For instance, the UNCLOS and SAR Conventions advocate searching and rescuing migrants at risk of drowning, stranded, or lost at sea but downplay the fundamental maritime security threat that such irregular migrants and migration flows could pose on the European Union territory. Such international legal frameworks fail to recognise that migration crisis management transcends maritime SAR operations to encompass security-based approaches to counter smuggling and human

trafficking, amongst other maritime security threats. The data show that most laws and regulations emphasised humanitarian-based responses to maritime security and migration challenges in the Mediterranean, thus revealing an existing loophole for conducting military-based missions. Legal frameworks guide military operations, but they do not adequately define their operational mandates to encompass maritime SAR missions, anti-trafficking, anti-smuggling, and anti-piracy operations. The main challenges emanate from jurisdictions, access to asylum protection, and willingness of states to take responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers.

The challenges above manifest in two primary ways: first, most EU member states – particularly those with no Mediterranean coastline, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two – have been reluctant to grant international protection of refugees and asylum seekers, especially within the relocation framework from highly burdened EU southern states to EU northern states. Such challenges have led to the evolution of asylum and refugee policies to include partnerships, and agreements to avoid accommodating refugees and asylum seekers by relocating them to other countries (Trauner, 2016). Second, the challenges manifest in the lack of the existing frameworks to uphold the refugees and human rights law in extraterritorial high sea waters, which was exactly the case for the theatre of operations in which mission Mare Nostrum was in effect. Although the EU's management of migration crisis and related challenges are guided by integrated border management and global approaches to migration policies, these two categories of policies are applied in inland and maritime territories, thus posing concerns over human rights regarding the protection of migrants in the EEZ and the high seas territories. The challenge above was typical for Frontex-operations, which, unlike mission Mare Nostrum, concentrated their interventions more on territorial waters and minimise operations on non-territorial EEZ and high sea waters, as analysed in Section Two of this chapter.

Summary and Analysis of Key Findings

It can be argued that international, regional, and national frameworks guided the implementation and conduct of maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea such as mission Mare Nostrum. The legal frameworks above operate within four fundamental principles of (i) universality, (ii) territorial sovereignty, (iii) nationality, and (iv) protective principles. The data collected show that maritime operations and surveillance systems adopted

by the EU and its member states in managing the cross-Mediterranean migration and maritime security issues have their foundation in the UNCLOS Convention. The convention divides the oceans and seas into maritime zones for easier management of such territories, and provides clear authority on states and regions responsible for promoting maritime security and managing migration flows in the mandated zones.

It can be argued that articles 29–32 of the UNCLOS provide a crucial anchor for maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea, such as mission Mare Nostrum and other EUNAVFOR MED, NATO- and Frontex-mandated operations. The UNCLOS legal framework supports states to conduct maritime SAR operations within the existing legal provisions, and identifies the 12 nautical miles from the shoreline as the prescribed territorial waters of that nation. The UNCLOS legal framework also provides sovereignty over the air space, water surface space, and seabed for 12 nautical miles, thus allowing the states to devise different social, economic, military operations in such territories. Although the protocol clarifies such sovereignty and provides a guideline on how such operations should be conducted, the convention framework, however, does not clarify whether non-territorial waters should be patrolled by states or joint agencies. The protocol also supports limited – yet highly controlled – maritime operations in the 'Contiguous Zone[53]' (previously illustrated in Figure 27) to ensure that they prevent any security threats from encroaching on their maritime territories. However, despite EU member states having criminal laws to impose penalties on irregular entries, some member states have not drawn hitherto a clear distinction between *scafisti*, traffickers, *passeurs* on the one hand, and the needy migrants such as asylum seekers and refugees on the other hand.

The data presented in this section show that the migration crisis and maritime SAR and security operations in the Mediterranean region operate within different legal and regulatory frameworks. The scrutiny of the legal frameworks and protocols shows that most regional and national regulations are enshrined in the international law of the sea and other international maritime laws, such as the SAR and SOLAS conventions. The EU member states, especially in the northern regions, have continuously shown a lack of support for the southern European states in dealing with migration issues within the existing legal and regulatory framework.

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[53] The Contiguous Line '[…] *lies adjacent to the territorial sea but up to 24 nautical miles* […] *from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. Within the contiguous zone the coastal state may exercise the control necessary to prevent/punish infringement of its fiscal, immigration, or sanitary laws within its territory or territorial sea* (Arsenijevic *et al.*, 2017: 4).

Some of the legal provisions, frameworks, and bodies introduced in the quest to improve the EU migration and maritime security management practices included the following: Frontex-operations, integrated border management systems, enactments of EU asylum support office to the 'fast-track' asylum claim processing, financial support for EU border agencies, and launching of voluntary relocation services to other EU countries. The legal framework for dealing with migration and maritime security issues shows that excessive political interference affects the efficiency in implementing such policies, as discussed in Section Two of this chapter. International, regional, state-based, and non-government civil society actors have an interest in the Mediterranean migration and maritime security issues, thus depicting a complex nexus of issues under which the existing policies must be improved. Although laws and regulations are superior to politics, it can be argued that political goodwill is critical in the management of migration and consequently maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum.

Migration and maritime security operations in the Mediterranean Sea operate within three cadres of legal and regulatory frameworks. The cadres include: (i) international frameworks – such as the UNCLOS and SAR conventions, human rights law, refugee law, and the SOLAS Convention; (ii) regional frameworks – such as EUROSUR, the EU framework for migration, maritime security, and border control, and (iii) national-based frameworks. Although there is a range of legal provisions, the laws and regulations have enhanced co-operation in managing migration flow into the EU by sea and management of refugees and asylum seekers. However, the myriad frameworks have also challenges, especially in relation to countries that do not implement some policies, thus affecting their efficacy. Finally, data show that the EU migration policies on asylum-seeking and refugees require improvement to increase burden-sharing, and that most regional and state-based legal and regulatory frameworks are embedded in legal provisions of different international laws. Previous legal frameworks and existing regulations support burden-sharing as a migration crisis resolution approach. However, some EU member states have been reluctant to implement efficient and fully operational systems to facilitate asylum seekers and refugees from highly burdened southern states to less strained northern states. Finally, the data show that political interference also affects the implementation and support accorded by other EU states on different legislative frameworks for migration and maritime security.

CHAPTER FIVE: MISSION MARE NOSTRUM DATA [2]
A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

Saving lives is non-negotiable. Saving lives is what we do, what we will continue to do and fight for, and what we urge you to defend.

― MSF International President Dr Joanne Liu[54]

This chapter presents and analyses the findings gleaned from the semi-structured interviews utilised for this research. The study combined convenience and purposive sampling obtained from 16 respondents. Data distilled from interviews were abductively coded to generate 10 main themes listed in numerical order. The topics address the research question and sub-questions, and reflect the principal points of this study. Each theme discusses and analyses the data collected and highlights the key findings, which are summarised at the end of the chapter and will be thoroughly compared and contrasted with the existing literature in Chapter Six. Evidence takes the form of quotations from interviews and extracts from observations. The interview questions originated from the main themes covered in Chapter Two, while other questions were formulated to complement the data missing from the literature review (see Appendix III: 'Interview Guide' for the full list of questions). Transcription conventions are used as follows: excerpts from interviews are formatted in *italic* font; <u>underlined</u> text represents emphasis added by the researcher; in addition, the researcher's explanatory notes and analytical comments are included and marked by square brackets or footnotes. A set of five asterisks is meant to replace any confidential information, which was sanitised during the transcription process. It is noteworthy that not every respondent commented on each theme presented; hence, the sources are not always presented in a sequential order (*i.e.*, from A1 to A15).

1. *Effectiveness of Mare Nostrum in Saving Lives at Sea*

All 16 participants explained that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in SAR operations, in line with the data collected and analysed in Chapter Four. However, every participant had different perspectives on the level of effectiveness, as some perceived the operation to be more effective in SAR interventions than others. For instance, participant A1 explained that '[*M*]*are*

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[54] MSF International President Dr Joanne Liu's speech on a panel discussion at the Global Compact on Migration conference, Marrakesh, 11 December 2018 (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, 2018: n.p.).

Nostrum was highly effective, even if nobody liked it'[55] while participant A11 stated that '[*M*]*are Nostrum was highly effective in saving persons rescued at sea'*[56]. Regarding this, interviewee A4 stated that '[*M*]*are Nostrum was the largest and most effective maritime search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean Sea'*[57]. Respondent A7 said that the mission was effective, while participants A6 and A9 said that it was '[…] *very effective'*[58]. The data collected from Admiral De Giorgi show that mission Mare Nostrum was the most effective operation conducted in the Mediterranean for saving the lives of migrants stranded at sea (see Appendix VI). According to interviewee A1, SAR missions are meant to be enacted to save lives, and *not* to combat immigrant crisis or trafficking, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Admiral De Giorgi, however, affirmed that mission Mare Nostrum was not only conducted for SAR missions but also incorporated two other operational mandates. The threefold operational mandates of Mare Nostrum were: (i) maritime security operations; (ii) arresting human traffickers and smugglers to reduce cases of uncontrolled access into the EU; and (iii) rendering humanitarian help to needy migrants. Admiral De Giorgi explained that mission Mare Nostrum employed a range of personnel that not only ensured the safety of migrants rescued, but also conducted immigration processing of migrants *before* they could be safely disembarked at the Italian shores. Interviewee A12 explained that the mission was effective in SAR operations, in the assertion that '[*M*]*are Nostrum was a success. Probably a victim of its success. What we did when* [we] *were in operations speaks for itself. There is no doubt that it was effective* (emphasis added)'[59]. Participant A14 asserted that '[*T*]*he Mission was effective in saving lives'*[60]. An analysis of the data collected above shows that all the respondents supported the researcher's assumption that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in saving human lives in the Mediterranean Sea in 2013 and 2014.

Participant A1 explained that maritime SAR missions are tailored to humanitarian responses, as evident in the assertion that '[*T*]*hey are not created for tackling the immigration phenomenon'*[61]. The same respondent explained that, even though mission Mare Nostrum

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[55] A1, interview with researcher, 1 June 2020.
[56] A11, interview with researcher, 27 July 2020.
[57] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.
[58] A6, interview with researcher, 17 June 2020. | A9, interview with researcher, 9 July 2020.
[59] A12, interview with researcher, 3 August 2020.
[60] A14, interview with researcher, 21 August 2020.
[61] A1, interview with researcher, 1 June 2020.

arrested traffickers, they only forwarded them to the relevant local authorities for prosecution. Interviewee A2 also agreed with A1 insofar that maritime SAR operations are effective in saving lives and humanitarian assistance, and not purported to solve immigration issues, as expected by the public. The same participant explained that the main challenge was represented by misguided perceptions from the public that SAR missions conducted by the Italian Navy would curb – and, eventually, put an end to – migration issues, as discussed in Section One of the previous chapter. Respondents A2 explained that mission Mare Nostrum was very effective in saving lives, but the international and local community expected more from it, especially on reducing or ending irregular migration to the EU by sea – which was not part of its mandate.

Respondent A2 asserted that '[…] *we* [the Italian Navy, here represented by mission Mare Nostrum] *cannot do much to stop immigration*'[62]. The data gleaned from the interviewees' explanations indicate that the operational mandate of SAR operations did not allow mission Mare Nostrum to tackle migration challenges – such as trafficking and smuggling – or ensure maritime security. The same participant [A2] suggested that only a change in the mission mandate would enable maritime SAR operations to combat such issues. This perspective is evident in the assertion from the same interviewee in response to Question Two[63] that '[*M*]*aybe with a different mandate? But even with a different mandate, scope of work and rules of engagement, we would need more resources. Money. Not only that. ***** We would need more engagement from law enforcement* (emphasis added)'. The data above show that mission Mare Nostrum had a constricted mandate to save lives and not to tackle immigration issues, as outlined in the literature review in Chapter Two and discussed in Chapter Four.

Interviewee A4 agreed that maritime SAR missions are effective in saving lives but are not conceived to deal with immigration or trafficking issues. The respondent asserted that '[*M*]*aritime security operations are not an effective way to manage, or reduce, or stop, irregular migration or prevent human trafficking*'[64]. According to the same interviewee, maritime SAR missions are, however, useful in the larger picture, but they cannot be useful solely in combating smuggling and trafficking, since other actors such as political leaders, immigration officials, and judiciary services are needed in such a setup. Participant A6 also

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[62] A2, interview with researcher, 1 June 2020.
[63] See Appendix IV.
[64] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.

explained that SAR missions are effective in saving lives but had reservations about their effectiveness in countering human trafficking and smuggling. The respondent did not explain further nor expanded on the topic.

Nine interviewees agreed that maritime SAR operations are effective ways of saving lives. Participant A7, however, explained that military operations are a deterrent to trafficking and smuggling operations, but do not entirely stop them. In agreement with the majority of the respondents' perspectives, interviewee A9 explained that, although they do reduce illegal immigration, that particular objective is not the main mandate of maritime SAR operations, adding that such operations to combat trafficking and smuggling could not be effective without the support of the Navy. Respondent A7 explained that mission Mare Nostrum was mandated to reduce human trafficking and smuggling but did not have enough resources to achieve this mandate effectively, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Respondent A11 too agreed that Mare Nostrum was combating human trafficking but clarified that it was not the main objective of the mission, with the assertion that '[…] *we were also curbing immigration, however that is not the main objective of a search and rescue maritime operation*'[65]. The analysis of the data collected shows that maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum were effective in rendering humanitarian help, but their effectiveness in immigration and maritime security issues was debatable. The interview data also show that maritime SAR missions conducted by the military did deter human smuggling and trafficking operations but did not stop them. Lastly, the data indicate that SAR operations could combat immigration issues if the operational mandate were to be expanded and more resources allocated.

An analysis of the data from the 16 participants and their perspectives on maritime SAR operations shows that maritime operations are enacted to primarily save the lives of migrants. The respondents had varied perspectives on the level of effectiveness of such operations, especially in the context of mission Mare Nostrum. Data from Adm De Giorgi showed that SAR operations are effective in saving lives of migrant if funded – and coordinated – adequately. Admiral De Giorgi, however, maintained that the primary goal of SAR missions is

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[65] A11, interview with researcher, 27 July 2020.

to render humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress at sea or those facing imminent danger in the hands of their *scafisti*.

2. *Effectiveness of Mare Nostrum in Managing the Migration Crisis*

The interview data collected show that maritime SAR missions are not designed to deal with immigration issues but to search and rescue migrants at sea. Comparison of the data shows that some participants – such as A6, A7, A11, and Adm De Giorgi – viewed SAR operations as helpful in tackling migration issues but not as adequately as expected. For instance, respondent A6 stated that '[…] *military ships could be a deterrent for human traffickers*'[66]. Search and rescue operations conducted by the military could bar human traffickers and smugglers as they fear arrest and other penal consequences. However, the data also show that mission Mare Nostrum did not have adequate mandate and resources to conduct efficient anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling activities.

Interviewee A1 explained that SAR operations are not created to tackle migration issues and could not, therefore, be effective solutions to such issues. The explanation offered by A1 on this standpoint is that military-led SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum had no operational mandate and resources to conduct such mission extensions. For instance, the same respondent stated that '[W]*e are the Navy, we are military* [personnel]. *We do not have judicial powers* [to detain or arrest] *like* Carabinieri *or* Guardia di Finanza'[67]. Participant A14 clarified that maritime SAR operations are not designed to deal with immigration issues, and mission Mare Nostrum was never intended to stop irregular migration to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea. The same interviewee explained that Mare Nostrum was mandated to save the lives of migrants and reduce those activities that facilitate irregular migration, further explaining that the public had the wrong perception – mainly fostered by the media – about the operation: that it would *stop* irregular migration at sea. In defence of Mare Nostrum, participant A14 explained that the mission was not a pull factor as hyper-publicised by the media and enunciated in Lee's migration theory, because the high influx of irregular migrants to the EU through the Mediterranean route had been happening for decades, long before mission Mare Nostrum was even launched, without any control or reliable surveillance. Respondent A6 shed light on this controversy around the expectation amongst the Italians and the EU for Mare

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[66] A6, interview with researcher, 17 June 2020.
[67] A1, interview with researcher, 1 June 2020.

Nostrum to end irregular migration to the EU, although such actions were not part of its mandate.

Interviewee A12 explained that maritime SAR operations are not quite effective in dealing with immigration issues because for SAR activities to deal with immigration issues effectively, they would require tremendous resources and co-operation from other partners. The respondent asserted that '[…] *they* [maritime SAR operations] *would need more resources, I mean, more money, and better co-operation at the political level* (emphasis added) '[68]. The data show that navy-led SAR operations have no power to prosecute smugglers and traffickers and could not, therefore, be strategic solutions alone to migration issues, proving that there is indeed a gap between maritime operations and migration issues, and as highlighted by the researcher in his theoretical approach for this research. The data, however, reveal that military maritime SAR operations *could* reduce or deter smuggling and human trafficking, if provided with the necessary resources and the adequate level of co-operation with supportive partners at the political level. An analysis of the interview data above shows that Mare Nostrum's operational mandate was limited to rendering humanitarian assistance to migrants, in line with the findings from the previous chapter. It is the researcher's opinion that with an expanded mandate, support from political stakeholders, co-operation with other EU neighbours and financial and personnel resources, maritime SAR operations could also contribute to effective and sustainable solutions to unregulated migration issues.

3. *Effectiveness of Mare Nostrum in Maritime Security*

A scrutiny of the data collected from the interviewees shows that maritime SAR operations promote maritime security and safety of migrants at sea through reducing cases of fatalities, smuggling, and trafficking. However, the data show that SAR operations alone are not sufficient to guarantee maritime security. Interviewee A9 explained that SAR operations for saving migrants at sea should also involve stopping activities that encourage migration by sea, alluding to the pull factors as in Lee's migration theory. Respondent A4 held that maritime operations conducted by the military to search for and rescue migrants and arresting traffickers and smugglers are not the best way to deal with migration as a maritime security issue.

