

The Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Dimensions of Migrant Rescue

Terence Rudolph

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Geography

York University

Toronto, Ontario

June 2022

© Terence Rudolph, 2022

Abstract

In a highly publicized and deadly rescue effort in April of 2015, 800 people drowned when a migrant boat crashed into merchant vessel the *King Jacob* in the Central Mediterranean (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 1). Various sources have since reported that commercial ships are “deliberately avoiding migrant-heavy areas, refusing to reveal their position, or by-passing migrant vessels in distress” to avoid the risks associated with performing rescue at sea (Aarstad, 2015, p. 414). Based on original findings about commercial ship rescues, I analyze humanitarian and geopolitical risks that govern maritime rescue in the Central Mediterranean. The research is based on interviews with 24 maritime professionals with experience in maritime rescue and a series of freedom of information requests (FOI) to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) for information about rescues involving commercial ships. By examining Frontex data pertaining to maritime incidents involving migrants I was also able to determine that, of the 2,779 recorded incidents during the European Border and Coast Guard Agency’s Joint Operation (JO) *Triton* that took place from 2014 to 2018, 359 identified the involvement of commercial/merchant ships. My contribution also develops a new and unique method of analyzing the geographies of migrant rescue using geospatial ship tracking technology; the Automatic Identification System (AIS). These geospatial data help illustrate the economic risks and costs associated with rescue. Based on data from the FOI requests, I provide examples of how commercial ships involved in rescues can be identified and studied using free online ship tracking software to reveal a variety of details about the geography of a particular rescue. This digital approach provides a spatialized analysis of how maritime rescue on the Central Mediterranean is governed, but it also highlights an economic geography of maritime rescue that is entangled with the political geography of migration and border security at sea. I argue that geographical analysis of commercial shipping provides insights into the economic interests and political risks that drive these vessels and their movement.

Dedication

To Lorraine and Manfred

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was made possible through the help and support of my family and thesis committee. Jennifer Hyndman was an especially kind and patient supervisor. Her tactfulness, encouragement, and breadth of knowledge are consistently inspiring. Alison Crosby and Steven Tufts challenged and encouraged me to work through this dissertation. Together my thesis committee provided an example of how people can create a constructive and supportive environment for research, I am grateful for having the opportunity to experience this process.

The contribution of Mathew Sparke to this dissertation was instrumental. I would also like to thank Philip Kelly and Christopher Kyriakides for their support and time engaging with my work. Peter Vandergeest, Yvonne Yim and Kira Williams are people I owe a debt of gratitude for all the help I received from them. My thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, York University Faculty of Graduate Studies, York University Department of Geography, Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903, York University Graduate Students' Association, and The Jack and Mae Nathanson Centre on Transnational Human Rights, Crime and Security for supporting my research project.

Thank you to all the people who participated in my study, your time and willingness to share stories about maritime rescue are very much appreciated. Ute Gerbershagen, I could not have done this without your help, thank you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Chapter One: An Introduction to the Human Geography of Maritime Commercial Rescue.....	1
Research Objectives and Main Arguments.....	5
The Responsibility to Rescue People at Sea.....	6
A Geography of Mediterranean Migration.....	11
Outline of the Disseratation.....	37
Chapter Two: A Human Geography of Maritime Rescue.....	41
Taking a Ship Through the Geography Commercial Rescue.....	42
Conceptualizing the Responsibility of Commercial Ships to Rescue Migrant Boats.....	45
A Political Geography of Maritime Securitization and Externalization.....	52
The Geoeconomics of Maritime Rescue.....	61
Conclusion.....	68
Chapter Three: Charting the Course: Conceptualizing a Human Geography of Rescue Risks on the Mediterranean.....	71
Context.....	73
Inventing a maritime Method to trace Migrant Rescues at Sea.....	75
Freedom of Information Requests to the Coast Guard and European Border Agency (Frontex).....	83
Commercial Vessels Involved with Rescuing Migrants during JO <i>Triton</i> 2014-2018.....	87
Seeing like a Commercial Vessel: AIS and the Financial Risks of Rescue.....	96
Conclusion.....	100

Chapter Four: Commercial Ships and Migrant Boats: Coordinating Mass Migrant Rescue in the Central Mediterranean Sea.....	103
Commercial Rescue on the Mediterranean Sea.....	106
Methods: Coordinating mass rescue and the Ambiguity of Distress.....	114
Findings: Industry Guidance on Mass Maritime Rescue.....	117
Conclusion.....	126
Chapter Five: Failure to Disembark: The Geopolitics of Commercial Rescue on the Mediterranean.....	129
Methods of Mapping Maritime Migration Routes to Europe.....	134
Seafarers, Border Security and Maritime Rescue Responsibility.....	139
The Coordination of Maritime Rescue and the Geopolitics of Search and Rescue Zones.....	144
Vessels of Securitization and The Criminalization of Rescue on the Mediterranean.....	149
Conclusion.....	155
Chapter Six: The Geoeconomics of Protecting Profits from Migrants in Maritime Distress.....	158
A Political Economy of Commercial Ships and Migrant Boats.....	161
Researching Commercial Rescue.....	167
Vessels of Externalization and the Infinite Risks of Forced Migration.....	172
Conclusion.....	181
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	183
Findings.....	185
Research Contributions.....	188
Implications and Future Research.....	191
Conclusion.....	192
References.....	194
Appendix.....	215

List of Tables

Table 1. IMO Ship Types.....	215
Table 2. Interview Participants.....	80/215
Table 3. Timeline of Freedom of Information Requests to Frontex.....	87/218
Table 4. Percentage of Commercial Ships and People Involved in Commercial Rescues.....	94

List of Figures

Figure 1. Vessel Traffic on the Mediterranean.....	21/200
Figure 2. Frontex Risk Analysis 2015.....	21/221
Figure 3. Frontex Risk Analysis 2016.....	221
Figure 4. Vessel Traffic at the Strait of Gibraltar.....	222
Figure 5. Vessel Traffic Between Libya and Italy.....	223
Figure 6. Vessel Traffic between Turkey and Greece.....	224
Figure 7. Frontex Serious Incident Report no. 12.....	225
Figure 8. Frontex Serious Incident Report no. 578.....	226
Figure 9. Commercial Ships Involved in Maritime Rescue.....	91
Figure 10. Total Number of Irregular Migrants.....	93
Figure 11. 2015 Incident Report.....	227
Figure 12. 2016 Incident Report.....	227
Figure 13. 2017 Incident Report.....	227
Figure 14. Screenshot of 2017 Incident Reports.....	228
Figure 15. Image of OOC <i>Cougar</i>	97
Figure 16. Image of <i>Zefirea</i>	98
Figure 17. Image of <i>King Jacob</i>	107

Chapter One:

An Introduction to the Human Geography of Maritime Commercial Rescue

What happens when small unsafe and unregistered boats loaded with uninsured migrants in distress come up against massive cargo and tanker ships that sustain the global economy? My central research question focuses on identifying the factors that influence decisions by commercial ship captains to rescue people in the Mediterranean Sea. Examining how seafarers and commercial vessels respond to migrants in distress on the Central Mediterranean illuminates how decisions to rescue are mediated by humanitarian, political and economic interests. The responsibility to rescue people in maritime distress is designed and coordinated by state-based rescue coordination centres and often carried out by merchant ships that are not only commercial agents but nationally flagged vessels.

My main argument in this dissertation is that border externalization and supply chain security manage the bodies of people on the move across the Mediterranean through the logic of risk. Any risks attached or perceived to be associated with the rescue of migrants shape the inherent life-or-death relationship that exists between those in distress and those in a position to help. Maritime geography serves to highlight the harsh reality of this relational context where forced migrants are literally engaged in a life-or-death struggle to reach Europe, and non-assistance is often synonymous with death. In shaping the rescue equation risks to seafarers, real and/or perceived, are dangerous for migrants in distress on the Central Mediterranean. People crossing the Mediterranean are generally referred to as migrants by security organizations like the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) or asylum seekers by humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR. According to Aarstad (2015) the role of commercial rescue on the Mediterranean “is little-noticed in the media and by the general public, and largely disregarded in the EU’s political

responses to the crisis” (p. 413). This dissertation explores and juxtaposes the movement of merchant ships with the movement of often unseaworthy migrant boats on the Central Mediterranean Sea. I identify and examine ways that migrants crossing the Mediterranean are simultaneously constructed as humanitarian victims, security threats, and financial risks.

To support my thesis, this dissertation is organized into seven chapters, including this Introduction. In this first chapter, I introduce the human geography of commercial rescue, outline my central research questions, objectives, and arguments, and provide a background and discussion of my research site: the Central Mediterranean. This chapter delivers a background of what has been referred to as a “crisis” of migration on the Mediterranean (Human Rights Watch, 2015). A primary objective of my research is to critique and position the current “crisis” on the Mediterranean within a collective body of scholarship that can attend to the turbulent history of human migration on water. This critical approach to crisis formations extends from literature that documents legal, political, and social problems that exist well beyond the “acute crisis phase” (Hyndman & Giles, 2017, p. 69). This introductory chapter documents how security agencies and humanitarian organizations disaggregate the crisis into different migratory routes and catalogue specific operations that seek to govern these movements, organize rescue, and manage states’ security.

Focusing on specific incidents reinforces the significance of studying specific contexts as well as the importance of ship type to analyses that seek to understand the risks involved with the maritime rescue of migrants. Two incidents provided a constant source of reflection throughout this study of commercial maritime rescue on the Mediterranean. The first happened in the Central Mediterranean in April 2015, when more than 800 migrants died during a failed rescue attempt by a cargo ship, the *King Jacob* (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 1). The second occurred four months later

in early September 2015, in the Eastern Mediterranean, when the death of toddler Alan Kurdi brought global attention to refugee flows across the Mediterranean (Kingsley & Safak, 2015). In the weeks following its publication, more than 20 million people on social media viewed the photograph of the young Syrian child's lifeless body lying face-down on a Turkish beach (Slovic et al., 2017). The mean number of daily donations to the Red Cross increased more than 100-fold in the week after the publication of the photo—an effect which was sustained for five weeks after the photo's first appearance (Slovic et al., 2015). According to Slovic et al., (2017) “new behavioral data from information searches and donations demonstrates that, in this case, an iconic photo of a single child was worth more than hundreds of thousands of statistical lives” (p. 640). In Canada, the photo prompted the then-Conservative government to remove some of the immigration restrictions after it was discovered that the Kurdi family's application to bring Alan to Canada was rejected by immigration officials (Kingsley & Safak, 2017, para. 7).

In the Central Mediterranean, the death of more than 800 migrants in the worst modern human tragedy on the Mediterranean, nearly four months prior to the death of Alan Kurdi, reinforced my resolve to study the risks involved with commercial rescue. However, the difference in public sentiment toward these tragedies forced me to contemplate how media coverage and humanitarian response can both be fleeting and emotional experiences. While the *King Jacob* incident served as a morbidly poignant reminder that my analysis of commercial rescue was a topic worthy of the commitment a dissertation requires, it also was a stark reminder that, in the words of Slovic. et al. (2017), “[w]e cannot assume that the statistics of mass human crises will capture our attention or move us to take action, no matter how large the numbers” (p. 640). For some scholars, anti-Blackness in Europe is defined by European border walls, surveillance technology, and externalization agreements that reinforce the conception of people seeking asylum in Europe

as a sudden “crisis” that threatens European national communities (Proglio et al., 2021). These architectures, practices and exclusionary policies racialize Africans crossing the sea to Europe and dichotomize them as either criminal or vulnerable (Proglio et al., 2021). However, the scholarship on anti-Blackness in, on and across the Mediterranean is more expansive than these exclusionary bordering practices alone (refusing the disembarkation of migrants, interdiction at sea, migration detention centres, protracted refugee camps). To situate the *King Jacob* incident within current and historical conceptions of African peoples moving across the Mediterranean to Europe I examined recent scholarship that describes how anti-Blackness in Europe is generated, performed and maintained.

Each year thousands of people make the dangerous maritime journey to reach Europe (UNHCR, 2020), and with no government to control Libya’s borders, hundreds of thousands of migrants have sought to reach Europe from the country (The Economist, 2022, para. 9). How seafarers define the risks associated with rescuing migrants provides insight into the way seafarers embody political and economic narratives. When faced with migrants in maritime distress seafarers must negotiate competing responsibilities to rescue migrants, protect their crew, and deliver the goods that are part of their individual livelihoods and international political economy. Research documents how a shortage of legal avenues to enter Europe is imbricated in efforts to secure the borders of ‘Fortress Europe’ from non-European migrants and particularly to people from African and Middle Eastern nations (Hammerstad, 2014; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Paggi, 2004; Totah, 2003). According to reports, the Central Mediterranean route is the most dangerous migration route in the world, one in six people embarking from the shores of North Africa will not survive the crossing (Ghani, 2020). Despite accounting for only 25% of arrivals, the Central Mediterranean route accounts for almost 88% of all recorded deaths on the Mediterranean

(Amnesty International, 2017). My research examines how seafarers (attempt to) reconcile the sanctity of rescue with national security and the financial imperatives that govern the global marketplace. This political economy of maritime rescue, and non-rescue, at sea is partly framed by literature that describes the globalization of trade in goods and services, with the ever-greater controls restricting the movement of labour/people (Roediger 2006; McDowell, 2008). Next, I connect literature that describes the racialized history of capitalism to contemporary constructions of migrants as political and economic risks.

Research Objectives and Main Arguments

The overarching goal of this project is to trace a human geography of commercial ships that rescue migrants on the Mediterranean Sea. My research has two main objectives: 1) to explore how seafarers and those that insure, represent, narrate, and act for them assess the risks posed by migrants at sea; and 2) to analyze seafarers' decisions to rescue, and their struggles to negotiate risk, humanitarian need, and law at sea. Underlying aims also include identifying and examining the risks involved in performing rescue at sea; analyzing the geopolitics of disembarking migrants; and introducing the economics of commercial maritime rescue. I have chosen the Mediterranean as the site for my study because it is often reported to be one of the deadliest places for maritime migration. My analysis relies on original interviews with key informants, existing web-based geospatial data and is framed by scholarship that covers humanitarian and geopolitical risks within the context of global political economy.

My contribution is unique in that it introduces a topic that has received little, if any, attention in scholarship or news media: the geographies of rescue by merchant ships. The central argument is that maritime rescues involving commercial vessels and migrant boats generate an unpredictable geography where the political and economic risks posed by migrant's shape

responses to their rescue in contexts of maritime distress. To support this thesis, I highlight the lexicon of incalculable physical, political, and economic risks which are applied to the bodies of migrants. My analysis shows how the responsibility to rescue at sea, along with the geopolitics of disembarkation in Europe, all contribute to conceptualizations of migrants and migrant rescue as inherently risky.

I argue that the movements and operations of merchant vessels in rescue situations on the Mediterranean cannot be separated from their maritime relationships with state-based rescue operations. The proximity of commercial ships to people in distress at sea, combined with their humanitarian, national, and commercial interests ensure they will continue to be relied upon for maritime rescue. Conceptually, this analysis incorporates and extends a securitization framework that documents processes of border security through the management of migration on the Mediterranean. This framework rests on conceptualizations of migrants as surplus populations, strangers, and ‘others’ that must be contained (Duffield, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). Conceptualizations of migrants are reflected at sea, through seafarers, in ways that seek to differentiate migrants in distress from other people that require rescue.

The Responsibility to Rescue People at Sea

This analysis of the responsibility and risks of maritime rescue elucidates connections in maritime law among a diversity of vessel types, the scope of geographic technologies and the density of maritime traffic. The process of distinguishing between safe and unsafe rescue operations is based in an environment of standard operating procedures (SOPs), rules of engagement (ROEs) and shifting jurisdictional responsibilities. The trigger for the positive responsibility to rescue is often pulled remotely by offshore rescue stations that rely on “ships of opportunity” that are in close proximity to people in distress at sea. However, decisions to invoke

the responsibility of rescue at sea are not based solely on proximity: the type of ship is also particularly important in identifying the safest potential rescue vessel. Decisions about what constitutes “distress” are wrought with considerations that parallel those that seek to make similar determinations of what constitutes “reasonable fear” (UNHCR, 1951).

The obligation to offer assistance at sea is a well-established and almost universal humanitarian principle and legal premise. As with other humanitarian responses, migrant rescue at sea in practice is geographically uneven and often politicized. This duty has been inscribed in various and overlapping regulations, including legal conventions, customary practices, moral codes, and celestial edicts (Maltzman & Ehrenreich, 2014; Basaran, 2015). The history of solidarity and rescue at sea is rooted in seafarers’ long standing and shared appreciation of the inherent risks that come with seafaring. Only in relatively recent history have seafarers been able to rely on accurate charts, radio and radar technology or geospatial technologies like the automatic identification system (AIS) and weather satellites to inform their navigational decisions. Even with these technological advances, seafaring remains a risky business, reinforcing how dangerous it was for the seafarers that operated for centuries without these high-tech sources of geographic knowledge.

In this study I adopt the same geospatial technology maritime rescue centres use to coordinate rescues to identify vessels that have been involved in a rescue, specifically the automatic identification system (AIS). By examining data pertaining to maritime incidents involving migrants in the Central Mediterranean, I was able to determine that 359 of the 2,779 recorded incidents during the European Border and Coast Guard Agency’s Joint Operation (JO) *Triton* involved commercial ships from 2014 to 2018.

In addition to technological advances, nation-states have organized to develop a nearly universal statutory duty that requires all ships to provide assistance to people in distress at sea. In 1910, at the Third International Conference on Maritime Law held in Brussels, a group of 24 seafaring nations drafted the International Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules with Respect to Assistance and Salvage at Sea.¹ Often referred to as the Salvage Convention, the Brussels Convention covers salvage, collisions, and the responsibility to provide assistance at sea. It defines the duty of seafarers to provide assistance in Article 11: “Every master is bound, so far as he can do so without serious danger to his vessel, her crew and passengers, to render assistance to everybody, even though an enemy, found at sea in danger of being lost” (Assistance and Salvage at Sea, 1910). Article 11 also details how “[t]he owner of the vessel incurs no liability by reason of the contravention of the foregoing provision” (1910). Article 12 of the Salvage Convention defines responsibility of states to “propose to their respective legislatures the measures necessary for the prevention of such infringements” (Assistance and Salvage at Sea, 1910). The geopolitics of maritime rescue emerges in response to the ongoing international effort to navigate the underlying currents of sovereignty, security and liability that nuance the application of the responsibilities laid out in the Salvage Convention. For example, the US has historically been reluctant to sign international maritime conventions. After a public inquiry found that a U.S. flagged vessel, the *SS Californian*, was in the vicinity of the *RMS Titanic*, but failed to respond to distress, however, calls led the United States Congress to ratify the Brussels Convention in 1913

¹ See the Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law with respect to Collisions between Vessels (Brussels, 23 September 1910) United Kingdom, India, Germany/Prussia, Argentine Republic; Bohemia, Hungary, Austria; Belgium; Brazil; the Republic of Chile; the Republic of Cuba; Denmark; Spain; United States of America; France; The Hellenes; Italy, Japan; Mexico, the Republic of Nicaragua; Norway; the Netherlands, Portugal and the Algarves, Romania; Russia, Sweden; the Republic of Uruguay. (<http://www.admiraltylawguide.com/conven/collisions1910.html>) or (<https://comitemaritime.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Status-of-the-Ratifications-of-and-Accessions-to-the-Brussels-International-Maritime-Law-Conventions.pdf>)

(Maltzman & Ehrenreich, 2014, p. 1268). In fulfillment of article 12, US Congress enacted bill 46 U.S.C. 728, providing that the master of a vessel shall render aid to every person found at sea in danger of being lost, where they can do so without serious danger to their own vessel, imposing criminal penalties on a master who fails to give such assistance. After a series of lawsuits targeting the United States Coast Guard or the United States Navy for failing to assist, in 1983 a provision was added to the U.S statute, exempting U.S government vessels.

Today, the responsibility to rescue people in distress at sea is among the most accepted principles of maritime law, international humanitarian law, and the international law of the sea (Basaran, 2015). These laws are designed to direct human conduct by sanctioning inaction and encouraging rescue. Principal among them is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the 1989 International Convention on Salvage (SALVAGE) and the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR):

Every State shall require the master of a ship flying its flag, in so far as he can do so without serious danger to the ship, the crew or the passengers: (a) to render assistance to any person found at sea in danger of being lost; (b) to proceed with all possible speed to the rescue of persons in distress, if informed of their need of assistance, in so far as such action may reasonably be expected of him. (UNCLOS, art. 98.1)

The master of a ship at sea which is in a position to provide assistance, upon receiving information from any source that people are in distress at sea, is bound to proceed with all speed to their assistance. (SOLAS, ch. V, reg. 33.1)

Every master is bound, so far as he can do so without serious danger to his vessel and persons thereon, to render assistance to any person in danger of being lost at sea. 2. The States Parties

shall adopt the measures necessary to enforce the duty set out in paragraph 1. 3. The owner of the vessel shall incur no liability for a breach of the duty of the master under paragraph 1.

(SALVAGE, art. 10)

These Conventions make it clear that when notified of a need for assistance the flag state of a ship has a responsibility to require that the master of the informed ship proceed as fast as possible to the rescue of persons in distress. These provisions outline the duty of the flag state to oblige masters of vessels flying their flag to rescue people at risk of being lost at sea, and the duty of coastal States to establish and maintain the legal instruments for the adjudication of their administration. Significantly, these additional sources of the duty to rescue talk about a master's legal duty to rescue rather than the vessel or its owner.

The territorial scope of the duty to assist people in distress at sea includes all maritime zones. Article 98 of UNCLOS is found in Part VII (High Seas), but also applies to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). As for the territorial sea, while UNCLOS does not contain analogous wording, the duty to save life at sea can be inferred from the reference to assistance in the case of distress found in Article 18(2) of UNCLOS. Contrary to UNCLOS, the SOLAS convention explicitly applies to vessels in all maritime zones. In addition, Article 98 of UNCLOS (1982) stipulates:

Every coastal State shall promote the establishment, operation and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service regarding safety on and over the sea and, where circumstances so require, by way of mutual regional arrangements cooperate with neighbouring States for this purpose.

The responsibility to establish and maintain adequate search and rescue (SAR) regions highlights how terrestrial geopolitics governs the way maritime rescue is performed at sea. Rescue services

and rescue coordination are defining issues in my analysis of commercial rescue. The human geography that shapes the international approach to the coordination of maritime rescue services is made up of a seemingly endless flow of vessels along established maritime routes. Moreover, the interaction of different countries and their respective ratification, or not, of various conventions that seek to articulate, enact, and adjudicate the responsibility to rescue is critical to building an understanding of how geopolitical boundaries can produce deadly physical consequences for migrants in distress at sea.

In this study, I contend that risks to seafarers are a proxy for the risks to migrants: when seafarers determine that a rescue would threaten their safety, they can refuse to perform it. In a maritime rescue, risks to seafarers are simultaneously or even disproportionately less than they are for migrants. This study relies on interviews with seafarers and data on interdictions/rescues provided by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). My interest in investigating the risks and reasoning that shape approaches to the maritime rescue of migrants in distress, however, is based on an understanding that the risks to seafarers and ship owners are ultimately less than they are for migrants in maritime distress. In the event of a rescue attempt the lives of seafarers and migrants are tied together; the rescue risks are always relational to the risks of non-rescue or non-assistance. For migrants, in a maritime context, the risks of non-assistance can be fatal. The problem in this study is that non-assistance and unsafe rescues result in people drowning in the Central Mediterranean. Reports that seafarers are intentionally avoiding areas where migrants are known to be in distress, or blatantly by-passing migrants in distress are serious allegations that inspired this research.

A Geography of Mediterranean Migration

Efforts to document the loss of life at sea and human migration across the sea are met with considerable challenges, and many deaths are not recorded by the authorities who keep these statistics (Williams, 2018). Despite these important gaps, research about commercial rescues on the Mediterranean have received even less attention. What has been recorded, tends to focus on state-based interceptions at sea. According to Patalano (2015), between 2011 and 2013, the Italian Navy was responsible for 139 rescue missions, which saved more than 16,000 migrants. The sinking of two boats that led to the death of over 600 migrants in October 2013, is what triggered public demand for action and facilitated the Italian government's launching of *Mare Nostrum*, which lasted from October 2013 until October 2014, and rescued over 156,000 migrants on the Mediterranean (p. 15). However, in late 2014, a variety of factors—including increased migration, high costs, a lack of EU-wide burden sharing, and a narrative that implied the rescue operation was responsible for the increases in sea migrants—prompted the abandonment of the Italian-funded initiative. *Mare Nostrum* was replaced with the Frontex operation *Triton*, a body with a different mandate.

For many observers, the 2014 termination of the Italian *Mare Nostrum* operation and its replacement by operation *Triton*—run by the European Union's border and coast guard agency (Frontex)—symbolizes a shift from a humanitarian approach to rescue to a border security-based approach of managing to migration on the Mediterranean. The shifting rescue boundaries and objectives of these operations mirror discussions in the literature on the securitization of migration. Hyndman and Mountz (2008) argue that refugee protection on the Mediterranean is invoked, not by law, but “through ad hoc decisions of governments made through offshore processing centres, bilateral readmission agreements, and other tools of the transnational state”; such *ad hoc* state-based measures ultimately circumvent international law designed to protect refugee rights (p. 251-

252). My analysis of commercial maritime rescue shows how seafarers and flagged merchant vessels are instrumentalized by state-based rescue coordination centres to manage the flow of people attempting to reach Europe.

On land, borders tend to be more clearly defined than at sea. Moreover, the liminal space that constitutes the protracted refugee camps and settlements of the world is also found in the Mediterranean environment: both are considered humanitarian, and both are infused with overlapping political, economic and security interests. Commercial rescues of migrants fit within a broader framework of migration, mobility, and security. To examine how the involvement of commercial ships is influenced and managed by state-based rescue operations it is necessary to understand the way rescue operations are coordinated at sea and particularly in the Central Mediterranean. In this study I examine the impact of a shift from Italy's *Mare Nostrum* to Frontex's Operation *Triton* to highlight the way commercial ships were instrumentalized by security actors, including the EU Government.

Triton ran on a third of *Mare Nostrum's* budget annually, from 2014 to 2018, and was principally focused on "border control within 30 miles from the Italian coast" (Cusumano, 2017, p. 2). In 2015, the European Council decided to supplement the securitization of its borders with the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation EUNAVFOR Med 'Sophia', which was designed to counter illegal migrations by disrupting smuggling networks and destroying smugglers' boats (Tardy, 2015, p. 1). The Italian Navy maintained a diminished operation in the Central Mediterranean through operation Mare Sicuro (Safe Sea), and search and rescue SAR operations were joined on a voluntary basis by Navy and Coast Guard from both the U.K. and Ireland which all contributed to an effort "protect humanitarian and commercial activities in the area" (Cusumano, 2017, p. 92). By late 2015, the worsening weather conditions reduced the

number of migrants crossing the Central Mediterranean. Arrivals to Greece along the Eastern route in 2015, by contrast, increased dramatically (Cusumano, 2017, p. 3).

The widely publicized tragedies, particularly images of Alan Kurdi, the drowned toddler, shifted attention towards the Eastern Mediterranean. This focus, along with the increase in migratory flows through the Aegean led to the deployment of Frontex operation Poseidon, which was similarly focused on border control—like its Central Mediterranean counterpart *Triton* (Llewellyn, 2015). In 2016, the EU agreed to deliver a three billion EUR euro readmission funding package to Turkey in return for Turkey preventing onward journeys to the EU by asylum seekers, and NATO also deployed its Maritime Group in the region (Lehner, 2019; Kanter, 2016). The closing of Eastern European land borders and the agreement between Turkey and the EU worked to reduce the flow of migrants crossing the Aegean (Reitano & Micallef, 2016; Heck & Hess, 2017). Migration through the Central Mediterranean, however, did not decrease in 2016: the total number of sea arrivals to Italy reached 181,436, an 18% increase compared with 2015 (UNHCR, 2017).

Research that analyzes rescue on the Mediterranean tends to focus primarily on state-based operations (Tazzioli, 2016; Patalano, 2015; Mustățea, 2020). The proliferation of private, non-governmental (NGO) vessels in the region, after *Mare Nostrum* was replaced with *Triton*, has attracted significant media attention and been the topic of a growing body of scholarship (Cuttitta, 2018; Del Valle, 2016; Garelli, & Tazzioli, 2018). For example, Cusumano (2017), identifies ten separate NGOs with rescue operations on the Mediterranean in 2016: Christopher and Regina Catrambone set up the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS); MSF developed its independent SAR capabilities by using two ships, the Dignity I and Bourbon Argos; SOS Méditerranée started SAR operations from the 77m long Aquarius; and German NGO programs Sea-Watch and Sea-

Eye, as well as the Spanish program Pro-Activa Open Arms. All “deployed smaller vessels and three other organizations, namely the Berlin youth association Jugend Rettet, the Dutch NGO Boat Refugee Foundation, and Save the Children, also started SAR missions in the Central Mediterranean (Cusumano, 2017, p. 92). Research that documents the dynamic relationships between the securitization of EU’s border, reductions in maritime rescue zones and increasing deaths on the Mediterranean is emerging (Heller & Pezzani, 2016; Williams & Mountz, 2018; Steinhilper & Gruijters, 2018).

Recent critical analysis of search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean shows how lines have been blurred between rescue and interdiction (Williams, 2018; Moreno-Lax., 2018). According to Moreno-Lax (2018) the invocation of human rights “serves paradoxically to curtail (migrants’) human rights, justifying interdiction (‘to save lives’), and impeding access to safety in Europe” (p. 1). She describes how “through a narrative of ‘rescue’ interdiction is laundered into an ethically sustainable strategy of border governance” (p. 1) Assessments of the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) ships in responding to humanitarian crises mirror existing analyses that describe how NGOs are instrumentalized through state based agreements to provide life-saving services while containing the perceived risks associated with unchecked migration (Duffield, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). A branch of critical literature can be found in recent state-based efforts to criminalize maritime NGOs, not necessarily for rescue, but for disembarking migrants in ports without consent and for operating in jurisdictions where they are not invited (Cuttitta, 2018; Cusumano, 2021). This literature also fits within an existing body of work that highlights connections between humanitarian organizations and various for-profit economic actors—like security companies—that assist in various humanitarian operations (Spearin, 2008;

Weiss, 2013). The findings from my research complements these efforts but also fills a clear gap by addressing the role of commercial ships in the Mediterranean migration crisis.

My analysis is designed to examine what happens, and who must respond, when a distress signal is heard. Moreover, while I rely on data produced by border security organizations and information gathered from seafarers, my analysis does not discount or discredit the testimonies of migrants themselves. My intention is not to augment these migrant stories and fill research gaps for those who have experienced, first-hand, instances of non-assistance.

This dissertation is rooted in a belief that people move for many different reasons. In the cases of Mediterranean migration decisions that ultimately led to migrants' maritime distress often have more to do with what they were trying to escape than where they were trying go (Crawley et al., 2016; Squire et al., 2017). My goal is to examine and position commercial rescue within a broader political and economic but nonetheless *human* geography of commercial rescue.

The Geography of Migratory Routes and Commercial Rescue on the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean Sea borders 21 different nation-states. The cartographic boundaries of the Mediterranean are clearly outlined by a coastline that runs from the rock of Gibraltar along Spain and southern France, around Italy and Greece to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and the entire coast of North Africa. This geography includes hundreds of islands, including Sicily, Sardinia, Crete, Cyprus, Santorini, Lampedusa, Elba, the Maltese islands, and the many islands off the coast of Greece, Turkey, and Croatia, among others. Historian David Abulafia (2003) observes the Mediterranean space as the area where three continents meet—Europe, Asia, and Africa—and describes the “absolutely fundamental importance” of the Mediterranean region to the history of the entire planet as undeniable (p. 12). Whether we identify the Mediterranean in terms of its water, its islands, its coasts, or the states and civilizations that have materialized along its borders, the

idea that the physical constraints imposed by this space have “determined human behavior” has been a common approach to its study (Abulafia, 2003, p. 11). While most research that covers the Mediterranean concerns itself with the land and states surrounding the sea, my study is designed to trace a human geography of movement on the water. These movements are governed through the intersection of land-based state politics, economics and physical geographies that influence how and why people navigate this changing space.

This section provides a background and critical analysis of what is commonly referred to as the migration ‘crisis’ on the Mediterranean. I examine the interplay of distinct humanitarian, geopolitical and economic interests that define the Mediterranean space. My research explores key moments of ‘crisis’ production and their attendant geographies. Specifically, I focus on commercial rescues that occurred during operation *Triton* along the Central Mediterranean migration route from 2015 to 2018. My overall aim is to capture, as much as possible, how commercial rescue efforts along the Central Mediterranean migration route, and during operation *Triton* fit within a broader global dynamic of maritime rescue, forced migration and securitization.

In 2015 over one million migrants arrived in Europe, five times more than in 2014 (UNHCR, 2016). While the number of migrants and refugees that have reached Europe by sea dropped to 358, 923 in 2016, the reported lives lost at sea increased from 3,771 in 2015 to 5,011 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). According to the UNHCR the causes for the increased deaths are many, including increasingly security-oriented approaches to migration by the EU’s border control organization Frontex; the use of more dangerous routes and boats; travel during bad weather; and the embarkation of thousands of people. For human smugglers, migrants—fleeing war, violence, and persecution in their countries of origin—represent an extremely lucrative market (UNHCR, 2016b). Europol (2016) reports that in 2015 migrant smugglers netted between three and six billion

Euros bringing people to Europe, and estimates that profits would double, or even triple in 2016. Migrant smugglers provide a variety of goods and services throughout the crossing to Europe, from the provision of transportation, accommodation, fraudulent documents, boats, and life preservers.

In economic terms the rescue, processing, and detention of migrants on the Mediterranean represent a sizeable humanitarian and military industry with considerable budgets and resources, which includes both naval operations, and humanitarian organizations with their own ships. Groups such as the Migrant Offshore Processing Centre's (MOAS), the Phoenix, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the Bourbon Argos, all raise money for and fund their own operations (Cusumano, 2019). The increasing influence of capital on rescue, asylum and security on the Mediterranean has grown in tandem with conflicts in bordering states, and the commercial shipping industry has consistently expressed that the rescue of migrants represents a physical, financial and legal liability (International Chamber of Shipping, 2014; International Chamber of Shipping 2015; International Maritime Organization, 2014). Current disputes around where migrants can disembark have consistently made headlines across Europe and North America, for example in June 2018 after being refused entry to Italy and Malta, Spain's president Pedro Sanchez granted permission for NGO rescue ship the *Aquarius* to disembark the 629 people on board in the port of Valencia (Ellyatt, 2018); and the recent trend in Italy, since President Sergio Mattarella signed a bill drafted by interior minister Matteo Salvini in 2019 that would mean non-governmental organisation rescue boats that bring migrants to Italy without permission would be seized and could face fines of up to 50,000€ (Tondo, 2019). The seizure of migrant rescue ships and criminalization of ship captains and NGOs that disembark migrants against the orders of national authorities is evidence of the ongoing turmoil.

Various sources have reported that commercial ships are “deliberately avoiding migrant-heavy areas, refusing to reveal their position, or by-passing migrant vessels in distress” in an effort to avoid the risks associated with performing rescue at sea (Aarstad, 2015, p. 414). The expansion of commercial rescue has had, and continues to have, a number of economic and security-related impacts on seafarers and the shipping industry that are worth exploring.

A Human Maritime Geography of the Mediterranean

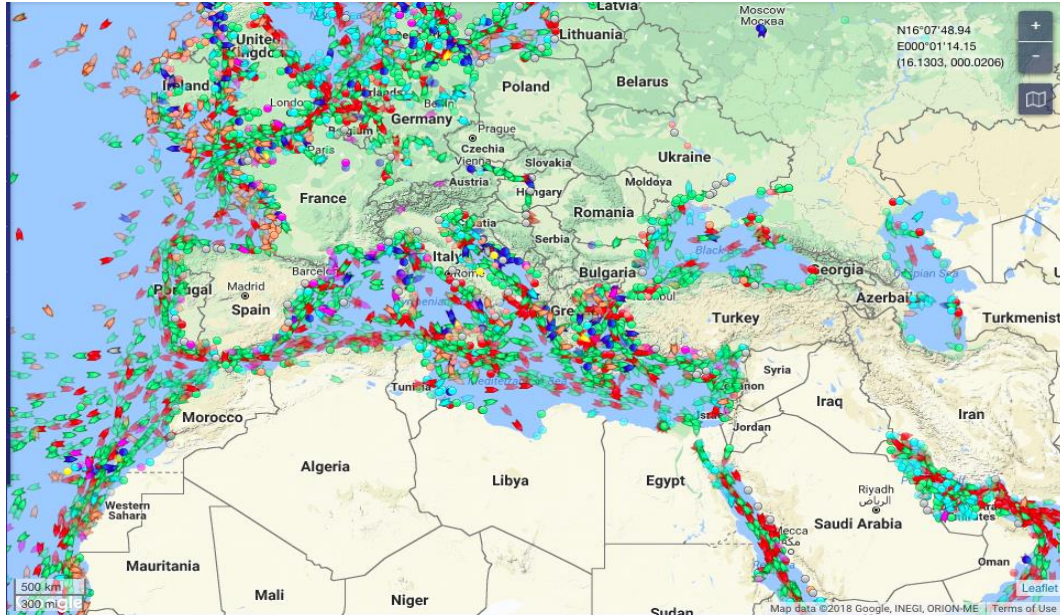
The Mediterranean Sea is among the busiest waterways in the world for seaborne trade, hosting 20% of the global total, and 10% of international container traffic (UN, 2019). Fisheries in the Mediterranean Sea are characterised by a fishing fleet of 82,000 vessels, smaller boats accounts for 80% of the total. Overall reported landings fluctuate around 800,000 tons, mostly concentrated in the western Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea (European Commission, 2019). A strict accounting of marine traffic on the Mediterranean is difficult, however the variety and density of ship traffic is easily perceptible using widely available AIS technology that monitors and publishes ship movements in real time. This geospatial technology permits the tracking of ships in different categories. However, according to the International Maritime Organization “there are no universally applicable definitions of ship types” (IMO, 2019). Nevertheless, Appendix A (Table 1) presents the non-exhaustive list of different ship types provided by the IMO.

The type of ships involved in commercial rescues can have serious impacts on the outcome of the operation. There is emerging scholarship and media stories that document and analyze the rise of NGO rescue ships on the Mediterranean; however, the types of ships they use to perform these rescues are rarely mentioned (Cuttitta, 2018; Cusumano, 2019). For my analysis of commercial rescue efforts, understanding the maritime capabilities of different ship types is significant. To do this I sought information from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

(Frontex), where it was necessary to know and specify the terms the organization employs. For example, Frontex refers to ‘commercial’ and ‘merchant’ ships interchangeably and employs the terms ‘ships’ and ‘vessels’ interchangeably as well. Many “rescue ships” are repurposed fishing vessels, and many are crewed by seafarers that are employed/chartered by the NGO. Effectively, the NGO ships are commercial ship types, categorically, but operating for a humanitarian mission. For example, MSF chartered the Bourbon Argos—an offshore supply ship—to conduct rescue missions in the south-Central Mediterranean (MSF, 2015).