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[68] A12, interview with researcher, 3 August 2020.

The data above show that maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum partly addressed the challenges but could not be regarded as sufficient or standalone solutions to maritime security challenges with respect to migration issues. Interviewee A4 stated that '[M]aritime security operations are not an effective way to manage, or reduce, or stop, irregular migration or prevent human trafficking: yes, they can be a great asset to the whole picture, however, they cannot be the only actors'[69]. Data collected from seven respondents show that maritime security operations alone are not effective in fostering maritime security, as critical support from political leaders, robust policies, financial and personnel support, along with the involvement of all local authorities, are key to finding a lasting solution to the cross-Mediterranean migration and security challenges.

Information from Adm De Giorgi shows that mission Mare Nostrum facilitated the arrest of smugglers and traffickers and destroyed their vessels. Such response actions to these clandestine activities made them very expensive and risky for criminals, thus reducing the number of criminal activities at sea. Admiral De Giorgi's perspective was that smugglers and traffickers are leading clandestine activities that threaten maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea; thus, a reduction in these activities fostered an improvement of the security situation in the region. In support of Adm de Giorgi, interviewee A14 added that heavy military presence at sea during Mare Nostrum was a deterrent to organised criminal activities, and most of them resulted in either changing routes or reducing their illicit activities of smuggling and trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea. Interviewee A1 explained that maritime SAR operations are effective in conducting security operations from a tactical perspective but clarified that Mare Nostrum as a SAR operation could not offer long-term solutions because such operations have no mandate to prosecute arrested smugglers and traffickers.

In a related line of thought, interviewee A4 explained that military maritime SAR operations have no judicial mandate for law enforcement on criminals arrested at sea. The respondent asserted that for military-led SAR operations to be effective in fostering maritime security, '[…] policies, engagement at the political level, a great network of intelligence with other countries, and support from police officials or law enforcement'[70] are needed. An analysis of the data from the interviews affirms that maritime SAR operations alone are not effective in

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[69] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.
[70] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.

ensuring maritime security. The analysis shows that SAR operations could only reduce threats to maritime security such as trafficking and smuggling but not eliminate them, as this requires maritime operations that are more focused on security tasks. Admiral De Giorgi also explained that mission Mare Nostrum metamorphosed into '*Mare Sicuro*' after its closure in October 2014 (see Appendix I), but was limited to patrolling activities only. It is noteworthy that he further explained that ISIS cells growing in Libya – and their attacks on Libyan oil platforms – increased Mare Nostrum's attention on monitoring their activities ashore. The Italian Navy maritime mission Mare Sicuro near the Libyan territory continued until 2016, when EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia was launched to take over (see Appendix I).

4. *Importance of Maritime Security Operations in Managing the EU's 'Blue Borders'*

The study also investigated whether maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum were critical in managing the EU's 'maritime margins', through evaluating whether the EU would manage to control its blue borders and deal with unprecedented changes associated with unregulated migration to the EU without such operations. This dimension was critical in evaluating the importance of mission Mare Nostrum in not only EU maritime security but also blue border control, alongside its main objective of saving lives at sea. Interviewee Adm De Giorgi explained that the EU could not control the EU blue borders and prevent illegal immigration without the support of military maritime security operations.

According to Adm De Giorgi, the EU *failed* to control irregular access to the EU by migrants in the context of Frontex-operations. For instance, when responding to Question Three[71], he stated that '[*T*]*he purpose of Frontex* [was] *to seize the EU borders against illegal immigration. It failed* (emphasis added)'[72]. Admiral De Giorgi explained that, while a significant number of the migrants setting off for the EU through the Mediterranean Sea were drowning, most managed to access the EU through Italy. Admiral De Giorgi illustrated that the patrol officials would intercept them and bring them ashore, or they would access the Italian shores by themselves, without any interception or immigration processing (see Appendix VI). In response to the same interview question [Q3], participant A1 firmly explained that without military maritime security operations, the EU would not be able to control its blue borders. Data collected from interviewee A1 revealed that SAR operations conducted by NGOs, for

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[71] See Appendix III.
[72] Admiral Giuseppe De Giorgi, interview with researcher, 24 June 2020.

instance, are not designed to conduct border control operations; thus, a military presence is required to control the EU maritime margins and reduce irregular migration to the EU.

The same interviewee [A1] expressed an opinion that '[...] *without us* [the Navy], *the European Union would have <u>no way</u> of managing the number of migrants coming to Europe* (emphasis added)'[73]. Data collected from the majority of respondents showed that the EU could not effectively control their blue borders and mitigate the security-related risks associated with uncontrolled migration to the EU by sea without maritime security operations of a military nature. Interviewee A4 asserted that military maritime operations have special mandates to deal with security issues, and must, therefore, have a specific focus to deal with immigration to be effective in border control. Interviewee A4 also agreed that the EU still needs a military Navy to conduct such missions. The same respondent stated that the '[*E*]*uropean Union could not be able to manage the Mediterranean Sea in terms of irregular migration without maritime security operations*'[74] but also added that such operations require support from other government agencies.

Interviewee A6 explained that the EU requires the navy for border control but added that immigration issues could not be adequately solved by the military alone, as previously discussed. Data gleaned from the same respondent further showed that immigration challenges require a change in migration policies and co-operation from all relevant stakeholders, explaining that the EU could not manage migration without security operations for maritime security and border control. For instance, the respondent illustrated that there is no alternative to military-led maritime security operations for border control and migration crises, in the assertion '[I] *cannot see any other alternative to that. You take Frontex* [as an example]. *Frontex didn't do much to counter irregular immigration into Europe*'[75]. Participant A9 had a similar perspective, as seen in the statement '[I] *do not think so. In fact, no. You know, Frontex tried, but it was not a maritime search and rescue operation. That's why <u>it failed</u>* (emphasis added)'[76]. According to interviewee A11, mission Mare Nostrum was an example of maritime security operation that managed to monitor, intercept, and mitigate potential risks associated with irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea. Interviewee A9 added that Mare

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[73] A1, interview with researcher, 1 June 2020.
[74] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.
[75] A6, interview with researcher, 17 June 2020.
[76] A9, interview with researcher, 9 July 2020.

Nostrum had high results not even comparable to Frontex's or NGOs' because it saved many lives without external pressure or politicisation.

Participant A12 explained that only the military is capable of patrolling EU blue borders efficiently because they have the mandate to operate in the marine surface space, airspace, and underwater, as also revealed in the previous chapter. Respondent A14 illustrated that the EU could not manage irregular migration through border control without maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. Interviewee A14 also asserted '[N]*o. If you take Frontex, they* [Triton] *were mandated to protect the EU borders from illegal migration, but they failed* (emphasis added)'[77]. The perspective of interviewee A14 was that the EU border control operations are best suited to be conducted by the navy, in conjunction with other supportive stakeholders. Finally, the data reveal that the EU maritime territory could not be patrolled effectively to prevent irregular migration to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea without military security operations.

5. *Accountability and Compliance to Legal Frameworks: IOM, UNCLOS and Human Rights Law*

Data collected from interviewee A1 show that mission Mare Nostrum held itself accountable as it followed all the extant protocols and procedures. The accountability[78] of the mission was reiterated by other supranational organisations' officials on several formal occasions. Twelve respondents and Adm De Giorgi concurred that mission Mare Nostrum was accountable in all its period of operation. The accountability was fostered through ensuring that the mission complied with all legal frameworks and regulations, such as the SOLAS, the SAR Convention, and the UNCLOS, as discussed in Chapter Four. Data collected from respondent A1 showed that mission Mare Nostrum was compliant with all the extant legal frameworks and protocols. The same interviewee added that the operation was conducted within the regulations and policies of the UNCLOS and the IMO. Interviewee A14 explained that all legal issues and consideration were factored in during the planning and pre-deployment phases of the mission, in line with the data collected and analysed in the documentary review.

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[77] A14, interview with researcher, 21 August 2020.
[78] In terms of obligation to accept responsibility for mission Mare Nostrum's actions, interventions, and search and rescue operations at sea.

Considering the complex nature of mission Mare Nostrum, which encompassed SAR and anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking duties, the operational mandate and tactical aspects of the mission were conducted in compliance with the UNCLOS Convention and IMO regulations. For instance, interviewee A11 stated that '[…] *accountability and integrity were preserved at all times. All sea operations and interventions from Mare Nostrum were compliant with the IMO and the UNCLOS*'[79]. Interviewee A6 revealed that, in addition to the IMO and UNCLOS legal regulations, mission Mare Nostrum complied with all standards and procedures for maritime security operations, such as human rights regulations, refugee law, and the Dublin Convention. Participant A4 explained that there were no concerns over the accountability or legal issues because the mission adhered to all legal frameworks. All respondents expressed that mission Mare Nostrum was conducted in full compliance with international human rights law and the International Migration Law [IML].

6. *Tactical and Operational Capabilities of Mare Nostrum*

Interviewee A1 explained that mission Mare Nostrum's tactical and operational capabilities were highly effective in monitoring the Mediterranean Sea territory it patrolled. The information obtained from the same interviewee also showed that Mare Nostrum had control and responsibility, as well as clear security guidelines, on their operational and tactical mandate to search and arrest any unauthorised surface or submerged vessel. Interviewee A1 explained that the tactical and operational mandate was effectively fulfilled, and all maritime security threats within its operational *radius* and area of responsibility were successfully intercepted and addressed.

Interviewee A2 also suggested that maritime security operations conducted by the navy are critical in monitoring the Mediterranean Sea because, contrary to a chronic misconception that the navy exclusively monitors surface activities, it also monitors beneath the surface (*i.e.*, the subsurface) and the maritime airspace, thus providing an active and comprehensive surveillance of the entire theatre of operations[80]. Participant A4's perspectives on capabilities and resources were that only the navy had tactics, operations, trained personnel, and intelligence capacity to conduct large-scale operations in the high seas. Analysis of participant

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[79] A11, interview with researcher, 27 July 2020.

[80] Although the subsurface dimension is irrelevant in terms of migrants' movement, this tactical capability proves critical for locating the sunken vessel after a shipwreck; this is important to then determine and triangulate the location of survivors who may be adrift at sea after abandoning the boat.

A4's explanation shows that the use of the Italian Navy to conduct mission Mare Nostrum was instrumental in ensuring that the operational and tactical capabilities of the mission were effective in achieving Mare Nostrum's aim and objectives.

Respondent A7 supported the above data in the statement '[O]*nly the military navy – not a civilian, not a commercial – would have the tactical and operational capabilities required for such a task*'[81]. To illustrate the immense tactical and operational capabilities of mission Mare Nostrum, A7 explained that many NGOs had tried to conduct SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea, but their results were considerably below those of Mare Nostrum, as emerged from the documentary review in the previous chapter. The same interviewee explained that the low results could be attributed to the limited operational and tactical assets of NGOs and other private operations, in comparison to a navy-led SAR operation such as mission Mare Nostrum. Admiral De Giorgi affirmed that only the military could conduct – and manage – a three-dimensional control (marine surface space, airspace, and subsurface) of the EU maritime space, due to its vast strategic, tactical, and operational assets and capabilities.

Data gleaned from participant A9 concurred with interviewee A7's arguments, as seen in the quote '[M]*aritime security operations are the only actors provided with adequate tactical and operational means and able to conduct such missions. Other entities, such as Frontex and NGOs, have tried, but* [the] *results are very different* [from what mission Mare Nostrum achieved]*'[82]*. Participant A11 attributed the operational and tactical success of Mare Nostrum to the use of military assets that the mission had at disposal, as discussed in Section One of Chapter Four. Respondent A11 further argued that the operational and tactical mobility of mission Mare Nostrum was effective and efficient because the military had resources that no NGO or Frontex could have to deploy in a single maritime security operation. Participant A8 also stated that '[D]*rones, radar, sonar and so on are* "apparati"[83] *that only the Military can put at* [its] *disposal*'[84]. Interviewee A14 also agreed that mission Mare Nostrum had an effective tactical and operational setup to carry out its mandate.

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[81] A7, interview with researcher, 22 June 2020.
[82] A9, interview with researcher, 9 July 2020.
[83] *Apparatus, i* (from Latin, 'technical equipment or machinery needed for a particular activity or purpose').
[84] A8, interview with researcher, 26 June 2020.

However, interviewee A14 stated that '[…] *tactical and operational capabilities are important, but one needs support from all countries. There must be a common effort, with a common goal. That was not the case with Mare Nostrum*'[85]. The participant above revealed that the mandate was effective but that the mission could have delivered more results than it did if more support was accorded by other EU countries and the EU neighbourhood partners. This finding reveals that maritime security challenges, especially ones that have a complex nexus with migration and humanitarian, and organised crime issues, are broad and cannot be broached strategically from a single dimension alone. It is the researcher's opinion that support and co-operation of certain stakeholders – such as the key actors outlined in the previous chapter – involved in the cross-Mediterranean migration and EU security were necessary for the optimal achievement of Mare Nostrum mandate, with particular regard to reducing smuggling and trafficking.

7. *Security and Safety: Standards and Procedures*

Interviewee A6 explained that mission Mare Nostrum's security and safety guidelines concerned two main groups, namely, (i) personnel on board the operation vessels, and (ii) the migrants rescued at sea. Participant A6 explained that the mission employed immigration officials, medical personnel, and law enforcement officers, such as the national police. Law enforcement officers ensured that any unlawfulness was handled within the existing legal frameworks. The health and safety of migrants and the crew were critical, thus explaining the presence of medical officers readily available on board of all ships. Participant A14 stated that '[*T*]*he Mission* [Mare Nostrum] *was operating at the highest security and safety standards*'[86]. Once Mare Nostrum ensured the safety of migrants, the mission forwarded the migrants to immigration officials for processing, to ascertain that they were not a threat to the EU security, before asylum seeker or refugee status could be given.

The data also show that smugglers and traffickers who were arrested during the mission were forwarded to the police and the judiciary authorities for prosecution. Respondent A8 stated that '[*T*]*he security guidelines and regulations* [that] *applied to Mare Nostrum were in line with the Italian Navy*'[87]. Interviewee A14 explained that having the highest security, safety, and legal frameworks was useful; however, support from other stakeholders was needed – but never

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[85] A14, interview with researcher, 21 August 2020.
[86] A14, interview with researcher, 21 August 2020.
[87] A8, interview with researcher, 26 June 2020.

extended – by the expected parties such as the European Union. Regarding this, interviewee A14 argued that with such support, mission Mare Nostrum would have better delivered its mandate. Analysis of the data provided shows that mission Mare Nostrum adhered to strict security and safety guidelines, mainly from the Italian Navy, supported by internal maritime safety protocols.

8. *Impact of Reduction in SAR Operations in the Mediterranean Sea*

Data gleaned from Adm De Giorgi show that a reduction of maritime SAR operations – coupled with the closure of Mare Nostrum in favour of Frontex-operations – did increase fatalities at sea, as outlined in Chapter One and subsequently affirmed by the data presented in the previous chapter. Admiral De Giorgi explained that the fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea were at a peak in autumn 2016. Interviewee A1 explained that the closure of Mare Nostrum in October 2014 led to more deaths and smuggling of migrants to the EU, as outlined in Chapter One. Participant A4 concurred with the statement '[*E*]*U leaders "killing migrants by neglect" after cutting Mediterranean rescue missions*' (The Independent, 2016: n.p.)', as evident in the following statement:

> *Unfortunately, I have to agree with that statement* [see Q6, Appendix IV]. *Without rescue missions in the Mediterranean, it was obvious to have a massive loss of life* [sic] *at sea. Migrants, when they leave their countries, they think that there will be someone to save them while in distress. However, that is not the case anymore, especially after Mare Nostrum was terminated.*[88]

The assertion above shows that mission Mare Nostrum reduced fatalities of migrants, and its closure increased the loss of lives because there were no resources available on site to save them from the overloaded smugglers' vessels or the risk of being lost at sea. Interviewee A6 agreed that the EU decision not to support mission Mare Nostrum and instead support Frontex-operations to take over maritime security operations was disastrous when viewed from the SAR perspective, as discussed in Chapter Four.

Interviewees A7 and A4 also supported the argument that the closure of Mare Nostrum increased drowning cases of migrants. It also emerged that Frontex-operation Triton had no operational and tactical capacity to prevent mass drowning accidents in comparison with Mare

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[88] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.

Nostrum, as emerged from the data collected in Chapter Four. Interviewee A7 further illustrated that there were minimal chances for a small and overloaded 'left-to-die' boat to reach the EU if there were no maritime SAR operations in the area, so most of the migrants drowned. Participants A6 explained that the migrants' plight was highlighted by the hyper-publicised reports of mass drowning of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Interviewee A6 held that mission Mare Nostrum should have been supported by the EU to continue and expand its operational radius and area of responsibility. Interviewees A8, A9, A11, and A14 also agreed with respondent A6's statement. Interviewee A8 explained that African migrants were unaware that the EU decision not to support mission Mare Nostrum in favour of Frontex-operation Triton reduced SAR operations, thus resulting in them drowning or starving at sea. The data collected above show that without the help of maritime SAR operations, the majority of migrants drowned at sea. The EU move not to support more SAR operations because of its alleged pull effect as enunciated in Lee's migration theory led to more drowning, thus resulting in a humanitarian crisis, as previously discussed[89].

9. *Impact of Actors on Mediterranean Migration: Collaboration and Conflicting Views*

Data collected from respondent A1 disclosed that international actors – such as the IOM and the UNHCR – supported mission Mare Nostrum, but Frontex was the main competitor in the EU. For instance, respondent A4 asserted that '[*W*]*hile UNHCR and IOM were very co-operative with our navy and its operations, <u>Frontex was not our best friend</u>* (emphasis added)*'*[90], proving the antagonism between the two missions previously discussed in Chapter Four. Respondent A2 also explained that the UNHCR and the IOM were instrumental in ensuring that the rights of migrants were respected after disembarking on the Italian shore because Mare Nostrum had *no* mandate once the rescued migrants left the vessel. Supranational organisations such as the IOM, the UNHCR, and the Italian immigration department were instrumental for processing the migrants. In response to Q9[91], interviewee A6 also stated the following:

> *Mare Nostrum was fully respected and* [was] *very well regarded by the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* [UNHCR].

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[89] See Figure 5 in Chapter One, '*Deaths and Arrivals in Southern Europe in 2016–2017*'.
[90] A4, interview with researcher, 3 June 2020.
[91] See Appendix III.

> *With Frontex, it was different. We were not so close. This level of distance had some impact on operations.[92]*

Similar sentiments were expressed by interviewee A7 in the following statement:

> *We were working daily with* [the] *UNHCR and* [the] *IOM, I have very good memories of them. They were doing a great job and* [were] *always available. They were supportive and understanding our efforts.* [About] *Frontex instead, I do not have the same good memories.[93]*

The data reveal that international actors in the Mediterranean Sea supported the efforts of mission Mare Nostrum. Nonetheless, data collected from interviewee A1 show that the mission also had several antagonists at the national and international level – such as Frontex, in line with the negative comments expressed by the two respondents above. The analysis of data shows that Mare Nostrum had co-operation challenges with Frontex border agency, as discussed in Chapter Two. Interviewee A9 illustrated this poor working relationship between Mare Nostrum and Frontex in the statement '[With] *Frontex* [things were] *not so well, though. They were not our best supporters, I remember*'[94]. Interviewee A11 comprehensively illustrated this strained relationship in the following excerpt:

> *UNHCR and IOM, law enforcement, all medical doctors, the nurses, especially from the Italian Red Cross were highly professional and co-operative with Mare Nostrum. The only conflicting views we had were with Frontex. They were competitors and they were not too much supportive of Mare Nostrum.[95]*

Interviewee A14 also emphasised that Frontex did not appreciate the presence of mission Mare Nostrum in the theatre of operations. Admiral De Giorgi explained that the cold relationship between Mare Nostrum and Frontex was centred on competition for resources, as discussed in the previous chapter. In line with the above arguments, interviewee A8 explained that there was significant co-operation amongst the stakeholders involved in the operation, limited however to the Italian government. Participant A14 explained that the media was the greatest enemy of mission Mare Nostrum as it propagated a notion of Mare Nostrum being a pull factor,

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[92] A6, interview with researcher, 17 June 2020.
[93] A7, interview with researcher, 22 June 2020.
[94] A9, interview with researcher, 9 July 2020.
[95] A11, interview with researcher, 27 July 2020.

in accordance with Lee's migration theory. The notion was geared towards creating fear and xenophobia for irregular migrants, particularly in Italy.

10. Comparison of Mare Nostrum with Different Migration Approaches

When comparing different approaches of migrants at sea, Admiral De Giorgi explained that the main difference between them consists into identifying the '[…] *port* [sic] *of safety*'[96]. He further illustrated that in the case of mission Mare Nostrum, under the EU approach, the Italian Ministry of Interior, for national security reasons, decided on the port of disembarkation for immigration processing of the rescued migrants. Interviewee A1 explained that the EU approach, and particularly Mare Nostrum, could not be compared with other approaches from other countries because the migration challenges are tackled differently. The same respondent illustrated that, while mission Mare Nostrum rescued migrants to the EU shores of Italy, the Australian model involved approaching and rendering humanitarian assistance to migrants *while at sea* and towing them to safety to Christmas Island instead of mainland Australia, as discussed in Chapter One.

Interviewee A1 also illustrated that the Mare Nostrum-like approach was different from the American model because – unlike in the EU, where migrants are rescued to the EU shores – the American law enforcement, coast guard agencies, and border control systems do not allow any disembarking of irregular migrants on American shores. Once apprehended, such immigrants are deported to their countries of origin. The majority of respondents also explain that a Mare Nostrum-like approach could not be compared with other models because they operate on different procedures, legal frameworks, and capacities. All respondents explained that the approaches are different and could not be compared due to the difference in immigration policies set by each individual government. For instance, in response to Q8[97], interviewee A6 illustrated the following:

> [The Australian model is indeed a] d*ifferent approach. That depends on the immigration policy that each nation has. With the EU legislation on human*

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[96] Under international law, 'Place of Safety – POS' (in Italian, *Porto Sicuro*) is the site where rescue operations are considered completed and the survivors are no longer exposed to safety risks and can access basic goods and services (*i.e.*, food and water, shelter, medical treatment). The definition is not to be mistaken with *Porto Vicino* (From Italian, 'Nearest safe port', in terms of geographical proximity) (UNHCR, 2002; Guardia Costiera, 2018; Bastoni *et al.*, 2020).

[97] See Appendix III.

> *rights, a 'stop the boats' model like the one they have in Australia <u>could never be applicable to Italy. Or to Europe.</u>* (emphasis added)[98]

The quote above reveals that each country has its own migration policy, which may be different from other countries and may not apply in the context of another. Interviewee A9 further illustrates this finding in the assertion that '[W]*ell, I do not think they can be compared. The Australian model, for example, would be in contravention of the European Union convention on human rights, the one I mentioned earlier.* […] *No, they cannot be compared at all'.* Respondent A11 also agreed that national interests in immigration, policies, and the partnerships binding them to behave in a specific manner towards migration issues differ. For instance, EU countries are bound by protocols and formal agreements amongst EU member states, such as the Dublin Convention. In response to the same interview question [Q8], participant A11 illustrates these differences in national interests, objectives, and mandates in the excerpt below:

> *Every state has its foreign policy and its interests in migration.* […] *Mare Nostrum was saving lives, as the objective of the mission. Australia's interest is not to let any boat reach the coastline. So, you see? Different objectives, different mandates.*[99]

The excerpt from interviewee A8 below also illustrates those differences further:

> [Different approaches to migrants at sea are] *difficult to compare: each country adopts different policies when talking about migrants at sea. Consequently, different approaches are adopted. The Australian model and the model by Mare Nostrum are quite divergent, in the sense that 'stop the boats' was to prevent illegal immigrants from going to Australia and considering offshore detention in camps on small islands. Mare Nostrum was not like that: our priority was to save lives at sea. Period* [sic]*.*[100]

Analysis of the interview data in this section shows that the nature of approaches or models adopted by different countries depends on national immigration interests, mandates, agendas, foreign policy, and impacts from other international and regional treaties or partnerships. In other words, one migration management approach may not apply in another country because of the differences enumerated above.

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[98] A6, interview with researcher, 17 June 2020.
[99] A11, interview with researcher, 27 July 2020.
[100] A8, interview with researcher, 26 June 2020.

Summary and Analysis of Key Findings

Mission Mare Nostrum was an effective maritime SAR operation in the Mediterranean Sea. The interview data show that the mission was effective in saving lives, rather than managing border control, maritime security or solving immigration challenges resulting from irregular migration. The data collected from interviews above rebut the allegation by politicians and the media that Mare Nostrum have contributed to a deterioration in maritime safety. On the contrary, mission Mare Nostrum has played a crucial role in saving lives. The interview data also indicate that without the support of military maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum, the EU would not be able to manage or control its 'blue borders' or mitigate the risks associated with unregulated migration through the Mediterranean Sea. The analysed data also reveal that Mare Nostrum was accountable and did comply with all legal frameworks and regulations, such as international law, human rights law, the UNCLOS, the SAR Convention, the IMO, and other regional partnership legislations. The mission was conducted in line with the Italian Navy security and safety standards and protocols. Mare Nostrum's tactical and operational capability was highly effective; furthermore, the interview data disclose that no entity other than the military would have the tactical and operational capabilities to discharge such mandates in the high seas. The analysed data reveal that the EU decision to scale down SAR operations in the Mediterranean led to increased migrants' fatalities at sea. With regard to different approaches to migrants at sea, the data reveal that the EU approach, especially the SAR model adopted in mission Mare Nostrum, is different from migration models adopted in other countries. Although these alternative approaches do prevent illegal entry, the American model to prevent migrants disembarking on American soil or the Australian model that assists migrants by towing them to detention centres outside the mainland, could not be applied in the EU context; neither can the SAR model be adopted in those countries, due to differences in foreign policies on migration.

Mission Mare Nostrum experienced high politicisation and hyper-publicising of the wrong notion and false expectations. The wrong perceptions revolved around a belief where the public expected the mission to root out irregular migration to the EU, even though it was clearly mandated to first save lives – and only then – reduce migrant smuggling to the EU. The findings of the research show that maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum are meant to save lives and not root out smuggling or trafficking. The navy appears to be the only entity

with adequate operational, tactical, and strategic capabilities to conduct effective maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum. The findings reveal that the EU decision to scale down SAR missions in the Mediterranean led to more fatalities at sea because migrants were still fleeing their countries to the EU by sea. Such a move was the result of blatant negligence of the plight of migrants at sea, suggesting that the best approach would be to co-operate with all stakeholders to reduce migrants embarking for the sea journey in the first place, instead of reducing maritime SAR operations.

Mission Mare Nostrum offered relief to the migration crisis. Nonetheless, such phenomenon remains as a complex nexus of pull factors in the EU, push factors mainly in Africa and the Middle East, and mediating factors of facilitators, as Lee articulated in his theory of migration. This complex web makes single-dimension initiatives – such as maritime SAR operations alone – inadequate to provide long-term solutions, thus requiring a more comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders involved in the migration phenomenon. The interview data show that SAR-based operations are fundamental in protecting the human rights of migrants at sea but must also encompass ways of processing the migrants for security reasons to avoid allowing criminals and terrorists to Europe. The data also disclose that mission Mare Nostrum enjoyed overwhelming support and co-operation from international actors such as the UN, the UNHCR, and the IOM but faced criticism and competition for resources and support from national and regional media, politicians, and EU border agencies such as Frontex. The data affirm that Frontex was the main competitor to mission Mare Nostrum, in terms of resources allocation and support from the EU, as discussed in the documentary review in Chapter Four.

Mission Mare Nostrum was accountable and compliant with human rights law, the UNCLOS Convention, the SOLAS, and all other extant guidelines. However, protecting the human rights of refugees post-disembarking was not part of the mission mandate, so this task fell to immigration authorities and other related offices. Mare Nostrum operated within the security and safety guidelines of the Italian Navy and was very effective as a SAR operation. However, maritime SAR operations alone could not be effective in solving all maritime security issues, especially those emanating from irregular migration. Without maritime security operations, the EU would not be able to control its blue borders or mitigate any issues associated with irregular migration to the EU. The data reveal that Mare Nostrum was notably effective in its SAR objective of saving lives and reducing human trafficking to the EU, insofar that mission Mare

Nostrum was a deterrent to trafficking and smuggling in the Mediterranean Sea area it patrolled. In line with Bueger's perspectives on maritime security and migration crises being a complex nexus that requires new approaches, the data show that new comprehensive and hybrid models are required to tackle the migration and maritime security issues witnessed in the Mediterranean Sea. This hybridity should involve combining maritime SAR operations with pro-security, anti-smuggling, anti-trafficking operations, anti-piracy, surveillance, and border control, and would possibly fill the theoretical gap between migration and maritime operations policies.

Lastly, the data show that fatalities at sea increased after Mare Nostrum ended in October 2014 because migrants still embarked on sea journeys to the EU, not knowing that maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea had reduced after Mare Nostrum closed and Frontex-operation Triton (with a different mandate than its predecessor) took over. Although most migrants died at sea, the number that managed to access the EU shores remained high. It can be argued that maritime SAR operations alone are *not* adequate to curb migration challenges: more co-operation, political goodwill, financial resources, bespoke mandates, and policies involving all stakeholders are needed.

The last two chapters have presented and analysed empirical data collected from the documentary review and interviews. There were four main sections, three of which presented and analysed data from documentary reviews in Chapter Four, while this chapter presented and analysed data from 15 interviewees (*i.e.*, A1 through A15) and Admiral [Ret'd] Giuseppe De Giorgi, Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy at the time when mission Mare Nostrum was in operation. The analysis of the data reveals that maritime SAR operations represent the best approach to save the lives of migrants at sea because maritime security operations encompass a range of activities, mandates, and resources, such as anti-trafficking, anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and SAR missions. However, the findings suggest that pro-security operations alone – or SAR operations alone – are not adequate solutions to migration crises.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Providing security and long-term solutions for such refugees is a humanitarian imperative. And to the extent that it can contribute to this objective, then the notion of "protection in regions of origin" must be welcomed. At the same time, we should not expect this approach to provide any easy answers to the asylum and migration dilemmas of the world's more prosperous states.

— Former UNHCR senior official Jeff Crisp[101]

This chapter compares and contrasts the empirical findings of this research derived in the preceding chapters with the theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature review outlined in Chapter Two. The chapter comprises six main sections: (i) operational and tactical capability of mission Mare Nostrum; (ii) relevant actors in the Mediterranean region and their impact on the mission; (iii) impact of Mare Nostrum on subsequent SAR operations; (iv) effectiveness of Mare Nostrum; (v) challenges that brought the mission to its premature closure; and (vi) lessons learnt. Subsequently, the chapter follows with a visual representation and discussion of the conceptual framework of analysis used by the researcher for this study. This chapter concludes the thesis with a summation of the findings and a review of the research aim, to determine whether the data discussed answered the research questions of this study. The final section of the chapter highlights the implications of the findings of this research and outlines how this research provides a distinctive contribution to the existing body of literature and to the fields of maritime security studies and international relations. Finally, the thesis provides recommendations for policy improvements, along with proposed avenues to explore for future research agenda.

Mare Nostrum's Mandate: Tactical and Operational Capabilities

The Mandate of Mission Mare Nostrum

The findings of this study reveal that the launch of mission Mare Nostrum and other maritime operations were influenced by the necessity to control the irregular migration and eliminate the perceived security threat, in line with Musarò's argument (2016a). Mare Nostrum had a

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[101] Article written in a personal capacity by Jeff Crisp and published by the Migration Policy Institute (Crisp, 2003: n.p.).

threefold mandate, although its primary objective was to search for and rescue migrants stranded at sea, in distress, or facing the risk of vessel capsizing and drowning. The other two peripheral mandates were reducing uncontrolled migration to the EU through arresting migrant smugglers and traffickers, and conducting maritime security operations, as mandated by the Italian Navy. Although mission Mare Nostrum had a secondary operational mandate to arrest smugglers and traffickers, such suspects were forwarded to law enforcement authorities for prosecution. Therefore, mission Mare Nostrum had little control over the fate of criminals arrested at sea, thus could not be regarded as a lasting solution to migrant smuggling challenges in the Mediterranean Sea. However, the mission was a deterrent to such illicit trade, as most smugglers and traffickers avoided the sea route where Mare Nostrum was operating in fear of arrests and their boats being seized. The primary mandate as to why Mare Nostrum was launched by the Italian Navy, in conjunction with other government agencies, was to render humanitarian aid to migrants following massive cases of fatalities at sea when overloaded vessels capsized in Lampedusa in 2013 (Coppens, 2013; Bern, 2016). The findings of this investigation support the arguments of Taufer (2016) that Mare Nostrum was the largest and most effective military-led mission launched to conduct maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

The findings also support the argument of Musarò (2016a) insofar that mission Mare Nostrum arrested smugglers and traffickers for reducing irregular migration into the EU. Such a mandate was based on the argument that smugglers facilitate irregular migration to the EU by sea and thus that, arresting the facilitators and confiscating their boats, would reduce the '*crimmigration*' phenomenon, as discussed in Chapter One. As argued in chapters Two and Four, the analysis of the mandate of Mare Nostrum shows that controversy surrounded the public perception and expectations of Mare Nostrum: the public expected the mission to stop irregular entry to the EU, although the data reveal that the mission had no mandate to conduct such comprehensive anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations to completely root out irregular migration through the Mediterranean Sea. Similar perspectives were noted by Garelli *et al.* (2018) who viewed mission Mare Nostrum as a military security operation that should remove all smugglers and traffickers, amongst other sources of threat to Italy and the EU in general. In support of Musarò (2016a), Tazzioli (2015a), Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins (2016), and Crawley and Skleparis (2018), the findings of this study disclose that high interference from political players and the media created the notion that Mare Nostrum should

have put an end to irregular migration to the EU, as opposed to saving irregular migrants en route to EU shores. Such interference led to confusion amongst the public on the mandate of the operation whereby most thought of it as a pro-security mission, while others thought of it as a humanitarian operation. The data support the conclusions of Del Valle (2016), and Stierl (2016) that mission Mare Nostrum's main mandate was a SAR-based mission, alongside two other peripheral mandates to arrest smugglers and traffickers and mitigate any maritime security risk associated with the threat posed by irregular migration to the EU.

Tactical and Operational Framework and Adequacy of the Resources Allocated to Mare Nostrum

The findings of this research reveal that the tactical and operational framework for mission Mare Nostrum was adequate for it to discharge its mandate, in support of the claims of the Marina Militare (n.d.) discussed in Chapter Two, according to which the mission had sufficient resources to fulfil its mandate. The data show that mission Mare Nostrum had access to military resources, information, intelligence, and experienced personnel in maritime security and SAR operations. The mission had a range of resources, some of which only the military could afford (see interview data from Chapter Five). Therefore, having such resources for Mare Nostrum made SAR interventions seamless and effective, and increased efficacy in discharging the mission mandate. The findings on the operational and tactical mandate of mission Mare Nostrum show that the operational support from the Italian Navy was crucial for the effectiveness of the mission in fulfilling the three mandates, especially arresting smugglers and traffickers, as well as conducting SAR missions in the 70,000 km^2 of the Mediterranean Sea that were patrolled. Mare Nostrum's tactical and operational capability encompassed patrol of the sea subsurface, maritime air space, and surface level. The use of military vessels to conduct mission Mare Nostrum was critical because no other civil or NGO-based vessel – although they did decrease the workload of the coast guard agencies to a certain extent – had the operational and tactical capability such as the navy.