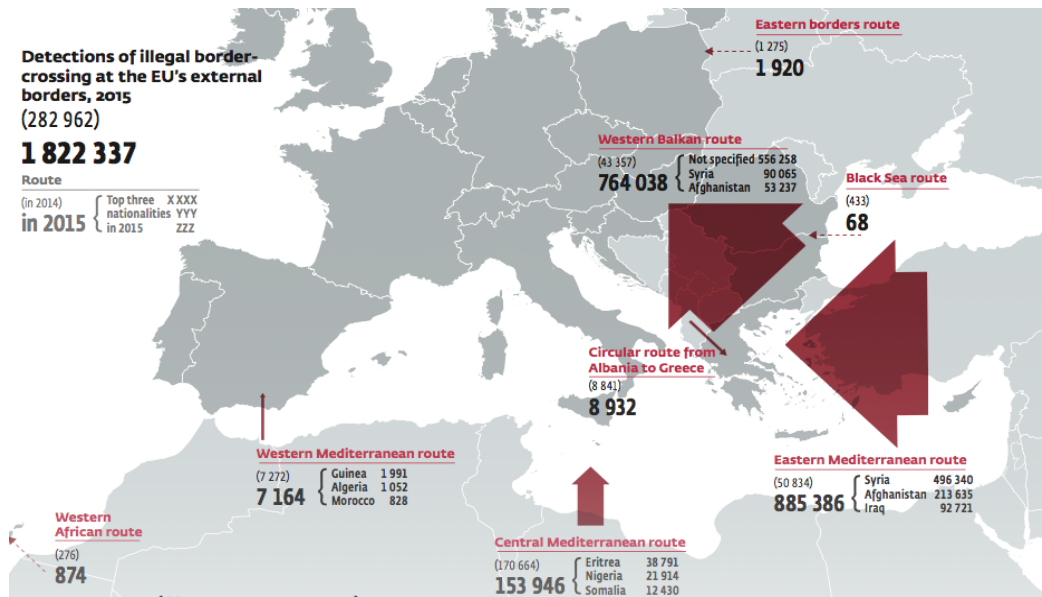
In addition to Frontex reports, my study draws on data from the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to trace shipping routes. This tracing requires a brief introduction of ship type classification categories. There is overlap with respect to the International Maritime Organization’s (IMO’s) general classification scheme and the AIS software providers who track ships. For example, under the category “Tugs & Special Craft” vessel tracking software provider *marineTraffic.com* lists 29 different types of vessels: under the category “Cargo Vessels” 15 sub types are listed, 6 types of “Passenger Vessels” are listed, 5 different types of “Fishing” vessels, 3 types of “Pleasure Craft”; while “High Speed Craft”, “Navigation Aids” and “Unspecified Ships” are all stand alone categories. The live map that *marinetraffic.com* publishes in real-time shows the density of marine traffic, and colour codes various types of vessels (see Figure 1). Cargo vessels are green, oil tankers are red, passenger vessels are blue, tugs and special craft are light blue, high-speed craft are yellow, pleasure craft are purple, and fishing vessels are orange. Geographically, security organizations like Frontex, and humanitarian organizations, like the UNHCR, have separated the migratory routes that migrants follow into three general categories (see Figure 2).

Figure 1. Maritime Vessel Traffic on the Mediterranean



Note. This AIS map exhibits the density and variety of ships that frequent the Mediterranean. From a (2016) snapshot taken with MarineTraffic – Global Ship Tracking Intelligence (www.marinetraffic.com).

Figure 2. Maritime Mediterranean Migration Routes



Note. Map of Mediterranean migration routes and number of crossings reported by Frontex for 2015. Frontex (2015). Frontex Risk Analysis for 2015. European Border Security

Recent research, however, takes a critical approach to the cartographic representation of Mediterranean migration and shows how migration patterns are much more nuanced than the broad strokes depicted (Crawley et al., 2017; Cobarrubias, 2019; Casas-Cortes et al., 2017; van Houtum, & Bueno Lacy, 2020). This body of work describes how the production of migration maps fit within a border security framework and colonial history of geographic thinking and European map creation. Despite this colonial history, my analysis relies on data produced by these international organizations. The language of security, however, is upended and works “against the grain” with data produced through a variety of technological and bureaucratic channels (Casas-Cortes, et al., 2017, p. 24). Comparing migration maps with ship traffic maps helps highlight the maritime geography that stages the interactions between migrants and commercial ships. The juxtaposition of these human maritime geographies reinforces the fact that these waters are shared spaces where people from different vessels with distinct purposes inevitably come within close proximity to one another. The different maps also reinforce how maps are selective representations that are framed to foreground and exclude aspects of the same geography.

Proximity and the Paradox of Representing Suffering

While registered under a single flag, merchant ships are vessels of national interest and commercial agents bound by the Law of the Sea and its codification of rescue when needed. How seafarers describe the perceived risks associated with rescuing migrants provides insight into the way seafarers embody the geopolitics and geoeconomics of risk and security that govern and fuel their respective political and economic vessels.

To provide insights about how seafarers are responding to people in distress on the Mediterranean I rely on literature that illustrates how proximity, distance, and considerations of personal security influence ethical obligations to rescue. The significance of grounding my

maritime analysis can be appreciated by returning to some of the issues or lines of inquiry that have developed through existing geographic imaginaries concerning moral obligations to act. This section lays the groundwork for considering how contemporary geopolitics of migration on the Mediterranean that deal with issues surrounding the death and detention of migrants are produced and consumed in the global community.

A review of Hyndman (2009), Butler (1993), Ahmed (2000, 2013) links how national conceptualizations of migrants are mediated through various proximities and methods of representation. Their collective work identifies a paradox of migration: the movement and coming together of different people in the borderlands serves as an engine for endless calls for rescue and security. This body of literature forms a basis for launching an examination of how seafarers determine their responsibility to rescue people in distress at sea. By tracing the effect of proximity and distance on moral obligations, it provides an epistemological background for legal scholarship that seeks to outline and adjudicate the moral battleground of rescue. It also connects the channels of obligation that flow globally through present and proximate rescue geographies. This geography of responsibility to rescue is significant for my thesis in that it helps explain my focus on both seafarers as actors with the proximate ability to provide help, and the crisis formations that frame this humanitarian need. This analysis of commercial rescue aims to understand if any of us have the capacity or willingness to respond ethically to suffering at a distance, and how is that decision reached when a humanitarian crisis at sea does happen. At sea, the proximity of ships to people in distress, along with ship type, plays a pivotal role in shaping who will even be called to a given scene and is largely determined with the AIS geospatial technology.

“People as much as states are the subjects of geopolitics” (Hyndman 2009, p. 196). In her exploration of the politics of body counts in Iraq, Hyndman (2009) adopts a feminist geopolitics

that aims to recast war as a field of live human subjects, with names, families, and hometowns (p. 196). Her feminist geopolitical epistemology of resistance substantiates the argument that counting bodies (can) produce(s) “incomplete and selective representation of the crisis at hand” (p. 196). For Hyndman (2009), the more challenging question is “how to produce responsible relational representations of war that convey meanings of loss, pain, and destruction without further fuelling conflict” (p. 196). Certainly, the ongoing effort to represent migrant deaths on the Mediterranean is similarly conflicted. Hyndman’s (2009) analysis provokes important avenues of analysis: how are migrants in distress on the Mediterranean represented, and what do these representations say about their authors? These questions helped to guide and maintain a critical approach in this analysis: my study does not imagine how migrants *should* be represented, instead the chapters engage with the question of *how* migrants in maritime distress *are* represented and subsequently treated. The following passage from Giller Prize winning author Omar El Akkad’s (2021) political fiction, *What Strange Paradise*, which I draw on throughout the dissertation, captures the cognitively dissonant (re)actions of tourists and European nationals that inhabit the beaches where migrant bodies wash up on shore:

The coast guard and the morgue keep partial count of the dead, and as of this morning it stands at 1,026 but this number is as much an abstraction as the dead themselves are to the people who live here, to whom all the shipwrecks of the previous year are a single shipwreck, all the bodies a single body. (El Akkad, 2021, pp. 4-5)

In this quote, El Akkad brings the inconsistency of responsibility and representation to life through storytelling that places the bodies of migrants in proximity to the international community.

This study is steeped in debates that surround the responsibility to rescue people in distress. To illuminate the security and humanitarian risks that structure decisions to rescue people at sea,

this section relies on scholarship that identifies the forced migration of marginalized people as a locus of both fear and compassion. Conceptually, Ahmed's book *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2013) relies on the concepts of distance and proximity to explain how the process of discursive appropriation works. The significance of her explanation to geographers interested in mapping the spatial dynamics of power in the past, present, and future, revolves around recognition that "colonial encounters do not just involve a transition from distance to proximity: they involve, at one and the same time, social and spatial relations of distance and proximity" (Ahmed, 2013, p. 12). The spatial relations that exist between massive nationally registered and financially insured/protected ships, cargos, and crews, and uninsured, unprotected, unregistered, unflagged and unseaworthy boats filled with migrants could not be more pronounced. Paradoxically, the sheer size and power of massive commercial ships make them dangerous for migrants (trapped on-board precarious vessels) that can be overturned in the wake of their would-be rescuers. Alternatively, the risks that are understood and framed as emanating from the bodies of migrants in distress are tied to the perceived safety and security of non-rescue for those in proximity to help.

My decision to focus on commercial ships and how seafarers and shipping companies negotiate the risks associated with performing rescue at sea is an extension of scholarship that forms a geography of rescue ethics that rests on Butler's human geography of rescue. In her chapter "Embodying Strangers" Ahmed (2000), builds on Butler's (1993) *Bodies that Matter* in her consideration of how embodying strangers' rests on the mutually constitutive/relational: affects and effects of othering. The coming together of the migrant boat and the commercial ship provides a significant site for both identifying and examining the way humanitarian, political and economic logic/rationality is used to articulate the risks of rescuing strangers; and how these rationalities

serve to strengthen the borders of Europe through the definition of what lies outside them as inherently risky: “through the cartographic mapping of other spaces and bodies as strange and uninhabitable this body becomes home, providing, the contours of ‘inhabitable’ space” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 93). Further, Ahmed’s work dovetails nicely with Butler’s *Frames of War* (2009). In conversation, the authors open up new geographies of affect through their analysis of the ways in which distance and proximity have the capacity to provoke inherent human conditions.

The commercial maritime rescue of migrants is a polarizing topic that encapsulates competing humanitarian, political and economic forces from both rescuers and people in distress. To help capture how these forces shape social spaces Ahmed describes how colonial encounters involve a transition from a humanitarian approach at a distance to a risk/fear-based construction based on proximity. This constitutes a geography of embodiment. While Ahmed’s analysis is terrestrially based, I extrapolate her thinking to a maritime context: with the sea as social space and the concept of proximity governing how migrants become risks as they move toward European borders and commercial ships.

Butler’s (2009) interrogation of Sontag’s work pulls apart the alleged differences between narratives and photographs as they relate to their producer’s ability to elicit emotive responses and whether or not these affective reactions are enough to trigger a moral obligation to act. In so doing, Butler’s analysis provides a spectrum of human geography that animates the representation and consumption of suffering, near and far: by outlining the global circuitry that defines contemporary humanitarian action.

To outline significant issues that have been raised with respect to the way people represent and respond to suffering at a distance, I engage the connected works of Sontag and Sherene Razack. Sontag’s (1977) *The Image-World* argued that we are so inundated with images of

suffering and sensationalist photography that our capacity for response had faded. In her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), she implicates the flood of photographic representations of suffering with what she sees as a growing disconnection with “how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering” (p. 80). This idea leads her to consider that “perhaps the only ones with the right to look at images of suffering of this extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it” (Sontag, 2003, p. 34). Razack (2007) critiques the lack of attention to race in Sontag’s analysis, despite the fact that, as she argues, “the theft of pain with which Sontag and others are concerned is an act supported by a racial logic” (p. 389).

In her analysis of Canadian military and humanitarian responses to the Rwandan genocide, Razack’s *Stealing the Pain of Others* (2007) extends Sontag’s work: “The ‘flood of terrifying images’ tells us all we need to know, and in place of history and context, the very information needed to consider the future, we install ‘absolute evil’ and the good soldiers overwhelmed by it” (p. 380). Nevertheless, Sontag (2003) concedes that images can and must represent human suffering, and that they must teach us how to register human loss and devastation across global distances. These images can establish and communicate—through the visual frame—a proximity to suffering that keeps us aware of the human cost of war, famine, and destruction in places that are geographically distant. The international reaction of the global community to the photograph which depicts a Turkish police officer holding Kurdi’s dead body reflects the struggle of representation depicted by Razack (2007), Butler (2007, 2009, 2012) and Sontag (1977, 2003).

In Butler’s (2009) book *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* she examines Sontag’s (1977, 2003) work surrounding the effectiveness of photography in shaping public perceptions of war. The second chapter of the book discusses how the photographs of prisoners at Abu Ghraib endorse a perception of the Muslim prisoners as deserving victims of abuse and violence that

denies them recognition as human beings. Butler (2012) aims to counter the idea that ethical obligation is confined within national borders among communities that share common language (p. 137). Instead, she observes, “obligations to those who are far away as well as to those who are proximate cross linguistic and national boundaries and are only possible by virtue of visual or linguistic translations, which include temporal and spatial dislocations” (Butler, 2012, p. 137). Butler (2012) refers to these “dislocations” as “circuits” and suggests that they have a confounding effect on “any communitarian basis for delimiting the global obligations that we have” (p. 137). She equates this with the “experience we have in relation to the media when it takes proximate suffering at a distance and makes what is proximate appear very far away” (Butler, 2012, p. 137). Her work probes the spatial dynamics of moral obligation and describes how media can have a displacing affect on those consuming it.

According to Butler (2012), “the ethical demands that emerge through the global circuits in these times depend on this limited but necessary reversibility of proximity and distance” (p. 137). She contrasts the assumption that proximity imposes certain immediate demands for “honoring principles of bodily integrity, nonviolence, and territorial or property rights claims” with instances where “one part of the globe rises in moral outrage against actions and events ...in another ..., a form of moral outrage that does not depend upon a shared language or a common life grounded in physical proximity” (Butler, 2012, p. 135). At the same time, she recognizes that “no matter how fully transported through media we might be, we are also emphatically not” (Butler, 2012, p. 135). Butler’s work centres on the concept of grief and it provides a valuable lens through which to recognize the way media representations of human tragedies like children drowning in the Mediterranean affect the people who consume them. However, her work on grief

is also significant for the debate it has inspired, one that revolves around the question of what is the role of grief in inspiring ethical obligation.

Geographies of Whiteness and Racialized Capitalism on Water

In 1841, an American slave ship, the *Creole*, was carrying 135 enslaved African Americans from Virginia to the New Orleans slave markets by ship. Some 130 miles northeast of the Bahamas the slaves rebelled and forced the ship to disembark in Nassau, a British territory where the British Slave Abolition Act of 1833 guaranteed their freedom (Rupprecht, 2016, p. 39). The US had not yet abolished slavery. In 2019, a group of migrants including 15 women and 47 minors commandeered an oil tanker in the Central Mediterranean, the *El Hiblu 1*, and refused to return to Libya after being denied entry by Italy and Malta. While recent reports of slavery in Libya invite comparisons to historical accounts of slavery in the US (Mafu, 2019), the purpose of this example is to call attention to the geopolitics and geoeconomics of these maritime insurrections.

In the second half of the eighteenth century there was a significant increase in rebellion on board transatlantic slave vessels. As a result, slave traders pushed marine insurance providers to cover costs resulting from these rebellions: “the recurrence of shipboard revolt required legal theorists, like slaveholders, to confront the contradiction of slaves as property, their dual character as human beings and as commodities. Yet, they were also forced not only to recognise slaves’ humanity but also to consider their desire for freedom” (Rupprecht, 2016, p. 35). For the purposes of this analysis the key idea is uncontroversial: people are not property and are inherently opposed to being enslaved, and or trafficked; they can be expected to rebel against abuses and/or criminal acts.

Geographies of whiteness refer to geographies that are “assumed to be white or are in some way structured, though often implicitly, by some notion of whiteness” (Bonnett, 1997; McCarthy

and Hague, 2004; Vanderbeck, 2006). An editorial by critical geographers Olds, Sidaway and Sparke (2004), after the 2004 tsunami off the coast of Indonesia, captures a defining characteristic of the geography of whiteness: they outline how racist double standards are promulgated through Western media coverage of crises that disembodies non-white death while personalizing white death (p. 475). The economic value associated with whiteness is charted through geography, including labour studies that detail the history of this association. In this way the study of race and racism toward migrants in my analysis is entangled in the mutually constitutive state-based racism and global political economy. For example, the work of Du Bois (1935), and Roediger (1991), establishes how white identity privileged white workers through access to the labour market through citizenship.

Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) describes how white working-class identity in the USA was established in contrast to black slaves, while his (2006) *Working Towards Whiteness*, along with other scholars Ignatiev (1995) and Jacobson (1998), details how various American immigrant groups became "white" through the denigration of blacks in the labour market. The relationship between labour opportunities and race is also part of the history of movement and mobility across the Mediterranean. Merrill (2011) has also described conditions wherein southern Italians have been categorized in distinction from lighter skinned northern Italians and discriminated against in northern cities (p.1543). However, Merrill (2011) suggests that "in the contemporary context of neoliberal globalization and the influx of immigrants beginning in the late 1980s, southern Italians are now in a position of greater privilege compared to migrants" (p. 1543). The migrants in my study may be aspiring workers, however economic motivations are not necessarily the sole influences on their journeys. Nevertheless, the idea that the capitalist economy is racially configured is not new; and according to scholars of race "racialized capitalism" is

founded on the transatlantic slave trade and the plantation slavery that funded European industrial growth (James 1989; Mintz 1986; Robinson 1983; Trouillot 1995, 2003; Waquant, 2006; Bonacich, Alimahomed, & Wilson, 2008).

According to Merrill (2011) “the acceptability of migrant death on the Italian borders is not simply a matter of the successful mastery of neoliberal state social and moral authority” (p. 1558). Instead, Merrill (2011) describes how “consent generated by racialization” is imbricated in the “production and reproduction of a racialized surplus population” (Merrill, 2011, p. 1558). In the late nineteenth century, the external territories subject to European colonial rule were similarly divided for conquest in the interest of capitalist expansion. The effects of this colonial agenda are maintained through contemporary migration on the Mediterranean with the continued activation of a surplus labour population that Merrill (2011) describes as “a floating, border-crossing labor force” (p. 1549). In my view ongoing migration on the Mediterranean is governed by the same political, economic, and racial tensions that birthed the contemporary political economy. To elucidate how the migrant boat functions as a vessel for “surplus populations” I examine how the maritime rescue of migrants is rendered physically, politically, and financially risky. The foundation of these conceptualizations is based in understandings that ultimately work to separate the risks of performing a rescue for seafarers from the risks of not being rescued for migrants.

Some scholars have outlined how the modern European state developed during the time of “new immigration” to America, and this formation was characterised by a “state racism” that sought to protect the nation from both external and internal security risks (Roediger, 2005; Stoler, 1995; Foucault 1990). European migration to the United States in the early twentieth century included many of those racially persecuted in Europe. According to Roediger (2005), northern Italians saw southern Italians as Africans while southern Italians looked down on Africans (p.

116.). Capital structured workplaces by creating competition that was implicitly racialized. In the early twentieth century, employers preferred a labour force divided by race and national origins (Roediger, 2005, p. 72). According to labour economists' segregation by nationality and/or race was designed to weaken Labour unity, weaken wages and to promote competition and daily productivity (Roediger, 2015; Edwards, et al., 1973). Today the logic of security works to manufacture the same divisions that create favorable conditions for capital while restricting the organizing power of labour.

Critical race scholars remind us that focusing strictly on the economic rationalities that underpin the capitalist system obscure the racial and gendered dynamics that manufacture disposable workers (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994, 2000, 2002). By examining how commercial agents/seafarers conceptualize the risks associated with rescuing migrants in the Central Mediterranean we can see how the racial and gendered dynamics that force migrants into unseaworthy vessels are obfuscated by the securitizing tendencies of state and corporate actors. In this study, I rely on theorists who are variously described as Foucauldian and Marxist, namely Mark Duffield and Deb Cowen respectively, to illuminate a biopolitics of supply chain security. Cowen (2014) observes how the logic of supply chain security cast disruptions to the international “free” flow of goods—acts of piracy, indigenous blockades, and labour actions—as threats to life itself (p. 15). Her work builds on Duffield’s insurance-based analysis through an examination of the way commercial and political interests cast migrants as risks. Duffield (2006) suggests “racism, migration, and development are interconnected on a planetary scale” (p. 71). His analysis highlights how the figure of the refugee or uninsured migrant is the embodiment of “the collapse of the national/international divide and the exposure of the fragile infrastructures and livelihood

systems of mass society to the threat represented by the free movement of the world's non-insured people" (Duffield, 2006, p. 71).

My analysis examines how seafarers and shipping companies separate the risks to their vessels and crew from the risks faced by the people who are drowning. Drawing attention to the insurance-based approaches to managing risk, I examine how commercial cargo is insured while migrants are not. In doing so, I extend the scope of securitization theory from the political and humanitarian domain to include commercial agents. My analysis of how shipping companies seek to resist the financial risks of rescuing migrants illuminates a history of how people are insurance liabilities. In short, rescuing people at sea can be a risky action for seafarers on merchant vessels to enact.

Race and Citizenship on the 'Black Mediterranean'

Recently, in focusing on the role of grief in pro-refugee activism in Europe, Ida Danewid (2017) argued that "these ethical perspectives contribute to an ideological formation that disconnects connected histories and that turns questions of responsibility, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform into matters of empathy, generosity, and hospitality" (p. 1). Her work connects Ahmed's (2013) spatial analysis of liberal constructions of migrants as strangers to the Mediterranean crisis to show how public mourning, liberal hospitality and calls for multiculturalism work to continue rather than break with key premises of the populist, far right, and anti-immigrant and racist political parties they "supposedly seek to challenge" (Danewid, 2017, p. 11). In this way dead migrants serve to foster the creation of a more empathetic and cosmopolitan European identity through the erasure of Europe's colonial past and neocolonial present, and by implication the responsibility Europe bears for the bodies on its shores (Saucier & Woods, 2014, p. 58). Contemporary scholarship that examines the deep entanglements of race and

citizenship in on going debates about Black Italianness and the racial boundaries of the Italian state has begun to unpack the colonial history of fortress Europe and the migrant as stranger.

Through the framework of the Black Mediterranean, Hawthorne (2021) describes the sea as “perched at the geographical and metaphorical edges of Europe and Africa” (p. 169). Her work describes “who truly “belongs” in Italy as a rightful citizen continues to be shaped by the much-hyperbolized threat of African contamination and Italian racial degeneration” (Hawthorne, 2021, p. 169). She provides insights into the racial history of the idea that people moving across the Mediterranean Sea, from southern to northern shores, are risky to rescue and often difficult to disembark. The Black Mediterranean framework throws the boundaries of Europe in relation to the Mediterranean and Blackness into question (Hawthorne, 2021, p. 169). She also questions how the forces of globalization, neoliberal trade relations, and mass migration contribute to a racialized, exclusionary capitalism. For the purposes of my study the idea of the Black Mediterranean challenges and informs the racial logic of securitization and border externalization.

The chapters in this dissertation are designed to follow different conceptualizations of the human geography of commercial ships rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean. Together they show how framing migrants as humanitarian victim, border security threat, and financial risk produces a variety of mobility issues and obstacles that shape this maritime space. In part, my approach to the study of maritime rescue in the Central Mediterranean is an endorsement of work by Herzfeld (2005) that observes how ‘the Mediterranean,’ as unitary category, has regularly supported cultural imperialism (p. 48). A critical approach to the historical geopolitics of the Mediterranean region, including religious conflicts, the expansion of mercantile economies, piracy and slavery, all contest the utopian vision of one Mediterranean in recognition of many Mediterranean’s (Abulafia, 2011). In Abulafia’s (2005) structural model of ‘the Mediterranean’

he describes the Sea as “as an empty space between lands [...] in which waters link between diverse economies, cultures, and religions” (Abulafia, 2005, 65). For Abulafia, trade is what Middle Seas share comparatively, it makes the Mediterranean paradigm expandable to other parts of the world, like the Mediterranean Atlantic, the Trans-Oceanic Caribbean, the Japanese Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean (2005, p. 65). Similar to how Orientalism is said to manifest essentialized geographic divisions between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ culture, Black Mediterranean scholars recognize “Mediterraneanism” (Herzfeld, 2005), as sharing a historicising and similarly “white, and predominantly, male European gaze” (Proglino, et al., 2021, p. 10).

According to Proglino et al. (2021), Abulafia’s work opens new geographical perspectives, yet it reflects a fallacy inherent in the classical Mediterranean Studies model of the basin as a unitary sea. Black Mediterranean scholars suggest this fallacy extends from a failure to examine the type of trade being performed: specifically, “the delinking of the Mediterranean from capitalist exploitation” obfuscates connections with other systems of sea/ocean connectivity (Proglino, et al., p. 3). For example, the role of Italy during the onset of the Atlantic slave trade is only one of the many connections between the Black Mediterranean and the Black Atlantic (p. 3). The mutually reinforcing practices of exploiting indentured racialized labour, restricting Black mobility, and incarcerating racialized individuals in detention centres and camps are not confined to the Mediterranean geography. According to Davis (2000) the “strong sequential links” that connect the Italian Renaissance and the Atlantic slave system that exploited Black slaves for sugar production and processing originated in the Southern European medieval kingdoms, and in the slaveholding colonies in the eastern Mediterranean and on the coast of the Black Sea (p. 459). Identifying these links reinforces the significance of focusing on the history of how people have been forcibly displaced and used for the purposes of economic exploitation across different times

and maritime spaces. For Chambers (2010), “when the people in the Mediterranean become visible as Black” the history and contemporary geography of the Mediterranean becomes noticeably defined by “slavery, drowning, brutality, and the wrecked lives of ferocious migration today” (p. 681). Recognizing this past, links the current ‘crisis’ on the Mediterranean to be to an ongoing and repeating history of racialized violence.

The Black African migrant is a central figure in the essentializing geographical determinism that links the physical geography of the Mediterranean to a distinct history (Chambers, 2008; Giaccara and Minca 2010). According to Danewid et al. (2021) “these narratives share an implicit cartographic vision of the Mediterranean space, one that reproduces its complex topography into a single, unitary epistemological framing and political management” (p. 9-10). A Black Mediterranean framework illustrates how Black migrants moving across the sea are blanketly categorized as refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people “seemingly floating on its fluid waters to reach the more stable typographies of continental Europe” and who have increasingly come to symbolize the insecurity of that maritime space (Danewid et al., 2021, p. 10). For my study of rescue in the Central Mediterranean, the way Black Mediterranean scholars are critical of stereotypes that describe African migrants as victim, “criminal threat” and/or “violent invader” (Danewid, 2021, p. 10) provides context for my engagement with seafarers and maritime professionals. Being cognisant of how following the construction of migrants as victim and/or threat essentially reproduces “voiceless subjects” (Danewid, 2021, p. 10) is less challenging than navigating a research process that can account for this analytical tendency. Still, I extend the work of Black Mediterranean scholars by examining how migrants are constructed not just as humanitarian victim, or criminal threat but as financial risks that must be securitized.

Outline of the Dissertation

This first chapter situates the study within the racial logics of migrant reception on the Mediterranean, highlighting the influence of the moral and physical proximity, along with other power relations, to geographies of maritime rescue. The second chapter situates the research in the broader literature on the specific geographies of shipping, maritime security, and rescue at sea. It also engages the racial logics of rescue, and grounds my analysis in three bodies of work: 1) a human geography of commercial ships, migrant boats and maritime rescue (Sorrenson, 1999; Hasty & Peters, 2012; Foucault, 1967; Harvey, 2000; Spivak, 1999); 2) a political geography of maritime securitization and externalization (Huysmans, 2000; Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Duffield, 2007); and 3) a geoeconomic framework of rescue at sea (Sparke, 2018; Cowen, 2014). Each of these respective streams of literature is extended in subsequent chapters of the study, woven together with original fieldwork and analysis. Together they advance a theoretical framework of political, economic, and maritime geographies. This framework is designed to illuminate the way shipping companies and seafarers narrate the risks involved with the maritime rescue of migrants. Specifically, by extending a securitization framework to account for how the construction of political and financial risks of performing a humanitarian action at sea I chart new theoretical territory.

This dissertation is in manuscript style format. Chapters three, four, five and six are meant to stand alone as individual publishable pieces. Therefore, the chapters contain some overlapping background information on migration and rescue on the Mediterranean, as well as details that explain my research methods and the geography of the Mediterranean. This repetition is in accordance with the guidelines set out in the York University Graduate Program in Geography Student Handbook 2020-2021, which states “Students may organize their thesis or dissertation in

such a way that individual chapters may be directly extracted for submission as article publication. If this produces repetition in the overall document, an explanation should be provided in the introduction” (York Geography, 2020, para. 5). While efforts have been made to limit the amount of repetition, I present and rely on background, data and methods that is the same in each of these chapters. The third chapter introduces my unique methodological contribution that uses geospatial technology to gather information about commercial rescues involving migrants. The chapter describes the research design, process, and study participants in detail. It presents my position as a researcher and outlines how previous research interests helped shape my approach to this study and mediated my access to study participants. At the research design stage, secondary quantitative data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) helped to identify and describe representative populations involved with rescue on the Mediterranean. Chapter three also describes how I applied my knowledge of border security operations in my freedom of information (FOI) requests to the European Coast Guard and Border Agency (Frontex) to produce a new method for identifying commercial vessels involved in rescuing migrants with geospatial technology available free on-line: Automatic Identification System (AIS) data on *marinetraffic.com*. This chapter also highlights how this use of AIS offers up methodological innovation for geographers who trace ship movement.

There were two main conferences where participant observation helped to develop and refine the research objectives in this study. These conferences provided access to a large network of professionals with experience in maritime rescue and border security and highlighted the way migration and rescue on the Mediterranean is portrayed as both a humanitarian crisis and a threat

to border security. They also allowed me to identify key informants in their respective areas of focus—humanitarian rescue and border security. Attending conferences helped to identify organizations and individuals with expertise in maritime rescue. Semi-structured interviews with 24 maritime experts in various capacities formed the basis of the data for this research project.

Chapter four extends the literature review on the geography of maritime rescue law to the Central Mediterranean. While research that covers rescue on the Mediterranean continues to focus primarily on state-based operations, the emergence of non-state actors has recently begun to be studied. For example, Cusumano (2017) describes the emergence and growth of NGOs with rescue operations on the Mediterranean in 2016. In this chapter I incorporate information gathered through participant observation and conversations with seafarers and maritime rescue professionals at the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) conference in Gothenburg, Sweden that details risks associated with the mass rescue of migrants at sea and how these efforts are coordinated. This participant observation highlights the role of coordination among rescuers, and is combined with interviews with shipmasters, seafarers, and other maritime professionals, to help illustrate the physical risks to seafarers performing humanitarian rescue at sea. The chapter is couched in current scholarship that documents the unprecedented expansion of private NGO ships in the Central Mediterranean.

Chapter five examines state-based rescue operations and the geopolitics of disembarkation. This chapter explores how state-based actors instrumentalize the language of security—that buttresses the responsibility to rescue at sea—to separate the rescue of migrants from other seafarers in distress. Participant observation at a Border Security conference in Rome, Italy allowed me to meet Navy and military officers that specialize in border security on the Mediterranean; their insights helped construct a framework for understanding the way migrants

are constructed as threats to border security. This chapter supports the central argument of this dissertation: that commercial ships and shifting maritime boundaries of rescue are the final frontier of border externalization that has, until very recently, been defined as terrestrially bound.

In chapter six, I launch an examination of the financial risks of commercial rescue on the Mediterranean. This chapter provides an accounting of how Protection and Indemnity Clubs (P&I clubs) seek to protect shipping companies from the risks involved with shipping in general and migrant rescue specifically. I draw on data from and interviews with staff at major international organizations that represent the overwhelming majority of shipping companies, seafarers, and Protection and Indemnity (P & I) clubs—including the International Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus, and the International Group—produce a geoeconomics of rescue.

In the chapter seven, the conclusion, I review my theoretical contributions and arguments that establish a framework for the study of commercial maritime rescue, and the basis for my understanding of how migrants are conceptualized as risky to rescue. Finally, I suggest future directions for research that involves the use of the automatic identification system (AIS) for identifying and tracking commercial vessels operating in areas where migrants are often found in distress, like the Central Mediterranean.

Chapter Two:

A Human Geography of Maritime Rescue

The following scene from author, El Akkad (2021), took place as an uncle and his nephew boarded a smuggler's boat in Alexandria, Egypt to cross the Mediterranean:

Smuggler: "We're happy to pay his fare if you can't, but then he's not yours anymore. He's ours, and we have the right to recoup our costs."

Uncle: "No, I saw you talking to the others, I know the bottom deck costs fifteen hundred. You put me there, you put him up top."

Smuggler: "You want to go down to the bottom deck with the Africans?"

Uncle: "Brother, there are Africans on both decks"

Smuggler: "You know what I mean" (p. 58).

Uncle to nephew: "we're just going on a short trip"

Smuggler: "He's paid up, he's not for the market." (El Akkad, 2021, p. 58)

Mobility has always been defined by market economics: commercializing the value of human life by restricting the movements of some while rescuing people who can afford to be saved. Throughout human history the ship has been a vessel for the racialized economy, driven by the logistics of market exploitation. This study extends an existing body of work that examines the geography of ships. With reference to Marxist, Foucauldian, and postcolonial and feminist scholarship, my analysis builds a global political economy of commercial maritime rescue. In a way, the aim of my examination is to follow the ship through different yet connected analytical routes; showing how it can serve as a vessel for encapsulating the risks that define contemporary securitization practices, both political and economic.

My analysis of existing scholarship in this chapter is situated in three bodies of literature: 1) a human geography of migrant boats and commercial ships; 2) a political geography of maritime

securitization and externalization; and 3) a geoeconomic framework of insurance at sea. These specific literatures helped shape both my research questions and methods for collecting data and their analyses. What follows is an appraisal and grouping together of key pieces of scholarship that provide a theoretical basis for analyzing maritime commercial rescue. While a strict definition of maritime commercial rescue includes any rescue involving a commercial ship, this synthesis of scholarship serves a common goal: to elucidate the theoretical underpinnings of decisions to rescue and to reflect their terrestrial counterparts.

Before I review these three areas of literature, I introduce a geography of ships. How does a human geography lens position the commercial ship, the migrant boat or even the maritime world within established spatial ordering? What happens when small, unsafe, and unregistered boats loaded with uninsured migrants in distress come up against massive cargo and tanker ships that sustain the global economy? The geopolitics of rescue on the Mediterranean is tethered to the epistemological, ontological and corporeal construction of seemingly innocuous categories like “homeland”, “security”, “citizen”, and “refugee.” My research was designed explore these categories and the contradictory constructions different actors produce.

Taking a Ship Through the Geography of Commercial Rescue

Slowly it came into focus -pole-mounted lights illuminating the deck of a huge freight ship. Lit this way and from the *Calypso*'s fog-blinkered view, the starboard side gave the vessel the appearance of a sparse floating city. With barely perceptible momentum it moved at an acute angle to the *Calypso*'s present direction, such that the two ships were likely to come within a few hundred feet of each other before they passed. (El Akkad, 2021, p. 118)

The preceding quote is borrowed from a fictional yet fitting description of what it might be like to come up against a massive cargo ship while aboard a migrant vessel in the Mediterranean. According to Sorrenson (1996), in the eighteenth century, the ship was instrumental in the

production of scientific knowledge; it was crucial for assembling, producing, refining and testing knowledge about the physical world (p. 221). Hasty and Peters (2012) point to “icebreaking floating laboratories that chart the effects of climate change at either pole, or those that are mapping changes in levels of biodiversity in the coral reefs of the southern Pacific, or indeed the sonar-mounted ships seeking untapped submarine deposits of oil or gas around the world”, as contemporary examples of the essential role the ship plays in the production of geographic knowledge (p. 662). They conclude, “the ship has ever been entangled in the production of knowledge, a site of thought and accumulation of thought. [...] The ship then has a place within geography, in the making of geographical knowledge” (p. 663). What then might a geography of ships and rescue operations look like? How does the geography of ships contribute to the expropriation of maritime space and the production of geographic knowledge? While this dissertation is more concerned with the former, the latter question provides an opportunity to engage with existing scholarship that examines the role of the ship in geographic thought. Subsequently, this theoretical base contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how ships are vessels for political and economic actors.

My research works ‘the ship’ into established parameters and existing categories of rescue on the Mediterranean. Hasty and Peters (2012) point out that the ship is “intricately bound-up with the everyday lives of much of the world’s population, indeed approximately 95% of trade is still carried by ship” (p. 669). Emerging maritime geographies have worked to decentre the terrestrial focus of human geographies (Steinberg, 2001). Philip Steinberg (2001), a geographer, highlights different conceptualizations and uses of the sea itself and shows how ocean space serves multiple functions, including transportation surface, resource area, military a battleground, and even as a Foucaultian “heterotopia.” According to Hasty and Peters (2012) “the ship, so central to the

function maritime life, remains a largely neglected figure in the literature; a regularly acknowledged but seldom considered feature of the maritime worlds elucidated in the work aforementioned and elsewhere” (p. 661). My aim is not to reframe the disciplinary boundaries of geography, with “the ship” in a leading occidental role; instead, the mission is to explore key lines of enquiry raised by this approach.

Like Hasty and Peters (2012), I endeavor to elucidate ways “the ship is a moving technology, traversing a moving surface, in a space of fluid legal boundaries” (p. 669). For example, they question how things like the flag of the ship, the size of the ship, the company who owns it, the cargo it carries, the insurance underwriting the vessel, and the security level of the ship, govern where it travels and docks (Hasty & Peters, 2012, p. 669). Similarly, my research examines how these variables influence and determine how seafarers make decisions to rescue migrants at sea. In this way my analysis adds to existing analyses by organizations like the Seafarers International Research Centre that help build an understanding of “the contemporary social and cultural lives of men and women who work (and live) in maritime spaces, onboard ships and in ports” (Peters, 2010, p. 1264). Other examples of recent research that examines the work of seafarers include: Sampson and Schroeder’s (2006) examination of the marginalization of transmigrant seafarers after changes in ship registration; Sampson’s (2003) discussion of the transnational identities of seafarers; and Sampson and Zhao’s (2003) detailing of the communication problems and associated cultural difficulties that frustrate multilingual crews. Marschke and Vandergeest (2016) outline the connections between global North buyers and global South labour practices. This type of research sheds light on the lived experiences of seafarers: “a group often invisible and forgotten; situating them in a global and connected context that spans land and sea” (Peters, 2010, p. 1264). My analysis of how seafarers aboard commercial vessels

perform the border security politics of their vessels homeland similarly connects previously invisible maritime geography to terrestrial geopolitics.

Conceptualizing the Responsibility of Commercial Ships to Rescue Migrant Boats

My research is focused on exploring how seafarers narrate and act on their responsibility to rescue migrants in distress at sea. The aim is draw out some of the parallels that exist between terrestrial and maritime rescue by focusing on how both are the product of common conceptualizations of this responsibility.