In support of the conclusions of Koller (2017), the findings of this research disclose that mission Mare Nostrum had a higher budget than its successors, such as Frontex-operation Triton. The data also indicate that Mare Nostrum had considerable financial support from the Italian government. It is evident that mission Mare Nostrum had adequate tactical and operational frameworks. The findings of this research support the results of Davies and Neslen

(2014) reviewed in the literature review, according to which Mare Nostrum had adequate aerial support resources to ensure that the surveillance necessary for SAR missions was adequate and conducted on a periodical basis.

On a financial standpoint, the €9 million monthly budget ensured that all the activities conducted at sea were conducted efficiently during the time that mission Mare Nostrum was in operation. Mare Nostrum had a high allocation of military and non-military personnel, which included law enforcement officers, medical personnel, judiciary, and immigration officials. The data also compared the operational and tactical capability of Mare Nostrum to its successor – and main contender – Frontex-operation Triton and show that Mare Nostrum's capabilities were adequate and effective in conducting the search, rescue, and arrest of smugglers. The findings show that the EU would not be capable of mitigating the challenges emanating from irregular migration to the EU without the support of military-led maritime security operations such as Mare Nostrum. Mare Nostrum's capabilities have been applauded by humanitarian advocates for its effectiveness in saving migrants' lives in the Mediterranean Sea, whereas other operations such as Frontex-led Triton, despite the EU funding and support, had fewer results in terms of migrants rescued. The findings above indicate that the EU would not be able to control irregular migration and security threats posed by infiltration to the EU of organised crime groups, trafficking and smuggling, amongst other illicit activities associated with illegal immigration, without military maritime security operations such as mission Mare Nostrum.

Compliance With the Legal Framework and Operational Guidelines

Mission Mare Nostrum had a robust legal and regulatory framework that guided operations from the planning phase to the closure of the mission. Compliance to legal provisions was critical to the mission, especially conformity with Italian laws and international regulations on migration and maritime security operations. The findings of this research show that mission Mare Nostrum was guided by three sets of legal and regulatory frameworks. The three cadres of legal frameworks were international, regional, and national laws and regulations. In line with international laws and obligations under the UNCLOS and SOLAS conventions, Italy had an obligation to prevent further loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea. The findings above support the arguments and conclusion of Musarò (2016a) and Okonkwo (2017) that EU countries have a legal mandate and obligation to prevent loss of migrants' lives at sea through conducting maritime SAR operations. Mission Mare Nostrum was crafted in compliance with the

international laws on human rights, refugee law, and the UNCLOS Convention. Mare Nostrum also complied with other regional regulations, such as the Dublin Convention and EU laws and regulations on migration and humanitarian issues. Although the findings show that Mare Nostrum complied with international and regional laws and regulations, there were differences in asylum-seeking and relocation processes to other EU countries. However, such follow-up was not part of the Mare Nostrum mandate and is beyond the scope of this study. Finally, mission Mare Nostrum followed all international maritime organisation regulations – as well as standard protocols and safety and security guidelines set by the Italian Navy – in discharging its mandate.

Impact of Key Actors on Mare Nostrum

International Actors and Their Impact on the Mission

Although the Italian Navy directed and conducted Mare Nostrum, the mission incorporated other international actors that supported those activities as well as issues that fell outside its mandate. The mandate of mission Mare Nostrum was limited to searching for and rescuing migrants, as well as to intercepting and arresting traffickers and smugglers. Therefore, other actors were needed for the prosecution and settlement of rescued migrants, and their relocation from Italy to other EU countries. The findings of this research show that the UNHCR was a critical actor, especially in ensuring that the human rights of rescued migrants were respected during the SAR procedures, as well as immigration and relocation processes. In support of Pries (2018), the findings of this research disclose that supranational organisations such as the UN, the UNHCR, and the IOM, are fundamental in supporting maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea and globally. The findings of this investigation affirmed the arguments and conclusions of the IOM (2015; 2017) and UNHCR *et al.* (2015): Mare Nostrum complied with all UN regulations, especially on human rights and other laws of the sea, as described in the UNCLOS Convention. Supranational actors ensured that the asylum-seeking claims and relocation of migrants within the EU followed all due procedures and respected the human rights of migrants, and arrested smuggling and trafficking suspects. Likewise, the IOM was a crucial international actor, especially for data gathering and recording of SAR missions and disembarking activities. International civil society actors, such as NGOs, were also involved in Mare Nostrum activities, especially those that conducted SAR operations in the area. Mission Mare Nostrum was a significant 'boost' to the few maritime SAR operations conducted by NGOs and other civil society actors. Although international actors partook in the mission, the

findings of this research show that their involvement was minimal, as they were not engaging directly in the planning and execution of SAR missions. Such international actors supported post-operation activities that were not part of Mare Nostrum mandates, such as refugee settlement and support of immigration processing, amongst others. The data analysed in the preceding chapters show that the failure to involve international actors directly was faulted because migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea are complex and could not be managed by a maritime SAR operation alone. The data suggest that the involvement of regional and international actors could provide strategic solutions to the migration crisis. With this regard, it can be argued that finding lasting solutions to the challenges of migrants drowning in the Mediterranean Sea requires the involvement of all international, regional, and state-based actors.

Regional Actors and Their Impact on the Mission

The findings of this investigation show that the EU has been the main regional actor in the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis, thus affirming the findings of Martins and Strange (2019). The analysis also supported Eris (2012) in suggesting that the EU advocated for the humane treatment of irregular migrants, especially those in need such as asylum seekers and refugees. However, the European Union supported mission Mare Nostrum only passively: it did not support the mission financially or through the provision of additional human resources. European politics on migration issues created a notion that Mare Nostrum was responsible for the increased irregular migration into the EU, thus acting as a pull factor – as articulated by Lee in his migration theory model. Such hyper-publicising and politics created false perceptions amongst the public – especially Italians and other EU citizens – that mission Mare Nostrum would have stopped irregular migration by sea to Europe. One of the significant impacts of the EU as a regional actor on Mare Nostrum was that it contributed to the closure of Mare Nostrum in favour of Frontex-operation Triton. The EU chose to support operation Triton which had a broader mandate for maritime SAR operations and security activities for border control. The EU was in support of the new operation but differed, however, on the aspect of uniquely deploying SAR operations. The findings derived in the preceding chapters disclose that the EU, particularly under the pressure of some member states, supported integrated border management systems more than SAR operations. The EU decision to support Frontex for increased efficiency in border control and other maritime security operations was based on the argument that deploying SAR operations alone had a pull effect on migration to the EU, insofar

that it encouraged migrants' smuggling. Nonetheless, there is no evidence in the analysed data to suggest that mission Mare Nostrum was responsible for the increased migration to the EU; moreover, it can be argued that the mission did not act as a pull factor for the increased irregular migrants in the EU because such mass movement of people was happening uncontrollably even before Mare Nostrum was conceived. Similarly, the data show that supporters of SAR-based operations such as mission Mare Nostrum argued that, although the number of irregular migrants accessing the EU increased while Mare Nostrum was in operation, such irregular migration was happening in an uncontrolled manner and with high fatalities at sea, even before the mission was in operation. The data support the arguments of Strand *et al.* (2019) and the UNHCR (2020a) insofar that other macro-economic factors – such as political instability and insecurity – in the countries of origin caused mass displacement of people and eventually irregular migration.

The findings from the interviews affirm that mission Mare Nostrum did not have a calling effect on migrant trafficking; however, data collected from the documentary analysis, especially from the European Commission (2016), disclose that operation Sophia did. Similar arguments for Frontex-operations Triton and Poseidon were propagated. The data show that the increased cases of irregular migrants accessing the EU through porous maritime borders of the EU Southern countries required other non-SAR approaches such as more stringent border control measures. For instance, findings from the EU Committee (2016) depicted SAR-based operations as agents that facilitate irregular entry because searching for and rescuing migrants at sea purportedly made smuggling and trafficking of migrants less cumbersome. The argument in the above findings is that smugglers could maximise their profits through overloading their vessels and setting off for the EU journey up to the high seas, from where the migrants would then be rescued by the SAR operations in the area and subsequently taken to the EU, as discussed in Chapter Four. While this could be true, especially when viewed from the perspective that the number of irregular migrants accessing the EU increased, the findings also reveal that the number of fatalities at sea reduced while mission Mare Nostrum was in operations. The results and arguments above support the findings of the UNHCR (2018) and the IOM (2018), which showed an exponential increase in arrivals of regular migrants in Italy between 2015 and 2016 after Mare Nostrum was closed and Frontex-operation Triton took

over[102]. The findings of this study support the statistics provided by UNHCR (2020b) that show that fatalities at sea reduced, although the number of irregular migrants accessing the EU by sea increased, with 2016 being the peak. The findings of this research show that mission Mare Nostrum was falsely accused by regional actors, as it could not be solely responsible for the increasing numbers of irregular migrants in the EU because the number of irregular migrants accessing the EU by sea rose exponentially from 2014 to 2016, long after mission Mare Nostrum had been shut down. Furthermore, the irregular migrants were processed and vetted before being given asylum and refugee status. Data from Johansen (2017) attributed the increased immigration not to the calling effect – as alleged by the EU Committee (2016) – but to the increased political instability and insecurity in Africa and the MENA region. Therefore, the analysis yielded mixed findings on the calling effect because data supported both hypotheses. Documentary review data from the EU Committee (2016) disclosed that some EU countries, such as the UK House of Lords, accused missions Mare Nostrum and Sophia of acting as a pull factor, as enunciated in Lee's migration theory; however, the data from interviews defended mission Mare Nostrum from such allegations.

In favour of Mare Nostrum, the analysis of the data from interviews reveals that the mission was not responsible for any calling effect, since the irregular migration was already happening in high numbers before the operation was launched in October 2013. The findings of this investigation disclosed mixed perceptions from regional actors on the necessity of SAR-based operations, as in the case of Mare Nostrum and Sophia. The controversy over the suitability of maritime SAR-based operations in the migration challenges in the Mediterranean region has been contentious, as supported by the data collected: the findings reveal a two-divide controversy amongst regional actors, in line with the arguments and findings of Jumbert (2018) revealed in the literature review section of this study. One faction of the regional actors supports stringent maritime security operations and border control to prevent irregular entry to the EU, based on EU security concerns and increased terrorism associated with irregular migrations to the EU, as the UN-CTCED (2019), Achilli (2018), Achilli and Tinti (2019), Bensman (2019), and Europol (2019) established. The other divide supports humanitarian assistance approaches, based on the argument that migrants require help instead of the inhumane treatment of being turned away or detained for illegal entry. The findings of this investigation support both

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[102] See Figure 5 in Chapter One, '*Deaths and Arrivals in Southern Europe in 2016–2017*'.

hypotheses: that irregular migration is a security threat and – simultaneously – that irregular migrants in distress require humanitarian assistance through maritime SAR operations.

Contrary to the findings of Antúnez (2019), which state that humanitarian SAR-based operations are inadequate to address smuggling and trafficking and other illicit activities, the data analysed on mission Mare Nostrum show that all arrested smuggling and trafficking suspects were forwarded to immigration officials for vetting and processing. The findings of this research show that immigration officials and security and judiciary personnel were aboard military ships to ensure that all migrants were vetted and smuggling suspects arrested and forwarded to the police and judiciary authorities for prosecution. Therefore, it is the researcher's opinion that the notion that Mare Nostrum acted as a pull factor as in Lee's migration theory, and was a facilitator for criminals is *unfounded*. Mare Nostrum did not search for and rescue irregular migrants at sea and disembark them on the Italian shores without vetting them, thus favouring a security threat, as some regional actors suggested.

State-Based Actors and Their Impact on Mission Mare Nostrum
The findings show that several countries in the EU had different interests in the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Countries sharing the Mediterranean coastline – such as Italy, Spain, Malta, and Greece – are directly involved in migration issues because they are the first points of contact for irregular migrants accessing the EU by sea. In line with the findings of Klepp (2011), and Carrera and Cortinovis (2019), the results of this investigation on the role of state actors with a Mediterranean coastline in the migration issues show that Italy and Libya had a higher share of all migration-oriented operations in the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, the findings show that Malta and Spain enacted stern measures to curb the increasing irregular entry of migrants to the EU. Northern African countries – such as Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt – were compelled by the ENP policies to ensure that they stiffened their emigration regulations. Such increased control over emigration ensured that irregular migrants leaving North Africa marine ports for the EU journey by sea were reduced as part of the long-term strategic solutions and initiatives under the ENP agreement. Although mission Mare Nostrum was conducted in the Italian maritime territory – due to the high numbers of sea migrants opting for the Italy route – Malta also developed as a preferred EU entry point. Particular focus was placed on Libya for solving the migration crisis in the EU, as its shores have long been the leading exit point for most migrants, principally of African origin. Turkey, Greece, and Malta, in contrast,

grappled with migration challenges emanating from migrants fleeing the civil conflicts in the Middle East, and unrest and political instability following the Arab Spring, notably in Syria and Yemen. The results of this study affirm the findings of Reitano (2015) and BBC News (2016) that armed conflicts, civil unrest, and political instability in some EU neighbourhood countries fostered the Mediterranean migration crisis because people were fleeing for safety.

The findings of this research depict a desperate situation in which migrants were willing to take their chances with the dangerous cross-Mediterranean journey for safety in the EU, rather than stay in their countries and die in the armed clashes witnessed in some of those hostile environments – such as the Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni conflicts. The results of this study affirm the findings of Weatherburn (2015) and the UNHCR (2020a) reviewed in the literature section, which stated that as long as there were armed conflicts and political instability in the EU neighbourhood countries, especially those with a Mediterranean coastline, there would always be displacement of people. Such displacement lead to mass migration, thus fuelling the crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The results above affirm the findings of Strand *et al.* (2019) and the UNODC (2008) reviewed in Chapter Two. The involvement of EU neighbourhood states – especially those that are significant sources of migrants embarking for the sea journeys to the EU – is critical in finding long-term solutions to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Such state actors have interests in cross-Mediterranean migration issues because some of the policies enacted by the EU affect them. For instance, the findings show that the mandate of two of the major maritime security operations – EUNAVFOR MED operations Sophia and Irini – involved training the Libyan coast guard services to foster co-operation in reducing the number of sea migrants leaving from the Libyan ports for the EU.

The findings show that some EU state actors hold conflicting interests in the migration issues and means used to end the crisis because they differed from the SAR and anti-smuggling approaches adopted by Italy. For instance, the United Kingdom preferred border control measures for SAR missions to prevent irregular entry to the EU, and recommended enactment of stringent integrated border control measures. The UK also suggested that such stern pro-security measures should be implemented alongside other ENP initiatives to tackle the push and facilitating factors for smuggling and trafficking. In support of Herbert-Burns *et al.* (2008), the United Nations (2015), and Sanderson (2019), the results of this study disclose that maritime security and ending irregular migration to the EU should be based on integrated

border control systems, surveillance, information sharing and involvement of all regional, international, and state actors. The results of this investigation support the arguments and conclusions of Lehr (2013), insofar that maritime security issues, associated with irregular migration, result from poor governance and control in the sea, which allows organised criminal groups to operate in the area potentially masquerading as needy migrants in distress. The argument reinforces the value in the selection of the theoretical approach for this study, that is merging Lee's migration model with maritime governance theories, and in exploring the use of maritime SAR operations as a bridge to fill this gap.

Mare Nostrum: A Blueprint for the Future of Maritime SAR Operations

Humanitarian Impacts of the Search and Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean Sea

The results of the study on Mare Nostrum show that the mission rendered the much-needed humanitarian assistance to migrants stranded at sea and those that faced the risk of drowning. In support of the arguments of Dembinski *et al.* (2019), the results of this study disclose that the migrants were ferried to the EU on overloaded boats with no medical personnel or sufficient food, thus facing the risk of starvation, in addition to drowning. Mission Mare Nostrum helped such migrants and brought them to safety on the EU shores where they were processed for asylum-seeking or refugee status. Furthermore, the findings of this investigation support the claims of Musarò (2016a), Garelli and Tazzioli (2017), and the Marina Militare (n.d.), according to which Mare Nostrum impacted the subsequent humanitarian operations in the regions because it saved a considerable number of migrants during its period of operation. The data disclose that mission Mare Nostrum was a significant boost to the ongoing humanitarian aid operations in the Mediterranean Sea, mainly conducted after its closure by NGOs and other civil society actors. The findings of this study affirm the discoveries of Musarò (2016a) and Akar (2019) that Mare Nostrum was a pacesetter in maritime humanitarian operations in the region, setting the standards of achievement for others to replicate. The findings depict Mare Nostrum as one of the largest humanitarian assistance SAR operations conducted in the region, due to its high effectiveness in saving lives. Therefore, it can be argued that mission Mare Nostrum impacted subsequent humanitarian operations positively.

Impacts of Pro-Security Maritime Security and Blue Border Control Missions at Sea

The findings of the investigation reveal that mission Mare Nostrum and other subsequent maritime operations – such as Frontex-led Triton and Poseidon, EUNAVFOR MED operations

Sophia and Irini, and NATO-operations in the Aegean Sea – conducted border control and maritime security operations to arrest smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean Sea. The results show that mission Mare Nostrum reduced trafficking and migrant smuggling, thus supporting the conclusions of Musarò (2016a). Analysis of the data on operations Triton, Poseidon, Indalo, and Themis reveals that Frontex-operations supported more border control missions through empowering coast guard agencies than SAR operations did. Frontex-operations supported information sharing and integration of the EU marine and inland border control agencies to boost collective EU burden-sharing in combating EU security issues associated with irregular migration.

The data support the findings of Vacas Fernández (2016) that Frontex-operations reduced the vulnerability of EU maritime borders to terrorism, organised crime, irregular migration, trafficking, and smuggling. The results also supported the argument of Vacas Fernández (2016) that operations Triton, Poseidon, Indalo, and Themis were effective in improving the efficacy of coast guard agencies in EU countries to deal with border control operations and preventing irregular entry to the EU by sea. The findings of this research disclose that such naval operations positively impacted EU maritime and inland security because border control operations ensured that the migrants were vetted thoroughly to separate genuine asylum seekers and refugees from people regarded as a security threat to the EU. Suspected cases were either arrested and forwarded to law enforcement and judiciary authorities for prosecution, turned back, or deported to their origin countries, in accordance with the mandate of the operation. However, although Frontex-operations improved maritime security and border control, such activities were not adequate nor sufficient to end irregular migration to the EU.

The findings of this study reveal that border control, maritime security operations for arresting criminal at sea, and humanitarian operations need to be supported by other strategic approaches to tackle the migration push factors in the countries of origin. In this regard, the findings affirm the arguments and conclusions of Lutterbeck (2006) and the European Commission (2015b) that surveillance, information sharing, and co-operation amongst EU and the migrants' origin countries is critical in managing maritime security and border control operations efficiently and comprehensively. The findings of this research show that although mission Mare Nostrum and other subsequent operations could not end irregular migration challenges for the EU, the

operations were still impactful in reducing the phenomenon, as per the statistics reviewed in the literature and illustrated in Chapter Two.

Impact of the mission on Policies for Dealing with the Migration Crisis in the Mediterranean
The data collected in the documentary review and interviews yielded a range of findings on policies for dealing with migration crises in the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, it can be argued that policies established exclusively at the local level for dealing with migrants – such as integrated border control measures, arrest, detention, and prosecution of irregular migrants and *passeurs* – would not end irregular migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea. Such policies only reduced the phenomenon but failed to address the increasing humanitarian crisis of migrants drowning at sea. The findings show that maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum impacted the EU foreign policies on dealing with migrants at sea because they opened discussions on other solutions that could end the crisis. Such discussions supported the enactment of the ENP, tasked with enacting operations, policies, and initiatives for addressing the migration and maritime security issues from Lee's perspective on the push factor dimension, that is, in the countries of origin. The findings show that, despite having major missions, such as Mare Nostrum or Frontex-operations Triton and Poseidon, irregular migration to the EU by sea remained a chronic occurrence, thus raising the question of whether humanitarian and maritime security border control measures were the ultimate solutions to the irregular migration challenges.

The findings of this research answered the question whether a pro-security or a humanitarian approach is to prefer by disclosing that the two dimensions were not adequate solutions to end the irregular migration, as the phenomenon is a complex issue influenced by macro-environmental factors, such as political instability and conflicts in other countries. Therefore, such macro-push factors could not be eliminated through humanitarian SAR missions or maritime security operations alone. It can be argued that foreign policies regarding migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea need to be improved, to ensure more co-operation and information sharing from EU neighbourhood countries, especially those with a Mediterranean coastline, affirming the standpoint of the European Commission (2015b) on policy improvements addressed to the EU-Mediterranean migration crisis. It is evident that there is a need for a more comprehensive approach that deals primarily with push factors – such as

political instability and conflicts and facilitating factors such as smuggling and human trafficking – and pull factors.

Effectiveness of Mare Nostrum

The effectiveness of maritime operations could only be evaluated based on the results in preventing smuggling, trafficking, illegal cross-Mediterranean movement, and drowning of migrants at sea. Based on the findings of this study, it can be argued that mission Mare Nostrum was effective as a maritime SAR operation because it saved the lives of migrants stranded or in distress. The mission was also effective in reducing migrant smuggling because they feared arrest by the Italian authorities. However, Mare Nostrum was not effective in ending migrant smuggling to the EU – simply because such objective was never part of the mission's operational mandate. The alleged pull effect was an undesirable side effect of the mission that represented the leading cause for the criticism of Mare Nostrum. Nonetheless, the mission achieved its operational mandate. The operation was adequately equipped and patrolled a larger area compared to maritime operations conducted before and those that succeeded, such as Frontex-operations Triton and Poseidon.

Effectiveness in Saving Lives at Sea

The findings of this investigation support the results of researchers such as Taufer (2016), Del Valle (2016), Stierl (2016), and Perrone (2019), insofar that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in searching for and rescuing migrants at sea. The data affirm the findings of Musarò (2016a) that Mare Nostrum increased the survival rates of migrants embarking for the dangerous journeys, because such migrants were rescued and brought to safety ashore, compared to the scenarios before Mare Nostrum was in operation, where most of the migrants would drown – as in the Lampedusa incident in 2013 – or succumb to starvation. The findings of the UNODC (2013), Balarezo (2013), Seker and Dalakis (2016), and Olson and Gordon (2018) reviewed in the literature section of this research depicted trafficking and smuggling as a highly profitable business, thus increasing the risk of drowning for migrants. The data from the documents reviewed and analysed in Chapter Four, along with the interview data collected in Chapter Five, support these findings because before mission Mare Nostrum was launched, the fatality rates of migrants were high when such overloaded vessels capsized. From the perspective of the searching for and rescuing such migrants, the results of this research show that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in saving lives. The findings from interviews in

Chapter Five provide overwhelming support to Mare Nostrum as a highly effective operation in SAR missions conducted in the Mediterranean Sea.

Effectiveness in Blue Border Control and in Reducing or Eliminating Smuggling and Trafficking

The findings of this research show that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in reducing migrant smuggling and human trafficking to the EU, as most of them feared being arrested. Mission Mare Nostrum was a deterrent to migrant smuggling: most smugglers preferred to change route and avoid those territories patrolled by Mare Nostrum. The findings from the documentary review depicted the scenario that Mare Nostrum had a calling effect by encouraging more smuggling and trafficking of migrants, instead of ending the irregular migration. However, interview data indicate that mission Mare Nostrum neither had such a calling effect nor made smuggling easy as alleged because the mission arrested suspected traffickers and smugglers, thus acting as a deterrent to criminal activities, as opposed to being an alleged pull factor, as outlined according to Lee's migration theory. Although the findings of the study support the arguments in the literature review that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in discharging its mandate to reduce smuggling and trafficking, the findings also show that the mission was accused of encouraging irregular migration, contrarily to what its mandate established. However, from the findings of the interview data, corroborated by the data from the documentary review, the notion that Mare Nostrum acted potentially as a pull factor as in Lee's migration theory model was invalidated and not substantiated by evidence. Nonetheless, the data collected also support that maritime SAR-based operations such as mission Mare Nostrum are not entirely effective as border control operations. For instance, the interview findings disclosed that Mare Nostrum only reduced these clandestine illegal activities but did not end them, as they continue to date.

Based on the interview findings, therefore, Mare Nostrum could not be judged as a highly successful mission with regard to border control and maritime security, for other aspects (*i.e.*, co-operation of all stakeholder and political goodwill) are critical to making such operations effective. However, although the interview findings show that the effectiveness of Mare Nostrum as border control and maritime security operation was debatable, the same findings also suggest that the EU needs such maritime security operations. The European Union would not be able to control its blue borders or mitigate EU security challenges emanating from

irregular migration by sea without military maritime security operations such as Mare Nostrum, Frontex-operations, EUNAVFOR MED, and NATO-operations. Therefore, the findings above supported the results of Patalano (2015) insofar that mission Mare Nostrum influenced other maritime operations, particularly on blue border control and SAR activities.

Effectiveness in Informing the Balance between Maritime Military and Humanitarian SAR Operations

Mission Mare Nostrum incorporated humanitarian and maritime security operation. The results of the study support the Marina Militare (n.d.) in suggesting that Mare Nostrum had a maritime security mission mandate to arrest suspected smugglers and traffickers. The findings of this research confirm the results expected when SAR operations are combined with military maritime security operations. The data show that conducting SAR operations alone is not the best solution to migration-related challenges. Humanitarian missions such as the SAR model offer aid to migrants at sea, but do not stop organised crime activities.

The findings show that deploying maritime security operations and border control measures for security reasons alone is not the ideal way to deal with migration issues either. Bigo *et al.* (2015), Yates (2015), and Cusumano (2018) argued that the best approaches for dealing with migration issues and maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea should incorporate both humanitarian SAR strategies and pro-security operations, such as border control and deportation of criminals. The results of this research, however, disagreed with the above arguments: although combining the two approaches is effective in dealing with migration issues, the findings show that no balance for humanitarian and maritime security missions had been established as the right one to end migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the findings above are based on study results showing that both approaches did not provide long-term solutions to the Mediterranean migration crisis. The data analysed on parties opposed to the humanitarian SAR approach show that promoting only SAR missions could be disadvantageous, due to the possibility of encouraging more migration by sea, thus posing a security risk if criminals are smuggled – or rescued – onto EU soil. In this regard, the results above affirmed findings of Bigo *et al.* (2015), Europol (2016; 2018), and Bensman (2019). The finding of this research showed, however, that having pro-security operations alone may infringe on human rights protection, especially for genuine cases of asylum seekers fleeing their countries because of insecurity. Therefore, combining more approaches is beneficial in

providing a comprehensive model of tackling migration issues in the Mediterranean. In support of Garelli and Tazzioli (2019), the findings of this study disclose that the migration issues in the Mediterranean are complex and could not be solved through a humanitarian approach only, on account of the high number of actors as outlined in Chapter Four, and other macro-environment factors. The results also support the arguments of Bueger (2015b) that maritime security challenges transcend providing humanitarian aid or arresting perpetrators of illegal activities in the sea to incorporate other strategic solutions, such as collaboration, information sharing, and capacity building amongst all stakeholders.

The results of the investigation also suggest that deploying either approach encounters hyper-publicising and politicisation from two divides. The politicisation and controversy over appropriate approaches for the migration crisis noted in this study confirm the findings and arguments of Tazzioli (2015a; 2015b) and Panebianco (2016b), reviewed in the literature review of this thesis. Pro-security enthusiasts would always oppose 'pure' humanitarian SAR operations, as seen in the revelations that some opposed mission Mare Nostrum based on the perception that it was a SAR operation that encouraged migration. In contrast, human rights activists would always be opposed to pro-security maritime security operations. Mare Nostrum encompassed both SAR and pro-maritime security operations; yet the outcomes of the mission show that combining the two approaches was not sufficient to end irregular immigration into the EU. Therefore, the findings suggest that combining multiple approaches is the most suitable way to broach such challenges, in line with the findings of Reitano (2018). In consonance with Jumbert (2018), it appears that even when SAR and maritime security operations are enacted jointly – as in the case of mission Mare Nostrum, there will always be controversy and politicisation over what approach should be prioritised, as highlighted in Chapter Four.

Effectiveness in Shaping Maritime Operations in the Mediterranean Sea
The findings of this investigation show that insights and lessons learnt from mission Mare Nostrum influenced subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean Sea. Since Mare Nostrum was highly effective in saving lives at sea, in line with the conclusions of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants [PICUM] (2019), the mission was a valuable reference point for subsequent maritime operations that aimed to search for and rescue migrants. In support of Baubock (2019), the findings show that mission Mare Nostrum achieved its objectives and fulfilled its mandate adequately. Therefore, Mare Nostrum provided

a practical example from which other policymakers could draw insights on operational and tactical capabilities. Future maritime operations drew vital lessons from the challenges and limitations that Mare Nostrum faced. For instance, Davies and Neslen (2014), and Turner and Beckwith (2014) revealed that mission Mare Nostrum faced financial difficulties, leading to its closure. Therefore, other subsequent operations realised that such missions are financially demanding and required either narrower mandates achievable with the budget allocated or more lobbying for financial sustainability. The low level of support and collaboration provided by the EU to mission Mare Nostrum, as illustrated in this study, affirm the findings of Toaldo (2015a; 2015b). Maritime operations such as Sophia learnt from Mare Nostrum the lesson that an effective mission requires not only financial support but also collaboration and political goodwill from all EU stakeholders. Therefore, such insights shaped how subsequent operations were planned and executed. The realisation that maritime security operations involving humanitarian aid to irregular migrants required external policies in the EU neighbourhood was a fundamental milestone for the EU in the journey to develop more comprehensive policies and systems for providing long-term solutions to the migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, the initiative to train and empower the Libyan coast guard agency to support maritime security operations drew lessons from Mare Nostrum, insights that even large-scale operations require to be complemented by other actions taken in the migrants' origin countries. It is the researcher's opinion that without such complementary operations and initiatives, maritime operations would still only provide short-term solutions, and the challenges would resume as soon as the operation is shut down.

Effectiveness in Informing Foreign Policies Managing Sea Migrants' Crises
The findings suggest that prioritising humanitarian-based operations over pro-security operations for border control fuelled the phenomenon of 'crimmigration' (García Hernández, 2013; Van der Woude *et al.*, 2018: n.p.), thus heightening the politicisation and hyper-publicising for stiffening immigration laws in most EU countries. Furthermore, irregular migrants such as asylum seekers or refugees have a right to international protection; therefore, some of the moves under pro-security operations, such as turning back, detention, or barring entry to irregular migrants who flee their countries due to security reasons, are not in line with international treaties on human rights. The results of this study suggest that combining different approaches is critical because a failure to recognise the two conflicting viewpoints may lead to low support for an operation that instead requires optimal collaboration. For instance, the

findings of Schatz and Endemann (2019) have shown that stakeholders who supported more pro-security operations offered little support to mission Mare Nostrum because it was perceived as a humanitarian aid operation that encouraged more migration to the EU. The findings of Funke (2018) also demonstrated that NGOs and other humanitarian operations for SAR missions were highly criticised, in concurrence with the data gleaned from the interviews in Chapter Five. The results on mission Mare Nostrum's effectiveness and its impact on subsequent operations show that Mare Nostrum's lessons have influenced foreign policies on migration, particularly on the concurrence of the need for more strategic solutions through collaboration and capability empowerment in the migrants' countries of origin. This is in line with the findings of Herbert-Burns *et al.* (2008) and Bueger (2015b), previously reviewed in the literature section. The outcomes of mission Mare Nostrum and other maritime SAR operations provided critical insights on policies issues that require improvement. Following such insights, the EU realised that migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea required additional foreign policies that would foster co-operation from MENA countries and their respective coast guard agencies. In addition, it can be argued that EU stakeholders in migration and security should secure more political goodwill and mediation talks to end the conflicts and political instability in neighbouring countries that are perceived to be fuelling the irregular migration phenomenon to the EU.

The Closure of Mare Nostrum: An Untimely End

Legal, Tactical and Operational Challenges

Mission Mare Nostrum did not face significant operational or tactical challenges because the operation was adequately funded until its closure. The findings of this study reveal that the challenges faced by the mission were accordingly mitigated and did not affect the outcome of the mission. For instance, Mare Nostrum followed all operational and legal provisions of international, EU regional, and Italian laws but noted that the mission had no legal mandate to conduct operations in other EU maritime territories outside the Italian territory. Such legal limitation allowed smugglers to evade arrest from Mare Nostrum by diverting their route to other neighbouring countries, such as Spain and Malta. Similarly, the findings show that during EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, traffickers and smugglers changed the route to avoid punitive measures when arrested. Findings from the EU Defense Council (2020) in the documentary analysis showed that Frontex-operations had operational challenges emanating from legal limitations too, and that affected its effectiveness. Frontex-operations Triton and

Poseidon had operational and tactical limitations because of the downscaled funding and personnel, concurrent with a broader area of responsibility compared to their predecessor mission Mare Nostrum. Therefore, the limited personnel and tactical capacity affected the discharge of their mandate to enact an efficient integrated border control system. The findings above also affirm the data compiled by Benton (2014) showing that Frontex-led maritime operations encountered funding challenges.

Lack of Sufficient Stakeholders Buy-In

The results of this study support the findings and arguments of Toaldo (2015b) that maritime operations did not receive the support of all stakeholders. For instance, Frontex did not enjoy the support of the UK until it revamped its policies to ensure integrated border control systems in order to prevent illegal entry. The findings also affirm that operation Sophia was criticised by the House of Lords of the United Kingdom based on the alleged calling effect for migrants overseas (EU Committee, 2016), in accordance with Lee's migration theory. It can be argued that different countries have a different interest in the Mediterranean Sea migration issues: for instance, some countries support full border control approaches to prevent irregular entry to the EU. The data analysed in this study support the findings of Ghazaryan (2012) and Bicchi (2014), insofar that maritime operations that adopted a single approach – or emphasised one approach only, while downplaying others – did not garner full support from all stakeholders. For instance, the controversy based on humanitarian aid instead of border control was the main *critique* of mission Mare Nostrum. Consequently, the EU chose to support Frontex instead of Mare Nostrum based on the accusation that Mare Nostrum was a SAR mission that encouraged migration to the EU, acting as a pull factor as dictated by Lee's migration theory. Finally, the lack of adequate financing, commitment, and support was identified as the main challenge facing these types of maritime SAR operations.

Inadequate Resources and Stakeholders Pulling Out of the Operation

The findings from the documentary analysis contradict the results of Davies and Neslen (2014) that showed that mission Mare Nostrum encountered financial challenges, as the data collected affirm that the mission was adequately funded. The findings from interviews, however, clarified that, although mission Mare Nostrum had adequate technological, information, human, and financial resources, the burden was too high for Italy to bear alone, considering that the migration crisis affected the entire EU. As a result, the Italian government lobbied for

financial support from the European Union in the spirit of burden-sharing but was competing for this support with Frontex, which was also in operation. In this regard, the findings affirmed the arguments of Koller (2017) reviewed in the literature: the financial burden was too high for Italy, thus leading to Mare Nostrum's closure in October 2014 after the EU chose to support Frontex-operation Triton to take over EU maritime security operations and SAR missions in the Mediterranean Sea.