Taken together, the works of Gayathri Spivak, David Harvey, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said provide conceptual scaffolding that permits a critical view of the Eurocentric definition of both migration and rescue on the Mediterranean. Harvey's (2000) critique of Foucault's essay on heterotopia lumps the geography of his work with Kantian geography: both treat space as static and separate from time, both are banal. However, "unlike Kant's Geography" the concept of heterotopia "has become an important means—particularly within postmodernism—of simultaneously resurrecting and disrupting the problem of utopia" (Harvey, 2000, p. 537). He argues "the whole essay on heterotopia reduces itself to the theme of escape" (p. 538). Surprisingly, Harvey misses the boat amidst his castigation of Foucault's (1986) suggestion that "the ship is the heterotopia par excellence" (p. 27). First, here is how Foucault describes the boat, he seems to use the terms boat and ship interchangeably:

[T]he boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and: at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, ... it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal ... the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development (I have not been speaking of that

today), but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates. (Foucault, 1986, p. 27)

For my analysis of migrant boats and commercial ships Harvey's (2000) critique of Foucault's concept (1967) of heterotopia provides a valuable launching off point. According to Harvey (2000),

the banality of the idea of heterotopia becomes all too plain because the commercialised cruise ship is indeed a heterotopic site if ever there was one; and what is the critical, liberatory, and emancipatory point of that? Foucault's heterotopic excursion ends up being every bit as banal as Kant's Geography. I am not surprised that he left the essay unpublished. (p. 538)

I assert that Harvey (2000) neglected to see the analytical and practical value that boats and ships bring to geopolitical study. In my study of commercial rescue an understanding of how different types of vessels represent both political and economic interests is useful because it illuminates the dynamics of how maritime rescues are coordinated, as well as the impacts the rescues have on political and economic interests. Moreover, the purposes for which different vessels are built and being operated influences their suitability for responding to people in distress at sea. For example, massive cargo ships and oil tankers can be difficult and slow to manoeuvre, as well as more dangerous to board while at sea. Nevertheless, it's worth returning to Harvey's example of the cruise ship as a banal conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of defining heterotopic spaces to help capture the analytical significance of vessels to human geography thinking. Specifically, the cruise ship that rescued more than 300 migrants close the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean comes to mind; those rescued then subsequently refused to

disembark when they were brought to Cyprus instead of their intended destination, Italy. In my view the “emancipatory potential” of the cruise ship in this example was transformed by the people that sought to use it to escape the violence in Syria. Furthermore, the idea of migrants on a cruise ship reinforces the idea that ships take on the political and economic aims of whoever is at the helm. So, while ships can be designed to be better suited for one purpose or another, what they are ultimately used for is up to whoever happens to be in charge of its movements at the time.

In contrast to Harvey, my work shows how the boat functions as a valuable analytical object, a vessel that can be employed to highlight geographical histories, methods, and futures. The boat provides a gateway to both colonial and neocolonial domination of space. To illustrate my position, I apply Spivak’s (1999) critique of Foucault’s Eurocentric conceptualization of “geographical discontinuity”, and her subsequent postcolonial articulation of contemporary global economic structures. The result is an appreciation for the significance of the geopolitical and local circumstances that structure the coordination of maritime rescue. Though not aimed specifically at the concept of heterotopic space, Spivak (1999) succeeds—where Harvey fails—in developing a (mostly Marxist) critique of Foucault’s geographically Eurocentric analytic of space and power.

My contention is that the juxtaposition of the migrant boat and the cargo ship effectively highlights significant characteristics of geopolitical and economic order. To move beyond a discussion of whether ships constitute a heterotopic space, I review Spivak’s critique of Eurocentrism in Foucault’s writing. Spivak (1999), draws on Said (1979, 1982) to argue how Foucault’s work: 1) consolidates the international division of labour; and 2) manifests and appropriates the voice of the oppressed. Said’s (1982) “critique of power in Foucault as a captivating and mystifying category that allows him to ‘obliterate the role of classes, the role of economics, the role of insurgency and rebellion” (as cited in Spivak, 1999, p. 265), is valuable.

For Spivak (1999), “the ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern is the left intellectuals stock-in-trade” (p. 255). She argues that contemporary French intellectuals are incapable of imagining the kind of Power and Desire that could “inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe”, and that “that everything they read, critical or uncritical is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe” (Spivak, 1999, p. 265).

The literature I reviewed for this analysis of the commercial rescue of migrants at sea was also heavily Eurocentric. When I apply Spivak’s critical approach to the eurocentrism in Foucault’s work to maritime commercial rescue it helps establish an understanding of what a boat full of migrants represents, and what a boat full of commercial cargo represents. Each vessel provides a useful representation of exactly what Spivak (1999) suggests is foreclosed in Foucault’s writing: the international division of labour. This is not to suggest that each person on board a “migrant boat” is somehow devoid of agency, or member of some prescribed sub-altern group, but that as far as theoretical conceptualization goes, the idea that the migrant boat represents a worthy image of people who occupy the position of Other provides a useful frame of analysis. Moreover, Spivak’s work reminds me of my reliance on information produced mainly through European and American sources and how this reality, functions to sustain contemporary geographies. For Spivak (1999), the entire constitution of that Other is achieved through an epistemic violence akin to that described by Foucault in his archaeology of madness: “Foucault locates one case of epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of madness” (p. 266). Yet, the national subject of the global South is consistently produced in this [same] “unproblematic way”, in this way “an alibi for globalization is produced by calling the testimony of the credit-baited female” (Spivak, 1999, p. 255). To be sure, Spivak’s work considers the poorest women of the

South to represent the prototypical foreclosed native informant of today (1999, p. 6). Moreover, her contribution stresses the connections between how the North continues to “aid the South” in the same way imperialism “civilized the New World”, and how “the South’s crucial assistance to the North in maintaining its resource-hungry lifestyle is forever foreclosed” (Spivak, 1999, p. 6).

My analysis of maritime commercial rescue relies on an understanding of how different types of vessels have different rescue capabilities, and how these capabilities can derive from their role in economic trade and/or their nationality and subsequent responsibilities set out in maritime conventions. Moreover, the information that documents and categorizes migration across the Mediterranean, from countries in North Africa to European shores, is produced by European border agencies and the accessibility of this migration data is mediated by the degree to which one is familiar with maritime operations in specific areas of the Mediterranean. Spivak’s critique of Foucault’s concept of “geographical discontinuity” helps to form a critical approach that is careful to acknowledge what is being foreclosed in analyses of maritime commercial rescue. Specifically, her approach fosters an appreciation for the political economic geographies that produce the figures and erase the voices of people that occupy migrant boats.

I find engaging with Spivak’s critique of Foucault helps to highlight the increasingly securitized borders of Fortress Europe and the relationship this trend has with people following clandestine maritime routes to Europe. Spivak (1999) argues that Foucault seems unaware that the “intellectual within globalizing capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labour” (p. 255-256). Nonetheless, her analyses provide an avenue by which to examine broader geopolitical structures that shape the human geography of maritime rescue. She suggests that Foucault’s analyses of the management of space in the clinic, the asylum and the prison foreclose a reading of broader narratives of European imperialism, and that his

findings are only made possible by a certain stage in exploitation, “for his vision of geographical discontinuity is geopolitically specific to the First World” (Spivak, 1999, p. 278). Her critique focuses on Foucault’s concept of “geographical discontinuity”, which he uses to differentiate between extraction and appropriation—in the Marxist sense—on the one hand, and domination/power on the other hand. She argues that Foucault’s focus on the latter is based on his determination that power studies offer “greater potential for alliance politics” (p. 278). This decision produces an “admirable form of localized resistance”; however, the real mark of geographical discontinuity, according to Spivak (1999), is the “international division of labour” (p. 278). The maritime rescue of migrants by cargo ships highlights the disparity between large multi-national corporations that capitalize on the free flow of goods aboard cargo ships so massive that their wake could overturn a migrant boat; and migrants packed onto unseaworthy vessels that are cast as disruptions to the movement of commercial goods. Moreover, from this vantage point the cargo carried aboard these massive vessels can be viewed as the product of the exploits of ‘cheap’ labour, and the migrant boat is a poignant representation of an international floating, precarious workforce.

The proceeding passage offers a fictional account of how people aboard a migrant vessel experience the displacing power of massive cargo vessels while on clandestine migratory routes aboard often unseaworthy boats:

The freighter neared. Amir watched it breach the nighttime fog, its full size coming into view. It appeared to him as the largest thing he’d ever seen, larger than the sea itself. He tried to catch sight of any movement on the ship, any other sign of life, but the lights along the starboard side washed the deck. All Amir saw were stacks of shipping containers, tall as buildings. Soon the passengers of the *Calypso* felt the displacing force of the ship. The waves

rose and smacked the side of the fishing boat, knocking it side to side. The two vessels passed, the distance between them close enough to swim. And then they were behind it, watching the huge freighter slip back into the night. (El Akkad, 2021 p. 120)

In order to move beyond the experience of encountering a massive cargo ship while aboard a migrant vessel their respective geographies must be expanded upon with reference to their position and role within the global political economy.

My aim here is to suggest that Spivak's analysis provokes an approach that problematizes the language of rescue and connects the ongoing migration and death along Mediterranean routes to Europe as a defining feature of contemporary geopolitical order. Spivak (1988) defines the "banality of the leftists intellectual" as a process by which their cooptation of the experiences and subsequent voices of 'subalterns' through self-portrayed transparency lays the groundwork for geopolitical, fugue as well as a globalized form of what Razack (2007) terms "stealing the pain of others" (p. 275). Throughout the course of my study there have been a number of incidents on the Mediterranean that have made international headlines; however, the aforementioned death of Alan Kurdi and the *King Jacob* incident stand out as overwhelming examples of circumstances where the voices of people crossing to Europe were coopted in popular media portrayals.

In her analysis of Romeo Dallaire's book and documentary *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Razack (2007) describes how "trauma narratives furnish middle power nations such as Canada with a homemade, that is to say a specifically national, version of the politics of rescue" (p. 381). In the case of Alan Kurdi, Canadian media sources sought to politicize his death through reports that the conservative government blocked claims for asylum filed by his father in Canada. Razack (1999) describes the ways in which "the pain and suffering of Black people can become sources of moral authority and pleasure, obscuring in the process our own participation in the violence that

is done to them” (p. 376). Both Malkki (1996) and Razack (2007) have identified how we can understand ourselves outside of history. Their work has encouraged me to examine the many permutations of what I have been calling maritime commercial rescue, to be self-reflexive and to recognize my own connections to the flow of goods made possible by mammoth commercial cargo vessels like the *King Jacob* and my role as a citizen of a country that has participated in waging war in Syria.

Razack’s work complements Spivak’s, as it provides further insights into the ways people represent, consume, and understand stories about migrants. My research is steeped in these issues of representation. Spivak’s (1999) analysis develops an understanding of the ways voices other than those articulated through Western academic institutions are foreclosed. Moreover, she describes how academia can/has further expropriate(d) the marginalized other through claims of transparent representation, particularly with the postcolonial migrant, which in her view “occlude[s] the native once again” (Spivak, 1999, p. 256). In her estimation, “Without a theory of ideology, it can lead to a dangerous utopianism. And if confined to migrant struggles in Northern countries, it can work against global social justice” (Spivak, 1999, p. 279). My decision to not “theorize from the margins” is shaped by her writing. Her work helps me to understand some of the limitations and eurocentrism in my own research process, and ultimately provides my analysis with a sense of direction—toward building an understanding of the processes and people that govern decisions to rescue migrants on the Mediterranean. Specifically, Spivak’s work has helped focus my research on identifying and articulating how geographies of whiteness produce migrant bodies as risks in the racialized capitalism of trade and politics of migration on the Mediterranean.

A Political Geography of Maritime Securitization and Externalization

Today the logic of security works to manufacture the same divisions that create favorable

conditions for capital while restricting the organizing power of Labour. In social and political science “securitization” is generally explained as a discursive and public process that involves the social and political construction of risks to national and or state security (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, 1998). In the world of finance securitization is a process whereby a group of assets are securitized: turned into tradeable securities in capital markets (Cowley & Cummins, 2005). For my analysis of commercial migrant rescue the discursive and financial ambitions of shipping companies are offered up as the quintessential geography of whiteness: centred around the control of future risks. Geographies of whiteness help me to frame the securitization agenda of the commercial shipping industry by following Baldwin’s (2012) suggestion that “we can learn much about whitenesses and their corresponding forms of racism by paying special attention to the ways in which such whitenesses are constituted by futurity” (p. 184). Baldwin’s (2012) thesis rests on the understanding that these geographies are shaped by future oriented discourse and my research agenda with commercial migrant rescue on the Mediterranean is a direct response to his call for investigation into the way the future shapes white geographies, and suggestion to explore “how the future is made present in various dialectical accounts of whiteness” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 184). In short, the dialectical relationship between the commercial ship and the migrant vessel is a fitting example that functions to ground the geography whiteness spatially and temporally. This grounding hinges on illuminating how future risks are captured and made present through political narratives and financial instruments.

For Baldwin (2012), futurity offers a constructive lexicon for conceptualizing and challenging conventional theories on whiteness that are past oriented. My contention is that securitization and geographies of whiteness coalesce in their mutual concentration on future risks; and the study of commercial migrant rescue extends these respective literatures. Baldwin (2011)

argues that there is a need to “study whiteness and futurity given how central the future is to contemporary governance and politics” (p. 187). In my study of commercial migrant rescue the geography of whiteness and futurity frames my approach to securitization and brings both concepts into dialectical symbiosis/relief. The logic of risk and security reconfigure and influence the phenomenon that is securitized. I examine how commercial vessels and seafarers embody the final frontier of border securitization through externalization by acting as agents of European border security—pushing migrants back to shores of African nations. I document how the financial costs of commercial migrant rescue are quantified by maritime insurance companies and how shipping companies attempt to protect themselves from these pecuniary risks. Both processes rely on the construction of migrants on the Mediterranean as future risks, to nation and profits.

Scholars have pointed out that security has proven to be a malleable concept that is constantly being redefined, as Murphy (2007) points out, by influential securitizing actors such as national governments (p. 450). Other scholars (Vaughn, 2009; Watson, 2011) have argued that humanitarianism itself is capable of promoting a securitization discourse, and Huysmans (2006) has shown how migrants are securitized. Their research employs the concept of securitization to elucidate the connections between development and security. In doing so, it highlights and frames an analysis of the relations between policy discourses on forced migration; the risks associated with the delivery of humanitarian services; and the operational security strategies of aid organizations.

My research also highlights connections between the securitization of forced migration and the securitization of aid delivery. Moreover, my aim is to produce research that documents the manifestations of protracted refugee situations. Protracted refugee situations represent cases where these mutually reinforcing channels of securitization are acutely visible. While these channels of

securitization have been elaborated on within the security and development literature, my research underlines the significance of protracted refugee contexts to these security-oriented debates. A number of scholars have outlined how a biopolitical framework that theorizes how humanitarian aid delivery in high-risk environments, like refugee camps, and in maritime contexts is essential to the broader task of using aid to securitize and contain high-risk populations and political instability (Hammerstad, 2010; Vaughn, 2009; Duffield, 2007).

While Hyndman and Giles (2017) focus on “these camp spaces where humanitarianism and national security intersect,” I focus on a maritime context that also serves to highlight how the securitization of migration on the Mediterranean is, like the camps, part of a “broader expression of broader efforts to securitize migration” (p. 32). Both the International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Convention) and the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention) stipulate that nation-states must arrange for the disembarkation of persons rescued at sea as soon as reasonably practical (Coppens & Somer, 2010, p. 399). Barnes (2004) observes that the “disembarkation of rescued asylum-seekers at the next port of call has been consistently advocated by UNHCR Executive Committee” (p. 71). The UNHCR Executive Committee recognizes that “to refuse disembarkation, or to permit it only under strict resettlement guarantee conditions, would not be in the spirit of accepted international principles, since this might indirectly discourage rescue at sea” (Barnes, 2004, p. 64). Nevertheless, there are a number of instances where vessels with rescued migrants on board were refused entry to European ports: for example, in 2018, Italy’s interior minister Matteo Salvini initially refused the *Alexander Maersk*, a Danish cargo ship, entry to disembark rescued migrants, and the ship’s captain, his crew and the migrants were forced to remain at sea for five days (DW, 2019). While the UNHCR cites international conventions that clearly define the responsibility to rescue people in distress, these

conventions are not formally binding. Moreover, Article V(b) of the SOLAS Convention also states that a State has the right to decide who enters its ports, even in case of emergency.

The purpose of this review is to position my analysis of the commercial rescue of migrants on the Mediterranean in the context of established scholarship that documents how the externalization of asylum is imbricated in the protracted exile of millions of refugees (Hyndman & Giles, 2017). Specifically, I consider the millions of people living in protracted crisis zones and camps as evidence of the failure of international refugee law and human rights instruments. Indeed, as Hyndman and Giles (2017) point out “international refugee law is not applied to the vast majority of the world’s refugees” (p. 26). In this light, the movement of people from regions and camps is, at the very least, predictable. Moreover, these conditions necessitate the production of scholarship that can attend to the connections between the externalization of asylum and the continued efforts of people to break out of these colonial geographies. Like Hyndman and Giles (2017) my research explains how the externalization of asylum confines the movements of refugees to their “regions of origin.” A primary component of this effort involves documenting the way the movement of refugees triggers processes of externalization and securitization.

Militarization, securitization, and externalization are mutually reinforcing power relations in my analyses. Their collective conceptual framework shapes decisions taken by shipping captains on the Mediterranean. The research design builds upon on political geography literature that describes the processes by which the EU seeks to externalize the security risks posed by migration (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Aradau & Van Munster, 2007; Lutterbeck, 2006; Carrera, 2007; Mineau, 2010; Neal, 2009). For example, recent geopolitical scholarship has identified how islands are part of “a broader enforcement archipelago of detention” and how “island enforcement practices deter, detain, and deflect migrants from the shores of sovereign territory” (Mountz, 2011,

p. 118). Commercial ships are part of this maritime geography but have not received much attention in scholarship or media.

Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population* describes a transition to a new technology of power: namely, a move from the question of "sovereignty over a territory" to the question of "regulation of a population" (2007, p. 135). He suggests that modern states perform what can be considered external or "diplomatic-military technology" in the interest of maintaining a territorial integrity and balancing power in the international community through external measures including war, and diplomacy. Moreover, the establishment and management of a spatial divide between external and internal security risks is what fuels the liberal paradox—how security risks can be effectively managed without compromising the rights and freedoms of the individual—and defines the parameters of a governmental epistemology with "population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault, 2007, p.108). The significance of addressing the liberal paradox on a perpetual basis can be seen in the work on securitization of migration. My study highlights how these processes are taking place at sea, and how flagged vessels encapsulate the political economic ethos of their national terrestrial counterparts.

Much of the contemporary geopolitical literature on forced migration has followed Foucault's lead in their conceptualizations of how contemporary states construct and respond to matters of national security—and this is evident in the scholarship on the securitization of migration. Development and security scholar Duffield (2007) argues that liberal forms of government have always been concerned with securing social and biological processes at the aggregate level of population, economy, and society "in the name of people, rights and freedom" (p. 4). Hyndman and Giles (2017) trace two central effects in relation to the securitization of forced

migration. First, they outline how the global North considers migrants as a security risk and institutes what they term “exclusionary cartographies” (p. 26) in an effort to repel asylum seekers from their borders. They cite the various biometric tests, the perpetually renegotiated bilateral readmission agreements, and ongoing regulations and practices (Hyndman & Giles, 2017) as contributing to conditions of long-term displacement for refugees in protracted refugee camps and settlements (p. 25).

This study supports the idea that humanitarian aid delivery in high-risk environments is essential to the broader task of using aid to securitize and contain high-risk populations and political instability (Hammerstad, 2010; Vaughn, 2009; Duffield, 2007). Exploring the ebb and flow of these relationships at sea provides examples of what happens when aid organizations are criminalized rather than securitized. I contend that when rescue vessels are impounded and ship captains brought up on criminal charges in European courts for disembarking migrants, this is an example of how the securitization of migration uses the tactic of criminalization to pursue its terrestrial national securitization agenda. This criminalization shapes the contours of the humanitarian space and highlights undocumented migration as a defining border. Drawing on existing research and advancing it, I examine how commercial ships are part of the border politics that govern how migrants are treated at sea.

The notion of perceived risk is the central component of the second effect of the securitization of forced migration specified by Hyndman and Giles (2017). Their approach to understanding risk, however, is not taken from Beck’s popular theory that describes a “risk society” governed through a “reflexive modernity” that attempts to describe our current “phase” of development. Instead, the authors adopt a Foucauldian approach that focuses on the epistemology of risk that renders it knowable, including different policies of war and surveillance,

that function through various institutions and administrative agencies that manage and define risk (Hyndman & Giles, 2017; Aradau & Van Munster, 2008). In line with a Foucauldian approach, Aradau and Van Munster (2008) focus their analysis of decision makers who govern by trying to “tame the future” (p. 24). Their analyses provide a background for my research into the technologies that govern the movement and future movement of migrant populations that are constructed as risky. For example, Creswell (1996) describes how “camp residents are thought to be mixing and mingling with rebel elements who are labeled ‘terrorists,’ and how this renders them ‘risky’ by association” (p. 288). In this way, future risk potential can help justify refoulement of refugee populations without evidence or actual security crisis ever happening. Aradau and Van Munster (2008) associate the management of future catastrophic events with neoliberalism and the depoliticization of policies and interventions (p. 24).

Securitization as governmentality works to justify security measures that move beyond what is generally considered normal. Hyndman and Giles (2011), however, explain how *refugees* who remain in their “regions of origin are considered as “deserving” refugees for whom humanitarian aid as basic food, housing and health care should be provided (p. 367). The contingent geographies of refugee displacement reinforce the significance of movement to determinations of risk. In these terms, the externalization of asylum encompasses the processes that seek to indemnify national populations from the forecasted risks posed by forced migrants. The central strategy of externalization is the movement of refugee determination procedures away from a destination country’s own borders, and techniques that are employed to achieve this aim include what Hyndman and Giles (2017) refer to as a “geopolitical constellation” of readmission agreements, visa regulations and interdiction practices, and biometric requirements (p. 24). My study explores how, in maritime geographies, ships can play a pivotal role in the process of

externalization.

Providing national security and refugee protection are not mutually exclusive projects, however, they are antagonists in some contexts of protracted displacement. For example, the humanitarian aid delivered in UNHCR camps is typically portrayed as distinct from counterterrorism strategies designed to address security issues. Despite this racialized portrayal, these polarizing objectives are often at war in protracted geographies of displacement. This conflict is obvious in the Dadaab camps of Kenya; here hundreds of thousands Somali refugees are seen as an ongoing security risk to their host country, and their refoulement has been consistently on the political agenda of Kenyan national governments for almost 30 years (Rudolph, 2012). This perception is not unfounded given the numerous terrorist acts that have occurred in and around the camps. Moreover, when acts of terrorism and general violence occur humanitarian aid delivery to the camps is limited to life saving services and the movement of refugees is restricted further (Rudolph, 2012; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). In this study, I explore the securitization of humanitarian aid delivery and the externalization of asylum at sea through an examination the role of commercial vessels in maritime rescues in the Central Mediterranean.

According to Jeff Huysmans (2000), for the European Union, “security policy is a specific policy of mediating belonging. It conserves or transforms political integration and criteria of membership through the identification of existential threats” (p. 757). In other words, nation states nurture the establishment of an internal community through security practices that seek to identify a multiplicity of political and social scenarios that trigger the liberal paradox. Framed in this way the securitization of migration becomes part of a process whereby multiple state actors are attempting to identify and address a multiplicity of risks on an *individual* basis in an increasingly interconnected world. Or as Huysmans (2000) suggests “a community [...] and its way of life

develop in response to an existential threat” posed by “figures of societal danger such as the criminal, the mentally abnormal, and the invading enemy” (p. 743). These discourses of danger and security practices establish a political community grounded in a framework of risk and a “political authority” derived from an ability to articulate and address, or as Huysmans (2000) argues “on the basis of reifying dangers” (p. 752). The securitization of migration literature is ensnared in a process of deconstructing risks and the logic that underlies processes of “othering.”

The Geoeconomics of Maritime Rescue

In maritime insurance law ‘inherent vice’ is the concept that allowed coverage for captive Africans. ‘Inherent vice’ is defined as the “capacity of a commodity to perish or deteriorate” (Rupprecht, 2016, p. 35). To this day, marine insurance does not cover losses caused by inherent vice: for example, during maritime transit, wine casks might leak, tobacco might dampen, wheat has the potential to moulder, fruit to ferment, and iron can weaken” (p. 34). Unlike any of these commodities African slaves could resist and therefore the question of how to adjudicate deaths that occurred while in maritime transit were mounted on the basis of inherent vice:

When deployed in the context of underwriting African cargoes, ‘inherent vice’ referred to ‘natural death’. Fatalities aboard a slaving ship caused by disease epidemics, a lack of nourishment, and sadness unto death or suicide were manhandled together, and understood indiscriminately to be the result of ‘natural death’ – and underwriters would not cover the risks of these things happening. In this sense, the term functioned as a formula of equivalence that legally and actually reduced so many people to so much inherently perishable matter. (Rupprecht, 2016, p. 35)

Many contemporary insurance companies—Lloyd’s, Royal and Sun Alliance, AIG, New York Life and Aetna—were established during the period of eighteenth-century slavery. Marine insurance was used to protect the profits of slave traders and provided a way for others to speculate

and trade on the venture without being directly involved the business (i.e., securitization) (Rupprecht, 2016, p. 33). According to Rupprecht (2016),

African bodies were rendered through legally binding documentary practices that converted each one into an exchangeable unit. The numbers and columns of modern accountancy captured life and scaled it into credits and debits. Market calculations, abstraction, measurements of suffering and rubrics of equivalence all commuted life into mere matter. The merchants also calibrated life and death into a mathematical equation when they took out insurance policies to cover their voyages. (p. 34)

To study decisions to rescue, or not to, rescue “other” people, I theorize spatial and temporal formations through a dialectical framework that views political, and economic configurations as circulatory and fluid ‘states’ of being and knowing (Harvey, 2010, p. 11; Foucault, 2007, p. 65). The purpose of this section is to position my analysis within geography literature that outlines the political and economic dialectics of governing the movement of people and commodities at sea. To this end, considering geopolitics and geoeconomics as dialectically entangled illuminates how they are “more than just discursive frameworks for diplomatic and military strategy” (Sparke, 2018, p. 485). Literature that describes the emergence of studies focused on geoeconomics exhibits the significance of a dialectical framework that captures the interplay of political and economic interests. The first part of this section provides a brief introduction to the concept of geoeconomics which illuminates paradoxical approaches to the movement and security of people, and in the second part of this section I draw on scholarship that describes the resilience of the global supply chain.

By now the idea that economic integration priorities have precipitated the spread of the borderless, or flat world business ideal, and its accompanying development strategies and

programs is well established: capital flows while labour is fixed. This geostrategic plan has certainly benefited business interests and supported the emergence of transnational capitalist corporations, as well as local-scale administrative consequences designed to increase travel, investment, and communication across borders. At the same time, the geostrategic discourse of a flat, borderless world was just as clearly a major misrepresentation: the massive global population of migrants and refugees in protracted political limbo evidence the migration controls that contain their movements. While borderless world geoeconomic discourse clearly represents capitalist integration interests, the context in which these interests play/ed out was/is equally shaped by contingent and ongoing “geopolitical preoccupations with enemies, insecurities, borders and belonging” (Sparke, 2018, p. 33). My research examines how migrants that disrupt the supply chain are characterized and managed by commercial actors with both humanitarian, security and economic imperatives.

‘Geoeconomics’, ‘geo-economy’, and the ‘geoeconomic social’ are terms that, according to Sparke (2018), are part of “a confusing constellation of concepts about how capitalist economic imperatives and international relations (IR) shape one another, and how the geography of capitalism simultaneously constructs and manages these reciprocal relations” (p. 484). For Sparke (2018), a “useful way of navigating through these confusions is to theorize the relationship between geopolitics and geoeconomics in terms of cogenerational dialectics” (p. 484). Sparke’s (2018) analysis suggests, “the ‘external’ dialectic of geopolitics and geoeconomics is best understood as an overdetermined expression of the ‘internal’ uneven development dialectic in capitalism between spatial fixity and spatial expansion” (p. 485). In my study, I suggest the cargo ship is an extension of spatial expansion while the difficulty with which migrant boats struggle

through the same fluid environments is a testament to the spatial fixity that afflicts their locomotion.

A number of geographers have described geoeconomics as a successor regime to 20th-century geopolitics. For example, Cowen and Smith (2009) argued that the “geopolitical social” is being overtaken by geoeconomics in the era of market-led globalization. However, instead of marking geoeconomics as successor regime to geopolitics Sparke (2018) argues that “a dialectical approach to such entanglement is critical [...] because it also offers a way of avoiding the pitfall of geographically imagining and partitioning geopolitics and geoeconomics as distinct guides for statecraft appropriate to different world regions” (p. 487). Besides, describing them as distinct historically or strategically, also often leads to geoeconomics and geopolitics being mapped onto to separate global regions geographically (Sparke, 2018, p. 487). I agree with Sparke and contend that an examination of the commercial rescue of migrants at sea represents a geography where the mixing of geopolitical and geoeconomic interests is on full display.

According to Sparke (2018) “geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses are entangled because they are geostrategic relays of the underlying tension between spatial fixity and spatial expansion at the heart of capitalist uneven development” (p. 34). He suggests that these two kinds of geostrategic discourse produce a “a double vision that maps the divergent economic imperatives towards territorial fixing and geographical expansion in a distortive way that repeatedly divides the world into distinct zones” (Sparke, 2018, p. 34). Instead of focusing on global connections, distinct zones of geopolitical conflict are contrasted with spaces of geoeconomic peace (Sparke, 2018, p. 34). Sparke (2018) argues that this double vision can be remedied through “tracing how territorial struggles reflect historical–geographical processes of uneven development, we can instead correct for the distortion and better understand the connections” (p. 35). Understanding the

limits of geostrategic vision helps illustrate the blind spots in “dualistic world order maps of the type that divide a Lockean geoeconomic core off from a Hobbesian geopolitical periphery” (Sparke, 2018, p.35). From this analysis Sparke identifies two critical Marxist and feminist strategies that offer “more materialist and embodied insights, respectively: the first concerns how the limits to capital relayed through the dialectics of geopolitics and geoeconomics lead to the production of territory”, and the second describes how “associated hopes and fears are experienced and negotiated at a personal level both in regions that are being re-territorialised and by global actors seeking to shape strategy” (Sparke, 2018, p. 35). In maritime geography the dialectics of geopolitics and geoeconomics is expressed in the orchestration and governance of the circulation of the goods that fuel the global economy, and the study of commercial ships rescuing migrants provides insight into how the terrestrial political economy shapes the human geography aboard the vessels involved in rescue.

To help conceptualize people on the move across the Mediterranean I rely on scholarship that theorizes their role in the global political economy. This study engages with research participants who navigate maritime shipping routes that intersect with the maritime movements of migrants. A racially informed conceptualization of migration and security describes how the majority of the world’s migrants are classified as uninsurable or maladaptive migrants that can be found in protracted refugee environments, informal settlements. A securitization framework works to unravel how the risks posed by migrants on the Mediterranean are considered unquantifiable by people in a position to rescue them. The logic of biopolitics dictates that uncontrolled immigration of a non-insured people threatens the welfare of society. Duffield (2006) argues that the fears of mass society’s insured population revolve around cultural difference and access to “finite” education, employment, financial, housing and welfare, state resources (p. 72). To support his

argument, he suggests that the move from a biological to sociocultural racism is made possible through the technologies of international development: “the biopolitical incorporation of a species-life that, lacking the insurance-based safety-nets of welfare regimes of mass society, is cast as self-reliant; in other words, ‘non-insured’” (Duffield, 2006, p. 70). For Duffield (2006), juxtaposing the resilience building proclivities of the international development industry with the welfare and insurance-based approaches to managing risks in neoliberal market geographies defines contemporary sociocultural racism. Moreover, Duffield’s (2006) analysis highlights how the figure of the refugee or uninsured migrant is the embodiment of “the collapse of the national/international divide and the exposure of the fragile infrastructures and livelihood systems of mass society to the threat represented by the free movement of the world’s non-insured people” (p. 71). My analysis traces these same sentiments in the narratives of seafarers who come up against migrants in distress.

The maritime border is the threshold through which the majority of the world’s goods must pass. For example, 95% of global trade move in more than 11 million containers through the world’s ports. Cowen (2010) documents how the field of logistics is necessary to secure supply, but “it also challenges the political and spatial logics of geopolitical territoriality” (p. 601). Her Foucauldian conceptualization of risks to security as not just about demarcating national territories, but as threats to circulation/logistical supply chains provides my study with a conceptual background that is well suited to analyses of state/merchant/marine relationships and their significance to the continuation of current constellations of power (Cowen, 2014). The juxtaposition between the logistics that lubricate the movement of commodities and the political and economic processes that frustrate the journeys of precarious migrants and the forcibly displaced is the defining feature of the contemporary geoeconomic landscape. Cowen (2010)

argues alongside companies like Walmart, that the cost of a territorial model of national security “could be crippling in the ports” (p. 3). Her argument reminds us that the reorganization of production on a global scale is made possible by the speed at which cargo moves across supply chains and through the critical nodes of ports: “without the rapid and reliable movement of stuff through space—from factories in China to U.S. big box stores, for instance—cheap labor in the global South cannot be ‘efficiently’ exploited” (p. 3). In Cowen’s (2014) book *The Deadly Life of Logistics* she observes that the circulatory needs of global supply chains are the *sine qua non* of a living global marketplace and traces a variety of the often violent and deadly implications that result from protection and maintenance of its processes. My analysis of commercial insurance policy and the rescue of migrants on the Mediterranean explores these processes.

According to Cowen (2010), the maritime border is a particularly revealing site of conflict between the competing projects of tight borders and global flows. Cowen (2014) observes that the naturalization of trade flows, also cast disruptions—acts of piracy, indigenous blockades, and labour actions—as threats to life itself (p. 15). This critical approach helps describe the way humanitarian organizations and contemporary scholarship portray “disruptions” to the flows of peoples and goods as phenomenon that must be “anticipated” and how commercial, political, and biological “survivals” figure “as matters of resilience” (Cowen, 2014, p. 206). Moreover, Cowen’s work builds on Duffield’s insurance-based analysis through an examination of the way commercial and political interests demnify migrants politically, financially, and criminally. Duffield’s work (2007) traces contemporary biopolitical formations that function to divide the world between insured and uninsured (p. 2). For Duffield (2006) “racism, migration, and development are interconnected on a planetary scale” (p. 71). He traces this connection though an immigration control system that provoked a “compensating race relation industry” to the emergence of the

modern aid industry (Duffield, 2006, p. 73). His argument is based on the idea that immigration control, national cohesion, and international development are all part of the same security agenda, motivated by the genuine fears of “free society” (p. 72).

Conclusion

Drawing again on El Akkad’s (2021) fictional portrayal of people navigating the Mediterranean by boat, the conversation begins with one passenger pointing at the smuggler.

Passenger: “That’s the only thing that matters to these people, money, money, money” (p. 164).

Smuggler: “You keep mistaking this for charity... We live under the invisible hand, not the invisible foot. This is a transaction, a business arrangement”

Passenger: “Bullshit, you promised a cruise ship, you promised meals. Why is it so hard for you to admit it: you lied to us.”

Smuggler: “You lied to yourself, did you really think there’d be a goddamn cruise ship waiting for you, because you saw it in the picture? Did you really think we’d feed you lobster for dinner every night? Brother, by the time we started lying to you, you’d already believed it.”

Passenger: “You’re a thief, dress it up however you want, but you’re just another black-market hustler”

Smuggler: That’s exactly what I am, and when you finally get over there to the promised land, and you see how those dignified, civilized Westerners treat you – when you find out what they expect of you is to live your whole life like a dog under their dinner table – I’ll wait for you to come find me and apologize. Brother you think the black market is bad? Brother, wait until you see the white market.” (El Akkad, 2021, p. 162-163)

Similar to this conversation between smuggler and passenger, the literature that makes up this chapter wrestled with the humanitarian responsibility to rescue people and the governmentalizing and racial logic of border externalization and supply chain security. Securitization is the quintessential geography of whiteness defined by a never-ending governmentalizing tendency fixated on identifying and controlling future risks. The history of maritime insurance captures the origins of securitization and ties it to attempts to protect merchants from the inherent desire of slaves to be free; today contemporary P & I clubs are struggling to protect their financial interests from this same risk. This seemingly neoliberal configuration has deep roots in the racist origins of international trade and the production of surplus populations.

My analysis of research that constructs a geography of ships provides a framework for how commercial ships are vessels that encapsulate the risks that define contemporary securitization practices, both political and economic. Engaging with research that constructs a geography of ships helped to prepare me for a study that relied heavily on an understanding of how different types of vessels respond to maritime rescue, and how these vessels represent and are governed by a matrix of social, political policy and procedures as well as economic imperatives. Moreover, leading with a conceptualization of ships that recognizes their analytical value as representations of contemporary geopolitical formations provides a thread that weaves through existing scholarship. First, I formed a human geography of migrant boats and commercial ships. In my view, the work of Spivak (1999) and Razack (2007) help to abstract from the physical observations that describe commercial ships and migrant boats and position these respective vessels in contemporary geopolitical space. In addition, their work forced me to contemplate my own positionality as a researcher, a process which is incomplete and ongoing. Second, I explored how the criminalization of rescue extends the political geography of maritime securitization and is part of broader efforts

to externalize migration. Finally, I extended geography literature that outlines the interplay of geopolitical and geoeconomic configurations to lay the groundwork for an analysis that highlights the political and economic dialectics of governing the movement of people and commodities at sea. Together the literature in this review provides a theoretical and conceptual framework for my study of commercial maritime rescue.

Chapter Three:
**Charting the Course: Conceptualizing a Human Geography of Rescue Risks on the
Mediterranean**

The military application of geographic information systems (GIS) and the automatic information system (AIS) to security on the Mediterranean has led researchers to label the Mediterranean as “the most surveilled place on earth” (Heller, Pezzani & Studio, 2012, p. 48). AIS was originally developed for collision avoidance, but it can also be used to navigate transport that around areas where migrant vessels are commonly found in distress. My research applies information produced by border security surveillance technology to examine instances where migrants encounter commercial vessels. I investigate claims where these vessels have been accused of refusing assistance to migrants. This research project was first inspired by my involvement with an international roundtable on child maritime piracy held at Canadian Forces Base (CFB Halifax) in 2013. Attended by some 20 naval officers, military lawyers, private security operators, maritime lawyers, civilian merchants and humanitarian industry professionals, the roundtable was geared towards building relationships across military, humanitarian, and commercial enterprises. My research aims to bridge important gaps between these different interests and groups and analyze “standard-operating procedures” (SOPs) and rules of engagement (on the Mediterranean specifically), with cooperation from research participants. I maintained contact with participants from the roundtable in Halifax; one of them was based in London, England, and had contacts with maritime organizations like the International Federation of Shipmasters, the International Maritime Organization, and the International Chamber of Shipping, all based in London. Through snowball sampling I added more study research participants who represented other key organizations in maritime commerce, labour, and security.

In my approach I studied up (Pred & Watts, 1992; Hyndman, 2000), which is to say I did not interview migrants who made voyages across the Mediterranean but spoke instead to captains of ships involved in ongoing shipping networks, and the maritime professionals who ran them. I studied the geographies of the ships, their crews and decisions when encountering migrants in distress. Those interviewed held key positions of authority in the industry, allowing me to elicit detailed responses to my questions about rescue at sea. To immerse myself in these networks of seafarers and operators in the shipping industry, in particular those involved in rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean, I participated in established international conferences on European border security and maritime rescue in Europe and used them to recruit participants for semi-structured interviews from major maritime organizations. My aim in participating in these conferences and in organizing these interviews was to learn about how seafarers and shipping companies negotiate both the physical, political, and economic risks that maritime rescues involve.

The aim of this chapter is to outline a novel methodological approach to understanding rescue at sea through: a) freedom of information requests (FOIs) to the European Border and Security Agency (Frontex); and b) the automatic identification system (AIS), publicly available vessel information provided on-line by marinetraffic.com. The methods that make up my study were designed to create an approach that yields new knowledge about how seafarers and shipping companies articulate the risks involved with rescuing migrants. My research approach involves making freedom of information requests and tracing vessels involved with rescues using ship tracking software that uses the automatic identification system to provide a myriad of both public and private vessel data. In this chapter, I first describe other requests that were made to the European Coast Guard and Border Agency (Frontex) to help explain how and what I learned about different maritime migration routes across the Mediterranean to Europe. To provide context for

my analysis I also document key incidents that brought international attention to migration across the Mediterranean and commercial rescue in the Central Mediterranean specifically. Then, in the second section, I illustrate how I began planning and recruiting research participants through networks developed by attending established maritime conferences on border security and maritime rescue. Next, in the third section, I analyze nine separate freedom of information requests I made to Frontex between December 2017 and September 2019. These requests yielded information on 359 specific incidents involving migrants and commercial ships that took place in the Central Mediterranean. Finally, using data from the information requests I identify specific commercial vessels that have participated in maritime rescues involving migrants with free on-line ship mapping software provided by marinetraffic.com. This approach highlights the geography of maritime rescue and provides both methodological insights and findings into how the economics of these encounters at sea is tied to the logistics of the supply chain when it involves commercial ships rescuing migrants in distress.

Context

While my analysis relies on existing web-based data and scholarship that covers humanitarian and geopolitical risks, my contribution is unique in that it develops a new approach to analyzing the geographies of migrant rescue. I call this the geoeconomics of rescue by merchant ships. A geoeconomic framework builds on political economy but is an entanglement of political and economic geographies (Sparke, 2007; Sparke, 2018b). My approach examines maritime rescues involving commercial ships and migrants in the Mediterranean through a geoeconomic lens. I argue for an approach that includes commercial ships in the role of rescue workers, seafarers and particularly ship captains. This approach provides an opportunity to engage those with knowledge of how rescues are coordinated and the risks they involve.

The annual Frontex risk analysis reports were instrumental in providing a window into how the EU “manufactures” key migration figures (Frontex, 2015; Frontex, 2016; Frontex, 2017). Moreover, the massive amount of information produced by Frontex required that I follow and narrow my analysis to specific routes and timeframes to manage my freedom of information requests. The FOI requests were crafted from information gathered through web-based research in Frontex risk analysis reports and produced data about rescues/interdictions at sea that documented the interactions between commercial ships and migrant boats. The two maps (see Figures 2 and 3) are from Frontex’s 2015 and 2016 risk analysis reports. They illustrate Frontex’s depiction of different maritime routes to Europe and capture the changes in migration numbers from 2015 to 2016. I reference these maps to provide a background for critical analyses of the geopolitical and geoeconomic arrangements that govern maritime rescue. In this way my work builds on existing research that takes a critical approach to the cartographic representation of migration across the Mediterranean by security organizations like the European Border Security Organization, Frontex (Cobarrubias, 2019; Casas-Cortes, et al., 2017; van Houtum, & Bueno Lacy 2020). My analysis disaggregates Frontex risk analysis data to provide a more detailed understanding of how shifting approaches to migration on the Mediterranean impacts the movement of and risks for migrants.

As foregrounded in chapter One, there were two main incidents on the Mediterranean that captured international headlines and served to further focus my attention on commercial rescue and particularly the coordination of rescue on the Central Mediterranean. The first was the death of three-year-old Alan Kurdi along the eastern route to Greece in September 2015, and the second was the *King Jacob* incident in April 2015 that reportedly claimed the lives of more than 800 people along the central route to Italy (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 1). Both tragedies transpired

after I had developed my research interest in commercial rescue on the Mediterranean. Also, these incidents serve as a reminder that the situation and interactions on the Mediterranean are ongoing.

More than seven years have passed since the death of Alan Kurdi, as a reminder of the ebb and flow of humanitarian sentiment, we can turn to recent events where the humanitarian rescue vessel that carries his name has been impounded more than once by Italian authorities (Sanderson, 2020). While the death of Alan Kurdi and the *King Jacob* incident incidents garnered international headlines, my focus on commercial ships rescuing migrants in the Central Mediterranean was further sharpened when, in 2017, the figures on crossings and deaths came out for the previous year (2016), reporting a massive drop in the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe from over one million in 2015 to under 400,000 in 2016 (Frontex 2015; Frontex 2016), combined with an increase in deaths from 3,771 in 2015, to 5,011 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). The two maps capture these trends. How did the role of commercial ships change during this time?

Inventing a Maritime Method to Trace Migrant Rescues at Sea

At the research design stage, data on migration and migrants on the Mediterranean from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) helped to identify and describe populations involved with rescue on the Mediterranean. The plethora of data being produced about Mediterranean migration to Europe includes, but is not limited to, recording numbers of crossings, mapping routes, tracking nationalities, and recording deaths and rescues. From the outset of my study, I immersed myself in industry data to help understand how commercial ships were involved with rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean.

Preliminary research at two major conferences helped contextualize and launch my research. These conferences provided access to a large network of professionals with experience

in maritime rescue and highlighted the way migration and rescue on the Mediterranean are portrayed as both a threat to border security and humanitarian crisis. In addition to providing access to people with experience and expertise in maritime rescue the conferences afforded me the opportunity to witness how these people and organizations interact and the areas of rescue on which they were focused. These conferences of maritime professionals took place in a highly contested and socially structured space.

The first conference was the tenth *Border Security: Enhancing Border Security through Technological Innovation and Procurement* conference, attended by senior military and border control experts from around the world. An event planning company, SMi Group, organized this 2017 Border Security conference in Rome, Italy. The purpose of the conference was to explore how political issues like “increasing migration on the Mediterranean and cross-border terrorism” can be addressed with “technological solutions” (SMi Group, 2017). Specifically, the conference was an opportunity for senior military decision makers to meet and network with companies that are proffering biometric and surveillance technology products. The Border Security conference provided insights into the ways European states are collaborating with the business sector to manage the “migrant crisis” through enhanced border security technologies. Being in Italy, border security and migration on the Mediterranean were top of mind and a feature topic at the conference.² The approach to migration at the border security conference and served as a platform

² The SMi group published the list of speakers online; there were 19: 1) Former Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, Borders & Immigration UK; 2) Deputy Head, 3rd Dept, Plans, Operations & Maritime Strategy Italian Navy; 3) Commander of the Provincial Military Command of Carinthia, Austrian Armed Forces; 4) Chief of Staff - Air Naval Operative Command Guardia di Finanza, Guardia di Finanza; 5) Director of Enforcement, Finnish Customs; 6) Commander of the Provincial Military Command of Carinthia, Austrian Armed Forces; 7) Chief Biometrics Strategy/Biometrics Division, US Citizenship And Immigration Services; 8) Director of the Identity Capabilities Management Division, ICMD, Department of Homeland Security; 9) Project Lead, EU 'PROTECT' Project; 10) Biometrics Branch Chief, Naval Criminal Investigative Service; 11) Head of Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre EMSC, Europol; 12) Project Manager Landside Security and Border Controls, Aeroports De Paris; 13) Head of the API-PNR Project, French Customs; 14) Research and Development Officer, EU-Lisa; 15) Unit for Coordination, Interior Ministry Czech Republic; 16) Executive Director, European Maritime Safety Agency; 17) Head

for security organizations to discuss new and existing methods for policing borders. According to the SMi group the Border Security conference provided an opportunity to “hear from military and border control experts on how they are effectively managing borders across Europe and the rest of the World in response to the migrant crisis as well as to the threat of cross-border terrorism” (2018). Topics at the conference included enhancing surveillance and detection strategies, effectively utilizing manned and unmanned [sic] vehicles, biometric technology and exploring the threats against land, sea, and air borders. Military speakers, border control and customs officials, solution providers, and technological experts addressed the topics.

The second conference was the fourth *International Maritime Mass Rescue Conference*, with participants who were search and rescue (SAR) practitioners from all over the world—140 delegates from 25 countries. The IMRF was established in 1924, and has 103 member organisations in 49 countries, it provides maritime rescue information and facilitates cooperation across a variety of maritime sectors.³ The IMRF provided valuable insights into the ways seafarers respond to mass rescues involving migrants. The International Maritime Mass Rescue Conference was run by the IMRF and hosted by the Swedish Sea Rescue Society (SSRS). This interactive conference provided opportunities to discuss the challenges of maritime mass rescue operations through case studies of real events and a mass rescue simulation exercise. The conference was

of Operations Division, EU Satellite Centre; 18) Technical Cooperation and Development Specialist, International Organization for Migration (IOM); and 19) Director, Program on Civil Security, George C Marshall Center for European Security Studies (SMi Group, 2017).

³ The conference presenters included, the President of World Maritime University; the Director-General of China Rescue and Salvage; the Head of the Maritime Human Factors Research Unit at Chalmers University of Technology; the Operational Lifeboat Inspector for the Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Institution; a Master Mariner with the German Maritime SAR Service; a Master Mariner with the Swedish Rescue Society, a Commodore with the Royal Navy, United Kingdom; Training and Project Coordinator with the Swedish Sea Rescue Society; the Passenger Vessel Safety & Mass Rescue Operations Specialist for the United States Coast Guard; the Chief of Staff for China Rescue and Salvage; Superintendent of Maritime Search and Rescue in the Canadian Coast Guard; the Former Head of Search and Rescue Operations, U.K; the Manager of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat; Master Mariner and Project Manager for the Mixed Migrant Safety Project; Master Mariner and Operations Director for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution; and a Master Mariner and Maritime Safety Investigator for the Finnish Lifeboat Institution (IMRF, 2018).

instrumental in providing details on how maritime rescues are coordinated and in explaining a variety of challenges that frustrate the development and application of standard operating procedures. I met a variety of ship masters and maritime rescue professionals at the conference; it helped reinforce the significance of commercial ships to ongoing maritime rescue efforts, not just in the Central Mediterranean.

Study Population and Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Mukherjee (2017) the myriad, subject positions of various participants involved in a research project are “impossible to comprehend”, yet, she maintains that conceptualizing positionality is a necessary, “relational and unstable process” (p. 296). Scholars have defined positionality as a combination of identifiers including but not limited to nationality, sexuality, gender, race and other identifiers, as well as spatial contexts that impact research design, interpretation and dissemination (Mullings, 1997; Mukherejee, 2017). The key informants in my study are comprised, overwhelmingly, of white men; only three of my 24 interviewees were women. By my non-scientific estimation, my research sample is largely representative of the conference goers from key maritime organizations who attended the conference. Interviewing participants in positions of power in an industry dominated by men imposes analytical constraints that reflect different researcher/subject dynamics. Haraway’s (2003) analysis of situated knowledge influenced how I understood my own position as a white man researching other white men who might rescue racialized migrants in the course of their professional roles as captains and shipmasters. My privileged position was mediated through my interactions with participants who were immersed in the highly militarized, hierarchical, and commercial world of seafaring. Seafarers were quick to point out my inability to appreciate the lived experience of seafaring and in particular the chaos involved in performing a maritime rescue. Shipmasters, in particular, are people who occupy positions of authority and my interactions and interviews with them were

largely considered an opportunity for me to learn about their expertise in the maritime world. While my role as a researcher impacted my access to shipmasters and seafarers my lack of experience as a shipmaster, seafarer, or migrant, challenged any notion that I was an expert on the topic of study: the commercial maritime rescue of migrants.

Feminist geographers have long challenged claims of objectivity and the role of the researcher as expert (McDowell, 1992; England, 1994; Katz, 1994; Rose, 1997; Kobayashi, 2003) and have worked at “establishing that they are always situated within overlapping networks of power and privilege” (Mukherjee, 2017, p. 292). A feminist geography of commercial rescue, then, examines these overlapping networks of power relations in the context of interwoven sociocultural, national, and international infrastructures that condition seafarers involved in the rescue of migrants. Although my research excludes interviews with migrants themselves, it does engage with common analytical threads of migration, like security, gender, and nationality albeit with a relatively privileged group of mostly white seafarers. I would argue that understanding and critically analyzing people in positions of power provides insights into the industries, state apparatuses, and organizations that organize and execute shipping and rescues at sea. It provides different and important insights to complement the growing body of literature that focuses on (re)producing migrant voices.

Most of my 24 interviews were conducted in person at the respective offices of seafarers, insurance and indemnity representatives, and search and rescue personnel, in London, England and different port cities in Italy. When a face-to-face interview was not possible interviews took place online using Skype. All of the study participants had an interest in maritime rescue. The research strategy of purposefully selecting study participants that are experienced with a given research topic is well established (Palinkas, et al., 2015). This method of “purposeful sampling” is

common in qualitative research for identifying a depth of information while compensating for financial and time constraints (Palinkas, et al., 2015; Patton 2002). Furthermore, researchers have documented the importance of “availability, the willingness to participate, and the ability to effectively communicate experiences and opinions in a reflective manner as significant aspects of research design” (Bernard, 2002). Given that this research project was developed through interaction with military, legal, and humanitarian professionals—with experience in rescue at sea—there was a reasonable expectation that participants had a firm background in the research area.

Participants were initially selected based on their specialty knowledge of, and/or experience with, maritime rescue. All of the participants were promised anonymity, and therefore their names and the companies they work for will not be mentioned. Some study participants, particularly the captains, held organizational positions in addition to their titles as captains. In many cases it was possible to quote an on-line source of organizational information to substantiate or reference a particular point. Interview subjects, their positions, their organizations, and a description of their organizations (where possible) are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Position	Organization	Description
Int. 1	Man	Senior Marine Adviser	International Chamber of Shipping	World's principal shipping organisation, representing 80% of world's merchant tonnage, through membership by national shipowners' associations
Int. 2	Man	Director of Campaigns & Communications	Nautilus Maritime Trade Union	Trade union and professional organization serving more than 22,000 maritime professionals
Int. 3	Man	Senior Secretary	Nautilus Maritime Trade Union	
Int. 4	Woman	Representative	International Group	International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs; the thirteen principal underwriting associations which comprise the International Group, between them provide liability cover (protection and

				indemnity) for approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage
Int. 5	Man	Captain/ Portmaster	Hutchison Ports	Hutchison Port Holdings Limited (HPH) private holding company comprised 48 port operations throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Australasia
Int. 6	Man	Captain/ Harbour Master	ABP East Anglia	Associated British Ports Holdings Ltd owns and operates 21 ports in the
				United Kingdom, managing around 25% of the UK's sea-borne trade
Int. 7	Man	Port Chaplain	Seafarers Centre	Charity Organization
Int. 8	Man	SAR Boat Pilot/Maritime Consultant	MSF	International humanitarian NGO
Int. 9	Man	Captain/ Assistant Secretary General	International Federation of Shipmasters	The Federation is formed of around 11,000 Shipmasters from sixty countries either through their
Int. 10	Man	Commodore/ Assistant Secretary General	International Federation of Shipmasters	National Associations or as Individual Members
Int. 11	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 12	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 13	Man	Seafarer	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 14	Man	Academic	Forensic Architecture	Research Agency
Int. 15	Man	Lieutenant	Italian Coast Guard	Part of the Italian Navy under the control of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport; head office
Int. 16	Man	N/A	Italian Coast Guard	in Rome where it manages the MRCC
Int. 17	Man	Captain/ Secretary General	InterManager	The only international trade association for the ship management industry; collectively members are involved in the management of more than 5,000 ships and responsible for in excess of 250,000 seafarers
Int. 18	Man	Royal Marines Officer / Chief Executive Officer	SAMI (Security Association for the Maritime Industry)	NGO with over 180 Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) from more than 35 countries as members
Int. 19	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 20	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company

Int. 21	Man	Lawyer	Human Rights at Sea	Charitable Incorporated Organisation for the benefit of the international community for matters concerning engagement with human rights issues in the maritime environment
Int. 22	Woman	Claims Executive	N/A	P&I Club
Int. 23	Woman	Research Coordinator	International Maritime Organization	Specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating shipping
Int. 24	Man	Representative	International Organization for Migration	Intergovernmental organization providing services and advice concerning migration to governments

McDowell (2010) explains that the goal of interviews is “to explore and understand actions within specific settings, to examine human relationships and discover as much as possible about why people feel or act in the ways they do” (p. 157). Most importantly, McDowell, (2010) stresses that “interviewing is an *interpretative* methodology” (p. 158); with this in mind these interviews were structured with an initial set of questions followed by a series of open-ended questions designed to probe meanings and emotions. This approach anticipated and welcomed the value of participants’ responses, and their potential for directing the research in ways that were not part of the initial design. While the interviews make up a large portion of the data for this study, overall, the development and interpretation of these encounters is contextualized through a variety of other material, including textual analysis of human rights and international law at sea, commercial shipping and insurance policy, newspaper articles, scholarly journals, film, conference proceedings, freedom of information requests and AIS data.

Triangulation is a process to assess validity, and is a common practice in social science research. According to Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) triangulation is used in mixed methods research in a variety of ways, and their review suggests “triangulation praxis” is surrounded by a range of issues and controversies (p. 75). The debates surrounding what constitutes triangulation

helped to shape the approach in this study. For example, my research process does not support the common idea that qualitative methods are for discovery and quantitative methods are for testing causal relationships. While efforts to articulate the role of triangulation in determining causation and developing methods for more comprehensive explanatory frameworks are ongoing (Fielding, 2012; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012), similar to other mixed method designs this study uses triangulation as way to put quantitative and qualitative data into dialogue with each other.

The process of using freedom of information requests to locate the specific ships involved in a given rescue through AIS data serves to enhance the depth of research in this study. According to Fielding (2012) research, that combines data from various technological sources—including real-time visual data available from geographical information systems, and qualitative interview data—can contribute to informed decision making in a variety of contexts. At sea AIS data are critical for determining what ships are in the best position to render assistance.

Freedom of Information Requests to the Coast Guard and European Border Agency (Frontex)

The operational rescue zone after *Mare Nostrum* shrank when the EU-funded Frontex agency took over in 2015; merchant ships operating in the Mediterranean stepped in to fill the gap. According to the Italian Coast Guard when *Mare Nostrum* was terminated, the commercial shipping industry was responsible for the rescue of 11, 954 people from Jan to May 2015, making it the primary actor conducting rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 38). In 2015, reports from various sources began to circulate allegations that commercial ships were deliberately avoiding migrant-heavy areas (Amnesty International, 2015; UNHCR, 2015), refusing to reveal their position (Amnesty International, 2015; UNHCR, 2015), or bypassing migrant vessels in distress (Basaran, 2015). Frontex records details about maritime rescues involving migrants and publishes them in annual risk analysis reports; the maps and figures

from these reports and information released by the border agency in response to previously filed freedom of information requests helped form the basis of my own FOI requests. My innovative research approach allows one to trace vessel information contained within freedom of information (FOI) requests and connect it to specific ships involved in a rescue based on available AIS data.

Information concerning the European Border Security and Coast Guard Agency's (Frontex) operations in the Mediterranean Sea is meant to be in the public domain. Obtaining the information, however, is a lengthy process that demands researchers familiarize themselves with key variables and vernacular employed by Frontex. I was introduced to the process of making freedom of information requests to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency through another PhD student, Kira Williams (2018), who was studying how search and rescue networks were being used to interdict migrants in Central Mediterranean. The FOI requests that produced important data about rescues involving commercial ships required knowledge of the specific operation—*Triton*— and specific incident numbers that corresponded to these maritime interdictions. The process of obtaining information is limited by both the organizational efforts of Europe's border agency to protect national security and by the structure and categories that classify what is ultimately recorded. For example, without background knowledge of operations and particular categories of rescue information researchers would be unaware of what is available. However, the study and representation of these categories can work to legitimize them as established boundaries of analysis. Nevertheless, I made 9 separate freedom of information (FOI) requests to Frontex between December 2017 and September 2019 that resulted in the release of data linked to commercial rescues that took place during JO *Triton*. My requests yielded information on 359 specific incidents involving migrants and commercial ships. The documents released by Frontex reported on specific incidents involving migrants in the Central Mediterranean during operation

Triton.

My first request, in 2017, for all serious incident reports filed during operation *Triton* was determined by Frontex to be too broad and they asked that the scope of the original request be narrowed. The corresponding narrowed version asked for only those serious incident reports involving commercial/merchant and vessels/ships. Again, Frontex determined that this would also yield an extensive data set, and they again requested that the scope of the request be narrowed in scope. These initial requests ultimately produced 13 serious incident reports involving commercial ships. See Appendix D (Figures 7 and 8) for two examples of these reports and the variables they included.

The initial release of serious incident reports from Frontex provided details on when and where a rescue took place, and information about the number of migrants rescued, and the country from which their boat had departed. There were key variables contained in these reports that pertained to the role of commercial vessels in the reported incident: “detected by” and “intercepted by” were two of particular interest for my study. Also, these serious incident reports included a “Fact of the case” section, at the end, which provided a summary of the rescue and often mentioned the role of the commercial vessel. Nevertheless, because I knew there were far more than the 13 serious incident reports than were released, I needed to develop a way to facilitate the release of more incident reports. The Press Office for Frontex later clarified that it drew a distinction between serious incidents and incidents (SRIs) and “incidents”:

A Serious Incident is an event or occurrence, natural or caused by human action, which may affect, or be relevant to a particular Frontex activity, the safety and security of participants in Frontex activities, the Agency’s mission and reputation, or any combination thereof. Serious Incidents also include situations of possible violations of European Union (EU) or international law, in particular related to Fundamental Rights (FR) and international protection obligations. Finally, Serious incidents include any violation of the Frontex Code of Conduct (CoC) applicable to all persons participating in Frontex operational activities and the Code of Conduct (CoC) for Joint Return Operations coordinated by Frontex. (Frontex, September 24, 2018)

“Incidents” on the other hand “refer to the general concept of a case/situation which (according to the operational plan of the Joint Operation) requires a specific action by the participating authorities” (Frontex, September 24, 2018). Previous FOI requests pertaining to operation *Triton* had produced a data set on a variety of variables including information that made it possible to identify incidents involving commercial ships: specifically, “detected by” and “intercepted by”.

With reference to the data released in a previous freedom of information (FOI) request for “Boat interception data under operation *Triton*, all available years” on Oct 11, 2017, I was able to determine that, of the 2,779 recorded/released incidents, 359 identified the involvement of commercial/merchant ships. I was able to determine this by filtering the Excel file through the “detected by” and “intercepted by” variables. Therefore, it seemed odd that Frontex only released 13 special incident reports (SRI’s). On observation, it appeared that these incident reports were Excel files published and released as Pdf documents, this contrasted from the previously released (13) serious incident (SRI) reports which had their own corresponding identification number and were not published versions of Excel files. Despite these murky, bureaucratic, definitional ambiguities, the newly released Pdf files from Frontex included similar information to the original Excel documents that were released on October 11, 2017. After my initial requests produced limited results, I amended my strategy and drew from the review of other FOI requests

My point in this section is to highlight the challenges involved in navigating the institutional bureaucracy that manages the information concerning migrant rescue incidents in the Central Mediterranean and to document a process that allows one to navigate various data sources, none of which is complete. I employed the recorded incident number that I retrieved from the original release of information on Oct 11, 2017, to make a new series of requests for serious incident reports under operation *Triton* involving commercial ships. As my initial requests were

denied as they were too broad, I decided to break down my asks for specific years and incident numbers, and filed for each separately, and the corresponding incident numbers accompanied each new request (see Appendix A: Table 3).

Commercial Vessels Involved with Rescuing Migrants during JO *Triton* 2014-2018

The information released by Frontex concerning operation *Triton* was increasingly redacted. After my initial strategy of requesting all information relating to commercial vessels was denied, I benefited from being able to consult previous information released in response to another request from 2017. Up until this point, using the previously released data, I had been able to identify specific incident numbers by filtering data released under the previous FOI request made for “Boat interception data under operation *Triton*, all available years”, on Oct 11, 2017.

Table 3. Timeline of Freedom of Information Requests to Frontex

Date and Title	Request	Response/Release	Detected by a commercial vessel	Intercepted by a commercial vessel	Notes
Sept 02, 2018 A copy of specific serious incident reports from JO Triton 2014	7 Serious Incident Reports	Oct 15, 2018 6 Incident reports involving commercial ships	6	0	Frontex initially reported that there were no Serious Incidents Reports (SIRs) However, Incident Reports were available
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2015	132 Incident Reports	Nov 22, 2018 109 incident reports involving commercial ships	53	111	Frontex took nearly two months to respond, requests now included specific incident numbers and year
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports	115 Incident Reports	Oct 30, 2018 96 incident reports involving commercial ships	76	84	In their Frontex defines Serious Incidents versus

from JO Triton 2016					Incidents: see page of this article
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2017	104 incident Reports	Dec 13, 2018 86 incident reports involving commercial ships	76	76	Frontex asks to address requests submitted on Sept 24 in succession
Oct 8, 2018 Boat Interception Data under Operation Triton from October 11, 2017 to 2018 termination	Boat interception data under operation Triton from October 2017 to the 2018 termination.	Nov 14, 2018 288 incident reports	N/A	N/A	This response included a letter attachment that detailed Frontex decision to exclude key variables from release.
Jan 10, 2019 Data from terminated Operation Triton	Please provide data on variables "type of intercepted by" and "type of detected by" type" for (terminated) Operation Triton incidents from 10/13/2017 (incident report #218101) to 31/01/2018 (incident report #229987).	Feb 1, 2019 0 incident reports released	N/A	N/A	This response included a letter attachment that detailed Frontex refusal to release the requested information. See page of this article (xx).
March 02, 2019 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports for Operation Triton from Oct 2017 to termination	A copy of the following 288 (serious) incident reports for Operation Triton from Oct 2017 to termination: Incident reports for incident numbers:	Sept 04, 2019 Frontex agreed to release 8 batches of 36 incidents the final release was on Sept 04, 2019.	N/A	N/A	Final release of information includes statement of how some parts of the document are expunged and the release includes information on "Disclaimers of non-disclosure.

Notes. For the calendar year 2014 I identified and requested reports on 7 incidents involving commercial ships. In response Frontex released 6 incident reports on October 15, 2018; and suggested that one report was not from 2014 yet that they were nonetheless including it in their release. This meant that only six maritime incident reports that pertained to operation *Triton* were released for 2014. For 2015 data, I identified and requested information on 132

incidents involving commercial ships. In response Frontex released 109 reports on November 22, 2018. According to Frontex there were no reports filed for six of the incidents from 2015, and 17 of the requested incident reports were not related to Joint Operation *Triton*. Nevertheless, like 2014, they still released the 17, unrelated, reports. For 2016, I identified and requested 115 incident reports involving commercial ships. Frontex responded that 19 of the incidents did not have corresponding reports and eventually followed up with the release of 96 incident reports from 2016 on October 30, 2018. This time, the response/release containing 2016 information, did not include any unrelated incident reports. Of the 104 incidents from 2017, Frontex did not have serious incident reports on 18 and so they released 86 reports for 2017 on December 13, 2018 (Appendix A: Table 3).

However, because this previous request was made in 2017—before operation *Triton* was terminated in 2018—I needed to file another request to extend the data set. The data set that was released by Frontex in response to the prior (2017) FOI request included incidents up until October 12, 2017. To complete the data set released in response to the 2017 request for the remainder of operation *Triton*, on October 8, 2018, I requested “Boat Interception Data under Operation *Triton* from October 11, 2017, to 2018 termination.” In response Frontex released 288 incident reports; however, when compared to the information released in 2017, my 2018 request was only granted partial access and was denied data on key variables including those that were of particular interest to my study: “detected by” and “intercepted by”. Nevertheless, I proceeded to follow the same strategy I had employed with the data that covered the incidents prior to October 12, 2017.

Using incident numbers gathered from their previous (partial) release of information on Nov 14, 2018 (see Appendix A: Table 3), on January 10 I specifically asked Frontex to provide data on the missing variables "type of intercepted by" and "type of detected by" type" for (terminated) Operation *Triton*. This is an excerpt from their response to my request:

I regret to inform you that access to the requested documents must be refused...as their disclosure would undermine the protection of public interest as regards public security and severely undermine Frontex’s decision-making process based on the following:

The variables contained in the documents relating to the “type of intercepted by” cannot be released as their release would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member states to curtail criminal activities at external borders and also put the life of migrants in danger. Thus, the disclosure of those variables would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security.

Furthermore, the variables contained in the documents pertain to information that is crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the EU which is used for risk analysis and, in turn, Frontex’s operational decision-making. As risk analysis used by Frontex to conduct its operations is

based on the information at issue, disclosing the variables and the information contained therein would benefit the smuggling and other organized criminal networks, including terrorist organisations, who would change their modus operandi accordingly. Simultaneously, this would diminish the effectiveness of Frontex internal analysis. As no overriding public interests for the release of these documents is ascertainable in the present case, these documents cannot be released. The variables contained in the documents relating to the “type of detected by” contain information regarding the technical equipment deployed in each operational area. Disclosing such information would be tantamount to disclosing the exact type, capabilities and weaknesses of the equipment, as well as their usual position, opening way for abuse. In this light, disclosure of such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security. (European Border and Coast Guard Agency, February 2019)

This refusal is couched in a security rationale that justifies the denial and subsequently provides valuable insight into the way Frontex defines and deals with perceived risk.

Despite Frontex’s initial refusal, on March 02, 2019, I made a final request for “[a] copy of specific (serious) incident reports for Operation *Triton* from Oct 2017 to termination.” In response they agreed to release the requested 288 incident reports in batches of 36. Their release ultimately allowed me to circumvent their original refusal and complete the data set for the entirety of operation *Triton*: although heavily redacted they released information on variables “detected by” and “intercepted by” that they had previously refused to release.

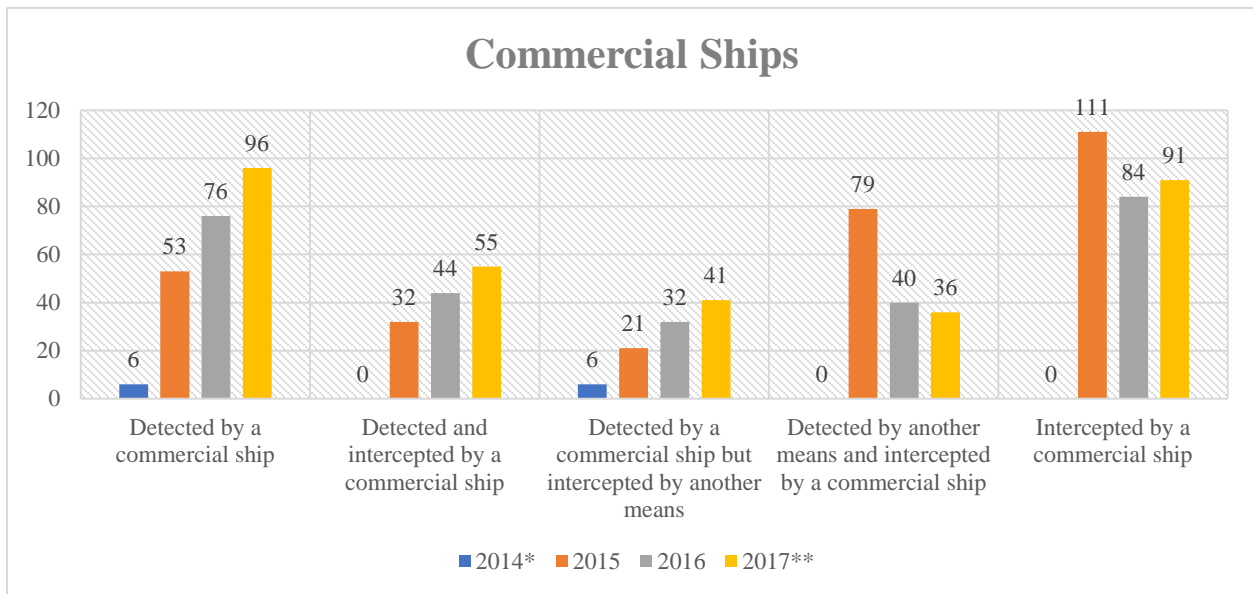
Working with the data provided by Frontex I aimed to investigate two claims made about commercial rescue patterns. The first claim was that commercial ships were responsible for rescuing large numbers of migrants when *Mare Nostrum* was terminated and replaced with operation *Triton* in 2015. The second claim, that I examine is the idea that in 2016 commercial ships began bypassing areas where migrant ships were commonly found in distress.

To examine these claims, I organized the data from Frontex into a graph representing the rescue variables under which commercial ship involvement was recorded across the different years for which Operation *Triton* was active 2014 to 2018. Specifically, I filtered for incidents where migrant boats were “detected by” a commercial ship and incidents where migrant boats were “intercepted by” a commercial ship. Next, I used these two variables to examine the different

configurations of rescue possibilities for a given incident (see Figure 9). Specifically, I broke down and recorded incidents across five categories:

1. Detected by a commercial ship
2. Detected and intercepted by a commercial ship
3. Detected by a commercial ship and intercepted by another means
4. Detected by another means and intercepted by a commercial ship
5. Intercepted by a commercial ship

Figure 9. Commercial Ships Involved in Maritime Rescue



Note. *Nov 1, 2014 to Jan 31, 2015 **Feb 1, 2017 to Jan 31, 2018

I organized the data released by Frontex into these categories and recorded the annual figures. It is important to note that Frontex has categorized the *Triton* data in an annual cycle that begins February 1 and ends January 31 the following year. For example, despite operation *Triton* ending February 1, 2018, and 11 incidents involving commercial ships occurring during January 2018, these incidents are listed as part of the 2017 data set. Or, put differently, Frontex never categorized any incidents for 2018, even though, technically, their reports indicate 11 incidents involving commercial ships for 2018.

By examining the involvement of commercial ships based on the data that Frontex released I identified that the number of commercial ships involved in detecting migrant boats in distress increased during the four-year period of *Triton*. The data set shows 53 commercial ships detecting migrant vessels in distress in 2015, 76 in 2016, to 96 for 2017. Also, according to the data released, over the course of operation *Triton* just over half of the commercial ships that detected a vessel in distress also went on to intercept that migrant boat.

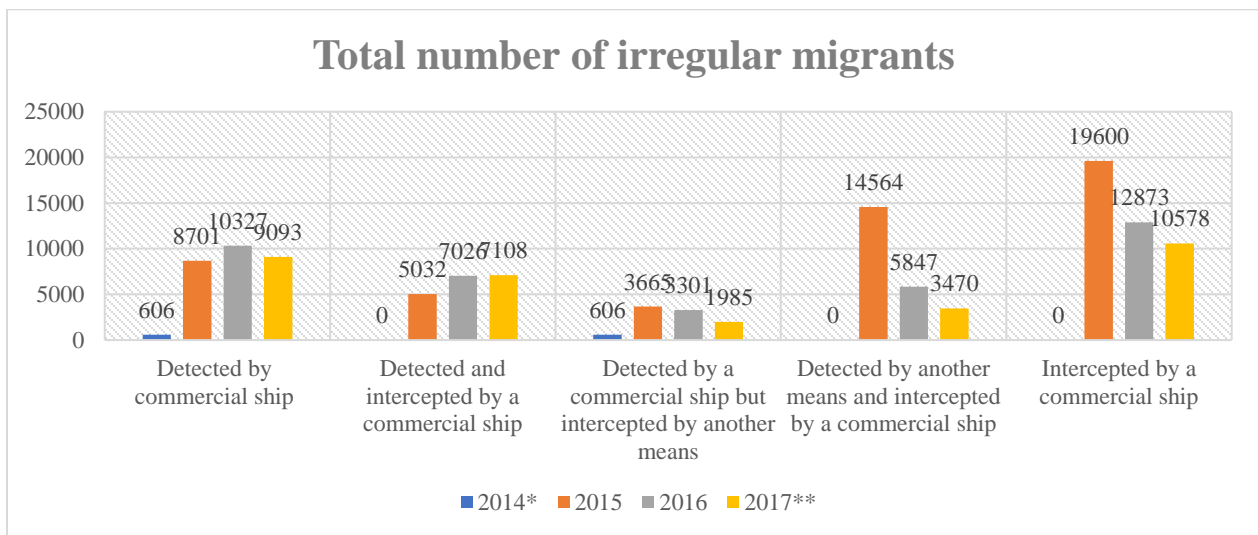
The most noticeable change—from 2015 to 2016—was in situations where a migrant boat in distress was detected by another means, and subsequently intercepted by a commercial vessel. In 2015, 79 commercial ships were called to intercept a vessel in distress that had been detected by other means. In 2016, and 2017 this number decreased significantly: to 40 in 2016, and 36 in 2017. Overall, the highest number of commercial ships intercepting vessels in distress was in 2015 with 111. This number also decreased in both 2016, and 2017: with 84 and 91 respectively.

The only pattern that I identified in relation to the claims I set out to analyze, is that it appears commercial ships may have changed their route from 2015 to 2016 as the number of commercial ships intercepting vessels detected by another means dropped sharply. **This drop indicates that commercial ships could have been avoiding areas they have determined to be high risk.** This would mean that while ships were continuing to detect vessels in distress throughout operation *Triton*, they were not being directed—as frequently—by state-run rescue coordination centres (responsible for receiving detections) to participate in rescues in 2016. However, there are a variety of factors that frustrate the forming of conclusions and the making of assertions about patterns of commercial rescue from Frontex data that emerged from these initial queries. For example, **the data from Frontex supports the argument that the involvement of commercial ships in migrant rescue on the Central Mediterranean is coordinated from shore.**

Nonetheless, the small sample size and redacted data from Frontex make it difficult to conclude if the reduction in commercial ships intercepting migrant boats that had been detected by another means from 2015 to 2016 was because there was a coordinated effort to have fewer commercial ships involved in rescues. Similarly, the redactions and limited sample size released by Frontex obscures the role of commercial ships as ships of opportunity/whether there were fewer commercial vessels near maritime incidents in 2016 compared to 2015.

To further investigate claims that commercial ships went from being major contributors to rescue in the Central Mediterranean (when *Mare Nostrum* ended and operation *Triton* began in 2014, and particularly into 2015) to bypassing areas where migrants were known to be found in maritime distress in 2016, I organized data from Frontex freedom of information requests to depict the total number of “irregular migrants” that were detected and/or intercepted by commercial vessels during operation *Triton* (Figure 10) across the same five categories of rescue.

Figure 10. Total Number of Irregular Migrants



Note. *Nov 1, 2014 to Jan 31, 2015 **Feb 1, 2017 to Oct 12, 2017

When compared to the data on the overall number of incidents—depicted in Figure 9, the data shows a more pronounced reduction in the overall number of migrants intercepted by a commercial vessel from 2015 to 2016: from 19,600 in 2015 to 12,873 in 2016.