Hyper-Publicising and Interruption from Politics and Humanitarian Activism

The findings of this study illustrate that all maritime operations conducted in the Mediterranean Sea were subject to hyper-publicising and political interference. The data from interviews disclose that the media was the greatest enemy of mission Mare Nostrum because the sensationalism in reporting news on migrants at sea created the false perception that Mare Nostrum was a pure SAR-based operation that encouraged more migrants to embark on the sea journeys. The media reports fuelled politicisation of the migration issues and interference in the EU debates in migration in favour of more stringent measures to prevent irregular entry to the EU. Concurrently, the actors in favour of humanitarian assistance to migrants also lobbied for more SAR operations, thus creating a convoluted debate over the right course of action, the combination thereof, and the right balance of the SAR and pro-security approaches used. With this regard, the findings support the results of Lehr (2002), Cuttitta (2017), Krzyzanowski *et al.* (2018), and Baubock (2019), as reviewed in Chapter Two. It can be argued that media and political influence were responsible for many misconceptions about mission Mare Nostrum and the overarching notion that the mission was a pull factor due to its SAR missions, when the reality was that Mare Nostrum also incorporated anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking security operations.

The Legacy of Mare Nostrum: Lessons Learnt

Lessons Learnt from Mare Nostrum (and Other SAR-Based Operations)

The findings of this examination disclosed that Mare Nostrum's effectiveness in saving lives in the Mediterranean Sea was a fundamental influencer for other SAR-based operations. The insights drawn from the mission show that SAR-based operations are an integral part of migration-oriented maritime security issues. However, a central lesson relating to the effectiveness of Mare Nostrum was that the nature of the approach to be used in dealing with the migration crisis depends on the interest of stakeholders and the nature of the crisis. For

instance, the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea involved irregular migrants drowning at sea and the proliferation of clandestine smuggling and trafficking of migrants to the EU. Such a crisis required a combination of humanitarian assistance and anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking approaches, as conducted by mission Mare Nostrum. It can be argued that SAR operations are indubitably effective in saving lives but cannot be relied upon as the sole solution to migration-related maritime security challenges.

Lesson Learnt from Pro-Security Military and Border Control-Oriented Operations

The findings of this research disclose that the European Union could not address the security threats emanating from the irregular entry in the EU without maritime security operations. The results are a valuable lesson on the need for robust integrated border management systems and adequate funding for such maritime operations. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews disclose that the EU could not manage to secure its blue borders without the support of military-led maritime security operations: the EU requires such operations to patrol its blue borders and prevent irregular entry to the EU. However, the findings also provide the important lesson that, although maritime security and border control are much-needed operations in ensuring EU security, such measures could not eliminate the Mediterranean migration crisis due to the complex nature of the phenomenon. In a similar way to the lessons on SAR operations, the hindsight on maritime security is that they alone are not entirely adequate solutions to the migration issue. Thus, other complementary approaches of a policy and political nature should be enacted.

Lesson Learnt from Alternative Approaches to Migrants at Sea

The study findings disclose that different countries adopt different migration policies and have divergent interests in migration issue, depending on the state-based immigration laws and regulations. In the context of the Mediterranean migration issue, the findings of this examination show that the American model could not apply in the EU because of the differences in immigration policies that mandate the EU member states to render humanitarian assistance to needy migrants fleeing their countries. Similarly, the Asian's 'boat people' approach, or the 'stop the boats' model adopted from the Australian government, could not apply in the EU due to the differences in policy, laws, and regulations governing the response to migration issues.

Lessons for Refugees and Asylum-Seeking Practices in the EU

The findings on Mare Nostrum, Triton, Poseidon, Sophia, Irini, and NATO-operations provide critical insights and lessons for asylum-seeking and refugee management best practices in the EU: maritime SAR-based operations are the most effective approaches for dealing with humanitarian issues affecting irregular migrants. Irregular migrants require succour and assistance as opposed to harsh punitive measures of detention or deportation. However, the findings of this study also suggest that, while the holding of migrants awaiting immigration processing is necessary to mitigate potential security risks of criminals masquerading as asylum seekers, the processing time for irregular migrants rescued should be minimised and fast-tracked to reduce the time spent by migrants in holding centres awaiting immigration processing.

Maritime SAR Operations: A **New** *Framework of Analysis*

The research study has shown that irregular migration has evolved over the decades and has considerably metamorphosed in recent years: from small numbers of migrants transported using clandestine services of smugglers through *unpopular* routes to avoid capture and prosecution, it has now evolved to displacement in large numbers on overcrowded vessels through *popular* routes, patrolled and actively surveilled by different navy forces and coast guard services. It can be argued that migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea are complex and require co-operation from all stakeholders in the EU and beyond to ensure that push factors are mitigated and pull factors eliminated, in order to minimise the irregular migration phenomenon. Maritime SAR operations are subject to politicisation, and thus adequate planning and securing all stakeholders' buy-in and political goodwill are needed for the smooth execution of such missions. Mission Mare Nostrum was an expensive naval operation but highly effective in SAR interventions, and notably effective in reducing human smuggling and trafficking in the area of responsibility where it operated. The impact of Mare Nostrum provided insights for other subsequent SAR missions and shaped how maritime operations in the Mediterranean region are planned and conducted. However effective they may be, though, maritime SAR operations should not be adopted as the sole solutions to eliminating migration challenges in the Mediterranean region because macro-factors – such as insecurity or political instability in the EU neighbourhood countries – are mostly responsible for the continued irregular migration to Europe by sea. The cross-Mediterranean migration nexus is convoluted

and comprises a sophisticated interaction of push factors making irregular migration chronic, and pull factors that encourage migrants to embark on the dangerous journeys.

Despite the increased punitive measures for smugglers, traffickers, and illegal migrants caught in EU waters, migration through the Mediterranean Sea has been persistent, thus revealing that other compelling factors make the migrants consider moving, irrespective of such punitive measures. In addition to the curbing actions against irregular migrants set by the EU, the journey is a gruesome one, full of natural dangers, such as drowning or starvation at sea. Although the number of fatalities in the Mediterranean Sea has been reducing over the years, irregular migration is still increasing, despite a combination of measures taken by the European Union, specific EU countries, neighbourhood countries in the Mediterranean region, and the international community. This persistence points to the existence of other overarching factors that promote irregular migration. These factors have been identified as issues in the country of origin that compel the migrants to leave so that they have no other better choice than to embark on the perilous journey to the EU by sea. Equally, other factors are the incentives that attract the migrants to the EU, such that the benefits to be gained by working and living in the EU outweigh the risks of the dangerous journey. As seen throughout the study, the journey is often a long chain of middle persons, mainly controlled by smuggling and trafficking syndicates, in Northern African countries such as Libya. The presence of facilitators such as *passeurs* and *scafisti* is also crucial in encouraging irregular migration.

On a temporal perspective of this study, Lee's migration theory model provided the research with a solid theoretical framework. Lee's conceptual framework on migrations – and its interdependent variables – enabled discussion on 'what we have'. An analytical framework is now needed to discuss 'where we can go with this'. Therefore, on the basis of the data collected and analysed in this study, the researcher formulated the following framework for assessing the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum in fulfilling its mandate to save lives at sea and reduce human smuggling and trafficking. The model visually represents how the investigation on Mare Nostrum was conducted in this research study, and how the maritime SAR component was integrated to Lee's model, in line with the abductive approach advanced by Tavory and Timmermans (2014); it represents a new *framework of analysis* which could be applied to other similar contexts, such as replicating the same study for other maritime SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

Migration Theory model (adapted from Lee, 1966)

PUSH FACTORS FOR CROSS-MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION

- Civil unrest, political instability and military confrontation in some Northern Africa and Middle East countries
- Low living standards
- Unemployment or low wages
- Human rights violations
- Political or religious persecution
- Mass displacement of people due to war in the Middle East
- Poor socioeconomic conditions
- Climate change or extreme weather

PULL FACTORS FOR CROSS-MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION

- Better jobs and wages rates in the EU
- Hope of getting employed
- Safety and international protection of asylum seekers
- Better living conditions and social infrastructure
- Opportunities for further education
- Tolerance to political, cultural and gender diversity

INTERVENING FACTORS (OBSTACLES)

- <u>Maritime SAR operations such as Mare Nostrum</u>
- Natural barriers in terrain during inland transit
- Lack of means of transportation to navigate through the sea journey
- Lack of legal documents to access a country legally
- Dangers involved in Mediterranean Sea (drowning or starving at sea)
- Time taken for the journey
- Money needed for the journey

Decision to migrate to the EU by sea

FACILITATORS OF MOVEMENT

- Traffickers and human smugglers in the Libyan, Egyptian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Algerian, Syrian, and Lebanese coasts
- Document forgers
- *Scafisti* and *Passeurs*

Mission Mare Nostrum as part of the responses to deal with the outcomes of the crisis, including massive fatalities of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and human smuggling

1. Was Mare Nostrum effective in saving lives through search and rescue?
2. Was Mare Nostrum effective in reducing human smuggling?
3. Was Mare Nostrum's operational mandate adequate to stop irregular migration by sea and reduce further fatalities?

1. Effective as a SAR operation. Lives were saved during the operation

2. The operational mandate was not adequate to end human smuggling and irregular migration to the EU through the sea

3. Reduced, but did *not* stop irregular migration and human smuggling through the sea

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE OPERATION

- Lack of funds to continue supporting the operation
- Political interference (over-politicisation)
- Competition for resources with Frontex-operations
- Accusations that the operation had a calling effect (pull factor)
- High and misguided expectation from the public that the operation would stop irregular migration and human smuggling, due to hyper-mediatisation
- Lack of specific mandate to stop smuggling
- Low support from other EU countries
- Low engagement of EU neighbourhood countries with a Mediterranean coastline

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS

- Adopt a more comprehensive approach where countries contributing to the migration are involved to findings long lasting solutions to the migration crisis
- More collaboration with the EU and adequate funding
- Adequate mandate in dealing with *human smuggling*, as this is the major facilitator of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean Sea
- Involve the Northern African and Middle East countries in preventing the migrants from getting on the boats, and findings solutions to reduce the push factors for migration
- SAR operations are the most effective in saving lives of migrants at sea, but they must be combined with pro-security measures for ending human smuggling, to avoid the negative security implications of irregular migration into the EU

Source: (researcher).

Figure 29. Formulation of a *New* Analytical Framework for Maritime SAR Operations.

The conceptual framework represented in figure 29 borrows significantly from Lee's migration theoretical model, insofar that cross-Mediterranean migration comprises a sophisticated entanglement of push factors that make irregular migration chronic and simultaneously pull factors that encourage migrants to embark on dangerous journeys. The hope for better job opportunities, international protection in the EU, and better living standards were partly responsible for the decision of migrants to reach the EU at all costs, including risking their lives during the sea journey. Mission Mare Nostrum was one of the major maritime SAR operations enacted to respond to the emerging crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. The operation was notably effective in reducing the number of fatalities at sea. The search and rescue approach adopted by mission Mare Nostrum was effective in finding stranded boats facing the risk of capsizing. The mission was also mandated to arrest suspected *passeurs* and *scafisti* who were ferrying – and abandoning – the migrants in high seas; mission Mare Nostrum's intervention did reduce the human smuggling and trafficking phenomenon across the Mediterranean Sea. The conceptual framework above also reveal that other macro-factors are involved in the migration crisis, and those are beyond the scope of work of any maritime SAR operation such as mission Mare Nostrum. The reduction of human smuggling activities during Mare Nostrum was only temporary relief to the crisis, for smuggling and the number of fatalities increased after the operation was withdrawn in October 2014. As evidenced in the framework, the findings recommend a more comprehensive approach from the international community through policies aimed at tackling the push factors in the country of origin that compel people to migrate to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea.

Limitations and Criticism

Whilst Lee's migration model proved helpful in illustrating the aspects of the cross-Mediterranean migration phenomenon, the theory, however, does not contemplate the suitability of maritime SAR missions because naval operations were not considered for such purpose when the theory was generated in 1966. Regarding the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum, Lee's theory offers a myopic introspection, considering that it does not directly connect the SAR mission's response to push and pull factors. Nonetheless, in an innovative dimension, mission Mare Nostrum could be viewed as an intervening factor in the cross-Mediterranean migration. Migrants and smugglers were afraid of being intercepted and arrested; thus, they either avoided the routes patrolled by Mare Nostrum or avoided crossing the sea at all. Since one of the mission's objectives was to reduce smuggling and trafficking

(*i.e.*, the facilitators of irregular migration), Mare Nostrum arrested smugglers and traffickers and forwarded them to the Italian judicial authorities for prosecution. In return, the arrests reduced the trafficking during the time that Mare Nostrum was in operation. Following Lee's arguments in his migration model of pull factors, mission Mare Nostrum could be viewed, in fact, as a pull factor – as publicised and believed by most Europeans. Mare Nostrum was accused of being a major pull factor for migration into Europe, considering that the risk of drowning was mitigated by the mere presence of SAR operations conducted at sea by Mare Nostrum, therefore allegedly acting as a pull factor by calling even more migrants. The assumption behind this notion was that the smuggling business – and risks of being apprehended – had been drastically increased because all that was needed was to get the migrants to high seas in the area of responsibility patrolled by mission Mare Nostrum; then, the migrants would be rescued and brought ashore to safety. The risk of drowning, being stranded at sea, or starvation, had reduced significantly, to such an enticing point that more migrants would undertake the journey.

This study relied on Lee's migration theory to understand why people migrate, as well as drivers, dynamics, and approaches to curb mass migration. Lee's model aimed to explain the aspects of continuity and directionality of flows of migrants, origins of migration, and the socio-cultural adaptation of migrants (Kurekova, 2009). The theoretical arguments of Greenwood (2016) on international migration held that the phenomenon is fuelled by numerous pull and push factors that either force one to move or attract one to relocate in the hope of better opportunities than the country of origin. Adler (2018) viewed the migration from a crisis perspective and noted that migration was categorised as a crisis because of an underlying perspective that migrants are in search of socioeconomic opportunities in Europe, rather than refugees or asylum-seeking. Similarly, the increased public discourses on migrant's loss of lives at sea, desperate journeys in search of economic opportunities, and a call for humanitarian actions heightened the debate on cross-Mediterranean migration as a *crisis*. Finally, theorising on migration is complicated because of the diversity and complexity of the area covered by international migration. Lee's international migration theory aids in understanding the mobility of human beings, and was therefore fundamental for this study in explaining the transnational migration push and pull factors and understanding the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum as part of the responses to deal with the outcomes of the crisis, such as the fatalities of migrants at sea and human smuggling into Europe.

Summation and Review of the Research Questions

The findings discussed in this thesis provided critical insights into the current state of play on migration issues, especially response approaches to migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea. The *status quo* of the Mediterranean stage is a complex interaction of different approaches applied to manage irregular migration and maritime security. There is a blend of humanitarian-based operations, which prioritise rendering humanitarian assistance to migrants at sea. There are also maritime security operations, purported to arrest traffickers and smugglers. The EU member states that prioritise the security and stability of the EU support the latter approach.

The research aimed to assess to what extent mission Mare Nostrum was an effective operation in reducing the loss of lives at sea and migrant smuggling. Additionally, the study aimed to evaluate the extent of the mission's capacity and resources to adequately deliver its mandate, how maritime operations balanced in policy the obligations to save lives at sea, the relevance of Mare Nostrum's mandate and suitability to the challenges, and lessons that should be drawn for management of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. It is noteworthy that, given the parity of the findings of this study with previous research[103] – which are in fact corroborated by this thesis, the distinctive contribution of this study maintains its originality in the sense that the interviews in Chapter Five have proved invaluable as providing new insights from a selected panel of practitioners with relevant experience.

Was Mare Nostrum Effective in Saving Lives at Sea?

The research explored mission Mare Nostrum extensively, especially its effectiveness in saving lives and its impact on other maritime security operations and foreign policies. The results of this research confirmed the assumption that Mare Nostrum was notably effective in searching for and rescuing migrants. The comparison of the efficiency of the mission in saving lives with other subsequent maritime operations revealed that mission Mare Nostrum was more effective because of its SAR-based mandate, aims, and objectives. The results of this assessment suggest that maritime operations that have SAR roles and functions are the most effective in saving lives of migrants facing dangers of drowning or starving at sea.

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[103] Notably, from Taufer (2016) and Musaro (2016) regarding Mare Nostrum's operational effectiveness; Koller (2017), and Davies and Neslen (2014) with regard to the adequacy of the mission's tactical support; Musaro (2016) and Okonkwo (2017) on the appropriateness of the legal mandates; Akar's (2019) argument that Mare Nostrum was a 'pacesetter' in maritime humanitarian operations; from Toaldo (2015) about maritime operations not receiving full buy-in from all actors.

Was Mare Nostrum Effective in Reducing Smuggling and Trafficking in the Mediterranean?

The findings of this research suggest that mission Mare Nostrum was effective in reducing smuggling at sea because smuggling and trafficking were reduced in the sea territory where Mare Nostrum operated. Although Mare Nostrum did not completely eliminate trafficking and smuggling, these clandestine activities reduced significantly, because traffickers and smugglers willing to risk getting arrested and prosecuted had decreased. Mission Mare Nostrum had the operational, tactical, and informational capabilities to apprehend them, thus negatively affecting their clandestine business. Mare Nostrum, however, could not eliminate smuggling and trafficking to the EU through the Mediterranean Sea for several reasons. Firstly, Mare Nostrum was never mandated to eradicate migrant smuggling or stop human trafficking. Secondly, even if the mission had the mandate to do so, the results show that the mission did not have sufficient resources to operate in the vast Mediterranean Sea territory under its area of responsibility. The research shows that smugglers and traffickers had diversionary tactics that involved changing direction to less patrolled sea routes to the EU. Therefore, even if the operation could have patrolled the entirety of EU water territories, there would still have been a legal issue because the extant regulatory framework allowed mission Mare Nostrum to operate in the Italian waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ] but not territorial waters of other states. Lastly, mission Mare Nostrum was not effective in eliminating migrant smuggling and trafficking because it did not address their root causes. The findings behind this conclusion were that migration issues require a comprehensive approach to eliminate the root factors fuelling the migration in the countries of origin, also designated as push factors by Lee's migration theory. Drivers of migration play a more important role than the type of maritime operation, irrespective of its mandated military or SAR humanitarian approach. In the context of the conclusion above, mission Mare Nostrum addressed the migration challenges at a tactical level; that is, when occurring during the journey by sea. Therefore, migration issues in the countries of origin were not part of its mandate and were, therefore, not addressed.