The data shows an even more significant reduction in the number of migrants detected by other means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship from 2015 to 2016: from 14, 564 in 2015, to 5,847 in 2016. **Whether we measure ships or people, the general trend appears to be relatively consistent: there was a significant decrease in the number of commercial ships intercepting migrants and during the same time there was a significant decrease in the number of migrants being intercepted by commercial ships, from 2015 to 2016.** Finally, to put the role and involvement of commercial ships in rescues during operation *Triton* into perspective I calculated both the percentage of incidents involving commercial ships in relation to the total number of incidents reported, and the total number of migrants rescued by commercial ships in relation to the total number of migrants rescued overall during each year of the operation. These figures are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Percentage of Commercial Ships and People Involved in Commercial Rescues

	Total Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents involving Commercial Ships	Percentage of Incidents involving Commercial Ships	Total Number of Migrants	Number of Migrants involved with Commercial Ships	Percentage of Migrants involved with Commercial Ships
2014	134	6	4.48%	19183	606	3.16%
2015	858	132	15.38%	155983	23261	14.91%
2016	1069	116	10.85%	180833	16174	8.95%
2017	1102	132	11.98%	102884	12563	12.21%

When adjusted for and presented in relation to the total number of overall incidents, this table maintains support for the previously identified reduction in commercial ship involvement in rescues from 2015 to 2016—with the percentage of commercial ships involved in rescues dropping by five percent. With respect to the associated drop in the number of migrants involved with commercial ships, when adjusted relative to overall numbers of people rescued the percentage dropped roughly six percent.

While the data released by Frontex support the idea that commercial ships were less likely

to be part of a rescue operation in the Central Mediterranean in 2016 than in 2015, there are factors that make data released by Frontex unreliable. First, the data from Frontex was heavily redacted. Initial reports on commercial ship involvement showed whether they detected or intercepted a given migrant boat, and details of the rescue often included the name of commercial ships involved in the incident. However, all of these variables were eventually redacted. Anecdotally, the evolution of their eventual blanket redactions is observable in screenshot examples of incident reports from 2015 to 2017: See Appendix E (Figures 11 through 14). This series of figures shows how Frontex recorded, organized, and reported information that documents interactions between commercial ships and migrant vessels. Frontex would often redact information on the type of vessel that intercepted a given migrant boat in distress. In the example from 2015 (Figure 11) it is possible to identify the name of the commercial ship that detected the incident—the *Maersk Prosper*—however the intercepting vessel information is redacted. For 2016 (Figure 12), the information in the notes reveals that the detecting vessel was German NGO vessel Sea Eye; however, *Merchant vessel* is listed under the category detected by on the same release. This is an example of instances where NGO vessels that detect and intercept migrant boats would end up being counted as commercial ships. While there is a case to be made for making this inclusion, my point here is to identify the significance of ship type, and to recognize the slipperiness of the categories under study. In addition, the example from 2017 (Figure 13) shows how civilian fishing boat the *Graziella* detected a migrant vessel in distress but the information on the intercepting ship is redacted. This example shows how the *Graziella*, a civilian fishing vessel, would also be counted as a commercial rescue ship. Finally, the screenshot in Figure 14 is cut from one of Frontex’s final releases of information and evidence of how completely redacted the information became.

In short, establishing patterns and controlling for nuances in the reporting of the data further

reinforces the significance of understanding the different geographies of ships. My point is to show how identifying the specific ships listed in the Frontex reports through publicly available Automatic Identification System software presents a new method of learning about the political and economic geographies that shape the maritime rescue of migrants by commercial ships.

Seeing like a Commercial Vessel: AIS and the Financial Risks of Rescue

Legibility is a condition of manipulation. Any substantial state intervention in society—to vaccinate a population, produce goods, mobilize labor, tax people and their property, conduct literacy campaigns, conscript soldiers, enforce sanitation standards, catch criminals, start universal schooling—requires the invention of units that are visible. The units in question might be citizens, villages, trees, fields, houses, or people grouped according to age, depending on the type of intervention. Whatever the units being manipulated, they must be organized in a manner that permits them to be identified, observed, recorded, counted, aggregated, and monitored. (J. C. Scott, 2008)

In the opening of Scott's (2008) *Seeing Like a State*, he questions why the state has always seemed to be the enemy of "people who move around" and how his book became a mission to describe how a state's efforts to settle its population is characterized by processes that seek to make its geography legible.

My study explores the digital terrain produced by AIS and the algorithms which translate the movement of ships into perceivable digital images. This technology allows me to see 'like an algorithm.' However, I do so with an eye toward the original ethos of Scott's (2008) original phrase, namely the understanding that these surveillance tools are primarily designed to extend the aims of modern statecraft. According to Fielding (2012) the type of research that combines data from various sources can contribute to informed decision making in a variety of contexts. Here I combine real-time visual data available from geographical information systems like AIS with ships

involved in rescues, FOI requests and qualitative interview data. At sea AIS data is critical for collision avoidance, but ironically, I reveal how it can also be used to plan pathways for transport that avoid areas where migrant vessels are commonly found in distress. Finally, AIS can be used to determine which ships are in the best position to render assistance when needed, and to digitally recreate maritime incidents in ways that are temporally and spatially accurate.

When an incident report names a vessel, I was able to employ free software provided by the world's biggest AIS provider, Marinetransport.com, to identify and track the ships movements. For example, Figure 15 is the OOC *Cougar* and Figure 16 is the *Zefirea*. Through the maritime rescue conference and the interviews with seafarers it became increasingly apparent that most commercial vessels were not designed to conduct maritime rescues, and that performing these rescues comes with a variety of risks.

Figure 15. Image of OOC *Cougar*



Figure 16. Image of Zefirea



In addition to the physical risks, ship captains I interviewed described how there were also direct costs including the rescue, port charges, humanitarian provisions, additional wages, and supplies, as well as cleaning, repair and restocking fees (Int. 17, Int. 18). However, the delay and diversion from intended routes is also an indirect cost that can result from participating in rescues and “likely to generate substantial loss of time and prevent the vessel from fulfilling its scheduled commercial activities” (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410). Geospatial technology, including the automatic identification system (AIS), render a variety of data about ships, including making their journeys and rescues visible and trackable. For example, MarineTraffic describes how their vessel monitoring services are based on “data gathered from our network of coastal AIS-receiving stations, supplemented by satellite receivers, we apply algorithms and integrate complementary data sources to provide the shipping, trade and logistics industries with actionable insights into shipping activity” (2021). The *marinetraffic.com* map (see Appendix B: Figure 1) is published on their website in real-time, and anyone with internet access can search for, or identify, ships equipped with AIS. Their service makes ship locations and vessel information transparent.

My research shows how the publicly available vessel details gathered through AIS can be used to help estimate the costs associated with the delays that maritime rescues cause for different types of vessels, for different periods of time. The delays implied in rescue threaten the economic interests that fuel international shipping ventures; a ship captain in my study described the costs to a particular shipping company involved in rescuing more than 250 migrants: “not only did this shipping company spend ten days doing this ... for a bulk carrier—which is one of the cheapest ships—for them to be involved in looking after migrants, I think it was roughly \$12,000 a day. So, we are looking at \$120,000 plus” (Int.18). Kilpatrick (2017) reports that “losses of up to USD \$500,000 arising out of a single migrant vessel rescue causing the vessel to be delayed for one week” (p. 410) are not uncommon. Moreover, these financial risks do not reflect the humanitarian costs of non-assistance and/or the safety implications of attending to large numbers of rescued people for lengthy periods of time.

Although the potential risks for crew involved in maritime rescue and accommodation of migrants at sea may be significant, the financial costs of delays also threaten the economic interests of shipping companies. The quantification and coverage of these financial disincentives are the domain of maritime insurance companies. My analysis of the shipping industry’s responses to the ongoing situation on the Mediterranean involves an examination of how maritime insurance companies cover the financial losses that result from participating in rescues. For example, documenting how shipping companies and vessel owners employ maritime insurance instruments like protection and indemnity clubs (P & I Clubs) to cover food, medication, overtime wages, and diversion expenses like fuel helps to provide a fuller picture of the costs associated with maritime rescues. However, most P & I Clubs will not cover loss of hire or “other financial losses like loss of profit” (Gard, 2020, para. 14). Therefore, the financial costs associated with food, fuel and

wages are rendered calculable and coverable through contemporary maritime insurance instruments like P & I clubs, however, the future costs and lost profits associated with lost time and late cargo are not so easily defined.

The ability to use data provided through the automatic identification system opens a variety of analytical avenues for investigation. In addition to hosting platforms for vessel enthusiasts to share and market their images of ships, various vessel tracking websites provide other free services where they publish vessel details including IMO number, name, vessel type, MMSI, call sign, gross tonnage, flag, length, year builder, owner, manager. In my study these details help provide a background to what I learned about the significance of vessel type in rescue coordination efforts. For example, the *Zefirea*, an oil tanker, could be closer in proximity to an incident but the OOC *Cougar* could be further away but ultimately faster to arrive on scene and better equipped to perform a rescue. When vessel traffic on the Mediterranean is examined through the geospatial technology of AIS it translates the dynamics of maritime rescue coordination into the language of capabilities. These capabilities are tied to an understanding of how different vessel types operate at sea. In this way, the coordination and analysis of maritime rescue adds to existing research that outlines the utility of AIS technology in planning maritime navigation routes (Tu et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2020). Moreover, for those studying maritime rescue they provide opportunity to examine and recreate incidents through the production of moving maps that depict the movements of vessels before, during, and after rescues. However, the costs associated with performing this type of analysis were beyond the scope of my analysis and the means available. Nevertheless, the data I produced make this future research possible.

Conclusion

Geospatial technology, like AIS, can be used to plot both maritime rescue and avoidance. migrant rescue at sea situation on the Mediterranean is ongoing. The data from Frontex shows a

significant reduction in the number of migrants detected by other means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship from 2015 to 2016, during operation *Triton*. Key relationships, procedures and international conventions that govern how maritime rescues are coordinated at sea, however, must be considered. In this chapter, I have outlined a research approach that triangulates identifying vessel data on rescues at sea through freedom of information requests, and organizational material on operation *Triton* published by Frontex, with information gathered through semi-structured interviews. This approach allows scholars and practitioners to assess whether ‘geographies of avoidance’, as I call them, are evident. The evidence presented shows that such spatial strategies to avoid potential rescues exist in the Mediterranean (from 2014 to 2018). Drawing on participant observation, semi-structured interviews with key informants, FOIs, and AIS data, I traced the identity of merchant ships that were involved in coordinated maritime rescue incidents in the Mediterranean (from 2014 to 2018) that involved migrants’ vessels in distress.

At the proposal stage of this study, I was unaware of the potential of AIS and related geospatial analysis. The processes of identifying commercial vessels using on-line ship tracking technology developed as I familiarized myself with Frontex data. My methods and analysis were iterative and designed to combine information gathered from organizations, people, and geospatial technology. Each of these information sources provides findings in and of itself, but together they also point to new methods and avenues of research for scholars interested in exploring the human geography of maritime rescue. Together, they create an innovative constellation of geographic analysis that has the potential to trace maritime rescue and avoidance in defined spaces tracked by marinetraffic.com for example. In my study, the insights of seafarers and shipping captains during interviews helped ground the information gathered through FOI and AIS sources. The combination of methods employed in this study generate a unique approach to ‘seeing’ what merchant maritime

rescue looks like in the Mediterranean. I contend and show here that AIS technology is most effective when used in conjunction with other methods of data collection.

By combining interview findings, FOIs, and digital GIS data from AIS, I have forged an original approach to tracing migrant crossings on the Mediterranean. The freedom of information requests produced hundreds of incident reports that can be used in future research, and my interviews with seafarers reinforces the significance of engaging with the people that make up the field under study. Analyzing seafarers and commercial rescues in the Mediterranean was motivated by a desire to understand the risks to rescuers and the considerations of merchant ship captains, which are ultimately tied to the risks faced by people in distress, crossing the Mediterranean by boat.

Chapter Four:

Commercial Ships and Migrant Boats: Coordinating Mass Migrant Rescue in the Central Mediterranean Sea

Migrants who drown while in transit are not counted as part of international drowning statistics. The UNHCR (2019) reports that nearly 18,000 people have drowned attempting to cross the Mediterranean since 2014. Recent reports suggest that commercial ships have been bypassing migrant heavy areas on the Mediterranean in order to avoid rescuing them (Aarstad, 2015; Cusumano, 2017). This chapter analyses the significant role of commercial ships, seafarers and maritime rescue coordination policy and procedures in the ongoing efforts to rescue thousands of migrants in the Mediterranean.

A country's merchant navy is made up of its commercial and trading ships and their crews. These commercial ships play a substantial role in the rescue of refugees on the Mediterranean. According to the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), from January 2014 to September 2015, more than 1,000 commercial vessels rescued more than 65,000 people (Saul, 2015, para. 4). Improving weather conditions usually correspond with more crossings. In April 2015 two shipwrecks, in the same week, claimed the lives of over 1,200 people. First, on April 12, an overcrowded boat, carrying 400 people, capsized when migrants became excited at the prospect of being rescued by an approaching tugboat and moved towards it. Then, on April 18, 800 people died when a boat carrying migrants collided with a cargo ship, the *King Jacob*, during a failed rescue attempt. Since these incidents, commercial rescue efforts on the Mediterranean have been scaled back. These titanic tragedies reinforce the significance of examining the dynamics of commercial rescue.

Building on recent theoretical work that describes a human geography of ships (Hasty & Peters, 2012), and the significance of the ship to mobilities studies (Anim-Addo, Hasty & Peters,

2014; Walters, 2015) I highlight the significance of ship type to maritime rescue and coordination. As discussed in the previous chapter, my research combines information gathered from seafarers, international organizations, and rescue coordination centres with data produced through freedom of information (FOI) requests and ship tracking technology. Developments in geospatial technology allow a variety of industries, including but not limited to military, fishing, and shipping, to monitor and track their maritime interests. These surveillance technologies enable human maritime geography to be viewed in new unprecedented ways. For example, the use of Automatic Identification Services—which is mandated by the International Convention of the Law of the Sea—allows vessel traffic services (VTS) to identify and locate a ships, position, permits, course and speed at sea.

Research that tracks migration across the Mediterranean has started to trace connections between reduced maritime rescue zones and increases in the number of people lost at sea (Williams and Mountz, 2018; Williams, 2018). To examine and document maritime rescue trends on the Mediterranean most analyses rely on the mapping and reporting efforts of organizations like the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the tacit acceptance of the idea that migration across the Mediterranean flows along established routes: an Eastern route, a Central route and a Western route (see Appendix C: Figures 4, 5 and 6). While research that examines the role of humanitarian organizations in the Central Mediterranean has started to emerge (Cuttitta, 2018; Heller & Pezzani, 2016), as I have argued in this dissertation, considerably less attention is paid to the rescue efforts of commercial ships. My focus is on the Central Mediterranean at the time when Italy terminated maritime rescue operation *Mare Nostrum* in 2014. When the EU replaced it with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's operation *Triton*, commercial ships began rescuing thousands of people left in the rescue gap that this transition

produced (Heller & Pezzani, 2016). The 65,000 people rescued by commercial ships in the first months of the operation are evidence of their commitment to maritime responsibility, and the obvious gap left by the termination of *Mare Nostrum*. My analysis shows how a reduction in search and rescue zones places migrants, seafarers, and rescue workers in extremely risky situations. To gain perspective from the people coordinating and performing these maritime rescues, I argue for an approach that includes commercial ships and focuses on the role of rescue workers, seafarers and particularly ship captains. This research approach provides an opportunity to canvass those familiar with how rescues are performed: to outline the various perceived risks they entail.

My analysis is organized into three parts. First, I describe the deadliest maritime incident involving a cargo ship and migrant boat in the Central Mediterranean. This tragedy highlights risks involved with commercial rescue and brings the disparate geographies of the cargo ship and the migrant boat into focus. Specifically, I connect the massive cargo ship to international trade and the migrant ship to the millions of displaced people living in protracted exile, migrants facing human rights abuses in Libya. Following a brief review of existing literature, I provide background on how the reduction of search and rescue (SAR) zones that accompanied the transition from *Mare Nostrum* to *Triton* resulted in more deaths, even with substantially fewer people crossing. My review of migration trends on the Mediterranean, alongside major maritime incidents, and transnational policy agreements—shows how migrants are kept at bay, far from European borders (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Basaran, 2015). However, I aim to dispel myths about ship captains avoiding maritime rescues by positioning the role of seafarers and commercial vessels within a broader geography of changing and contested search and rescue (SAR) zones. In the second part of the analysis, I describe the methods I used to examine the role of commercial ships in rescuing migrants and define mass rescue. The methods include: participating in the International Maritime

Rescue Federation's (IMRF) conference on mass rescue; reviewing organizational material on migration and maritime rescue; conducting semi-structured interviews with seafarers and organizational representatives from key maritime institutions; and, making freedom information requests to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency for data on commercial rescues. In the last part I organize my findings into four sections: a review of risks associated with rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean; a report on how the movements of commercial ships are coordinated from shore; an examination of how seafarers define distress and the implications it carries for rescue; and a review of the merchant navy's/shipping industry's guidance on maritime rescue.

Commercial Rescue on the Mediterranean Sea

The Cargo Ship and the Migrant Boat

The risks that commercial rescue pose were evident in the most publicized and deadly incident on the Mediterranean: on 18 April 2015, more than 800 people drowned when a boat full of migrants rammed into a massive cargo ship, the *King Jacob*, which was trying to rescue them (Figure 17). These deaths were not the result of a commercial ship avoiding an area of the Mediterranean that is known to be a popular route for migrants. Instead, the accident happened during a failed rescue attempt by a merchant vessel. At 146.42m long and 22.7m wide the *King Jacob* cargo ship provides a formidable symbol of the domination of a global economic system: where over 90% of goods are shipped by sea. The owner of the *King Jacob*, OSM Shipping GmbH & Co. KG, and the Portuguese flag it flies tie the vessel to this international system of global trade, as well as to various international conventions—that outline the responsibility to rescue fellow seafarers in distress. Principal among them are the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the 1974 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the 1989 International Convention on Salvage (SALVAGE) and the 1979 International Convention

on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR). A cargo ship of that size generally has a crew of 12 to 20 people, who generally lack the experience and training necessary to perform a mass maritime rescue. In contrast, there were over 800 migrants packed onto the fishing vessel that was 21m long, 8m wide and with 8m of the hull above the sea (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 55). Damage to the bow of the fishing vessel and to the left side of the cargo ship seems to confirm, the accounts of the incident provided by migrants and the crew of the *King Jacob*: that the fishing vessel crashed into the cargo ship.

Figure 17. *King Jacob*



The crashing together of a massive cargo ship—the *King Jacob*—and an overloaded migrant boat in the Central Mediterranean is a striking example of logistical failure, but also what Mary Louise Pratt (2007) describes as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (p. 7). In this case, the “ship has served as the primary space of, and means for, such encounters” (Hasty & Peters, 2012, p. 668). The coming together of the migrant boat and the commercial ship provides an opportunity to conceptualize the ship “as a window on the embodied processes of

globalisation, as a site forever embedded in networks of global interaction, wherein social, cultural, political and economic negotiations and exchanges literally take place” (Hasty & Peters, 2012, p. 669). The ships that traverse the maritime space connecting Europe and Africa define the human geography that makes up the Mediterranean Sea. Contrasting the disparate places—that constitute the migrant boat and the cargo ship—provides an opportunity to examine two very different vessels that encapsulate their respective origins.

According to Walters (2015), vehicles, roads and routes are often ignored in studies of migration politics. His concept of viapolitics is designed “to be contact zone for inquiries informed by these kinds of sensibility and aim for an account of migration that is much thicker with things and their entanglements with humans” (Walters, 2015, p. 472). My analysis of commercial rescue extends key areas of research identified by Walters (2015); for example, he contends “a research focus on vehicles can [...] deepen understanding of migration as a field of struggles and borders as a topology of power” (p. 477). Moreover, this analysis shares his understanding of “migratory struggles” as processes that are not strictly confined to “fixed settings and structures” but unfold “in and around vehicles, routes and infrastructures” (p. 474). To this end my focus on the commercial ship as humanitarian vessel and my analysis of the significance of ship type to maritime rescue support the idea that vehicular analysis deepens the study of movement and circulation in (geo)politics. Generally, my analysis follows two trajectories that emerge from Walters (2015b) critique of what he describes as Foucault’s failure to expand on numerous references to people in motion, vehicles, ports, and roads (p. 4). In the critique Walters (2015b) recommends an examination of the “peculiar powers exercised by a captain at sea or in flight” (p. 4). In Latin *via* means route or way, and Walters (2015) argues that the study of migration politics could be more observant to how ships, planes, buses, and other vehicles mediate the public

understanding of migration (p. 474). In addition, Walters (2015) suggests that “to think in terms of viapolitics is to ask how such routes are being inscribed in regimes of power/knowledge, how their truth is being elicited by various professionals of security, policing, and care” (p. 6). I draw not just on the language and information produced by security organizations but on “functionaries like captains, truck drivers, and crews” (p. 6), to help animate the routes that bring migrants and commercial ships into contact. Vessels, people and routes, or people in vessels on routes, are the focus of this analysis.

Mediterranean Migration Routes and Shifting Search and Rescue Zones

The tendency to discuss the Mediterranean Sea as one homogenous body of water can obstruct the disproportionate number of deaths that occur along the central route. Even when most crossings were attempted along the Eastern route in 2015, more people died in the Central Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is massive, and migrants cross it along various routes, at different times, on different boats and for different reasons. In September 2015, as previously mentioned, three year old Alan Kurdi drowned on the Eastern route, from Turkey to Greece. According to Hyndman and Giles (2017) images of his lifeless body on a Turkish beach “shifted public opinion positively toward the Syrian cause across the world” (xi). In 2015, there were 885 386 migrants that arrived in the EU via the Eastern Mediterranean route—17 times the number in 2014, which was itself a record year at the time (Frontex, 2018). In 2015, 21% of deaths occurred in the Eastern Mediterranean compared to only one per cent in 2014 (Frontex, 2018). After the EU-Turkey statement that agreed to secure its maritime and land borders and accept the return of irregular migrants from Greece came into force in March 2016, the number of migrants arriving on the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean dropped precipitously (Frontex, 2018): most of the 182, 000 migrants detected on the Eastern route in 2016 arrived during the first three months of the year (Frontex, 2018). In contrast, the Central Mediterranean route was responsible for 77% of

deaths in 2015—down from 97% in 2014. More migrants crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa died in a single month (April 2015) than ever before, and of the 1,250 that drown, 800 were the result of a single collision with a cargo ship (IOM).

In April 2015 arrivals in Italy reached more than 16,000 people, up from just over 2,000 in March (Pezzani death by rescue/UNHCR). The significant role played by commercial enterprise in responding to migrant deaths on the Mediterranean raises a variety of questions that academics have left largely unattended. For example, why did the number of people who drowned increase even after a drastic reduction in total number of crossings? In 2015 over one million migrants arrived in Europe—five times more than in 2014. There were 3,771 documented deaths in 2015. However, in 2016 the number of migrants that reached Europe by sea dropped to just below 360 thousand, and the reported lives lost still increased to more than 5,000. An examination of the role played by commercial ships in responding to migrants in distress helps explain how the chances of surviving a Mediterranean crossing were reduced from 2015 to 2016. In short, commercial ships were left to deal with the reduced rescue range prescribed under the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's Joint Operation *Triton*. The number of crossings generally increases in April as improving weather conditions makes the journey more manageable: the arrivals in Italy went from 2,283 in March to 16,063 by the end of April 2015 (Heller & Pezzani, 2016). From April 10 to 13, 2015 more than 8,000 people were rescued, with a record 3,791 people saved in a single day on April 12 (Heller & Pezzani, 2016). The rescue vacuum created by JO *Triton*'s reduced operational rescue zone provoked both an overwhelming response by merchant ships and strong warnings from both the shipping industry and the international community. Their worst fears were realized in the week starting on April 12, with two shipwrecks that took the lives of more than 12,00 people. Both of these incidents involved commercial vessels. On 12 April 2015, an overcrowded boat

capsized when migrants became excited after seeing tugboats coming to their rescue, 400 people died (Gayle, 2015). On April 18, 2015, more than 800 people died when it crashed into a large commercial vessel during a failed rescue attempt (Miglierini, 2016).

There are 21 different nation-states with a Mediterranean Sea border. These cartographic boundaries are clearly outlined by a coastline that runs from the rock of Gibraltar along Spain and southern France, around Italy and Greece to Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the entire coast of North Africa. This geography includes hundreds of islands, including Sicily, Sardinia, Crete, Cyprus, Santorini, Lampedusa, Elba, the Maltese islands, and the many islands off the coast of Greece, Turkey and Croatia, among others. While a maritime border may seem easily definable, how do states assign maritime rescue zones? The creation of search and rescue (SAR) zones is aimed at avoiding situations where no state is responsible for coordinating rescue. Italy and Malta, for example, have an ongoing and notorious dispute because they are signatories to different versions of the SAR convention. According to Heller et al (2012) the “result has been lengthy stand-off during which migrants have died, and a number of confrontations between Italian and Maltese naval vessels literally trying to block each other from entering its territorial waters and disembark rescued migrants” (p. 26). In Italy the sinking of two boats that led to the loss of over 600 migrants in October 2013, triggered public demand for action, and the Italian government’s launching of operation *Mare Nostrum*, which lasted from 2013 until 2014: and rescued over 156,000 migrants. With *Mare Nostrum*, the Italian navy patrolled a 70,000 square kilometre of the Mediterranean, an area that encompassed the search and rescue zones of Libya and Malta as well as Italy (Davies, 2014).

The human geography of migration and rescue on the Mediterranean is comprised of shifting operational rescue zones, disputes over where migrants will be disembarked and the

criminalization of rescue (McKenzie & Mezzofiore, 2019; Tondo, 2019). Commercial ships and the seafarers that work on them are a major part of this geography. My examination of shifting operational rescue zones positions the commercial ship as an extension of the EU's migration policy that seeks to keep refugees from reaching Europe's borders. In late 2014, a variety of factors, including increased migration, a lack of EU-wide burden sharing, and, a narrative that considered the rescue operation as responsible for the increases in sea migrants, prompted the abandonment of the *Mare Nostrum* and its replacement with Frontex operation *Triton*. According to the founders the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) the decision to end *Mare Nostrum*, left "2.5 million square kilometres of sea [...] unpatrolled" and prompted the creation of their Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) "after seeing the lack of response to hundreds of drowning's in October 2014" (MOAS, 2017). While there is considerable attention paid to rescues involving NGO ships, there has been limited attention paid to commercial rescues involving migrants in the Central Mediterranean. A few analyses have reported cases where commercial ships have not responded to migrants in distress at sea (Aarstad, 2015; Cuttitta, 2014; Heller & Pezzani, 2012). More recently, Cusamano (2017) has clarified how commercial ships have been avoiding migrant heavy areas, not necessarily avoiding rescues—a nuance that was supported by some of the participants in this study. I argue that this distinction rests on the concept of coordination; and an understanding of how advances in geospatial technology effectively move rescue coordination to land based coordination centres. For example, the Italian Maritime Rescue Centre (MRCC) in Rome monitors the position of all maritime traffic in the Central Mediterranean and coordinates maritime rescues in the area. The MRCC ultimately triggers the responsibility of a given ship captain to participate in a rescue operation (International Maritime Organization, 2005). In cases

where many emergency requests are being transmitted at a given time the decisions made by rescue coordinators can be the difference between being rescued or being left to drown.

In addition to weather concerns, the physical geography of different routes across the Mediterranean can exacerbate the risks of crossings. For example, Frontex categorizes crossings along three Mediterranean routes: the Western, Central, and Eastern routes. On the Western route, in places like the strait of Gibraltar, where its only 14km across, the tight physical geography that separates the borders of Europe from North Africa brings maritime migrants, and commercial ships of all types in closer proximity to one another. This proximity brings the significance of scale to the human geography of maritime rescue into focus. In terms of rescue coordination, when many ships are in close proximity to a ship in distress, the risk of potential rescue ships crashing into one another is always a concern. So, while different gradations of physical geography can force more maritime traffic—and therefore more potential rescue ships—into close proximity with migrant boats in distress, this proximity can pose increased risks that must be negotiated by rescue coordination centres. These risks can help explain how larger commercial vessels could, in certain circumstances, defer rescue to smaller, faster or vessels better equipped for maritime rescue.

By focusing on seafarers and major maritime organizations responsible for rescuing thousands of migrants I solicit insights from maritime professionals and avoid generalizations that characterize migrants homogeneously. The goal is to focus on how commercial ships are responding to migrants in distress on the Mediterranean. According to the UNHCR (2016; 2018), the increase deaths in the Mediterranean during 2016, despite a drastic reduction in crossings, can be attributed to a variety of variables including shifting to more dangerous routes, multiple vessels and people being embarked at the same time, weather, and the use of increasingly unseaworthy boats. My research suggests that while a number of operational risks exist for seafarers performing

maritime rescue, rescue coordination centres will continue to rely on seafarers and commercial vessels to help rescue people in distress at sea.

Methods: Coordinating Mass Rescue and the Ambiguity of Distress

The International Maritime Rescue Federation and Maritime Migrants in Distress

To launch my analysis of maritime commercial rescue I participated in the the International Maritime Mass Rescue Conference, run by the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) and hosted by the Swedish Sea Rescue Society (SSRS). The IMRF was established in 1924, and has 103 member organisations in 49 countries; it provides maritime rescue information and facilitates cooperation across a variety of maritime sectors. The conference began with a mass rescue simulation that highlighted the need for coordination between rescue coordination centres and seafarers, and contributed to the development of industry guidance papers on mass rescue.

In addition to the conference, I interviewed 24 maritime professionals. including ship captains and organizational representatives from maritime organizations, who were often retired ship captains themselves (Appendix A: Table 2). The combination of the semi-structured interviews and the conference helped me to document some of the concerns and risks that seafarers associate with rescuing large numbers of migrants in the Mediterranean. Moreover, they highlighted some of the ways that commercial ships fit within broader efforts to coordinate maritime rescue on the Mediterranean. Finally, I made a series of Freedom of Information requests to Frontex for data on commercial rescues during operation *Triton* to substantiate and generate new knowledge on the role of commercial vessels in rescuing people on the move in the Mediterranean. According to the International Maritime Organization a ‘mass rescue operation’ is “characterised by the need for immediate response to large numbers of persons in distress, such that the capabilities normally available to the search and rescue authorities are inadequate” (IMO, 2019). The federation publishes maritime rescue information on-line and facilitates cooperation

across a variety of maritime sectors. It provides valuable insights into the ways seafarers respond to mass rescues involving migrants, and has been organizing the mass rescue conference, and mass rescue operations project, since 2010. These annual interactive conferences on mass rescue operations create opportunities to discuss the challenges of maritime mass rescue operations through case studies of real events, mass rescue simulation exercises, and cooperation between a diverse set of maritime professionals. In 2019 the IMRF published a mass rescue operations (MRO) guidance comprised of 30 chapters geared towards standardizing responses to emergencies involving large numbers of people at sea. The IMRF's MRO project includes the development of an online library of applicable information designed to help prepare organizations and the seafarers they employ for the risks involved with performing mass rescue.

The MRO guidance provides a typology of mass rescue. There are two types of mass rescue that apply specifically to the ongoing situation on the Mediterranean:

3.7 Multiple incidents occurring simultaneously may also require a mass rescue operation, sometimes over a wide area. A fleet of fishing vessels or leisure craft may be overwhelmed by unexpected bad weather, for example. While each individual case may only require a 'routine' SAR response, many cases occurring more or less simultaneously can result in SAR services being stretched beyond their normal capabilities. This capability gap too will need to be filled. (IMRF, 2019)

3.8 Refugees or migrants in unseaworthy vessels present a special case of MRO. There are almost always problems with alerting and subsequent communication with the casualty vessel in such cases, and survival equipment is usually lacking. There are also issues to be faced regarding what is to be done with survivors. These issues should not be allowed to affect the rescue operation itself, and SAR facilities, including additional facilities such as merchant ships, should be allowed to land survivors into the care of appropriate. (IMRF, 2019)

The typology is intended to outline a variety of circumstances in which large numbers of people may be in distress in a maritime environment. There are key takeaways for seafarers and rescue coordinators:

3.10 Although the causes differ, and will present specific challenges in each case, the main principles of MRO response remain. (IMRF, 2020)

Among the most significant principles of mass rescue operations is the idea that the “capabilities normally available to the SAR authorities are inadequate to deal with it” (IMRF, 2020). According to the IMRF (2020), in coordinating and performing mass rescue operations “the most important consideration is how to find the additional resources needed to fill the rescue ‘capability gap’” (IMRF, 2020). The search for, and engagement of, additional resources is conducted by both seafarers and rescue coordination centres. Moreover, the forums provided by the IMRF allow the space for issues surrounding rescuing large numbers of migrants to be debated by policy makers and seafarers. Not coincidentally, these debates focus on an issue that has been at the centre of international refugee law since the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: specifically, how is a refugee defined, and in the maritime context how do we define distress.

The process of obtaining information is limited by both the organizational efforts of Europe’s border agency to protect national security and by the structure and categories that classify what is ultimately recorded. For example, without background knowledge of particular operations and particular categories of rescue information, researchers would be unaware of what is available for request. Moreover, the study and representation of these categories can work to legitimize them without examining how this reproduction serves established boundaries of analysis. To substantiate the information gathered from seafarers and organizational representatives I made a series of freedom of information (FOI) requests to Frontex between December 2017 and September 2019 that resulted in the release of data related to commercial rescues that took place during JO *Triton*. I was able to identify 359 specific incidents involving migrants and commercial ships. The documents released by Frontex reported on specific incidents involving migrants in the Central Mediterranean in two ways: 1) through the release of data sets that listed information on specific variables for specific incidents; and 2) through the release of special incident reports for

specific incidents that occurred during operation *Triton*. Two of the variables in the data sets were “detected by” and “intercepted by.”

The data I received from Frontex is incomplete and inconclusive. Yet, what has been released shows that during 2015 there were 79 recorded incidents detected by another means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship; and in 2016 only 39 incidents were detected by another means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship. The data support what participants in this study reported with respect to commercial shipping companies taking measures to reduce their presence in risky maritime geographies, like the Central Mediterranean, or piracy off the coast of Somalia. While the deadly accidents of April 2015 occurred during failed rescue attempts, the impact of this failure arguably cost many more people their lives in 2016. Just as the EU reduced their operational rescue zone in 2015, in 2016 merchant ships began bypassing migrant heavy areas—particularly off the coast of Libya in response to the deaths and risks involved with the mass rescue of migrants.

Findings: Industry Guidance on Mass Maritime Rescue

Rescue Risks

Seafarers and commercial ships were major assets during *Mare Nostrum*. According to the Italian Coast Guard, in 2014, 600 vessels were involved in rescuing 42,061 people, second only to the Italian Navy, and representing 25% of all rescues (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 38). When *Mare Nostrum* was terminated, the commercial shipping industry was responsible for the rescue of 11,954 people from January to May 2015, making it the primary actor conducting rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 38). Organizations like the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Maritime Rescue Federation provide guidance on rescuing large numbers of migrants. Their cooperation with the UNHCR and International Maritime Organization in calling attention to the hundreds of thousands of people

that drown on maritime migratory routes highlights both the concentration of the maritime shipping industry and a commitment to upholding the responsibility to rescue people in distress. While events on the Mediterranean are ongoing and responses of individual countries, companies and people are varied; there are elements of key issues baked into respective policies and actions.

Participants in this study unanimously recognized and expressed the sanctity of the responsibility to rescue people in distress at sea. For some participants, however, there were instances where performing a rescue would be considered too risky. In a recent BBC article, Andrew Linington of the Nautilus Maritime Trade Union described how some ships are outfitted to deter people from coming on-board:

Most ships are designed to pick up only a limited number of people in distress. A lot of the ships that go to the Mediterranean have been in the Middle East and have been through problem areas like Somalia, so they are actually equipped with stuff to deter people from coming on board. (Hughes, 2015, para. 16)

Linington went on to identify a number of concerns that make commercial rescue risky:

If you go to the rescue of sometimes several hundred people, it can compromise the safety of the entire ship. There is no accommodation for them, the ships are sailing with a minimum amount of food and there are not enough life-saving appliances. (Hughes, 2015, para. 13)

One participant in this study, from Nautilus, described how, with respect to the situation on Mediterranean, the location of the boat in distress could be considered a mitigating factor:

If I was a master on a passenger ship and I sighted a boat of largely, shall we say, male occupants I would probably not stop. I would speed off, and I would notify. On the tramlines between Gibraltar, you're never out of sight of another ship. There are ships around you all over, all the time. Other ships that are more suitable for rescue, and besides that there's naval

vessels with more efficiency, and once it's broadcast a ship will appear to pick people up.

(Int.S.3)

At its narrowest point the Strait of Gibraltar is only 14 kilometres (9 miles) wide, and ship traffic in the area is dense and constant. Therefore, while proximity to a ship in distress can trigger the responsibility to rescue there are a variety of other factors that can help explain how ship captains in command of larger commercial vessels, or passenger vessels could determine a rescue to be too risky.

The Coordination of Mass Maritime Rescue and Ships of Opportunity

The IMRF's mass rescue operations (MRO) guidance starts by making the point that from the rescue coordinators position, "issues on international waters imply coordination and not command or control" (2019). It outlines how search and rescue (SAR) mission coordinators as well as on scene (OSC) coordinators "will be seeking to use the facilities available to them in the most efficient and effective way" (IMRF, 2019). In the majority of cases those coordinating rescue "will not have command or control authority over the units responding: they are coordinators" (IMRF, 2019). While this distinction may seem arbitrary—in situations involving multiple ship captains, massive commercial vessels, and large numbers of migrants—communication and coordination are potentially the most significant factors in a safe and successful rescue operation. Arguably the most significant part of the responsibility to provide rescue coordination includes determining how to effectively use merchant ships in maritime rescue. Moreover, these decisions are largely based on the assessment of information gathered from geospatial technology and on scene communications. Particularly in situations involving large numbers of migrants and massive commercial vessels effective communication and coordination is the only safeguard against deadly collisions and safe maritime rescue and transport. Participants in this study recognized how the responsibility of merchant vessels to rescue people in distress is often triggered remotely when

rescue coordination centres identify “ships of opportunity”: any vessel close enough to aid another vessel in distress. In sum, safe maritime rescue operations depend on the ability of maritime rescue coordination centres to assess the circumstances of a given rescue geography and effectively communicate this information, and cooperate with on scene rescue coordinators to save lives at sea.

The physical geography of the Mediterranean and the density of maritime traffic along migration routes all but guarantees commercial ships will come up against future migrants in maritime distress. Moreover, recent developments in geospatial technology enable the human maritime geography of rescue to be viewed digitally. The use of Automatic Identification Services (AIS) can help identify and locate a ship’s position, permits, course and speed at sea. When these variables are depicted within maps that display the human geography of migration and trade routes alongside the existing geopolitical spatial ordering—delineated by national borders and maritime rescue zones—the result is a rendering of a situation animated by artificially rigid terrestrial borders and the perpetual and fluid motion of people and water. In addition to being critical for coordinating safe rescues, this spatial data can be employed by researchers to study ship movements in maritime geographies. Although, saving people is the primary objective of rescue an understanding of different ship types and their capacity for rescue is a critical component of this effort. The majority of seafarers in this study endorsed the idea that certain types of ships and crews were much better suited for performing rescues. A boat pilot from MSF described the relationship between the time it would take to be able to respond to people in distress, as well as the capacity particular types of ship have for executing safe rescues:

If you’re a big oil tanker, it’s going to take many miles just to stop. Your manoeuvrability and possibilities for rescue are highly limited. But, if you’re the Italian Coast Guard who

actually performs more rescues than anyone else, and has been doing it longer than anyone else, you have the right boats and the right people. They would be doing it in a way that a commercial boat could never do, because they're not a special Coast Guard search and rescue vessel. Of course a search and rescue vessel has a fully different capacity than a commercial tanker. (Int.8)

General Manager Hajimichael of Greek-based Tsakos Shipping and Trading elaborated on the significance of ship type to a rescue attempt, whose vessels helped rescued more than 600 people in the Mediterranean:

For merchant ships, every rescue is complex. With a purpose-built ship, you have just to walk from one boat to the other. It's another thing climbing from a small boat onto a vessel the size of a building in the middle of a rough sea. (Saul, 2015, para. 32)

In reference to the migrants being rescued Hajimichael described how, "these people are tired, are carrying their belongings [...] some are carrying children or their babies." He also corroborated the risks involved with tankers performing rescues: "some of the trickiest rescues in the Mediterranean have been carried out by oil tankers. On a tanker, matches, sharp objects or even mobile phones and electronic devices can be dangerous. A wrong move may cause an ignition" (Saul, 2015, para. 35). According to Hajimichael the risks continue once migrants have been brought on board:

[T]he only space migrants can use is crew accommodation – not the deck. You can use the hospital medical room and you still have 200 people on board that require clothing, water and food, you would imagine all of them will have to use the toilet. (Saul, 2015)

The number of people that need to be rescued is something that stood out for participants in this study. The Director of Campaigns and Communications for Nautilus International described the implications of these trends in shipping for commercial rescue:

So you're on a ship with 12 crewmembers and then you have to take on hundreds of people. So then you have issues with food and security and fuel. There's a huge logistical and personnel challenge. This is a particularly big issue. (Int.2)

Participants in my study reinforced that the MRCC in Rome and navy ships, are primarily responsible for coordinating rescue in the Central Mediterranean. For example, the Secretary General of one of the worlds leading ship-managing organizations described how

[i]t would be very unusual today, for a merchant ship to find unannounced immigrants, because navies have stepped up all the operations so much and they are in control. It is navy and the coast guard, who knows what's happening, they've got helicopters flying reconnaissance flights. It's not like before 2015, when nobody knew and it was the merchant ship, which came across the immigrants first. This is not really happening anymore. (Int.10)

When the EU reduced their operational rescue zone in 2015 the merchant fleet picked up the slack; but in 2016 there was a coordinated effort to have the merchant fleet alter their course and limit their involvement in migrant rescue. The decision to bypass migrant heavy areas came after major incidents involving commercial ships and migrants; however, participants in this study also suggested that the decision was based on incidents where migrants were deliberately sinking their own boats in order to force shipmasters to perform a rescue instead of monitoring and, or waiting for state-based rescue operations to arrive on scene. One shipmaster stated,

We get there and then you know what happens very frequently, and I'm sure you heard that: the ship they were on is sinking, they are sinking that ship because they see my big vessel

and they know that if they are sinking I have no choice but to pick them up. So two years ago my organization said guys there is so many troubles with those approach [that] there will be no merchant ships going through these areas. And then the panic sets in the government because then they realize bloody hell if the merchant navy does that there will be nobody: we would not even know immigrants are there. They would be sinking and dying and nobody would even care. (Int.10)

To further explain how the successful coordination of mass rescue hinges on the effective use of the merchant navy, the same participant described how,

[i]t's all very well if your 20 or 50 miles off shore, maybe a helicopter can reach you. But, have you ever thought about a passenger ship, which has 5,000 people on board? How many helicopters would you need to go to rescue 5,000 people when every helicopter can take 5 people? Even the whole of Canada and US together does not have enough helicopters to fly. So IMO decided, bullshit, ships have to continue to help each other. They will be coordinated by shore, nowadays, and that changed from before 1994, nowadays the rescue signal comes to the shore and then the shore sees who is available and is sending ships to help. That's assuming that shore knows there is a problem at sea. (Int. 10)

Managing Distress

Part of the resources published by the IMRF is an online periodical called *Lifeline*, in which the debate surrounding what constitutes distress, and who has the right to determine who is in distress, takes place. On one side of the debate, the IMRF argues that the concept of distress “must be extended to those believed to be in distress, and to those who, while not yet in distress, will become so if help is not provided to them in the meantime” (2018, p. 6). This position is decidedly more reliant on *people* in their determinations of what constitutes distress. For example, the position of the IMRF is that in defining distress “craft are superfluous”, it should be defined as a

“situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that a person or persons are threatened by grave and imminent danger and require immediate assistance” (IMRF, 2018, p.7). However, in a recent volume of *Lifeline* the IMRF recognized a common understanding that while search and rescue operations are difficult “out on the water”, they can also be difficult at the policy end, “where those responsible for providing SAR services face many calls on limited resources” (IMRF, 2018, p. 6). Certainly, rescuing and interdicting hundreds of thousands of migrants annually presents this type of strain on policy makers and therefore rescue coordination centres.

In determining when to engage these rescue resources rescue coordination centres rely on information provided by those in distress or by seafarers who detect and report ships/boats they believe to be in distress. However, there are maritime rescue professionals that offer opposing definitions of distress that hinge on the significance of the ship and the seafarers experience in making on site judgement calls in unique circumstances. For example, one Master Mariner with over 30 years experience in the coast guard during which he personally interdicted hundreds, if not thousands of illegal migrants at sea believes “determining when a person, vessel, or aircraft is in distress is a judgment call made on scene, based on the prevailing circumstances” (IMRF, 2018, May, p. 6). His position conflicts with the IMRF’s argument—which supports a change to the definition of “*distress phase*” because only persons are in distress (IMRF, 2018, February, p.6). Nevertheless, Master Mariner Rick Button argues “Ships and aircraft, as the vehicles transporting persons are a critical component of the on-scene distress determination” (IMRF, 2018, May, p. 7).

Industry Guidance and the Future of Commercial Rescue

The international shipping industry is a concentrated enterprise and its collective response to migrant rescue on the Mediterranean is predictably concerted. For example, the membership of European Community Shipowners’ Associations (ECSA) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) comprises the world’s national shipowners’ associations, representing more than 80% of the

world's merchant fleet. At the beginning of April, ECSA and ICS, supported by seafarers' unions, wrote to EU leaders demanding action:

The shipping industry recognises that the underlying issues are very complex. But when dealing with the imminent life or death of thousands of people, fast and decisive action is needed to avoid further escalation of the problem. Ideally we need an EU operation similar to *Mare Nostrum*, but the critical thing is that Search and Rescue resources, rather than border control resources, are increased now, and that they are increased immediately - not later in the year or even in a few weeks' time. (ECSA, 2014, para. 4)

The cooperation between the UNHCR, the IOM and ICS to help draw attention to the issue of maritime migrant rescue reinforces the risks involved. Moreover, it contextualizes claims that merchant ships are avoiding migrant heavy areas, and migrant rescue. While this may be true, the response is part of a broader geopolitical effort to block maritime migration.

The position of the International Chamber of Shipping and the European Community of Shipowners Association is echoed in the UN body responsible for the coordination of search and rescue (SAR). The International Maritime Organizations Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) manages navigation and communication, including the analysis and approval of: ships' routing measures and ship reporting systems; carriage requirements and performance standards for navigational and communication equipment; the long-range identification and tracking (LRIT) system; and the development of e-navigation. It also oversees search and rescue matters and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). The NCSR reports to the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee. According to this committee "unsafe mixed migration at sea" is a serious issue that requires attention and "maritime SAR is not an acceptable long-term solution, and the way forward is to promote appropriate and

effective action at the United Nations” (IMRF, 2018, May, p. 3). The international federation of shipmasters and the IMRF also support this position and join the Committee in urging full reporting of incidents at sea to the IMO. According to the IMO Secretariat at the policy level, the Global SAR Plan is part of the Global Integrated Shipping Information System. This system encourages member states to regularly update their Global SAR Plan. This updated information helps Rescue Coordination Centres to “act promptly when they are dealing with a distress situation across borders” (IMRF, 2018, May, p. 4).

There is no requirement or responsibility requiring merchant ships to navigate through areas where migrants are in distress. Sidestepping areas known to be risky, or avoiding dangerous routes is entirely different than failing to respond to a distress call from a rescue coordination centre. According to Peter Hinchliffe, Secretary General of ICS, “When we talk about increased Search and Rescue operations, we mean increasing the number of coastguard and other appropriate vessels that are immediately available to help and expanding the geographical area of patrols to those areas where migrants are most likely to be found before they get into serious difficulty” (ECSA, 2014, para. 8). He added: “When called upon to assist, merchant ships will always come to the aid of anyone in distress at sea, but as the tragic events of the weekend seem to have shown, merchant ships are really not best equipped to deal with such large-scale operations involving hundreds of people” (ECSA, 2014, para. 9). Nevertheless, merchant ships will continue to be important actors in large scale rescues.

Conclusion

The Mediterranean Sea is a popular route for shipping companies. It only accounts for one percent of the world’s oceans, yet it accounts for close to 15% of global shipping activity (Coomber et. al, 2016, p. 102). The commercial ships that contribute to this traffic will continue to play a significant role in a coordinated effort to rescue thousands of people from the Mediterranean.

While there are a variety of risks involved when large commercial vessels attempt to rescue hundreds of people, the capacity of commercial vessels to transport large numbers of people and the proximity of a vessel relative to other vessels and to people in distress will always contribute to how ships of opportunity are evaluated by rescue coordination centres. Seafarers and ship captains are uniquely aware of the geopolitical landscape that makes migrants and refugees difficult people to rescue. Their efforts to distance themselves from making refugee determinations and in requesting further state sponsored humanitarian assistance is widely publicized. The merchant navy's commitment to rescue is longstanding and deeply geopolitical; these ships are literally flagged vessels of their respective national politics. In the Mediterranean, they navigate changing search and rescue zones that are communicated and coordinated by rescue coordination centres on shore, inside Europe. The idea here is not to discredit the testimonies of people who may have been bypassed by ships while in distress on the Mediterranean, nor to suggest that instances of non-assistance have never occurred. Instead, the aim has been to explore the way seafarers navigate their responsibility to rescue people attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Europe.

As the reports of commercial ships avoiding rescues were circulating in 2017, a group of far-right activists, Defend Europe, raised more than 100,000 dollars to charter a 422-tonne vessel called the C-Star for their mission on the Mediterranean Sea, which was to disrupt non-governmental organization vessels from performing rescues, and to send refugees back to Northern Africa (Oppenheim, 2017). The political polarization that defines approaches to forced migration and rescue on the Mediterranean was on full display when the Defend Europe vessel required assistance from one of the same NGO ships it was trying to disrupt (Oppenheim, 2017). The coming together of these two vessels provides fitting physical and symbolic representation of the

current geopolitical climate in Europe. Furthermore, it provides insight into the human geography of rescue that shapes rescue policy and procedures on the Mediterranean.

Chapter Five:

Failure to Disembark: The Geopolitics of Commercial Rescue on the Mediterranean

People crossing the Mediterranean are variously described as migrants and asylum seekers; while security organizations like the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) often adopt the former, humanitarian organizations generally prefer the latter to describe these people on the move. This chapter takes a critical approach to the uniform construction of people crossing the Mediterranean, both as migrants or the many permutations of the term—for example forced migrant, economic migrant—as well as the blanket application of terms like asylum seeker, refugee or humanitarian victim. While my analysis will engage with these terms interchangeably throughout this examination of rescues involving commercial ships on the Mediterranean, I acknowledge that the terms themselves can frame the analysis in ways that construct people as both victims and threats, sometimes without thought. In this analysis, how people crossing the Mediterranean to Europe are characterized can mean the difference between life and death. For example, in 2016 security organizations celebrated a massive drop in the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe from over one million to under 400,000 in 2016 (Frontex 2015; Frontex 2016), while humanitarian organizations focused on the fact that despite the overwhelming decrease in crossings the number of asylum seekers who were lost at sea increased from 3,771 to 5,011 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). My analysis will explore how seafarers and shipping companies have been responsible for rescuing large numbers of people from the Mediterranean and how the risks associated with these rescues alongside the reluctance of states to allow those rescued to be disembarked help explain how maritime rescue is coordinated in the Central Mediterranean.

In June of 2018, the Mediterranean rescue coordination centre (MRCC) in Rome ordered the *Alexander Maersk*, a Danish cargo ship, to participate in a rescue involving migrants in the

Central Mediterranean. The merchant vessel took on 113 people from the German humanitarian rescue ship, the *Lifeline*; however, when Italy's interior minister Matteo Salvini initially refused the ship entry to disembark the rescued migrants, the ship's captain, his crew and the migrants were forced to remain at sea for five days (DW, 2019). My analysis highlights how seafarers and commercial ships are identified as being in the vicinity of a boat in distress and how their involvement in rescues is coordinated from shore, by rescue coordination centres. Moreover, I balance critiques of non-assistance levelled against commercial vessels with reports from seafarers that suggest that maritime rescue is nuanced, ranging from bringing people on board your own vessel to providing lifesaving services, and instances where people are deliberately sinking their own vessels and throwing people in the water to force commercial vessels to take them on board. Compared to ships owned and/or chartered by humanitarian organizations, merchant vessels have received considerably less attention for their role in rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean. This chapter analyses decisions taken by commercial ship captains who encounter migrants in distress at sea. By implication, the humanitarian rescue ships in the Central Mediterranean are positioned within a broader framework of border security and standardized international responses to forced migration on a global scale. The primary argument is that the role of commercial ships in migrant rescue on the Mediterranean shows how commercial ships are used by states to offshore migrants and keep them out of Europe.

A number of scholars have outlined how the EU seeks to externalize the security risks posed by migration on the Mediterranean (Aradau & Van Munster, 2007; Lutterbeck, 2006; Carrera, 2007; Huysmans, 2000). In maritime geographies, ships play a pivotal role in the process of securitization through externalization. By securitization, I mean the discursive and public process that involves the social and political construction of risks to national and or state security

(Buzan, Waever & de Wilde, 1998). Securitization and externalization are mutually reinforcing processes that seek to identify and control the risks associated with forced migration. Together they form a conceptual framework that lays out the highly geographical power relations that influence decisions taken by ship captains to rescue, or not, migrants on the Mediterranean. Through an examination of commercial ships, this chapter animates the geopolitics of marine rescue that shapes the responses of ship captains to migrants in distress and mediates their role in rescue situations on the Mediterranean. The aim is to create a geography of ships that analyzes the border security politics that produce a concerted effort to deter migration in relation to the rescue of migrants on the Mediterranean. Ship captains rely on standard operating procedures that map well onto their terrestrial counterpart: they seek to protect the borders of their vessels like national governments seek to protect their land based and sea-based borders. Yet, seafarers have explicitly publicized how their responsibility at sea is to rescue people in distress and not to determine who is, and who is not, a refugee (International Chamber of Shipping, 2015). Nevertheless, after migrants have been rescued, border security politics are ignited around the disembarkation of Mediterranean migrants at European ports.

The responsibility of ships to assist vessels in distress is set out in tradition and international treaties. However, before the 1979 international Search and Rescue (SAR) framework organized the world's oceans into official maritime SAR regions—where coastal states assumed responsibility for the coordination of rescues—there was no globally recognized system for maritime rescue. In theory, SAR zones are designed to delineate maritime rescue regions and consequently avoid situations where no state is responsible for coordinating rescue (International Maritime Organization, 2000). The SAR Convention mandates that coastal states with adjacent SAR regions establish cooperative agreements to govern their respective SAR zones (IMO, 2000).

In practice, however, these maritime rescue regions have proven to be malleable. Italy and Malta, for example, have ratified different versions of the SAR convention and consistently argue over the geography of maritime rescue responsibility. According to Heller et al (2012), the “result has been lengthy stand-off during which migrants have died, and a number of confrontations between Italian and Maltese naval vessels literally trying to block each other from entering its territorial waters and disembark rescued migrants” (p. 26).

This chapter is situated within but also critical of a European security framework on migration; it draws on original research in and about the Central Mediterranean. By now, research that catalogues attempts to securitize Europe’s borders from the risks associated with migration across the Mediterranean has positioned these maritime movements within broader geopolitical trends (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008). Part of this growing body of research has established the rising deployment and upgrading of different types of security forces involved in policing the Mediterranean (Lutterbeck, 2006; Heller, Pezzani & Studio, 2012; Ciabbari, 2014). Research outlines the role of humanitarian ships in responding to migrants in distress on the Mediterranean, highlighting some of the complexities of providing humanitarian aid at sea (Cusamano, 2018; Cusamano, 2019; Cusamano, 2020). The analysis in this chapter shifts the focus from NGO ships to commercial ships, and to how seafarers have responded to migrants in distress at sea. To situate their responses within a geopolitical framework, I describe recent changes in search and rescue zones in the Mediterranean to help animate the human geography of maritime rescue and security. Although there has been recent attention paid to the policing of the Mediterranean (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, Heller & Pezzani, 2017), Lutterbeck’s (2006) observation that “the ways in which these measures have themselves shaped the migratory patterns in the Mediterranean have been given only scant treatment” remains prescient (p. 60). Moreover,

Lutterbeck's (2006) analysis has helped recent research describe how the language of security imposed on the maritime geography of the Mediterranean has shaped the way migration to Europe is debated (Stierl, 2018; van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020).

The first section of this chapter describes the combination of methods I employed to investigate the role of commercial ships and seafarers in the rescue of migrants in the Central Mediterranean. These include participant observation at one of the largest border security conferences in Europe that took place in Rome Italy in 2018; 24 semi-structured interviews with shipmasters and maritime organizational representatives; data and maps published by European and Border Security Agency (Frontex) that categorize the movements of migrants across the Mediterranean; data from the UNHCR that documents migrant deaths on the Mediterranean; research that connects geopolitical agreements to migration and rescue trends on the water; and a series of freedom of information requests made to Frontex that highlight the shifting role of commercial ships in rescues in the Central Mediterranean. The second section of the chapter introduces the seafarers and organizational representatives that participated in this study and establishes their uniformly consistent commitment to upholding the responsibility to rescue people in distress at sea. However, this section also works to problematize their stated commitment to rescue by introducing instances where participants describe nuances that ultimately work to frustrate this uniformity, when it comes to the rescue of migrants in the Central Mediterranean. This frustration is largely related to how "rescue" is defined. The third section of the chapter analyses the paradox of how commercial ships were involved in the deadliest maritime rescues as well as responsible for rescuing thousands of people. In this section I outline key incidents involving commercial vessels and describe their shifting role in rescues that took place in the Central Mediterranean between 2013 to 2018. The analysis incorporates findings gathered from

participants that describe how commercial vessels are employed as “ships of opportunity” by rescue coordination centres: ships near people in distress at sea. In this way it extends existing work on the geopolitics of maritime rescue zones to highlight how commercial vessels are, and will continue to be, a major component of rescue coordination efforts in the Central Mediterranean. Finally, I position commercial rescue within a securitization framework that describes how the growth and subsequent criminalization of NGO rescue vessels operating in the Mediterranean emerged after commercial vessels were reported to be bypassing areas where migrants were often in need of rescue—as a result of the risks involved with performing these rescues. To document this geography of avoidance I rely on a series of freedom of information requests to European Border Security Agency Frontex, input from study participants and organizational documents.

Methods of Mapping Maritime Migration Routes to Europe

To explore the contours of securitization in Europe I met with a variety of private and state-based actors involved in securing the maritime borders of Europe. The never-ending need for enhanced border security is constantly being met with an ever-expanding group of security service and product providers. The governmentalizing effect of securitization is embodied in the coming together of these mutually accommodating security enterprises. The trajectory of the research in my analysis was guided by participant observation at one of the largest conference gatherings of representatives from a variety of border security organizations from across Europe in 2018 in Rome, Italy.⁴

⁴ Presenters at the conference included, the President of World Maritime University; the Director-General of China Rescue and Salvage; the Head of the Maritime Human Factors Research Unit at Chalmers University of Technology; the Operational Lifeboat Inspector for the Royal Netherlands Sea Rescue Institution; a Master Mariner with the German Maritime SAR Service; a Master Mariner with the Swedish Rescue Society, a Commodore with the Royal Navy, United Kingdom; Training and Project Coordinator with the Swedish Sea Rescue Society; the Passenger Vessel Safety & Mass Rescue Operations Specialist for the United States Coast Guard; the Chief of Staff for China Rescue and Salvage; Superintendent of Maritime Search and Rescue in the Canadian Coast Guard; the Former Head of Search and Rescue Operations, U.K; the Manager of the New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat; Master Mariner and Project Manager for the Mixed Migrant Safety Project; Master Mariner and Operations Director for the Royal National

In addition to the 2018 Border Security conference in Rome, I organized twenty-four semi-structured interviews with shipmasters and representatives from different maritime organizations. The purposive sampling of stakeholders in major maritime organizations and seafarers with experience on the Mediterranean helped identify the way migrants in distress are characterized as humanitarian victims and as potential risks to the security of ships and crews. As previously discussed in this dissertation, the majority of participants in the Border Security conference and the interviews were men, which coincides with reports that women only represent two percent of the world's 1.2 million seafarers (International Maritime Organization, 2020).

The findings in this chapter rely heavily on information and data provided by Frontex, including migration maps of routes used to cartographically categorize migration across the Mediterranean. While the data provided by Frontex is incomplete and in isolation obstructs the reality of migrant death rates on the Mediterranean, the material that was made available offers substantial opportunity for analysis. Through a series of freedom of information (FOI) requests to Frontex, made between December 2017 and September 2019, I was able to identify 359 specific incidents involving migrants and commercial ships. The FOI requests produced data about rescues/interdictions at sea and documented the interactions between commercial ships and migrant boats. To produce this data, I had to familiarize myself with the different routes and corresponding maritime security operations that operate on the Mediterranean. Specifically, the annual Frontex risk analysis reports provided key migration figures that could be used to inform my analysis of how geopolitics impacts the movement and death of people on the Mediterranean

Lifeboat Institution; and a Master Mariner and Maritime Safety Investigator for the Finnish Lifeboat Institution (IMRF, 2017).

Safety Agency; 17) Head of Operations Division, EU Satellite Centre; 18) Technical Cooperation and Development Specialist, International Organization for Migration (IOM); and 19) Director, Program on Civil Security, George C Marshall Center for European Security Studies.

(Frontex, 2015; Frontex, 2016; Frontex, 2017). Moreover, the massive amount of information produced by Frontex required that I follow and narrow my analysis to specific routes and timeframes to manage my requests. The two maps (see Appendix C: Figure 2 and 3) are from Frontex’s 2015 and 2016 risk analysis reports. They outline different maritime routes to Europe and capture the massive changes in migration numbers that took place from 2015 to 2016. Moreover, they provide a background for a more detailed analysis that seeks to understand the geopolitical arrangements that influence these figures.

Recent research takes a critical approach to the cartographic representation of migration across the Mediterranean by security organizations like the European Border Security Organization, Frontex (Cobarrubias, 2019; Casas-Cortes, et al., 2017; van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020). This body of work describes how the production of migration maps fit within a border security framework and colonial history of geographic thinking and European map creation. In this chapter, the language of security is upended and works “against the grain” with data produced through a variety of technological and bureaucratic channels. Dividing the migration that traverses the Mediterranean into different routes is an inherently colonial practice and the aim of border security has never been migrant rescue and asylum. My analysis disaggregates Frontex risk analysis data to provide a more detailed understanding of how shifting approaches to migration on the Mediterranean impacts the movement of and risks for migrants. My central argument is that terrestrial geopolitics, defined by key agreements that were designed to securitize European borders against migration, influence the way migrants in distress at sea are conceptualized by seafarers. To this end, the record year of 2015 provides a necessary entry point to this examination. More than one million migrants arrived in Europe in 2015—five times more migrants than the previous year (UNHCR, 2017). Then in 2016, the number of arrivals dropped from over a million

to just below 400,000 (UNHCR, 2017). This drastic reduction of Mediterranean crossings obscures how the actual risk to migrants attempting to reach Europe by sea were impacted by securitization efforts and the introduction in March 2016 of the EU-Turkey deal (Kingsley, 2016). Despite the massive drop in migrants from 2015 to 2016 the number of people that drowned while crossing the Mediterranean increased from 3,771 in 2015 to 5,011 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). The UNHCR has attributed increased deaths to a variety of factors including increasingly security-oriented approaches to migration by the EU's border control organization Frontex, the use of more dangerous routes and boats, travel during bad weather, and the embarkation with of thousands of people. Moreover, Europol (2016) reports that in 2015 migrant smugglers netted between three and six billion Euros transporting people across the Mediterranean.

Human trafficking and smuggling are not the only enterprises built on the plight of migrants: the rescue, processing and detention of migrants on the Mediterranean represents a growing market for the humanitarian/security industry which, in addition to naval operations, includes humanitarian organizations with their own ships. Ongoing disagreements over where migrants can disembark have consistently made headlines across Europe and North America, and the criminalization of ship captains and non-governmental organizations are all part of increased efforts to securitize Europe's borders. These efforts to criminalize humanitarian rescue are dealt with in the final section of this chapter. The aim in this section is to outline how key incidents on the Mediterranean connect to the externalization of the perceived risks associated with migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe. Specifically, I again draw on the death of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi in 2015 and the failed rescue attempt involving cargo ship, the *King Jacob*: an incident that claimed the lives of over 800 migrants in 2015. While the response to these tragedies could not be more disparate, a securitization framework applies to both.

Of the more than one million migrants that crossed the Mediterranean to Europe in 2015, the overwhelming majority (885,386) did so along the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece—17 times the number in 2014, which was itself a record year (Frontex, 2015; Frontex, 2016). Most of the people on this route in 2015 originated from Syria, followed by Afghanistan and Somalia. Migrants were disembarked at several Greek islands, but mostly on the island of Lesbos. In 2016, the EU arranged to provide a six billion euro readmission funding package in exchange for Turkey preventing onward journeys to the EU by asylum seekers (Lehner, 2019; Kanter, 2019). The closing of Eastern European land borders and the agreement between Turkey and the EU worked to externalize the risks associated with maritime migration. Turkey became a holding site for asylum seekers on the Eastern route. This border securitization effort contributed to a drastic reduction the flow of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea from 885,386 migrants in 2015 to 182,277 in 2016 (Frontex, 2017).

The major increases in the number of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean introduced a variety of concerns that frustrated seafarers and their ability to perform safe rescues. For example, prior to the *King Jacob* incident and the death of Alan Kurdi, bulk carrier *CS Caprice* was on route across the Mediterranean when it responded to a distress call from Malta's rescue coordination centre to help 500 people drifting north of Libya on a small fishing boat in October 2014. According to reports, there were only enough lifejackets onboard for 30 people and food supplies for 20 people (Saul, 2015, para. 41). The *CS Caprice* is owned by Campbell Shipping company and the senior manager for marine and safety at the company expressed concern that the rescue took place "off the coast of Africa and there was the Ebola situation at the time," and he worried that the 20 crew members on the ship could be at risk (Saul, 2015, para. 16). In April 2015, six months before media images of Alan Kurdi went viral, more than 800 people drowned in the

Central Mediterranean when a boat full of migrants rammed into a massive cargo ship, the *King Jacob*, which was trying to rescue them. Most of the migrants were from sub-Saharan African states, many fleeing from poverty and violence in Libya where they were in transit (Miglierini, 2016).

In response to this titanic tragedy, the European Union launched a military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean, European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED), designed to “identify, capture and destroy vessels before they are used by traffickers” and to “disrupt trafficking networks, bring the perpetrators to justice and seize their assets” (EUNAVFOR MED, 2016, para. 1). In addition, there was a marked decrease in the number of people rescued by commercial ships from “11,954 in the first five months of 2015 to only 3,689 from June to September, thus dropping from a contribution of 30 percent of the total of all rescues to 4 percent” (Forensic Oceanography, 2018). Instead of ensuring safe passage or protection for migrants, EUNAVFOR MED sought to undermine the transportation links that made such passage possible. Unlike the Eastern Mediterranean route, migration through the Central Mediterranean, however, did not decrease in 2016: the total number of sea arrivals to Italy reached 181,436, an 18% increase compared with 2015 (UNHCR, 2017). To provide a background for analysis of commercial rescue and migration on the Mediterranean, the next section briefly describes how risks posed by commercial migrant rescue are articulated by seafarers.

Seafarers, Border Security and Maritime Rescue Responsibility

The research done for this chapter follows an established approach to studying organizations and people in positions of power (Pred & Watts, 1992; Hyndman, 2000). All the people that participated in this study were comfortable being interviewed and most were even willing to be quoted directly; however, I chose to keep people’s identity anonymous. In many ways the authoritative and leadership positions held by the participants in this study contributed to my

being able to elicit detailed responses to my questions about rescue at sea. My experience at the border security conference in Rome helped to provide insight into the highly militarized maritime world. There was no mention of migrant deaths on the Mediterranean at this conference; instead, the focus was on what was described as a crisis at the border:

With the migration crisis ongoing throughout the Mediterranean and mainland Europe, Border Security is at the forefront of planning for nations around the world. This year's event will bring together senior border security experts from around the globe to discuss how to manage the security of borders at a time when mass irregular migration and cross-border terrorism have all nations at high alert. (11th Annual Border Security conference, Rome Italy)

The purpose of this section is to analyze the geopolitics that animates migratory routes across the Mediterranean by exploring the way seafarers respond to migrants in these contested maritime geographies. Moreover, the organizations in this study indicate a strong concentration of established maritime organizations that represent key maritime interests (Appendix A: Table 2). For example, the International Chamber of Shipping is the largest shipping organization representing 90% of merchant tonnage; the International Group is comprised of thirteen Protection and Indemnity Clubs (P & I Clubs) that provide liability coverage for approximately 90% of the world's maritime cargo; the Nautilus Maritime Trade Union represents 20,000 maritime professionals including shipmasters and was originally created in response to the 1,850 Merchant Shipping Act. On the surface responses in my study followed the industry trend that expresses a strong commitment to uphold the maritime responsibility to rescue. In this section I introduce some of these articulations and in so doing I lay the groundwork for the rest of the analysis which provides a more nuanced reporting of how migrants in distress in the Central Mediterranean challenge the solidarity of seafarers with respect to this humanitarian commitment.

The ship captains and seafarers that participated in this study all expressed a commitment to uphold their responsibility to rescue people in distress at sea. With respect to their position on rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, seafarers have consistently worked to separate their decisions to rescue people at sea from any geopolitical considerations. Explicitly, almost all interviews stated that decisions to rescue were not based on a person's migration status. A senior representative from the Nautilus Maritime Trade Union, with over 20 years of experience at sea, expressed the organization's stance in the following way,

[t]he position we take as an organization which is that these are persons at sea, that need assistance, it is not up to the master to determine the status of that individual be it they are a person who is been shipwrecked or an economic migrant, a refugee, an asylum seeker, it's not up to the master to determine the status. Assistance should be rendered to anybody, with certain exceptions determined by the captain. (Int. 3)

Another shipmaster, and Secretary General of the world's largest ship managing association, described how most rescue situations encountered by shipmasters will not involve migrants

I am a shipmaster. If I see someone in trouble, I go. This is the very principle of working at sea. Remember in my mind, as a master, I am not dealing with immigrants, first of all I am dealing with a human being at sea, fellow seafarers, that's 99.9% of accidents that I am dealing with. (Int. 17)

According to this shipmaster,

only in particular area of Mediterranean corner, not the whole Mediterranean and maybe Somalia is where you come in with immigrants and piracy issue. The rest of the world, which is 99.5%, is genuine fisherman or seafarer or yachting. I cannot have in my mind that all the time these guys are terrorists, that these guys are foul guys that are going to kill me, ok. (Int. 17)

This participant added to the idea that shipmasters should not make assumptions about the migration or criminal status of people in distress at sea, describing how immigrants are indistinguishable from any other person,

[n]ow, how do you know who is immigrant and who is not, do you think these guys have a stamp on forehead saying I am an immigrant, so you don't do you? No. So we don't know either. Until we are there. And actually, maybe even maybe when they are already onboard of my ship then I find out that they are immigrants. (Int. 17).

All the seafarers in this study expressed commitment to upholding their responsibility to help people in distress at sea, however, there were a variety of mitigating circumstances that could challenge their efforts, for example, in situations wherein a rescue performance would risk the security of their crew and ship. In short “there are now reasons for not picking up people, that are not unreasonable. It's unsafe if you think your own ship is in danger” (Int. 3, Senior Secretary Nautilus Trade Union).

While participants in this study expressed their commitment to rescue people in distress at sea there were those that described a nuanced approach to upholding this ancient maritime responsibility. These nuances are related to how rescues on the Mediterranean are coordinated from terrestrial rescue coordination centres and I will present these findings in the following sections of this analysis. For now, I want to focus on elaborating on the responses that define how seafarers narrate their responsibility to rescue. The next sections of my analysis will, to a degree, contest some of the positions expressed here: the aim is to present a disconnect between how all seafarers express a commitment to rescue, yet some introduce a variety extenuating circumstances that can impact the way shipcaptains respond to people in distress. For example, when asked about

the ability of shipowners and shipping companies to influence whether their ship performs a rescue one participant answered:

International maritime law applies, that's the bottom line. You have to assist. It's punishable not to assist. On all ships the master has the final word. He can overrule. On the boat he is the master. It would take a lot, especially if he sees a situation that requires his assistance, it would be very difficult for the company on shore to instruct the master, if that would come up its highly punishable not to assist people in distress. So, it would be extremely difficult for a captain to make such a decision. (MSF boat pilot, Int. 8)

In this response the nuance is not easily detected, while this seafarer upholds the commitment to rescue understanding his role in these rescues sheds important light onto debates surrounding what constitutes a "rescue." Specifically, this seafarer is a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) pilot for MSF, and in maritime humanitarian operations RIBs are referred to as Fast Rescue Crafts (FRCs): "The operation is dependent on FRCs (fast rescue craft), these are being launched from the mothership. All these boats have smaller RIBs with them. Everyone involved in this operation launches RIBs and I'm the RIB pilot" (Int. 8, MSF boat pilot). This is significant because his response to the idea that seafarers may abdicate their responsibility to rescue as a result of direction by financial interests through shipowners and/or for fear of risks to the security of their ship and crew is based on his knowledge of the different methods used to perform rescue and specifically the idea that, often, rescues are performed by launching FRCs/RIBs from the mothership. His experience highlights how there are no mandated ways that define exactly how a rescue must be performed:

There are many actors out there, and the different actors do it different ways. There is not like a set of protocols that this is how you do it. Anyone is free to do the rescues in whatever manner they choose. But of course, the MRCC has a pretty good overview of the boats and

crews and capacities of each boat that are in the zone. All the information about the boats is available for anyone on AIS. (Int. 8, MSF boat pilot)

In sum his position is that ships and seafarers must respond to calls from rescue coordination centres to participate in rescues, but how these rescues are performed will ultimately be the decision of individual shipmasters. In the opinion of this seafarer,

Different context requires different procedures. In the summertime in the Med its hot, and there's hardly any waves, so you can prioritize some of the rescues. You would be looking at a whole different thing if you were to rescue someone who has just been shipwrecked in the north Atlantic in the winter. It's extremely difficult to come up with a set of standard operating procedures which goes for everywhere. Also, the winter season looks very different than the summer season in the Central Med context. So, I don't know about that one. How would you ever get that through? (Int. 8)

Seafarers inhabit a world where the chain of command is clearly defined: captains occupy the highest position of authority on ships. This was evident in my interviews where many captains were quick to point to my own lack of experience at sea and therefore my inability to fully appreciate the intricacies of performing a maritime rescue. Moreover, my questions that challenged this authority by suggesting commercial interests could override the control captains have over their vessels, or the idea that standard operating procedures for rescues could be implemented were mostly dismissed with deference to the absolute authority of shipmasters. Nevertheless, the next parts of this analysis will continue to pushback against this absolute control.

The Coordination of Maritime Rescue and the Geopolitics of Search and Rescue Zones

The geographic areas delineated by search and rescue (SAR) regions are not simply extensions of a coastal states' borders; states' may extend their SAR region to accept rescue responsibility farther, into the high seas. To analyse the way seafarers have responded to migrants

in distress on the Mediterranean it is necessary to position this analysis within a particular time and space, namely the Central Mediterranean from 2013-2018. Some observers have documented how reductions in operational rescue zones defined by states on the Mediterranean contributed to increased deaths (Gloninger, 2019; Cusumano, 2019; Williams, 2018). In this analysis I examine the paradox of how, between 2013 and 2018, major incidents involving commercial vessels claimed the lives of thousands of people, and where commercial vessels were responsible for rescuing thousands of people in the Mediterranean. Moreover, outlining the shifting role of commercial ships from *Mare Nostrum* to Operation *Triton* helps to explain the significance of commercial ships to maritime rescue.

The sinking of two boats that led to the death of over 600 migrants in October 2013, initiated the Italian government's launching of *Mare Nostrum*, or Our Sea, in English. The operation lasted from October 2013 until October 2014: rescuing over 156,000 migrants on the Mediterranean, primarily on the Central route (Cusumano, 2017, p. 92). The Italian navy patrolled a 70,000 square kilometre of the Mediterranean under the *Mare Nostrum* operation, an area that encompassed the search and rescue zones of Italy, Malta and Libya (Davies, 2014). Moreover, the Italian Coast Guard relied heavily on the efforts of seafarers and commercial vessels during *Mare Nostrum*: in 2014, 600 vessels were involved in rescuing 42,061 people, representing 25% of all rescues (Forensic Oceanography, 2018). Nevertheless, in late 2014, a variety of factors including increased migration, high costs, a lack of EU-wide burden sharing, and a narrative that considered the rescue operation as responsible for increases in maritime migration, led to the cancellation of Italian-funded *Mare Nostrum* and its replacement with the EU funded Frontex operation, *Triton*. According to the International Chamber of Shipping, from January 2014 to September 2015, more than 1,000 commercial vessels rescued more than 65,000 people on the Mediterranean (Saul,

2015). By late 2014, increased migration became associated in public opinion with the increased rescue efforts mandated under *Mare Nostrum*, and divisions within the Italian citizenry grew increasingly disgruntled with a lack of EU-wide burden sharing. These divisions prompted the abandonment of *Mare Nostrum* and its replacement with Frontex operation *Triton*. According to reports the end of *Mare Nostrum* left “2.5 million square kilometres of sea [...] unpatrolled” (MOAS, 2017). When *Mare Nostrum* was terminated, the commercial shipping industry filled the gap left by Italy’s receding operational rescue zone and was responsible for the rescue of 11,954 people from Jan to May 2015, making it the primary actor conducting rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean (Heller & Pezzani, 2016, p. 38).

The end of the *Mare Nostrum* operation in 2014 and its replacement by the EU-backed Frontex operation, *Triton*, marked a shift from a humanitarian approach to rescue to a securitized approach geared towards managing migration on the Mediterranean (Patalano, 2015; Williams, 2020). This trend towards securitization is discussed in the literature on forced migration. According to Hyndman and Mountz (2008) refugee protection on the Mediterranean is invoked, not by law, but “through ad hoc decisions of governments made through offshore processing centres, bilateral readmission agreements, and other tools of the transnational state” that ultimately work around the rights set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention 1951 (p. 251-252). Shifting operational search and rescue regions (SARs) in the Central Mediterranean led to increasingly risky encounters between migrants and commercial ships. While NGOs receive considerable media coverage for their efforts in rescuing migrants, commercial vessels and seafarers have been criticized for reportedly bypassing migrant heavy areas on the Mediterranean in order to avoid performing rescues (Aarstad, 2015; Cusumano, 2017).