When viewed from an inward-looking perspective of the Lampedusa incident in 2013, mission Mare Nostrum could be judged as a product of an immediate crisis: an emergency operation launched *ad hoc* to respond to the highly publicised humanitarian crisis following the shipwreck. Such a conclusion would infer that the mission was not strategically planned to operate on a long-term basis in the Mediterranean Sea. Considering that the operation also

experienced financial challenges afterwards, which later led to its closure, mission Mare Nostrum could be judged as a short-term emergency operation to respond to the Mediterranean humanitarian crisis and refugee crisis in Italy. However, none of these conclusions is self-sufficient, as there are other complex meta-scenarios in which Mare Nostrum operated. The growing disfavour of the mission amongst the Italian politicians, locals, and the EU based on the reasons above made it economically and politically unsustainable, thus signalling its termination. The criticisms led to dwindling support from Italian nationals and the EU, competition from the EU-led Frontex, and discontinuation of funding to support Mare Nostrum, ultimately leading to its closure.

Eliminating smuggling and trafficking should start by dealing with issues that fuel the emigration to reduce smugglers' potential 'clients'. This conclusion leads to the inference that as long as persons are willing to take the risk involved in being smuggled to the EU, a mission such as Mare Nostrum would do little to end this clandestine illicit trade. As previously discussed, addressing the push factors for emigration is therefore the key to solving the irregular migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea. This conclusion leads to another reasoning: eliminating migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea requires combined approaches of operations to save and rescue migrants, enforce integrated border control measures, and collaborate with countries of origin to prevent irregular emigration. Considering such findings, mission Mare Nostrum was effective in fulfilling its mandate to reduce smuggling and trafficking but could not be effective in eradicating them.

Was Mare Nostrum Effective in Impacting International Outlook on Migration Crisis and Informing Subsequent Maritime Operations in the Mediterranean Sea?
Mission Mare Nostrum was effective in impacting the international outlook on irregular migration, as well as informing policies for dealing with irregular migration and maritime security issues. Mare Nostrum's outcomes on the level of efficacy and challenges that affected the mission provided critical insights for subsequent maritime operations. The aftermath of the mission showed that, despite being effective in saving lives, Mare Nostrum did not provide lasting solutions to the irregular migration crisis, thus providing insights on the need to incorporate more approaches that could contribute to long-term solutions. The mission's outcomes led to the realisation that SAR operations alone are not meant to exclusively tackle maritime security or border control issues; thus, there is a need to incorporate complementary

methods that target maritime security threats. Mission Mare Nostrum influenced the debate on migration because its outcomes depicted migration as an international issue that required collaboration from all involved stakeholders. The end result of Mare Nostrum suggests that more collaboration from international, regional, state-based actors, and civil society actors are critical in providing lasting solutions to the irregular migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea.

Challenges that Mare Nostrum and Subsequent Operations Encountered

Mare Nostrum encountered legal challenges because its operation was limited to its Italian maritime territory and non-territorial EEZ waters. This limitation was challenging because it allowed smugglers and traffickers to divert their illicit trade to routes not covered by the mission. Although other naval missions – such as Triton and Sophia – experienced financial challenges during their operations, Mare Nostrum was well funded, and the resources were adequate for fulfilling its mandate. However, there were increased debates and advocacy for burden-sharing on addressing the crisis because the operation was costly for Italy to bear alone, yet the irregular migration and related maritime security issues affected the entire EU. It can be argued that irregular migration and maritime security issues are subject to political interference and hyper-publicising that could lead to the wrong information and expectations circulating amongst the public, as was in the case for mission Mare Nostrum. The findings of this research led to the inference that maritime security operations are resource-intensive, and – as such – they require burden-sharing and co-operation from all stakeholders. For instance, although the Italian government adequately funded Mare Nostrum, the operation was resource-intensive, thus leading to the need for more lobbying from the EU for burden-sharing. The operation closed after the EU opted not to support it in favour of Frontex-operation Triton. Another challenge faced by Mare Nostrum and revealed in this investigation was that some stakeholders pulled out from the operation and others offered low co-operation.

What Lessons Do the Findings Offer for Humanitarian and Pro-Security Operations in the Mediterranean Sea?

Mission Mare Nostrum was a source of valuable lessons for future foreign policies on migration and for shaping subsequent maritime SAR and security operations. Based on the outcomes of Mare Nostrum, SAR-based operations are the most effective in saving lives, while pro-security missions are the most effective in addressing maritime security threats. However,

the involvement of other stakeholders, especially in countries where migrants originate from, was low and thus requires improvement. The results of this study show that the involvement of Libya through the empowerment of its coast guard agencies showed promising results, suggesting that irregular migration issues could be limited through co-operation with the countries of origin. A major lesson from mission Mare Nostrum was that maritime SAR-based and security operations could not be adequate solutions to eliminate irregular migration, since the phenomenon is an international issue that should incorporate international actors and be discussed at a political level.

An evaluation of other approaches used in other countries showed that those policies for irregular migration are different and can therefore not be applied in the EU Mediterranean case. The differences between these models are notable in policies, law, and regulations governing the responses to a migration crisis. Additionally, the asylum-seeking process should be streamlined and encompass more collaboration with all relevant authorities in light of integrated border management policies. Such streamlining would ensure that detained asylum seekers do not spend excessive time awaiting immigration processing or get deported to unsafe countries. Therefore, the lesson was that a balance between border control, maritime security operations, and humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants is critical in solving irregular migration challenges. Lastly, on a financial standpoint, mission Mare Nostrum was adequately funded, but the budget was too expensive for Italy to bear alone; thus, it was terminated. The mission balanced humanitarian assistance SAR activities with maritime security operations for anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking.

Implication of Findings

For Policymakers

Policymakers may find the outcomes of this research useful because they highlight policy loopholes that have made the irregular migration in the Mediterranean Sea become a chronic concern for the EU. For instance, the research reinforces the need for improvement of policies in support of more co-operation and collaboration with EU neighbourhood countries. Unless more comprehensive policies that involve origin countries of migrants are implemented, the irregular migration issues will always exist because maritime SAR operations such as mission Mare Nostrum would only cure what can be metaphorically regarded as 'effects' – and not the root causes – of irregular migration. The EU refugee crisis cannot be ended without finding

solutions to the problems that aggravate migration, such as ending the armed conflicts in the countries of origin. Therefore, the findings of this study impact policies because they offer insights into other necessary solutions to the irregular migration challenges in the Mediterranean Sea.

On Maritime Security Operations, SAR Missions, and Immigration Border Control Practices
The findings of this research impact the practices on maritime security operations, SAR operations, and immigration positively, by providing critical insights into challenges and ways of dealing with the issues at hand, as well as areas for improvement in best practices. Border control measures and other EU pro-security operations are necessary but should not be adopted as a standalone solution to irregular migration. The same is also true for humanitarian operations. Such a practice should be expanded to embrace a hybrid model that combines multiple approaches to the irregular migration phenomenon.

Contribution to Future Research on Maritime Security, Migration Crisis and SAR Operations
The study provides fundamental insights and literature for future researchers to reckon with, particularly those studying maritime security operations and irregular migration challenges. The findings add to the existing body of knowledge on the subject, especially research works on maritime security operations, and mission Mare Nostrum in particular. As Professor Bueger suggested, maritime security is a young and evolving discipline which requires extensive research. This study advances maritime security knowledge through assessing the effectiveness of maritime SAR operations in different contexts and expected efficiency in taking measures about maritime security threats and irregular migration. This is how this research provides an academic contribution to the existing body of literature and to the fields of international relations and European security studies. The findings also lead to recommendations in the ensuing subsections and ideas that future researchers may consider exploring.

Recommendations for Policy Improvements
Regulatory Recommendations
The laws and regulations governing maritime operations responding to irregular migration issues – especially regarding the responsibility of each state in cross-border movements, co-operation in migration management, and international protection of refugees and asylum seekers – should be revised further to foster the implementation of burden-sharing for migrants

in the EU. Similarly, the fact that the majority of drownings occur in high seas raises the issue of geographic equity, thus the need to consider rationalisation of search and rescue operations with all stakeholders. It is therefore recommended that the current EU and international policies on migration management are revised and improved, insofar that safe and legal channels for migration are planned and implemented. Given that migration is a political, social, and health challenge for European countries, policymakers are urged to enact specific policies to address the health needs of all migrants, including the refugees and asylum seekers. Health and safety issues should also be strengthened through the development of information and monitoring systems to promote robust policies for migrants. The researcher recommends incorporation of more collaboration and capacity empowerment of coast guard agencies in countries with high numbers of migrants into the EU, such as Libya. There should be regulatory frameworks and legally binding agreements in place on how the EU would engage its neighbours in preventing migrants from starting the irregular sea journeys to Europe. Although such regulatory frameworks would be reviewed and redacted, more active involvement from stakeholders – particularly at the political level – is required to secure political goodwill in crafting and implementing such frameworks. Similarly, the current regulations should be revised to ensure that the migration issue is addressed in the legal and regulatory frameworks. The EU as an entity should also collaborate in maritime SAR and security operations and responses to irregular migration issues in the Mediterranean Sea because state-based actors, such as in the case of mission Mare Nostrum, would otherwise encounter legal, regulatory, and financial limitations. Essentially, state-based operations such as Mare Nostrum, could not operate in maritime territories of other states, without their approval and co-operation. Currently, migrants smugglers exploit such loopholes to continue their clandestine trade. Therefore, more co-operation from all EU member states and EU neighbouring countries is needed to seal such vulnerabilities.

Recommendations for Best Practices

The researcher recommends the improvement of collaboration and co-operation amongst EU stakeholders in addressing irregular migration issues in the Mediterranean since it is a complex international issue. The researcher also recommends policymakers and regulators to involve all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of maritime security and migration-oriented naval operations for stakeholders buy-in purposes. Political interference should be minimised, at best; instead, more lobbying for financial support and information sharing for such missions

is necessary. It is further recommended that stakeholders in the EU do not attempt to solve irregular migration challenges using one approach – either search and rescue or pro-security – but instead combine different approaches to address the push factors in origin countries, facilitating factors in the Mediterranean Sea, and the pull factors in the EU. It is also proposed that more resources are facilitated and mobilised for maritime operations because the EU could not address the security threats associated with irregular migration without the support of military-led maritime SAR operations. Over recent years, the Mediterranean has undergone profound changes: not temporary changes, but real structural changes, which in many respects reflect the transformations of the world order. Due to these changes, Italy is now forced to face its security and foreign policy more systematically. The migratory phenomenon is an evident example of a dynamic that would characterise the MENA region for the coming decades and therefore requires a far-sighted strategic approach aimed at the causes of this phenomenon.

Recommended Policy Improvements

When mission Mare Nostrum was in operation, there were policies in place. However, their implementation was problematic due to political interference and hyper-publicising of incorrect information regarding the proceedings and achievements of maritime security operations. At the time of writing, the EU supports both SAR and pro-security maritime operations, yet policymakers are often conflicted on what approach should be emphasised more in responding to irregular migration issues. However, it was deduced from the findings that neither of the two approaches is adequate when deployed alone. It is therefore recommended that policymakers embrace collaboration with EU neighbour countries and implement hybrid approaches to address the irregular migration issues in the Mediterranean region. The policy for asylum-seeking should also be improved to foster burden-sharing because it is evident that the EU countries with a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea, such as Italy, Spain, Malta, and Greece, have been experiencing the highest number of arrivals. Lastly, it emerged that the European Union attempted to play a minimum role in managing the migratory routes coming from the south, leaving the responsibility almost entirely to Italy. Furthermore, over recent years, the 'NGO question' has also added to Italy's political isolation: the majority of NGOs – flying foreign flags – rescue and unload on Italian territory, considering the Italian mainland the nearest safe port. Non-governmental organisations have become the target of a part of politics that considers them protagonists in the entire chain of trafficking in human beings. Italy's reference to the European role in the area has been constant: if on the one hand, the

Italian insistence has been noted as an attempt to unload responsibility towards a supranational level, the EU management of the migratory phenomenon demonstrated how the European Union's foreign policy approach needs a major overhaul on the other hand.

The Unanswered Questions: Ideas for Future Research

The findings of this study are impactful to maritime security and SAR practices, policies, and upcoming research. Since the research clearly illustrates the effectiveness of mission Mare Nostrum and how it impacted subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean, it also raises the question of the NGO vessels and how their operations have evolved since the inception of this doctoral programme in 2016. Therefore, more research is needed on NGO-led SAR operations and their impacts on irregular migration in the Mediterranean stage. Future researchers could explore one specific NGO in a similar case study as that of mission Mare Nostrum in the replication of this methodology and research questions. Furthermore, other operations – such as Triton, Sophia, or Themis – could be used to replicate this study and investigate the impacts of the specific mission, in order to offer different insights into the role of maritime security operations in solving irregular migration in the EU. It is also suggested that analysts explore this topic using different methodologies, such as a quantitative or mixed methodological approach for future research.

Although this study provided insights into how to respond to migration crises at sea, the results also show that the operation conducted at sea alone could not eradicate the migration crisis. This study offered insights that working together with the EU neighbour countries may hold the key to lasting solutions to the cross-Mediterranean migration crisis. Therefore, from a political standpoint, the genesis of the migration issues and the reasons that make it chronic despite numerous operations in the sea should be researched. In other words, it is suggested that future analysis is conducted to explore the root causes on account of people irregularly emigrate to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea; the exploration and understanding of those reasons could be vital in enacting lasting solutions to the migration crisis. Additionally, the researcher considers noteworthy assessing how the migration crisis impacted EU politics and policies with respect to European citizens. Regrettably, anxiety over immigration and refugees has become a potent political force; therefore, it would be interesting to explore whether the criminalisation – or victimisation – of migrants are common sentiments amongst EU citizens and represent the *Zeitgeist* of this particular era.

Coda

Migration is a basic fact of human history. Emigrants are pushed by war or starvation. Immigrants are pulled by freedom or jobs. Maritime SAR operations are unavoidable when providing humanitarian assistance to save lives of migrants in distress or stranded in the sea. Maritime security operations are equally unavoidable because the European Union could not mitigate threats or patrol its blue borders without the support of military-led maritime operations. Such operations are costly and complex; thus, they require collaboration, and co-operation of all stakeholders in the EU, as well as international states and EU neighbours. Combining these two approaches as a hybrid model – in addition to policies and politics for reducing push and pull factors from the originating countries – is the best approach to providing durable solutions to the irregular migration issue in the Mediterranean Sea. Despite all unavoidable challenges, such as political interference, hyper-publicising of incorrect information, and legal and regulatory framework limitations, it can be argued that maritime SAR operations, such as mission Mare Nostrum, are paramount.

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Appendix I: Timeline of Maritime SAR Operations in the Mediterranean (2001–2021)
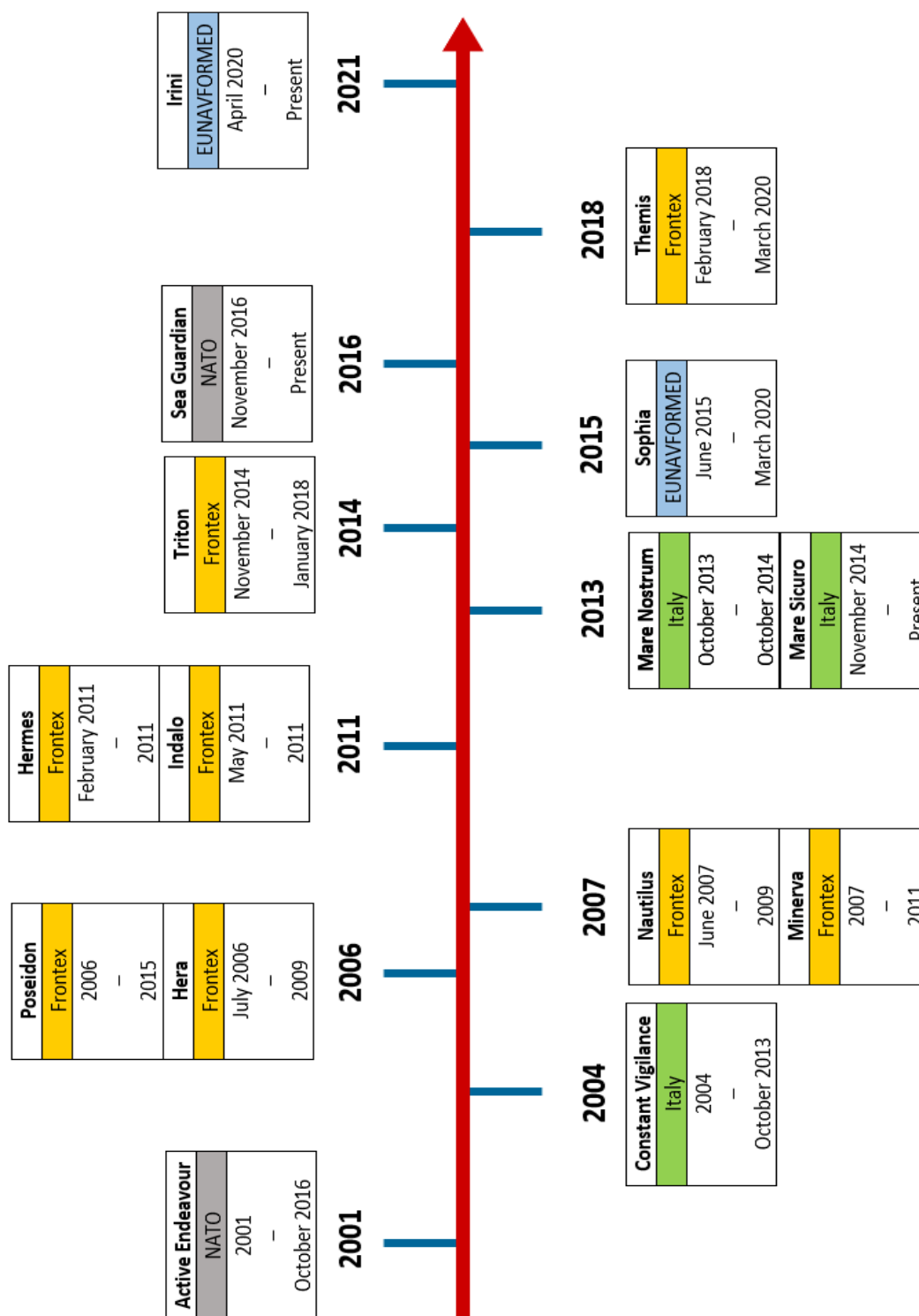
Source: (researcher).