My interviews with 24 maritime professionals, including 20 shipmasters with over one hundred years of combined experience at sea, suggests that these critiques overshadow the substantial effort by seafarers in responding to migrant deaths on the Mediterranean. In short, commercial ships have played a significant role in responding to migrants in distress on the Mediterranean, and exploring exactly how commercial ships extend European securitization efforts brings recent maritime rescue trends on the Mediterranean into relief. For example, one participant in this study described how EU countries are responsible for dealing with migrants in distress on the Mediterranean, and how merchant vessels are employed as ships of opportunity in maritime rescue:

The Italian and Maltese navy were very concerned because they are the closest in the Mediterranean, of the European countries which is responsible for rescue. So, Italy and Malta got together, and they did manage to get some NATO support and that's how we now have ships, Navy ships, operating there and the modus operandi for the merchant ships changed because we are now, not supposed to pick up people unless there is no navy around. So, you have got a background now. (Int. 17, Captain, and Secretary General of ship managing company)

Beyond being governed by maritime law and practice, the participants in this study recognized how the responsibility of merchant vessels to rescue people in distress often rests on being identified as “ships of opportunity”: any vessel close enough to aid another vessel in distress. One Captain described this responsibility as stemming from a realization that terrestrial rescue coordination systems lack the capacity to address both large-scale rescues and those that unfold far from shore:

Ships have to help each other. Have you ever thought about a passenger ship which has 5,000 people on board? When every helicopter can take 5 people, how many helicopters would you need to go to rescue 5,000 people? Even the whole Canada and US together does not have enough helicopters to fly. It is all very well if you are 20 or 50 miles offshore, maybe a helicopter can reach you. The rescue signal comes to the shore and then the shore sees who is available and is sending ships to help. That is assuming that shore knows there is a problem at sea. (Int. 17)

He went on to describe how the role of commercial vessels shifted from the time of *Mare Nostrum* in 2014 to Operation *Triton* in 2015,

from 2015 we managed to get the coordination centre in Italy: they would send a helicopter, or they would send a plane. It wasn't ships that were detecting those immigrant boats anymore. It was navy with the helicopters and air support, and they were able to tell us guys do not go there, because there is a immigrant boat, we are dealing with it with our dedicated navy ships, or sometimes they would say please come along because we do not have a navy dedicated ship within the vicinity, we need you. And that's a different ball game, because then we know we are going to the immigrants, and then we know what we are going to do, and we know there is support coming from the navy as well. So that was a big game changer for us do you get the difference? (Int. 17.)

According to recent reports the Central Mediterranean is among the most heavily monitored places on earth (Patalano, 2015). Participants with experience rescuing migrants in this highly militarized region respond to criticisms of non-assistance by referencing how

it's the MRCC that coordinates all the operations for that whole area. The whole area is under MRCC. The MRCC has a pretty good overview of the boats and crews and

capacities of each boat that are in the zone. All the information about the boats is available for anyone on AIS. (Int. 8, MSF boat pilot)

Also, the participants in this study were unaware of any instances where a commercial vessel denied a request from the MRCC to participate in a rescue. The risks that commercial rescues pose for migrants in distress were widely documented prior to the *King Jacob* incident on the Mediterranean in 2015. The next section explores how the risks witnessed during the *King Jacob* incident contributed to merchant vessels changing their routes and how this shift coincides with the deadliest year on the Mediterranean.

Vessels of Securitization and the Criminalization of Rescue on the Mediterranean

This section will anchor the organizational response of seafarers to migrants in distress and to the EU's securitization agenda. The EU's securitization agenda is captured in Hyndman and Mountz (2008): essentially it includes surveillance, a reduction in rescue zones, the instrumentalization of commercial vessels, and the criminalization of rescue (see also Ciabbari, 2014). To extend this research I describe the physical risks that make performing commercial maritime rescues dangerous and review research that details how NGO ships have been criminalized for attempts to disembark migrants in Europe. The central strategy of externalization is the movement of refugee determination procedures away from a destination country's own borders, and techniques that are employed to achieve this aim include what Hyndman and Giles (2017) refer to as a "geopolitical constellation" of readmission agreements, visa regulations and interdiction practices, and biometric requirements (p. 24). Following signals from the UNHCR to pursue 'preventative' policies (Hyndman, 2012; Hyndman, 2000), EU states have organized bilateral arrangements for "extra-territorial processing in the regions where migrants originate" (Betts, 2004). Together these policies and accompanying practices have kept asylum seekers outside sovereign territory.

In the Mediterranean, the small Italian island of Lampedusa, administratively part of Sicily, has a history of being instrumentalized for the purposes of keeping migrants from ever reaching the shores of mainland Italy. In 2004, reports suggest that migrants disembarking in Lampedusa would be flown back to Libya without providing any opportunity to make claims for asylum, contrary to established international refugee law against refoulement (UNHCR, 2005). Although seafarers have voiced their commitment to uphold the responsibility to rescue fellow seafarers and that they are not in the business of determining whether people in maritime distress are refugees, the idea that rescuing migrants is inherently risky remains prescient. Andrew Linington of the Nautilus Maritime Trade Union explained how “a lot of the ships that go to the Mediterranean have been in the Middle East and have been through problem areas like Somalia, so they are actually equipped with stuff to deter people from coming on board” (Hughes, 2015, para. 16). Weather can also make for difficult rescue conditions, the general manager of a Greek-based shipping company responsible for rescuing more than 600 people told reporters that he believed “Merchant ships are being used as radio taxis to pick up people” (Saul, 2015, para. 7). He argued that for merchant ships every rescue is risky and that “with a purpose-built ship, you have just to walk from one boat to the other. It’s another thing climbing from a small boat onto a vessel the size of a building in the middle of a rough sea” (Saul, 2015, para. 32). For example, the captain of the *CS Caprice*, a bulk carrier carrying 27,000 tonnes of barley, described how “People were hanging off the side of the fishing boat as the *CS Caprice* came alongside, and the wind was pushing the small boat towards the ship’s massive propeller” (Saul, 2015, para. 31). He recounted how the rescue took hours to get people safely on board his bigger ship and how the migrants were tired, carrying their belongings, and that “some are carrying children or their babies” (Saul, 2015, para. 35).

After reports of numerous risky and deadly incidents in 2015 began to circulate, shipping companies, seafarers and coordination centres determined that commercial ships and seafarers were being exploited by traffickers. According to participants in this study, rescue coordination centres and the commercial shipping industry decided that commercial vessels would stop immediately taking migrants on board. Instead, they took the position that “if we come across a vessel which is in distress, but its afloat, there’s no need for me to rescue anybody. The best lifeboat is your own ship” (captain and Secretary General of Intermanager, Int. 17). So, at first the plan was for commercial vessels to notify rescue coordination centres and to render assistance without taking people onboard. However, human traffickers quickly adapted to this strategy and “they learned that they need to start sinking the ship. And once people are in the water, we have no choice, we have to pick them up” (captain and Secretary General of Intermanager, Int.17). In a report to the UNHCR the International Chamber of Shipping claimed that when a ship’s response is not fast enough, “there are reports that children and pregnant women have been thrown into the water by smugglers to draw urgent response from merchant vessels” (Dearden, 2015). Moreover, a 2011 report by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime documents the practice of smugglers sinking their own vessels:

A frequently reported modus operandi put in place upon interception is for smugglers or migrants to force a rescue by sinking or scuttling boats. Rubber dinghies for instance may be punctured so authorities are forced to assume responsibility for persons in the water. (UNDC, 2011, p. 32)

While prior to the incidents on the Mediterranean in 2015, the idea that rescues involving commercial vessels can involve such dangerous circumstances is worth documenting.

According to the participants in this study, the collective decision to bypass areas where migrants were frequently found in distress was reached together with NATO and rescue coordination centres after rescues were deemed to be too risky for commercial vessels: “So then we also learned that maybe we shouldn’t rush into the vicinity of these guys. And it was a very tough call for the ship master to make a decision like that is impossible” (Captain and Secretary General, Int. 17). Consequently, in late 2015 seafarers decided “we’ve got another option we [...] we will not go there. There will be no merchant ships going through these areas” (Captain and Secretary General of Intermanager Int. 17). This strategy of avoidance is referenced in a 2015 letter from the UNHCR to the EU, which states

The shipping industry has played a significant role in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean,

leading private companies to incur heavy financial losses in the process. As a result, they have started to re-route their voyages to avoid areas frequented by migrant boats, and private vessels are becoming more reluctant to reveal their positions at sea. (UNHCR, 2015)

Shortly after the EU reduced their operational rescue zone in 2015, merchant ships began bypassing areas where migrants were frequently found in distress (Aarstad, 2015; Basaran, 2015).

The impact of this geography of avoidance is evidenced in the dramatic decrease in the rate at which commercial vessels were mobilised for rescue: from 11,954 in the first five months of 2015 to only 3,689 from June to September, from a contribution of 30% of the total of all rescues to four percent (Forensic Oceanography, 2018). The documents released by Frontex included two variables that illustrated this shift, “detected by” and “intercepted by.” The participant data from my study support what Frontex reported with respect to commercial shipping companies taking

measures to avoid risky maritime travel in the Central Mediterranean. While the FOI requests I made helped identify such a shift, the data provided by Frontex is by no means exhaustive. Yet, what has been released shows that during 2015 there were 79 recorded incidents detected by another means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship; while in 2016 only 39 incidents were detected by another means and subsequently intercepted by a commercial ship (European Border and Coast Guard Agency, 2018, January-November). When the EU reduced the geographical size of its operational rescue zone in 2015 the merchant fleet stepped in to fill the gap; but in late 2015 there was a coordinated effort to have the merchant fleet bypass these areas and only respond when requests were made by coordination centres, particularly the MRCC:

From 2015 [...] the coordination centre in Italy, would send a helicopter or they would send a plane. It wasn't [merchant] ships that were detecting those immigrant boats anymore. It was navy with air support, and they were able to tell us guys do not go there, because there is an immigrant boat, we are dealing with it with our dedicated navy ships. Sometimes they would say please come along because we do not have a navy dedicated ship within the vicinity, we need you. And that is a different ball game, because then we know we are going to the immigrants, and then we know what we are going to do, and we know there is support coming from the navy as well. So that was a big game changer for us; do you get the difference? (Int. 17)

While the major incidents involving commercial ships and migrants in 2015 put the risks of commercial rescue on full display, they also worked to justify the expansion of NGO rescue ships that were designed to perform maritime rescues.

More than 5,000 migrants lost their lives while attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2016, compared to 3,771 in 2015 (UNHCR, 2020). Frontex and organizations concerned with

managing border security, however, were not focused on saving lives, but the drastic reduction of crossings from just over 1 million in 2015 to just over 400,000 in 2016. This analysis balances the risks of maritime rescue and disembarking forced migrants in European ports with the risks associated with reducing the presence of commercial vessels in areas where migrants are in distress. Moreover, I situate the expansion of the NGO ships that began operating off the coast of Libya in 2016 within a broader framework of EU border securitization. In short, the maritime geography of the Mediterranean is populated by an incredible amount of moving commercial ships and NGO ships will never proliferate fast enough to replace these ships of opportunity in maritime rescue.

According to Cusumano (2019), in 2016, to help address the gap left first by *Triton*, and subsequently by the commercial vessels, “ten different non- governmental organisations (NGOs) started conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) operations off-shore Libya” (p. 387). By 2017 there was a growing effort to manage the movements and conduct of these NGOs and to criminalize those determined to be engaged with “human traffickers” (Cusumano, 2019, p. 106). For example, in the summer of 2017 German NGO Jugend Rettet had its vessel, the *Iuventa*, seized by the Italian authorities under suspicion of “assistance to illegal migration” and collusion with smugglers. The seizure came after the NGO, along with several others, had refused to sign a “code of conduct”. The code of conduct was presented to the EU parliament, by the Italian Government in July 2017 to regulate the activity of NGOs in the Mediterranean (European Parliament, 2017, para 1). The code of conduct allows for NGO vessels to disembark migrants in Italian ports, but “NGOs are banned from entering Libyan waters to rescue migrants, [and] are obliged to accept the deployment of Italian vessels with armed police on board to investigate people trafficking in Libyan waters in cooperation with the Libyan authorities” (European Parliament, 2017, para 1). The spatial border

dynamics of this “code of conduct” effectively worked to restrict the movement of private aid vessels that were operating in international waters about 20 miles off the coast of a Libya (Cusumano, 2019; Human Rights at Sea, 2017). To establish Libya’s control of its national maritime boundaries Italy and the European Union promised millions of euros to upgrade the Libyan coast guard fleet, and to train Libyan crews (Lewis & Scherer, 2017, para 2). Italian Interior Minister Marco Minniti presented the vessels and made clear the security objectives for which they were designed:

The first is the control of Libyan waters, which is highly important for the stability of this country. The second is to contribute with other European countries and Italy to the security of the Central Mediterranean, with a capacity to intervene against human traffickers and with preventative action against terrorism. (Lewis & Scherer, 2017, para. 3)

The “code of conduct” is a method of securitization that functions to restrict the movements of forced migrants, in this case from moving beyond the shores of Libya. Reports of human rights abuses and conditions in Libya describe how “even centers nominally controlled by government authorities hold migrants captive in inhumane conditions. Elsewhere they are often extorted, abused, murdered and even bought and sold” (Lewis & Scherer, 2017, para. 10). In November of 2017, the Libyan Coast Guard and NGO vessel, Sea Watch were involved in a “confrontational rescue” where 59 passengers were brought to safety in Italy by Sea Watch, but at least 20 people died, and 47 passengers were ultimately pulled back to Libya by the Libyan Coast Guard. Other interactions between the Libyan Coast guard and NGOs have become a threat to migrants and crews (Forensic Architecture, 2019).

Conclusion

The human geography of migration and rescue on the Mediterranean is made up of shifting operational rescue zones, and disputes over where migrants will disembark. Commercial ships and

the seafarers that work on them are a major part of this geography. This analysis of commercial rescue on the Mediterranean contributes to this discussion by documenting how seafarers and commercial ships embody the externalization agenda of border security politics. Ships owned and/or chartered by humanitarian organizations have received considerably more attention than merchant vessels for their role in rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), there were 15 legal proceedings against NGO ships involved in SAR operations in the Mediterranean Sea between 2016 and 2019. NGOs that operate outside established humanitarian boundaries are generally subject to the spatial forces of securitization. These forces are exhibited in the “code of conduct” that outlines the geography of externalization. Examining how commercial ships navigate these boundaries provides insights into how the European border security framework functions to externalize migration and keep migrants at bay.

Humanitarian relief organisations are never free of political interference, the fluid maritime SAR boundaries shift with the tides of securitization. Operational dilemmas force NGOs to negotiate humanitarian principles with local populations, and governments as they do on land. At the time of writing, the gap left by the retreating NGOs is once again being addressed by commercial ships and seafarers. For example,

[t]he OOC *Panther*, a German-owned merchant ship, is not in the business of sea rescues. But one day a few months ago the Libyan Coast Guard ordered it to divert course, rescue 68 migrants in distress in the Mediterranean and return them to Libya, which is embroiled in civil war. (Kingsley, 2020, para. 1)

And,

[o]n May 25, 2020, the Portuguese-flagged container feeder *Anne* picked up about 90-100 maritime migrants in the Central Mediterranean. The Portuguese news outlet *Expresso*

reports that the *Anne* was asked by the Maltese MRCC to carry out the rescue and - also at Malta's request - to transfer the survivors to Libyan authorities. (Maritime Executive, 2020)

And now with the impacts of COVID being felt globally the decision to close ports is even more troubling and to many observers the practice of returning migrants to Libya is not considered legal: Seaports in Malta and Italy are closed to sea rescue survivors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and merchant vessels have encountered serious difficulty in disembarking rescuees from the Libya-to-Lampedusa maritime migration route. However, Libyan officials regularly accept rescued migrants for return to detention. This avoids delay for the ship and for the migrants, but it may attract additional scrutiny: Libya is considered an unsafe place to disembark, and UNCLOS requires the master to deliver survivors to a safe port. (Maritime Executive, 2020)

This analysis has shown how examining the role of commercial ships in rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean can connect the geopolitics of border security to the way maritime rescue is coordinated. These rescues are coordinated from shore and commercial ships are vessels for securitization politics. The coordination of rescue will continue to rely on ships of opportunity to respond when large numbers of people are in distress at sea; their failure to disembark migrants in accordance with rules set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention is a coordinated effort.

Chapter Six:

The Geoeconomics of Protecting Profits from Migrants in Maritime Distress

When migrants require rescue by commercial ships they are cast as disruptions to the necessary free flow of commercial goods. To position the commercial ship and migrant boat within a global political economy I extend a geopolitical and geoeconomic analysis of the way risks to migrants are governed differently than risks to commercial cargo. Recent reports document how commercial vessels are being used to transport migrants back to Libya after being rescued in the Central Mediterranean (Kingsley, 2020; United Nations, 2021). For example, in 2020, German owned merchant ship, the OOC *Panther*, was ordered to divert course by the Libyan Coast Guard to rescue 68 migrants in maritime distress and return them to Libya. In this chapter I argue that commercial vessels play a significant role in rescuing migrants from the Mediterranean, and that there are physical and financial risks to performing commercial rescues that are poorly understood and often ignored.

From January 2014 to September 2015, more than 1,000 commercial vessels rescued more than 65,000 people on the Mediterranean (Saul, 2015). When the Italian government terminated its humanitarian rescue program, *Mare Nostrum*, and replaced it with Frontex operation, *Triton*, it left “2.5 million square kilometres of sea [...] unpatrolled” (Migrant Offshore Aid Station, 2017). Consequently, the commercial shipping industry filled the gap left by Italy’s receding operational rescue zone and was responsible for the rescue of 11, 954 people from Jan to May 2015, making it the primary actor conducting rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean (Forensic Oceanography, 2017, p. 38). Over one million migrants arrived in Europe in 2015—more than five times the previous year. In April 2015, more than 800 people drowned in the Central Mediterranean when a boat full of migrants crashed into a massive cargo ship, the *King Jacob*, which was trying to rescue them. Most of the migrants were from sub-Saharan African states,

many fleeing from poverty and violence in Libya where they were in transit (Miglierini, 2016). After this deadly incident, there was a clear drop in the number of rescues performed by commercial ships from “11,954 in the first five months of 2015 to only 3,689 from June to September, thus dropping from a contribution of 30 percent of the total of all rescues to 4 percent” (Forensic Oceanography, 2017, p. 38). In 2016, to fill the gap left first by *Triton*, and then by commercial vessels, “ten different non- governmental organisations (NGOs) started conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) operations off-shore Libya” (Cusumano, 2018, p. 387). In 2016, the number of arrivals dropped from over a million in 2015 to just below 400,000. Even with the significant decrease in crossings from 2015 to 2016 the number of people that died increased from 3,771 in 2015 to 5,011 in 2016 (UNHCR, 2016).

While NGO ships have been designed and/or equipped to perform maritime rescue, recent reports suggest that increasing efforts to criminalize their rescue missions have largely diminished their effectiveness (Cusumano, 2019; OHCHR, 2019). Now, despite the obvious dangers of using massive commercial vessels to rescue migrants, current trends suggest that rescue coordination centres are again turning to commercial ships for rescue and refoulement. The current Memorandum of Understanding on Migration between Italy and Libya was signed in 2017, under the agreement Italy supports Libyan maritime authorities to stop boats and return people to detention centres in Libya where “they are unlawfully detained and suffer serious abuse” (Struthers, 2020, para. 1). Scholars have called these pushbacks neo-refoulement as people are returned before ever reaching a European border (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008). In the first three years since the original deal was struck at least “40,000 people including thousands of children have been intercepted at sea, returned to Libya and exposed to unimaginable suffering” (Struthers, 2020, para. 1). In this chapter I connect with research participants and maritime organizations

responsible for transporting cargo and rescuing migrants. Specifically, this chapter analyzes how the shipping industry frames and sees the physical and financial risks posed by rescuing migrants.

Zoppi (2020) describes a “politics of absence” that functions to separate the inequality and human rights abuses in Libya from migrants on the Mediterranean. Furthermore, literature on the racialization of migration has outlined how the risk of dying during a border crossing is disproportionately higher for Black Africans than any other group (Danewid, 2021; De Genova, 2017). Similarly, Basaran’s (2015) concept of “governing indifference” explains how people are guided towards becoming indifferent to the “lives of and sufferings of particular populations” (p. 205). Basaran (2015) and Zoppi (2020) are contributors to a growing body of literature that catalogues the geopolitics of rescue and the securitization of migration on the Mediterranean (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008; Cuttitta, 2015; Cusumano, 2019). This chapter contributes important new information on the dynamics of maritime rescues that involve commercial ships and migrants in the Central Mediterranean. My semi-structured interviews with seafarers and organizational material published by the International Chamber of Shipping show that the shipping industry shares an approach to dealing with the risks posed by providing aid to migrants with the contemporary international development and humanitarian aid industry. My work traces these same connections in a maritime geography: where the law of the sea (SOLAS) necessitates life saving services and the shipping industry clearly articulates a refrain from political interference in refugee matters; and where the cargo that sustains the global economy is insured and uninsured migrants are left to drown. First, I contrast geoeconomics with geopolitics to frame the introduction to the language of logistics and supply chain security. My framework positions the analysis within a global political economy where migrants in distress on the Mediterranean are considered risks to national and financial securities. A section on methods describes how I collected data for this

analysis, including: semi-structured interviews with maritime professionals; analysis of organizational material, notably from the International Chamber of Shipping, the UNHCR and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex); and a series of freedom of information requests to Frontex for data on commercial rescues that took place under operation *Triton* in the Central Mediterranean. In the third section of this chapter, I present my findings in two parts: the infinite risks of rescuing migrants; and the financial disincentives to rescuing migrants.

A Political Economy of Commercial Ships and Migrant Boats

Geopolitics and Geoeconomics at Sea

This section constructs a geoeconomic theoretical framework that positions the commercial ship and migrant boat within the global political economy. This framework structures the analysis in this chapter by providing a geoeconomic lens through which the roles these vessels play in the global economy are brought into focus. The respective geographies of these commercial and migrant vessels are poignant examples of the entanglement of geopolitics and geoeconomics. According to Sparke (2018b) geoeconomics are not a successor regime to geopolitics, and attempting to separate these geostrategic discourses leads to “a double vision that maps the divergent economic imperatives towards territorial fixing and geographical expansion in a distortive way that repeatedly divides the world into distinct zones” (p. 34). In part my analysis of commercial migrant rescue aims to connect the “geopolitical” and the “geoeconomic”. According to Sparke (2018b) “geopolitical and geoeconomic discourses are entangled because they are geostrategic relays of the underlying tension between spatial fixity and spatial expansion at the heart of capitalist uneven development” (p. 34). My analysis of commercial rescue positions the migrant boat and the commercial vessel as representations of these two capitalist imperatives.

This chapter contends that a maritime geography encompassing merchant vessels that are flagged ships registered in different nations and unflagged, unregistered migrant boats that are not

beholden to any state represents an ideal space to highlight how the “dialectics of geopolitics and geoeconomics lead to the production of territory” (Sparke, 2018b, p. 35). Firstly, the trajectory of my analysis is built on the idea that commercial ships are extensions of terrestrial national territories: they are moving maritime territories. Dialectically, the “fixity” that shapes the restricted geographies inhabited by forced migrants is tied to and contrasted with the idea that commercial vessels are/represent the quintessential example/vessel for spatial/territorial expansion. Moreover, migrants in distress at sea are considered to be risks and an interruption to the international flow of goods.

Analyzing the risks associated with rescuing migrants reveals the duality of economic and political imperatives that challenge rescues with commercial ships. For Sparke (2018a) geopolitics and geoeconomics are dialectically entangled: “it highlights how as distinct geostrategic discourses they share common drivers in capitalist tendencies and contradictions” (p. 485). Political analysis of the commercial rescue of migrants on the Mediterranean is informed by an economic analysis of market imperatives. In turn, Sparke (2018a) suggests that these “help make the discourses and practices materially consequential” (p. 485). Below, I compare how cargo and potential refugees are protected from the risks of maritime travel/transport.

The history, language and logic of logistics provides insight into the way migrants are conceptualized by the commercial shipping industry. According to Marxist scholar Cowen (2014) while “logistics was once a military art of moving soldiers and supplies to the front” (p. 6) it now “maps the form of contemporary imperialism” (p. 8). The history of logistics is geopolitical; it suggests that geopolitics is defined by issues of sovereignty, authority and territory within a system of national states. Beyond this system of static national borders and geopolitical space, a geoeconomic conceptualization of contemporary logistics maps the fluid geography of circulation

and flow. In this way, “logistics as a business science has come to drive geo-economic logics and authority” (Cowen, 2014, p. 8). This spatial accounting of circulation and movement is where geoeconomics extends the traditional national boundaries of geopolitics to the international space of globalized markets (Sparke, 1998; Pollard & Sidaway, 2002). In commercial rescues migrants in distress on the Mediterranean are cast as disruptions to the flow of goods that supply the global marketplace. According to Cowen (2014) threats of disruption to the movement of goods is now a primary fear of corporations and governments evidenced by the emergence of an “entire architecture of security that aims to govern global spaces of flow” (p. 2). Supply chain security subsumes the entangled extraterritorial geographies of corporate and military logistics that rely on strategies of border management, transnational regulation, surveillance, labour discipline and data collection that govern the movement of goods and people (Amoore and De Goede, 2008; Bonacich & Wilson, 2008).

The Securitization of the Supply Chain

The securitization of the supply chain works to decouple the geopolitical binary of inside/outside state geography. In geographies of flow, those that impede the requisite movement face the security apparatus of corporate actors without the protection of laws. Instead, the invisible hand of the global marketplace administers financial justice in the form of lost profits to govern a corporate populace designed to protect their intrinsic need for growth. When migrants force commercial vessels to detour from their lineal pursuit of profits the market logic of logistics makes it clear that the attendant risks must be securitized, physically, but especially financially. While the risks posed by commercial rescue can be conceptualized in geopolitical terms that focus on the physical risks that menace seafarers’ responsibility to rescue, the geoeconomics of commercial rescue describes the risks in terms of supply chain security. Nevertheless, the idea that geoeconomics can be separated from geopolitics is challenged with reference to the way the

commercial shipping industry narrates the risks posed by rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean. To clarify, the fundamental language of risk and security is simultaneously applied to the physical and financial requirements of maritime shipping and geoeconomics, like geopolitics, is still anchored to the terrestrial challenges of sovereignty, and political territorial jurisdiction. Until now, however; the focus has been primarily on the geopolitics of risk while the geoeconomics of risk remains largely unrecognized.

The contemporary supply chain is rooted in a military and colonial history. Mediterranean history provides strong evidence of the significance of supply lines to successful military warfare. Moreover, present day supply chain security that sustains global market capitalism flows along the same currents that supplied the colonial frontier. Cowen (2014) observes “that it is not only striking but diagnostic that old enemies of empire-“Indians” and “Pirates” - are among the groups that pose the biggest threats to the ‘security’ of supply today” (Cowen, 2014, p. 8-9). According to Cowen (2014) logistics is a “ubiquitous management science of the government of circulation” and has been “crucial in the process of time-space compression that has remade geographies of capitalist production and distribution at a global scale” (p. 10). For Cowen (2014) “the paradigmatic space of logistics is the supply chain” (p. 8). Her work is mostly an extension of ideas presented in Foucault’s lectures *Security, Territory, Population* discussed in chapter one, the main argument being that the geography of the supply chain is an essential target for the processes of securitization. This argument stems from an observation of the emergence of a form of governmentality concerned with the management of circulation (Foucault, 2007, p. 65). For Foucault (2007) this shift in “security” strategy in town planning, revolves around “a completely different problem that is no longer that of fixing and demarcating the territory, but of allowing circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that things

are always in movement” (p. 10). My contention is that migrants in maritime distress represent disruptions to the supply chain; and that maritime shipping routes are the quintessential cartography of contemporary geoeconomics.

According to Duffield (2010) logistics is not only defined by flow but by spaces that reinforce or securitize the movements of some but not others: bunkers, refugee camps, borders, and spaces of overlapping jurisdictions. My analysis of overlapping and contested maritime rescue zones and the contested movement of people through these humanitarian geographies illustrates the significance of Duffield’s (2007) analysis and challenges the terrestrial divide of national territory. For Duffield (2006) “racism, migration, and development are interconnected on a planetary scale” (p. 71). He outlines this connection with reference to an immigration control system that sustains a “compensating race relation industry” and ties it to the emergence of the modern aid industry (Duffield, 2006, p. 73). According to Hyndman and Mountz (2008) asylum is increasingly described as a security issue. Their work traces a shift from refugee protection through international law to geopolitical projects including bilateral agreements, and safe third country agreements, which “create a geographical game of hopscotch for asylum seekers, with fewer and fewer spaces through which to pass to make a refugee claim” (Hyndman & Mountz, 2018, p. 268). Hyndman and Mountz (2008) describe this process as neo-refoulement/externalization and argue that it hinges on representing asylum seekers as “other” from a state perspective and is performed through the mutually accommodating aims of geographical containment and subsequent denial of protections afforded by human rights instruments.

In many ways Hyndman and Mountz (2008) establish a foreboding account of migrant rescue and neo-refoulement. Their work details how the fear of risks associated with forced

migration motivated a transition from legal protection of asylum seekers to “geographic strategies” that constitute what they call the “respatialization of asylum” (p. 250) and ‘*neo-refoulement*’ if not formal forced return (*refoulement*). Furthermore, Hyndman and Mountz (2008) lay the groundwork for moving a securitization framework out to sea and establishing how “*neo-refoulement* uses geography to suspend access to asylum” (p. 269). Their work offers examples from both Australia and the European Union to describe how both countries pursued externalization through bilateral readmission agreements and military support aimed at keeping asylum seekers from reaching their shores. The most widely referenced case of a state’s refusal to permit the disembarkation of a commercial ship is that of the MV *Tampa* by Australia. In 2001, Captain Arne Rinnan and the crew of the *Tampa*, despite incurring financial costs to the company, Wilhelm Wilhelmsen of Oslo, rescued 433 boat people from the Indian Ocean. The Australian Government refused to allow the Captain to disembark the rescued migrants on its territory and when he attempted to approach the boat was boarded by Australian military and blocked from entering Australian waters at the order of the Prime Minister. In the Mediterranean, German-registered ship, the Cap Anamur, rescued 37 people in 2004. The incident involved all EU member states but particularly Malta, Italy and Germany: Italy and Germany considered Malta to be responsible for processing any asylum claims made because the migrant vessel had first crossed its territorial waters (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008, p. 254). When Malta refused the ship was left at sea for several days before people were disembarked in Italy.

A securitization framework works to unravel how the risks posed by migrants on the Mediterranean are considered unquantifiable by people in a position to rescue them. According to Duffield (2011) immigration control, national cohesion, and international development are all part of the same security agenda, motivated by the genuine fears of “free society” (p. 72). He theorizes

a world divided between insured and uninsured/ “surplus populations” (Duffield, 2007, p. 17). An examination of commercial migrant rescue extends this theoretical framework to reinforce the deadly implications for uninsured populations in a maritime geography. According to Aradau and Van Munster (2007), “insurance requires the identification of risk and the statistical estimation of an event happening” (p. 101). Their work, which is largely a critique of Ulrich Beck’s seminal theorizing on how risks are managed in contemporary society, argues that “the double infinity of risk, as Beck hypothesized, makes terrorism difficult to govern by the technologies of insurance” (Aradau & VanMunster, 2007, p. 101). The “catastrophic element” represents the first way the infinity of risk can frustrate the calculation and governance of risk; and the second is uncertainty (Aradau & VanMunster, 2007, p. 101). Although the double of infinity of risk frustrates the insurance technologies of managing risk the argument is not that these calculations are rendered obsolete. Instead, Aradau and VanMunster (2007) argue that the governance of risk is not strictly a matter of insurance and attendant calculus. In short, their analysis—when applied to rescue of migrants by commercial vessels—shows how the modeling of risk for the protection of commercial goods remains within the realm of standard insurance practice; while the infinite risks embodied in the Mediterranean maritime migrant is “subjected to the imperative of governmentality” (Aradau & VanMunster, 2001, p. 101). While similar to Beck’s “uninsurable risk” their work does not define risks as “calculable/incalculable” instead they take a Foucauldian approach that concentrates on identifying how the infinite risks of, for example, potential future terrorists are governed/securitized.

Researching Commercial Rescue

For this study, I used several methods to collect data for this analysis. My aim was to consult with maritime professionals and organizational representatives to help guide the trajectory of the research and gather information about how commercial rescues involving migrants unfold

in maritime environments. First, I interviewed 24 maritime professionals. Second, I collected organizational material published by the International Chamber of Shipping, the UNHCR, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and other grey material. Third, I made a series of freedom of information requests to Frontex requesting information on rescues involving commercial ships during operation *Triton*.

While all shipmasters/captains are seafarers, not all seafarers are shipmasters/captains. From 2016 to 2018, I interviewed 12 shipmasters/captains. All of them were men and some held other positions within maritime industry: from port masters and harbour masters to representatives from the International Federation of Shipmasters. Many of the captains were also having military, navy and marine titles and backgrounds. Only one was a standard seafarer: someone employed on a vessel. There were only two women participants in the study, and both were not seafarers, one was a research coordinator with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the other was a representative from the International Group: the thirteen P&I Clubs that make up International Group collectively provide marine liability cover (protection and indemnity) for roughly 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage. Other participants were maritime professionals from prominent organizations in the maritime industry including a lawyer from Human Rights at Sea, an academic with expertise in Mediterranean migrant rescues and interdictions, a representative from the International Organization of Migration and a representative from the International Chamber of Shipping: the world's principal shipping organisation, representing 80% of world's merchant tonnage, through membership by national shipowners' associations.

To examine and support information provided by participants in this study concerning how commercial ships respond to migrants in distress on the Mediterranean, I consulted a series of reports published by the UNHCR and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). In 2006 the

UNHCR, the ICS and IMO co-authored “Rescue at Sea: A Guide to Principles and Practice as Applied to Migrants and Refugees” to serve as a guide to masters, ship owners, government authorities and insurance companies. The report provides information on legal provisions, safety measures, and procedures for disembarkation and is particularly tailored for cases involving asylum-seekers and refugees. It serves as a reminder that: 1) “sea-borne migrants and refugees are not a new phenomenon”; 2) “search and Rescue (SAR) services throughout the world depend on ships—for the most part merchant vessels—to assist persons in distress at sea”; and 3) “even when the rescue has been accomplished, problems can arise in securing the agreement of States to the disembarkation of migrants and refugees, especially if proper documentation is lacking” (UNHCR, 2006, et al., p. 2). These three themes are repeated in the updated 2015 edition of the report in which the guidance that outlines how “the Master is not responsible for determining the status of rescued persons” features prominently. The report, however, does make it clear that when “people rescued at sea claim to be refugees or asylum-seekers, or indicate in any way that they fear persecution or ill-treatment if disembarked at a particular place, key principles prescribed by international refugee law need to be upheld” (UNHCR, 2006, et al., p. 3).

The ICS also published a separate report titled “Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea: Guidance on Ensuring the Safety and Security of Seafarers and Rescued Person” (2014). The report was developed in response to the increasing number of migrants and refugees being rescued by merchant ships in the Mediterranean. It documents the tens of thousands of people, “sometimes as many as 200 persons or more during a single operation” that were rescued by commercial vessels in 2014 (ICS, 2014, p. 2). According to the report “the critical factor when dealing with large scale rescue at sea will be the number of people involved. This can make prioritising survivors for rescue, transportation in lifeboats or rescue boats, and embarkation very challenging

and potentially hazardous” (ICS, 2014, p. 4). Moreover, the report stresses that “embarkation is the most challenging phase of a rescue operation. Masters and crew should use ship specific plans and procedures, adapted for the circumstances” (p. 4). In 2015, the ICS published a second edition of “Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea: Guidance on Ensuring the Safety and Security of Seafarers and Rescued Persons”.⁵ This second edition is updated with input from Masters, crews and shipping companies.

The concentration and unity among maritime organizations in response to migrants in distress on the Mediterranean is evidenced in the 2015 ICS report. In this report there is an attempt to separate migrant rescue from rescues involving other seafarers: “while efforts continue at the political level to reduce the number migrants” travelling in unsafe vessels the “need to conduct large scale rescues, often involving very different challenges to conventional rescue operations” is increasingly frequent (ICS, 2015, p. 2). Specifically, the report argues that “merchant ships are not best suited to conduct large scale operations that may involve the rescue of hundreds of people at a time” however, it understands that “it is likely that ships will continue to be called upon to assist by Rescue Co-ordination Centres (RCCs) for the foreseeable future” (ICS, 2015, p. 2). The message in this report is clear: “the responsibility for arranging the disembarkation of those rescued lies with the State responsible for the SAR region in which the rescue took place, unless another State assumes responsibility. Disembarkation should occur in a place of safety at the earliest opportunity” (ICS, 2015, p. 10.). The ICS reports make it clear that their time is very important and that “the need to minimise deviation from the planned voyage” is threatened by states that are unwilling to accept the disembarkation of rescued migrants: “A prolonged wait for

⁵ With support from the European Ship Owners Association, the Asian Shipowners’ Forum; the International Transport Workers’ Federation, the European Transport Workers Federation, the Cruise Lines International Association, the International Association of Dry Cargo Owners, the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, the International Parcel Tankers Association, and the International Ship Managers’ Association.

disembarkation will make the challenges of accommodating and managing rescued persons more difficult for Masters and crew” (ICS, 2015, p. 10). While the safety concerns of seafarers accommodating rescued migrants are very real, so are the financial costs of delays. The calculation and coverage of these financial disincentives are the domain of maritime insurance companies.

In my study I analyzed freedom of information requests (FOIs) made to Frontex concerning incidents involving migrants on the Mediterranean during operation *Triton* to determine how many involved commercial vessels. From 2018 to 2019 I made nine FOI requests to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The results of these requests produced critical information concerning specific commercial vessels that were involved in rescuing migrants. I was able to catalogue and track specific commercial vessels, investigate the types of vessels responsible for rescue and gauge changes in how migrants in distress were being responded to by commercial ships. Of the 2,779 recorded incidents I identified 359 involving commercial vessels. After my own initial FOI requests to Frontex—for reports detailing these events—only produced 12 incident reports, I started filing individual requests, by year, using specific incident numbers gathered from the previously released data on the 2,779 incidents recorded during the duration of operation *Triton*. For 2014, I identified and requested seven incidents involving commercial vessels and received six incident reports. In the comments section of these incident reports, I was able to learn the names of the specific commercial vessels involved in the rescues. For 2015, I identified and requested information on 132 incidents involving commercial vessels: while Frontex released all the reports, the details of the incidents were heavily redacted. Nonetheless I was still able to identify specific commercial vessels in the majority of the incidents. For 2016, I identified and requested information on 115 incident reports. Frontex responded that 19 of the incidents did not have corresponding reports; again, the reports were heavily redacted. For 2017, I identified and

requested information on 104 incidents. Frontex claimed 18 reports were unavailable and the information in what was released was progressively more redacted than previous years. Finally, my request for data relating to incidents in 2018 was denied.