Appendix II: Ethical Approval to Proceed with the Research

School of International Relations Ethics Committee

26 May 2020

Dear Maurizio Carmini

Thank you for submitting your ethical application which was considered at the School Ethics Committee meeting on 6ᵗʰ May 2020.

The School of International Relations Ethics Committee, acting on behalf of the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC), has approved this application:

Approval Code:	IR14887	Approved on:	25.05.2020	Approval Expiry:	25.05.2025
Project Title:	"Mission 'Mare Nostrum', 2013-2014: A Framework of Analysis for Maritime Rescue Operations"				
Researcher(s):	Maurizio Carmini				
Supervisor(s):	Dr Peter Lehr				

The following supporting documents are also acknowledged and approved:

1. Consent Form
2. Participant Information Form
3. Debrief Form
4. Sample Questions

Approval is awarded for 5 years, see the approval expiry data above.

If your project has not commenced within 2 years of approval, you must submit a new and updated ethical application to your School Ethics Committee.

If you are unable to complete your research by the approval expiry date you must request an extension to the approval period. You can write to your School Ethics Committee who may grant a discretionary extension of up to 6 months. For longer extensions, or for any other changes, you must submit an ethical amendment application.

You must report any serious adverse events, or significant changes not covered by this approval, related to this study immediately to the School Ethics Committee.

Approval is given on the following conditions:
- that you conduct your research in line with:
  - the details provided in your ethical application
  - the University's Principles of Good Research Conduct
  - the conditions of any funding associated with your work
- that you obtain all applicable additional documents (see the 'additional documents' webpage for guidance) before research commences.

You should retain this approval letter with your study paperwork.

Yours sincerely,

Joyce Walsh

SEC ADMINISTRATOR

cc. Dr Peter Lehr

School of International Relations Ethics Committee

The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland: No SC013532

1) I am interested in maritime security operations, notably the military and humanitarian mission 'Mare Nostrum'. In your view, to what extent was 'Mare Nostrum' effective as a search and rescue operation, with specific regard to persons rescued at sea?

2) What is your general opinion about search and rescue maritime operations? [*Probe, Type 2*]: Would you consider them as effective ways to manage immigration and to curb human trafficking, or rather as a method for saving lives at sea? Or anything else?

3) In the absence of maritime security operations, would the European Union be able to effectively manage their 'blue borders' in the Mediterranean Sea and mitigate the potential risks arising from unregulated immigration into the continent?

4) Do you have any concerns over the accountability of the mission 'Mare Nostrum? [*Probe, Type 1*]: To your knowledge, under what legal framework was the mission operating? Was the mission's mandate in compliance with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)?

5) As an expert in your organisation, to what extent would you define the tactical and operational capabilities of monitoring the Mediterranean Sea by employing maritime security operations in general? [*Prompt, Type 2*] Which security guidelines and regulations did apply to the mission 'Mare Nostrum'?

6) Please react to the following statement: "[…] *EU leaders 'killing migrants by neglect' after cutting Mediterranean rescue missions*" (Independent, 2016: *n.p.*). [*Probe, Type 2*]: "[T]*he scaling back of search and rescue operations 'created the conditions that led to massive loss of life*'" (*Ibid.*).

7) To your knowledge, was 'Mare Nostrum' conducted in compliance with any legislation on human rights? [*Probe, Type 2*] Was the mission mandate based on any of the human rights legislation and directives (*e.g.* Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, European Convention on Human Rights, EU Dublin Convention)?

8) How would you compare 'Mare Nostrum' with other nations' that abide by different principles of immigration and adopt different approaches to migrants at sea? [*Probe, Type 1*]: How would 'Mare Nostrum' differentiate *vis-à-vis* the Australian model ('Stop the Boats') or the American approach?

9) Could you please describe your view of the actors on the Mediterranean stage [*e.g.* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Border Management (FRONTEX)] during 'Mare Nostrum'? [*Prompt, Type 2*]: During your time with 'Mare Nostrum', have you ever experienced at a strategic level any conflicting views impacting on maritime operations?

10) Is there anything else you would like to add on this topic that I have not covered or asked you during this interview?

11) Is there anything else that you would like to ask me?

[Thank You very much for your time and consideration]

Appendix IV: Participant information Form

Participant Information

"Mission 'Mare Nostrum', 2013-2014: A Framework of Analysis for Maritime Rescue Operations"

Maurizio Carmini

My name is Maurizio Carmini; I have been working in the security industry for over 25 years as a security professional in hostile environments, at tactical and managerial level. In order to complement my work experience with solid academic knowledge, I am pursuing a Doctoral programme in International Relations at the University of St Andrews (Scotland, UK) https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk.

What is the study about?
As part of this degree, I invite you to participate in a research project on the effectiveness of the military and humanitarian mission 'Mare Nostrum' as a maritime search and rescue operation, and on the impact it had on foreign policy and on sea operations in the Mediterranean Sea since 2013. The research will also compare 'Mare Nostrum' to the subsequent maritime operations in the Mediterranean, in relation to operational mandates and actions.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been selected and invited to take part in this study on account of having been part of the military personnel or humanitarian officials who were actively involved in the Mission 'Mare Nostrum' during 2013 and 2014.

Do I have to take part?
This information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part. Your participation in this interview and this research is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time for any reason, even after signing this consent form. You also may refuse to answer specific questions without giving any explanation. Refusal of participation will not bring any consequences to you.

What would I be required to do?
In accordance with the University of St Andrews' Guidelines for Ethical Research, it is required that ethics approval must be obtained for research involving any human participants. If you agree to participate, we will schedule an interview at a time and place convenient for you. The interview will last approximately one hour of your time or less. Should more time be needed, we can schedule a follow-up interview, based on your availability. In addition to taking notes during this interview, I also would like to record your comments in a digital format.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?
There are no identified risks to your safety or security both during and after participation to this study.

Informed consent
It is essential that you are able to give your informed consent before taking part in this study and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to the research before you provide your consent.

Who is funding the research?
The research is being entirely self-funded. No external party financially contributed to this study.

What information about me or recordings of me ('my data') will you be collecting?
Only the minimal amount of data (relevant to the research, *i.e.* the maritime operation 'Mare Nostrum') will be captured. In order to maintain strict confidentiality of the participant, the international organisation and participants' names selected for this study will be pseudonymised.

How will my data be securely stored, who will have access to it?
I will be the sole interviewer, analyst and transcriber: no other person will have access to the data (except my supervisor Dr P. Lehr). All data will be acquired via my personal electronic device (digital voice recorder), then directly transferred onto my external hard disk drive. The same electronic devices (*i.e.* digital voice recorder and external hard disk drives) will be locked in my personal filing cabinet in a room with restricted access to me only. With regard to storage, data will be kept in a digital format, secured and encrypted at military-grade equivalent level (AES-256 bit), in full compliance with the UK Data Protection Act and the University's Data Protection Code (https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/assets/university/data-protection/research-human-data-ict-secure.pdf). The hard disk drive will not be connected to any local or external network (offline use *only*). No

other files will be stored on the same hard drive. No hard copies of the transcripts of the interviews will be printed. Only one backup (digital format) copy of the data will be kept for the duration of the research project, then erased at the same time of the master copy. Bearing in mind that participants will be able to withdraw from the research at any time and for any reasons, should you do so, all data relating to you will be destroyed.

How will my data be used, and in what form will it be shared further?
Your research data will be analysed *only* as part of this research study. Participants' data arising from the study (including excerpts of data like tables, figures or quotes) will be shared in a pseudonymised form in the thesis, which means that data will be edited so that they are referred to by a unique reference such as 'Alpha', 'Bravo', 'Charlie', *etc*. A 'key' document – linking to the participant's real identity – will be compiled and securely stored. The research is self-funded (researcher), thus there is no obligation to report or share any data to any funding party or any other research output.

When will my data be destroyed?
After submission of the thesis, the researcher will convert pseudonymised data into an anonymised format. I myself will destroy the data: first the content of the hard disk drive will be deleted, then the logical partition erased. Finally, the external hard disk drive will be physically destroyed. It is expected that the project to which this research relates will be finalised by June 2021.

Will my participation be confidential?
Yes, your participation will only be known to me and my supervisor Dr P. Lehr.

Use of your personal data and data protection rights
The University of St Andrews (the 'Data Controller') is bound by the UK 2018 Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which require a lawful basis for all processing of personal data (in this case it is the 'performance of a task carried out in the public interest' – namely, for research purposes) and an additional lawful basis for processing personal data containing special characteristics (in this case it is 'public interest research'). You have a range of rights under data protection legislation. For more information on data protection legislation and your rights visit https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/terms/data-protection/rights/. For any queries, email dataprot@st-andrews.ac.uk. You will be able to withdraw your data before 31 October 2020. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

Ethical Approvals
This research proposal has been scrutinised and subsequently granted ethical approval by the University of St Andrews Teaching and Research Ethics Committee.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?
In the first instance, you are encouraged to raise your concerns with the researcher. However, if you do not feel comfortable doing so, then you should contact my Supervisor or School Ethics Contact (contact details below). A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee is available at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/humans/ethical-guidance/complaints/.

Contact details

Researcher	Maurizio Carmini	**Supervisor(s) / School Ethics contact**	Dr Peter Lehr
	*****@st-andrews.ac.uk		*****@st-andrews.ac.uk
			+44 **** ** ****

Appendix V: Consent Form

Consent Form

"Mission 'Mare Nostrum', 2013-2014: A Framework of Analysis for Maritime Rescue Operations"

Maurizio Carmini

University of
St Andrews

The University of St Andrews attaches high priority to the ethical conduct of research. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before signing this form. Your signature confirms that you are willing to participate in this study, however, signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

Please initial box

o   I understand the contents of the Participant Information Sheet (marked ☐ *'mc222_EthicsApp_23/04/2020'*)

o   I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had them answered ☐ satisfactorily.

o   I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at ☐ any time without giving an explanation and with no disbenefit.

o   I understand who will have access to my data, how it will be stored, in what form it will be shared, ☐ and what will happen to it at the end of the study.

o   I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data before 31 October 2020, and I understand that ☐ if my data has been anonymised, it cannot be withdrawn.

o   I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Audio recordings:

I understand that part of this research involves recording audio data. These will be kept securely and stored separately to any identifiable information, *i.e.* consent forms and questionnaires.

Audio data can be a valuable resource for future studies and therefore we ask for your additional consent to maintain this data for this purpose.

o   I agree to being audio recorded. ☐

I confirm that I am willing to take part in this research

	Print name	Date	**Signature**
Participant			
Person taking consent			

mc222_EthicsApp_23/04/2020

1　**Admiral Giuseppe De Giorgi, ITA Navy (Ret.)**

2　**Interview (online format), on June 24, 2020**

3

4　*Marina Militare Italiana*

5　*Formerly, Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy from 28 January 2013 to 22 June 2016*

6

7

8　[*Omissis*]

9

10　*1) I am interested in maritime security operations, notably the military and humanitarian mission*

11　*'Mare Nostrum'. In your view, to what extent was 'Mare Nostrum' effective as a search and rescue*

12　*operation, with specific regard to persons rescued at sea?*

13

14　The scope of Mare Nostrum was threefold:

15　　-　Humanitarian assistance at sea (SAR).

16　　-　Capture of Human Traffickers.

17　　-　Maritime Security (sanitary and immigration control).

18

19　On our ships were embarked Doctors and Nurses from Ministry of Health, Red Cross and Non-Govt.

20　Organizations. Police officials were also on board with the task to verify via real time satellite link

21　with the Ministry of Interior the status of the survivors. So, the vast majority of the people rescued

22　were screened before reaching the Italian port of safety.

23　Before Mare Nostrum illegal immigrants were disembarking directly on the Italian soil without any

24　control whatsoever by tens of thousands.

25　During Mare Nostrum at least 95% of the boats carrying migrants were intercepted in the high sea.

26　We rescued more than 150.000 persons. Mare Nostrum was the greatest maritime humanitarian

27　operation in the history.

28

29

30　*2) What is your general opinion about search and rescue maritime operations? [Probe, Type 2]:*

31　*Would you consider them as effective ways to manage immigration and to curb human trafficking, or*

32　*rather as a method for saving lives at sea? Or anything else?*

33

34　Maritime search and rescue operations objective is obviously to save lives and are not conceived to

35　curb immigration. Mare Nostrum was also focused on pursuing the human traffickers arresting them

1

36 and destroying their boats once the migrants were rescued. This made the trade more expensive and

37 proved to be a deterrent even if not decisive.

38

39

40 *3) In the absence of maritime security operations, would the European Union be able to effectively*

41 *manage their 'blue borders' in the Mediterranean Sea and mitigate the potential risks arising from*

42 *unregulated immigration into the continent?*

43

44 The purpose of Frontex is to seize the EU borders against illegal immigration. It failed. Once the

45 boats carrying migrants arrive in proximity of the Italian coast either they are intercepted by the

46 Frontex patrol boats and brought to port or arrived on their own directly on the Italian coast.

47

48

49 *4) Do you have any concerns over the accountability of the mission 'Mare Nostrum? [Probe, Type*

50 *1]: To your knowledge, under what legal framework was the mission operating? Was the mission's*

51 *mandate in compliance with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations*

52 *Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)?*

53

54 The mission was operating according IMO and UNCLOS rules.

55

56

57 *5) As an expert in your organisation, to what extent would you define the tactical and operational*

58 *capabilities of monitoring the Mediterranean Sea by employing maritime security operations in*

59 *general? [Prompt, Type 2] Which security guidelines and regulations did apply to the mission 'Mare*

60 *Nostrum'?*

61

62 In addition to the main objectives stated in para 1, the Task Group Mare Nostrum compose of 5 ships

63 and air assets, exercised three-dimensional sea control with the aim of enforcing the legitimate use of

64 the sea and of the airspace. All surface traffic was identified, sub contacts were investigated, the air

65 tracks were transmitted in real time to the Italian air defence command.

66

67

6) Please react to the following statement: "[...] EU leaders 'killing migrants by neglect' after cutting Mediterranean rescue missions" (Independent, 2016: n.p.). [Probe, Type 2]: "[T]he scaling back of search and rescue operations 'created the conditions that led to massive loss of life'" (Ibid.).

There is no doubt that the reduction of ships available to perform search and rescue created worse conditions in terms of safety, ultimately causing more loss of life at sea. This occurred in the fall of 2016.

7) To your knowledge, was 'Mare Nostrum' conducted in compliance with any legislation on human rights? [Probe, Type 2] Was the mission mandate based on any of the human rights legislation and directives (e.g. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, European Convention on Human Rights, EU Dublin Convention)?

Mare Nostrum was conducted in full compliance of international law and human rights legislation (national and international).

8) How would you compare 'Mare Nostrum' with other nations' that abide by different principles of immigration and adopt different approaches to migrants at sea? [Probe, Type 1]: How would 'Mare Nostrum' differentiate vis-à-vis the Australian model ('Stop the Boats') or the American approach?

The main difference regards the port of safety. The ships of Mare Nostrum were directed to the Italian Ports that at the time were considered to be the proper place of safety in that context. The Ministry of Interior was responsible to choose the port of debarkation.

9) Could you please describe your view of the actors on the Mediterranean stage [e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Border Management (FRONTEX)] during 'Mare Nostrum'? [Prompt, Type 2]: During your time with 'Mare Nostrum', have you ever experienced at a strategic level any conflicting views impacting on maritime operations?

3

101 There was great appreciation for Mare Nostrum by UNHCR, IOM, while we had a competition for
102 resources with Frontex. The latter was effective in preventing funding of Mare Nostrum by the EU.
103
104
105 *10) Is there anything else you would like to add on this topic that I have not covered or asked you*
106 *during this interview?*
107
108 Mare Nostrum evolved in *Mare Sicuro*, after some Italian Coast Guard vessels were threatened by
109 armed smugglers attempting to prevent the destruction of the boats used for the human trade. In
110 addition, ISIS cells appeared in Libya requiring enhancing the military side of the mission. We
111 maintained the same number of assets at sea, but we operated closer to the Libyan coast to protect the
112 oil platforms from possible terrorist attacks and to monitor ISIS activities ashore. Rescue operation
113 continued unabated until the fall of 2016 when the area of operation was modified and the EU Sophia
114 ships were deployed.
115
116
117 *11) Is there anything else that you would like to ask me?*
118
119 [*Nihil*]