Vessels of Externalization and the Infinite Risks of Forced Migration

For Aradau and Van Munster (2011), analysing the way governments rationalize their response to incalculable risks like terrorism provides a glimpse into the governmentalizing nature of securitization:

For a governmental approach, what counts is not whether terrorism can be controlled or not, but the *dispositif* that is being deployed to make action upon the contingent occurrence of terrorism thinkable and practicable. Technologies of intervening upon the future are always failing; their failure is, however, part of governmentality, the very motor of the continuous requirement for new technologies and more knowledge. Governing terrorism through risk entails drastic prevention at the catastrophic horizon of the future as well as generalized and arbitrary surveillance at the limit of knowledge. (p. 108)

My research project explores these limits and shows how the conflation of migrants with terrorists is the first step in a securitization framework. Without this tactic the attendant securitization is not triggered, spread and acted upon.

In 2014, bulk carrier the CS *Caprice* responded to a distress call off the coast of Libya. The ship's Captain reported that there were about 500 people onboard a small fishing boat and that a brewing storm threatened to capsize the overcrowded vessel. According to Campbell Shipping, the company that manages the CS *Caprice*, the main concern is who they might be rescuing:

We do not know who we are taking onboard: There are no papers, there are no background checks [...] what if among the people rescued, a few are part of Islamic State or a terrorist organisation, and they [...] take over a tanker? (Saul, 2015, para. 8)

The shipping company also voiced concerns for the security of the 20 crew members of the CS *Caprice*, whom they argued could be overpowered by the 500 migrants and that they could be at risk of contracting an infectious disease: “It was off the coast of Africa and there was the Ebola situation at the time” (Saul, 2015, para. 14). The perceived risks of rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean are seemingly incalculable for seafarers and shipping companies. The purpose of this section is to highlight the way commercial seafarers narrate the risks posed by migrant rescue and to position these findings within a securitization framework that seeks to control future risks.

Risky Rescues and the Protection of Vessel Identities for the Purposes of Public Security

One of the most nuanced and informative interactions I had was with a Captain and Secretary General of one of the largest ship managing companies in the world. My intention here is not to contest the willingness of seafarers to uphold their responsibility to rescue but rather to show how the politics of fear works to separate migrants from the rest of a global community. With respect to the situation on the Mediterranean this experienced shipping captain reminded me that:

You are dealing with a very particular situation: one of hundreds of situations where we are talking about immigrants. In my mind, as a master, I’m not dealing with immigrants. First of all, I’m dealing with a human being at sea, fellow seafarers, that’s 99.9% of accidents that I am dealing with. Only in a particular area of Mediterranean corner, not the whole Mediterranean and maybe Somalia is where you come in with immigrants and piracy issues. The rest of the world, which is 99.5%, is genuine fishermen or seafarers or yachting. (Int. 17)

In this quote, though decidedly minute, the move toward separating the rescue of migrants with the rescue of everyone else starts to become evident. To help make sense of the way seafarers and

shipping companies articulate the risks associated with rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean I document the language and logic that Frontex employed in their refusal of my final request for information detailing commercial rescues in the Central Mediterranean.

Initially my freedom of information requests revealed details on specific commercial vessels—which can be used for a variety of research agendas including efforts to map the timelines and movements during maritime rescue, and therefore projected costs associated with these interdictions. The subsequent denial of my final information request provides insight into the way Frontex conceptualizes Mediterranean migration as well as my research agenda as a security risk:

I regret to inform you that access to the requested documents must be refused...as their disclosure would undermine the protection of public interest as regards public security and severely undermine Frontex's decision-making process based on the following:

The variables contained in the documents relating to the “type of intercepted by” cannot be released as their release would hamper the effectiveness of Frontex operations and jeopardise the efforts carried out by the European Union and Member states to curtail criminal activities at external borders and also put the life of migrants in danger. Thus, the disclosure of those variables would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security.

Furthermore, the variables contained in the documents pertain to information that is crucial for situational awareness at the external borders of the EU which is used for risk analysis and, in turn, Frontex's operational decision-making. As risk analysis used by Frontex to conduct its operations is based on the information at issue, disclosing the variables and the information contained therein would benefit the smuggling and other organized criminal networks, including terrorist organisations, who would change their modus operandi accordingly. Simultaneously, this would diminish the effectiveness of Frontex internal analysis. As no overriding public interests for the release of these documents is ascertainable in the present case, these documents cannot be released... The variables contained in the documents relating to the “type of detected by” contain information regarding the technical equipment deployed in each operational area. Disclosing such information would be tantamount to disclosing the exact type, capabilities and weaknesses of the equipment, as well as their usual position, opening way for abuse. In this light, disclosure of such information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security. (European Border and Coast Guard Agency, February 2019)

This refusal is couched in a security rationale that justifies the denial and subsequently provides valuable insight into the way Frontex defines and deals with risk of terrorism.

Migrants in the Supply Chain: Quantifying the Costs of Disruption/Rescue

When migrants rescued by oil tanker *El Hiblu 1* refused to be returned to Libya Italy's interior minister called the hijacking “the first act of piracy on the high seas with migrants” (Calleja

& Barry, 2019, para. 4). In response, a spokeswoman for German humanitarian group Sea-Eye said that “we don’t see it as a piracy issue because those people were claiming their right. It was completely illegal [...] to send them back to Libya” (Calleja & Barry, 2019, para. 7). According to Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui of Doctors Without Borders “migrants have long reported that commercial ships ignore smugglers’ boats in distress, or merely stop to give them water” (Calleja & Barry, 2019, para. 9). However, Hadj-Sahraoui recognizes that "this is extremely disturbing for commercial ships. The shipping industry is trying to follow a tenant of international law, which is rescue. [...] But if you are a commercial ship on tight deadlines and you need to deliver goods, it is an impossible situation" (Calleja & Barry, 2019, para. 9). For ICS secretary-general Guy Platten "If a ship is directed to disembark rescued people in Libya, it creates a potential for conflict between the crew and desperate and frustrated people that might object to being returned" (Calleja & Barry, 2019, para. 11). He also described how merchant seafarers "can be severely affected by the traumatic situations they have to face, having complied with their legal and humanitarian obligation to come to the rescue of anyone found in distress at sea" (Calleja & Barry, 2019, para. 11). Until European states honour their commitment to the various rescue conventions and the UN 1951 refugee convention the costs associated with lost time at sea will continue to exacerbate the risks associated with commercial maritime rescue.

On August 4, 2020, the Maersk *Etienne*, a Danish flagged tanker was on route to Tunisia when Malta’s rescue coordination centre requested it change course to assist a boat in distress located just outside Maltese waters—closer to the Tunisian-Libyan border (Soegard, 2020, para. 14). The crew of the *Etienne* safely rescued 27 migrants and soon after the small boat they had been on sank. Once onboard the *Etienne* the crew provided the migrants with water, food, shelter and other necessities (Gard, 2020, para. 3). Despite being summoned by Malta, the ship was

consequently denied permission to enter Maltese waters. The vessel subsequently anchored while lawyers and P & I representatives from Malta and Tunisia argued over where the migrants would be disembarked: “It is really shameful what the authorities are doing to us. The crew did their job honourably. But the people we rescued are abandoned and the vessel is paralysed. We need action” (Maersk *Etienne* captain, Volodymyr Yeroshkin, as cited in Soegaard, 2020, para. 15). After over a month stranded at sea three migrants jumped overboard and needed to be rescued for the second time. Finally, on September 11, 2020, after 40 days at sea the migrants were transferred to NGO rescue ship *Mare Jonio* and safely disembarked in Italy.

Commercial vessels are not designed to perform large-scale rescues. In addition to the physical risks commercial rescues are also costly. Direct costs include extra fuel consumed during and after the rescue, port charges, humanitarian provisions, additional wages and supplies, as well as cleaning, repair and restocking fees (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410). Kilpatrick (2017) observes that the indirect costs are likely to be even more substantial: when a vessel deviates from its intended route this is “likely to generate substantial loss of time and prevent the vessel from fulfilling its scheduled commercial activities” (p. 410). These delays impact the economic interests of shipowners, charterers, cargo holders, and insurers (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410). According to Kilpatrick (2017) reports of “losses of up to USD \$500,000 arising out of a single migrant vessel rescue causing the vessel to be delayed for one week” are not uncommon. A participant in my study described the costs to a particular shipping company involved in rescuing more than 250 migrants “not only did this shipping company spend ten days doing this ... for a bulk carrier -which is one of the cheapest ships- for them to be involved in looking after migrants, I think it was roughly \$12,000 a day. So, we are looking at \$120,000 plus” (Int.18). When asked about the costs associated with migrant rescue on another participant took offence to the criticisms that

shipmasters would avoid rescuing migrants due to financial costs not covered by P & I clubs: “I’m a shipmaster. If I see someone in trouble, I go. Money is not an issue, full stop” (Int. 17). He went on to say,

[s]o, I cannot have in my mind that all the time these guys are terrorists, that these guys are foul guys that are going to kill me, ok. And as you can see that I never ever mention dollars in my 5 minutes of speech- because that is absolutely irrelevant.

So, what we do whenever there is a signal that there is something happening at sea and requires my attention, we go. We evaluate, risk assessment and so on so forth. But I wanted to start with all of this, so forget about P & I clubs for the moment, forget about that. None of the masters are thinking about P & I clubs cover, that is not my job. My job is to save whoever is requiring safety, and that is what we do. (Int. 17)

While this participant’s response echoed the general consensus in my study, there were some who believed the financial imperatives of ship owners are certainly factors in decisions not to rescue.

In conversation these two respective seafarers, with over 60 years of combined experience at sea, provided valuable insights into just how messy maritime rescue can be.

We have to accept that there are commercial imperatives here. Because even though, as you rightly say, and in accordance with SOLAS the master should make those decisions. And he's probably a father and he's probably seeing things that distress him. But at the end of the day, he's got real world factors to think about. And I think that we have to look at it without demonizing anybody, just look at the harsh realities of life. And, when somebody says, "Oh well of course you must go and do this." Now on the streets of London, if you see somebody fall down and, let's say, they appear to be having a heart attack, how many people do you think will immediately go and help that person? There will be the odd one, but not

everybody. A lot of people will be quite happy to walk away, walk past, and not get involved.

So, it happens everywhere. (Int. 18)

In contrast to the majority of seafarers interviewed in this study, this ship captain believed the financial disincentives to perform maritime rescue could mean ship captains would avoid these risks.

The ship's master is the agent of the ship owner. And the ship owner may say, "I don't give a shit. I don't give a shit what you see. You carry on. Otherwise, you lose your bonus." This is a pretty cutthroat world. Is 200 more people dying going to make a difference to his business? Nope. Is the ship not getting to the port on time going to make a difference to his business? Yes. (Int.18)

In addition to the financial disincentives that could deter maritime rescue this master mariner also outlined the impacts of countries denying the disembarkation of rescued migrants:

Who pays for it? I remember speaking to one particular shipping company, and they told me about a situation where they had picked up, 250 migrants, and they picked them up and they took them to the Italian port that apparently everybody was going to. They had to wait outside for two days, with these people on board. And they'd been helping everybody by charging their mobile phones for them, giving them food, all that. They're being superb. And then the Italian authorities said, "No, you can't bring those people in here. We're full," which we can all understand, "so you gotta take them to Malta." And all of a sudden the people on board the ship, started up a Facebook campaign accusing the shipping line that had saved their lives and was looking after them. "We're taking them to a concentration camp." Because the people didn't want to go to Malta, because they were being taken away from the mainland that they were after. (Int. 18)

Recent events involving commercial ships have continued to bear out the ideas and responses conveyed in the semi-structured interviews from 2018. The idea that European states are reluctant to accept rescued migrants and examining the costs associated with this refusal shaped the trajectory of this analysis.

According to one of the worlds primary maritime shipping P & I clubs, *Gard*,

The present difficulties in having migrants disembarked may tempt some ships to turn a blind eye. This is of course something that should be avoided at all costs, and which could result in very heavy fines being imposed. Fortunately, no such cases have been reported to us. (Gard, 2020, para. 9)

Alongside other shipping industry members, *Gard* has urged EU leaders to find a political solution to the ongoing risks involved with migrant rescue. In addition, *Gard* has congratulated itself for having “assisted our member Maersk Tankers in the humane treatment of the migrants rescued and cared for by the crew of the *Maersk Etienne*” (Gard, 2020, para. 10). In the self-published *Refugee rescue P&I cover and assistance*, *Gard* outlines how, in cases of maritime rescue, it covers food, medication, overtime wages, and diversion expenses; however, it does not cover loss of hire or “other financial losses like loss of profit” (Gard, 2020, para. 13). According to the *Gard* report “Fuel usually represents the main extra cost item and cover is available [and;] in most rescue cases diversion will involve the highest costs and includes various types of expense” (Gard, 2015, para. 6). The idea that time spent involved in a rescue is worth highlighting because it fits well within the securitization/futurity framework of this analysis: while the financial costs associated with food, fuel and wages are rendered calculable and coverable through contemporary maritime insurance instruments like P & I clubs the future costs and lost profits associated with lost time and late cargo are infinite.

This analysis highlights the risks associated with using seafarers and commercial vessels for rescuing large numbers of migrants on the Mediterranean. Even though direct costs like food, extra fuel, port charges and cleaning costs are major costs in the event of a rescue, the indirect costs are often “even more substantial” (Kilpatrick, 2017, 410). Kilpatrick (2017) supports the idea that the losses in time from maritime rescue can lead to major losses resulting from not being able to fulfill contractual obligations, loss of profits and and future loss of business. Moreover, these delays can have reverberating effects on “a variety of actors with an economic stake in the underlying voyage, including shipowners, charterers, cargo interests, and insurers. For example, he reports that “stakeholders have recently reported losses of up to USD \$500,000 arising out of a single migrant vessel rescue causing the vessel to be delayed for one week” (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410). According to Kilpatrick (2017) “under the law of salvage, it is possible for a rescuer to recover a reward for protecting the property interests of a third-party shipowner” (p. 410). However, he argues that this tactic is not likely to result in any pecuniary compensation for losses that occur as a result of providing assistance to a migrant vessel:

[E]ven in jurisdictions in which pure life salvage creates an independent claim, this would not be helpful to the life salvor if the rescued persons are impoverished seafarers packed onto worthless inflatable rafts "owned" by elusive migrant smuggling cartels. (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410)

Article 16(1) of the Salvage Convention explicitly details how rescued people will not be responsible for their rescue costs, however “it also appears to allow national law to derogate from this principle” (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 410). In the United States, “life salvage” is only recoverable from the shipowner when claimed at the same time as a property salvage claim, whereas “pure life salvage will not give rise to an independent claim of recovery against the shipowner or rescued

persons” (p. 411). Although the Salvage Convention recognizes life saving to be a component of salvage coverage, “life salvage has traditionally been treated differently than property salvage [and] this doctrine effectively denying compensation for saving life, but allowing it for saving property, has long been controversial” (Kilpatrick, 2017, p. 411). The differential coverage available for property and people lends support to the idea that examining the way risk is treated in the case of migrant rescue provides valuable insight into how the contemporary political economy values the smooth flow of commodities over human life.

Conclusion

Efforts to securitize the future and infinite risks posed by forced migrants are dealt with through the geopolitical and geospatial tactics of externalization, while the geoeconomics of commercial rescue illuminates the uneven application of financial instruments to securitize the exploitative fruits of global trade. The shipping industry is the mechanism that facilitates this global trade flow. My research shows how disruptions to this flow are characterized as risks that must be securitized. While the responsibility to rescue is clearly something sacred to seafarers, the financial imperatives of shipping companies are equally sacred and personify market ideology: time is money. In maritime geographies and in the field of supply chain security the cost of losing time is mediated and managed by maritime insurance companies—operating at the limits of knowledge:

There has got to be some understanding of the harsh realities of life. At the end of the day, guess who caused these various wars and things? It's us. So look in the mirror. And before you start pointing the finger at anybody else. So I think there has gotta be a certain amount of harsh realities of life, and facing up to it, and not just being a lily livered academic about this. By the way now I'm doing a master's so I'm a lily livered academic as well. So we've gotta do these kinds of things. (Int. 18)

Each year thousands of people make the dangerous maritime journey to reach Europe because legal avenues to enter are virtually nonexistent (Amnesty International, 2014). With Fortress Europe increasingly closed off to people from non-European nation states and particularly to people from African and Middle Eastern states (Paggi 2004; Totah 2003) these clandestine migrations will continue. The Mediterranean is just one risky region that hosts the ongoing flow of people on the move.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

My intention in this dissertation was to investigate something I found perplexing and morally reprehensible: leaving migrants/refugees/people to drown. The most powerful way for me to do this, I still believe, was to work with the people who are most often in the position to be able to offer assistance: the seafarers and captains on the Mediterranean. During the exploratory phase of this project I found claims that commercial vessels were avoiding rescuing migrants on the Mediterranean Sea. Drawing on established literature that crafts a human geography of rescue, I proposed an approach to my study that has not relied on traumatic images of mostly black, drowned bodies—with the exception of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian toddler found on the Turkish beach—or the appropriation of migrant suffering through testimonies. The positive responsibility to rescue is often launched remotely by terrestrial rescue stations that rely on “vessels of opportunity” that are in close proximity to people in distress at sea (IMRF, 2019). The decisions that trigger the responsibility of rescue at sea are not only based on proximity and the type of ship, they are structured by the same decision making processes that produce life saving services, protracted refugee situations and on going geopolitical and geoeconomic inequalities. While there is support for the responsibility to rescue people in maritime distress, this responsibility is mediated through the risk based logic of securitization. However, I make a point in the dissertation to articulate that my intention is not to discredit the testimonies of people who report being bypassed by a commercial vessel. Moreover, I accept that passages like the following, from Omar El Akkad’s recent novel, *What Strange Paradise* (2021) that reflect what people in different parts of the world may think, or, possibly know about the prospect of being rescued by a commercial ship:

If the people on that ship find you, one of two things will happen. Either they’ll call the navy to come arrest you, or they’ll sink you themselves. Whatever lies you’ve told yourselves

about Westerners, you need to forget that bullshit right now, because I promise you they will do anything they can to make sure you go back where you came from, or else die out here (p. 119).

Human geography is in a state of perpetual motion, and the study of why people move and how this movement is managed is a key subject in geographic thought.

Nowhere is the risk and reward of human movement more apparent than in the geography of maritime rescue. The geography of ships opens a variety of opportunities to examine the ways maritime vessels encapsulate the interests of the people that drive them. On this global stage the racialized geopolitics of migration and the racialized geoeconomics of trade can figuratively, and literally crash into one another. This is what happened when a boat full of migrants crashed into cargo ship, *King Jacob*, in April 2015. My study of commercial ships and their role in rescuing people in distress in the Central Mediterranean developed from an interest in the relationships between migration, humanitarian aid and security actors, both state and private. More acutely, I have been interested in examining the political economy of humanitarian aid. This interest is sustained by a curiosity about the way states govern the movement of people and how the majority (millions) of people are living lives in protracted refugee situations. Instead of analyzing the geographies of people who attempt to cross the Mediterranean along a particular route, my methods are geared toward analyses which seek to critically examine the tensions of security and humanitarianism in the context of rescue. In the process I observed and cannot ignore the migration routes that people follow to Europe, however, my central objective has been to examine how the international community responds to migrants in distress at sea. By positioning the commercial ship within this geopolitical rescue framework, I was able to highlight how decisions to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean are influenced by multiple factors, involving geospatial maritime

surveillance technologies, international legal conventions, and coast guard/rescue coordination codes of conduct.

Findings

When processes of securitization are triggered, risks to migrants increase quickly. My study establishes how migrants are embodied through humanitarian, political and economic processes of securitization. My contribution relies on the spatial conceptualizations of humanitarian responsibility to rescue that describe how this responsibility is geographically mediated through proximity and distance to suffering. From understanding how migrants in maritime distress are conceptualized as risks to positioning the commercial ship as the antithesis to the migrant boat the human geography of maritime rescue rests in the tensions that exist between these respective vessels. The literal and figurative crashing together of the migrant boat and the commercial ship illustrates how the human geography of rescue will roll out. Maritime geography highlights the harsh reality of this relational context where rescue risks should be understood as life-threatening for migrants. If migrant rescue is differentiated from other forms of maritime rescue, and if this differentiation is based on the logic of securitization that defines migrants as geopolitical risks maritime geography can become executioner.

The responsibility to rescue people in maritime distress and the geopolitics of disembarkation parallel terrestrial humanitarian debates surrounding humanitarian aid and development for people displaced or ‘on the move.’ Both conversations revolve around security and the responsibility to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian, national, and commercial interests ensure commercial vessels will continue to be relied upon for maritime rescue. The movements and operations of merchant vessels in rescue situations on the Mediterranean are mediated by their maritime relationships with state-based rescue operations. In addition, merchant ships are responsible for the unobstructed flow of commercial goods. Even if

all migrants in distress were perceived as “deserving humanitarian victims” from a securitization prospective migrants crossing the Mediterranean can still be considered security threats and financial risks. To help throw into relief the tension that characterizes the perception of migrants as both humanitarian victim and security threat, my analysis has relied on a conceptual framework that documents processes of border security through the management of migration (Duffield, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2016). In part, my research project documents how these conceptualizations of migrants are reflected at sea in ways that differentiate between migrants in distress and other people that require rescue.

The research process in this dissertation was iterative, as discoveries were made through freedom of information requests and from tracing ship movements through *marinetraffic.com*'s open source geospatial technology. Together with my interviews and participant observation at seafarer conferences, these methods create an innovative constellation of geographic analyses that have the potential to trace maritime rescue and avoidance in defined maritime spaces. My interviews with seafarers and shipping captains helped me to understand the data provided by Frontex, as well as some of the risks involved with maritime rescue. The findings in this dissertation were offered in chapters four, five, and six.

In chapter four I showed how the sheer volume of maritime shipping traffic alongside the capacity of massive of cargo vessels ensures that merchant vessels will continue being critical components of maritime rescue coordination plans. The findings in this chapter were based largely on my involvement in international conferences on maritime rescue and interviews with seafarers. In this chapter, I highlighted the professed commitment of seafarers to their responsibility to rescue and how the politics of rescue coordination compares with their personal and humanitarian obligation to rescue people in distress at sea. This chapter explored the Law of the Sea and the

legal responsibility to rescue. My examination of how seafarers and rescue organizations define mass migrant rescue and maritime distress supports the idea that there is no requirement or responsibility requiring commercial ships to navigate through areas where migrants need help.

If rescue coordination is conducted from shore, as it is in most cases, which vessels are ultimately called on to perform the rescue and then who bears the responsibility for rescue? The decision-maker on shore or the seafarer on board the ship? And is avoiding areas where risky rescues have claimed the lives of thousands of people the same as disregarding a rescue request from a rescue coordination centre on shore? Further still, is there a difference between ignoring a request from a rescue coordination centre and ignoring a vessel in distress which is in close proximity to your own vessel? These ethical questions remain unanswered in this dissertation. This chapter was meant to nuance the concept of maritime rescue, and to highlight the role of seafarers and the significance of ship type in the performance of safe maritime rescues. It also highlights how large numbers of refugees in unseaworthy boats present important logical and safety challenges for rescue coordination.

In chapter five I positioned the rescue of migrants by commercial ships in the Central Mediterranean within existing literature that describes the geopolitics of securitization at sea. This chapter documented how seafarers and commercial ships embody the externalization agenda of border security politics. The border security conference in Rome and interviews with security professionals provided a way for me to examine how migrants are seen through a security lens. The chapter also outlined the role of commercial vessels in maritime rescue on the Mediterranean and compares it with the emergence and treatment of NGO rescue ships. In the process it highlighted how ships owned and/or chartered by humanitarian organizations have received considerably more attention than merchant vessels for their part in rescuing migrants in the Central

Mediterranean. An examination of how states have refused entry to ports and blocked NGO and commercial vessels from disembarking migrants demonstrates how the risks involved with rescue can extend beyond the acute phase. Commercial vessels have a responsibility to rescue people in distress and states have a responsibility to allow for the safe disembarkation of those rescued at the nearest place of safety: this chapter showed how the politics of disembarkation can quickly frustrate the performance and safety of rescue.

In chapter six I explored how migrants in distress can be defined as a risk to the security of the global supply chain of trade in goods. Most coverage of migration and rescue on the Mediterranean is focused on the geopolitics of rescue and/or the international and maritime law that governs state and NGO rescue relationships. Drawing on information provided by seafarers, the international chamber of shipping (ICS), P & I Clubs, Frontex and ship tracking data available through AIS provider *marinetraffic.com*, this chapter provided a unique approach that offered insights into the economics of rescuing people in maritime distress. A geoeconomics of migrant rescue by commercial ships was meant to add to existing geopolitical analysis of rescue and disembarkation. The chapter showed how the financial risks that come with maritime rescue are exacerbated by delays brought on by states that are reluctant to allow migrants to be disembarked. I illustrated how the rescue of migrants can be considered a threat to the flow of goods that sustain the global economy.

Research Contributions

The following is an excerpt from El-Akkad's (2021) fictional discussion between a passenger and smuggler aboard a boat in the Mediterranean that I have referenced throughout this dissertation; they speak of the inhumanity of the Dublin agreement and how to best act like a Westerner to avoid being detected by authorities:

Smuggler: “There are three things you need to know about America “First, everyone there is racist, especially the ones who tell you they’re not. Second, they’re terrified of sex. And, third no matter the crime, they’ll always find themselves innocent.” (p. 146)

Passenger: “Look at the skin color of the people up here [on the top deck; more expensive passage] and look at the skin color of the people down there [in the more dangerous hull of the vessel] and tell me we’re any better.”

Smuggler: “That has nothing to do with the color of anyone’s skin. There’s a price to sit up here and there’s a price to sit down there. If any of those Africans had enough money to be sitting in the top deck, that’s where they’d be. This is about business, not race.”

Passenger: “Keep telling yourself that,” (El Akkad, 2021, p. 147).

My theoretical contribution to the study of geographies of whiteness extends recent scholarship that questions whether securitization theory is racist (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2020). The aim of my analysis was not to show that securitization is racist, but instead to illustrate how whiteness is rationalized through processes of securitization. Processes that separate people into those who deserve to be saved and those who do not invite condemnations of racism, however I find that the study of these processes is not conducive to neat generalizations that position people or theories within binary groups: black or white, racist or not. The most compelling aspect of my analysis of whiteness is showing that the roots of racialized capitalism are present in current efforts to insure the risks associated with rescuing migrants. Linking current efforts to securitize the risks associated with rescuing migrants to historical efforts to insure slaves as cargo throws current trends on the Mediterranean into relief. Both advance an understanding of how securitization has long been a tool to disembody people:

The West you talk about doesn't exist. It's a fairy tale, a fantasy you sell yourself because the alternative is to admit that you're the least important character in your own story. You invent an entire world because your conscience demands it, you invent good people and bad people and you draw a neat little line between them because your simplistic morality demands it. But the two kinds of people in this world aren't good and bad – they're engines and fuel. Go ahead, change your country, change your name, change your accent, pull the skin right off your bones, but in their eyes they will always be engines and you will always, always be fuel. (Smuggler talking to people in the boat on route to Europe, El Akkad, 2021 p. 179)

While the harsh reality of life described in this quote is miserably pessimistic, it captures the economics of rescues that take place in the liminal maritime spaces between geopolitical boundaries and among people of different racialized groups.

This dissertation also aims to produce a new method for identifying commercial vessels involved in rescuing migrants with publicly available geospatial technology—Automatic Identification System data on *marinetraffic.com*—I applied my knowledge of border security operations to craft freedom of information (FOI) requests to the European Coast Guard and Border Agency (Frontex). With the information gathered from FOI requests I was able to identify commercial vessels that had been involved in maritime rescues. I contend that AIS technology is most effective when used in conjunction with other methods of data collection. By combining interview findings, FOIs, and digital GIS data from AIS, I developed novel ways to trace the geography of ships in the Mediterranean but also a more comprehensive understanding of how maritime rescues are coordinated.

Implications and Future Research

You are the temporary object of their fraudulent outrage, their fraudulent grief. They will march the streets on your behalf, they will write to politicians on your behalf, but you are to them in the end nothing but a hook on which to hang the best possible image of themselves. Today you the only boy in the world and tomorrow it will be as though you never existed. (El Akkad, 2021, p. 231).

This dissertation represents a sustained effort to engage with a humanitarian problem. It began before images of Alan Kurdi's lifeless body were transported across the globe in September 2015, and it was completed years after this image has receded into the ether of what defines the ebb and flow of humanitarian outrage. This study has engaged with scholarship that grapples with the issues that structure the way people respond to people in distress. My dissertation extends established literature and advances a conceptual framework that documents processes of border security through the management of migrant rescue on Mediterranean. This analysis rests on biopolitical conceptualizations of migrants as threats that must be contained (Duffield, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2017). This research project showed how these conceptualizations of people on the move are reflected at sea in ways that maintain socially constructed differences between "migrants" in distress and other "seafarers" that require rescue.

The delivery of humanitarian assistance, in both terrestrial and maritime geographies, is dependent on systems of logistics that are deeply entrenched in the market economics of the global economy. My study of commercial maritime rescue is meant to further highlight the phenomenon of commercial actors performing and/or contributing to humanitarian action, and border security. Given the European Coast Guard and Border Security Agency's toward redactions the idea that researchers will be able to identify ships through FOI requests is doubtful. Future research will continue to rely on the capabilities of geospatial technology to help identify and examine the

human geography of maritime rescue. Much more can be done with sufficient funds to expand access to the geospatial technology and more time to await very slow responses by Frontex to the FOI requests. These research tools have associated financial and time constraints: waiting months for information to be released by Frontex, paying for automated historical ship tracking can be costly, and monitoring free on-line vessel traffic maps is also time consuming.

Conclusion

The child lies on the shore. All around him the beach is littered with the wreckage of the boat and the wreckage of its passengers: shards of decking, knapsacks cleaved and gutted, bodies frozen in unnatural contortion. Three officers from the municipal police force pull a long strip of caution tape along the breadth of the walkway that leads from the road to the beach. Another three wrestle with large sheets of blue-cover canvas, trying to build a curtain between the dead and their audience. In this way the destruction takes on an air of queer unreality, a stage bled of movement, a fairy tale upturned. (El Akkad, 2021, p. 5).

In El-Akkad's novel the Syrian child is not dead, like Alan Kurdi, but only mistaken for dead by the authorities. Instead of landing on Turkish shores, he lands on Greek island. He provides a shred of hope in what has been a deadly maritime route for migrants in the Mediterranean.

This research project exposed me to countless images of dead bodies and video of people drowning. However, my privilege and experience as a researcher always positioned me far removed from the danger and death I witnessed. Many participants in my study encouraged me to experience life aboard a rescue vessel, but I never left shore. Perhaps I protected myself by not witnessing people's suffering through proximity. However, despite maintaining this physical distance my research forced me into a closeness with people that lived maritime experiences as migrants and seafarers. While I can easily discuss the limitations that my lack of maritime

experience imposed on my project or the gaps in theory that no doubt exist, I choose to argue that my approach involved thinking through how forces that also lie beyond the maritime world ultimately make their way out to sea.

This dissertation has examined how commercial ships respond to people in maritime distress on the Mediterranean Sea. Analyzing seafarers and commercial rescues in the Mediterranean was motivated by a desire to understand the risks to rescuers, which are ultimately tied to the risks faced by people in distress, crossing the Mediterranean by boat. My analysis shows how the responsibility to rescue is mediated through the geopolitics of rescue coordination and in certain circumstances—involving migrants—the criminalization of disembarkation. It is also shaped by the geoeconomics imperatives defined by supply chains and costs. The movements and operations of merchant vessels in rescue situations on the Mediterranean operate in conjunction with state-based rescue operations. This research identified and examined ways that people crossing the Mediterranean are simultaneously constructed as humanitarian victims, security threats, and financial risks. The security of commercial ships defines supply chain security and ships in distress that cost time and delays are subject to the processes of securitization. My salient argument is that the proximity of commercial ships to people in distress at sea, combined with their humanitarian, national, and commercial interests, ensure they will continue to be relied upon for maritime rescue, for anyone who finds themselves in maritime distress.

References

- Aarstad, Å. K. (2015). The duty to assist and its disincentives: the shipping industry and the Mediterranean Migration Crisis. *Mediterranean Politics*, 20(3), 413-419.
- Abulafia, D. (2011). *The great sea: A human history of the Mediterranean*. Oxford University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2000). Embodying strangers. *Body matters: Feminism, textuality, corporeality*, 85-96.
- Ahmed, S. (2013). *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. Routledge.
- Amnesty International (2015) Europe's Sinking Shame, (London: Amnesty International Ltd). Available at: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/webfm_send/1345 (accessed 1 June 2015)
- Amnesty International, Libya's Dark Web of Collusion: Abuses against Europe-bound Refugees and Migrants. (December, 2017). Available from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde19/7561/2017/en/>
- Amnesty International. (2020). Libya: Renewal of migration deal confirms Italy's complicity in torture of migrants and refugees. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/libya-renewal-of-migration-deal-confirms-italys-complicity-in-torture-of-migrants-and-refugees/>
- Anim-Addo, A., Hasty, W., & Peters, K. (2014). The mobilities of ships and shipped mobilities.
- Amoore, L., & De Goede, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Risk and the War on Terror*. Routledge.
- Aradau, C., & Van Munster, R. (2007). Governing terrorism through risk: Taking precautions, (un) knowing the future. *European journal of international relations*, 13(1), 89-115.

- Aradau, C., & Van Munster, R. (2008). Taming the Future: The Dispositive of Risk in the War on Terror. In L. Amoore, & M. Goede (Eds.), *Risk and the War on Terror* London and New York: Routledge.
- Barnes, R. (2004). Refugee law at Sea. *Int'l & Comp. LQ*, 53, 47.
- Basaran, T. (2015). The saved and the drowned: Governing indifference in the name of security. *Security Dialogue*, 46(3), 205-220.
- Bernard, H. R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Betts, A. (2004). The international relations of the "new" extraterritorial approaches to refugee protection: Explaining the policy initiatives of the UK government and UNHCR. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 58-70.
- Bevan, A. (2014). Mediterranean containerization. *Current Anthropology*, 55(4), 387-418.
- Bonacich, E., & Wilson, J. B. (2008). Getting the Goods: Ports, Labor, and the Logistics Revolution.
- Bonacich, E., Alimahomed, S., & Wilson, J. B. (2008). The racialization of global labor. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52(3), 342-355.
- Bonnet, A. (1997) "Geography, 'race' and Whiteness: invisible traditions and current challenges", *Area*, 29 (3), 193-99.
- Butler, J. (2009). Torture and the Ethics of photography: Thinking with Sontag. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable*, 63-100.

Butler, J. (2012). Precarious life, vulnerability, and the ethics of cohabitation. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26(2), 134-151.

Calleja, S. & Barry, C. (2019). Rescued migrants safe in Europe after hijacking oil tanker. *Associated Press*.

Casas-Cortes, M., Cobarrubias, S., Heller, C., & Pezzani, L. (2017). Clashing cartographies, migrating maps: The politics of mobility at the external borders of EU rope. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16(1), 1-33.

Ciabbari, L. (2014). Dynamics and Representations of Migration Corridors: The Rise and Fall of the Libya Lampedusa Route and Forms of Mobility from the Horn of Africa (2000-2009). *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13(2), 246-262.

Cobarrubias, S. (2019). Mapping Illegality: The i-Map and the Cartopolitics of “Migration Management” at a Distance. *Antipode*, 51(3), 770-794.

Code Of Conduct For NGOS Involved in. Migrant’s’ Rescue Operations at Sea.

<https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2017070516-EU-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

Coomber, F. G., D’Inca, M., Rosso, M., Tepsich, P., di Sciara, G. N., & Moulins, A. (2016). Description of the vessel traffic within the north Pelagos Sanctuary: Inputs for Marine Spatial Planning and management implications within an existing international Marine Protected Area. *Marine Policy*, 69, 102-113.

Coppens, J., & Somers, E. (2010). Towards new rules on disembarkation of persons rescued at sea?. *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 25(3), 377-403.

- Cowen, D. (2010). A geography of logistics: Market authority and the security of supply chains. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100(3), 600-620.
- Cowen, D., & Smith, N. (2009). After geopolitics? From the geopolitical social to geoeconomics. *Antipode*, 41(1), 22-48.
- Cowen, D. (2014). *The deadly life of logistics: Mapping violence in global trade*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Crawley, H., & Duvell, F. (2017). *Unravelling Europe's' migration crisis': Journeys over land and sea*. Policy Press.
- Cusumano, E. (2017). Emptying the sea with a spoon? Non-governmental providers of migrants search and rescue in the Mediterranean. *Marine Policy*, 75, 91-98.
- Cusumano, E. (2018). The sea as humanitarian space: Non-governmental search and rescue dilemmas on the Central Mediterranean migratory route. *Mediterranean Politics*, 23(3), 387-394.
- Cusumano, E., & Pattison, J. (2018). The non-governmental provision of search and rescue in the Mediterranean and the abdication of state responsibility. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 31(1), 53-75.
- Cusumano, E. (2019a). Migrant rescue as organized hypocrisy: EU maritime missions offshore Libya between humanitarianism and border control. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 54(1), 3-24.
- Cusumano, E. (2019b). Straitjacketing migrant rescuers? The code of conduct on maritime NGOs. *Mediterranean Politics*, 24(1), 106-114.

- Cusumano, E. (2019c). Humanitarians at sea: Selective emulation across migrant rescue NGOs in the Mediterranean sea. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 40(2), 239-262.
- Cusumano, E., & Villa, M. (2021). From “angels” to “vice smugglers”: the criminalization of sea rescue NGOs in Italy. *European journal on criminal policy and research*, 27(1), 23-40.
- Cuttitta, P. (2018). Repoliticization through search and rescue? Humanitarian NGOs and migration management in the Central Mediterranean. *Geopolitics*, 23(3), 632-660.
- Danewid, I. (2021). Policing the (migrant) crisis: Stuart Hall and the defence of whiteness. *Security Dialogue*, 0967010621994074.
- Davies, M. (2003). Obligations and Implications for Ships Encountering Persons in Need of Assistance at Sea. *Pac. Rim L. & Pol’y J.*, 12, 109.
- Davis, D. B. (2000). Looking at slavery from broader perspectives. *The American Historical Review*, 105(2), 452-466.
- Dearden, L. (2015) Migrant boat crisis: Human Smugglers ‘throwing pregnant women and children overboard to drown to force commercial ships to rescue them.’ *Independent*.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/migrant-boat-crisis-human-smugglers-throwing-pregnant-women-and-children-overboard-drown-force-commercial-ships-rescue-them-10290183.html>
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1935). Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis-A Negro View. *Foreign Aff.*, 14, 82.
- Duffield, M. (2006). Racism, migration and development: the foundations of planetary order. *Progress in Development Studies*, 6(1), 68-79

Duffield, M. (2007). Development, security and unending war: governing the world of peoples. Polity.

DW. (2019). Salvini closes Italy's ports to German refugee rescue ship

<https://www.dw.com/en/salvini-closes-italys-ports-to-german-refugee-rescue-ship/a-50183139>

ECSCA, ICS, ETF and IFT (2015) Humanitarian Crisis in Mediterranean Sea Brussels/ London

31st March 2015. Available at: [http://www.ecsa.eu/images/NEW_Position_Papers/2015-03-31%20ship ping%20industry%20general%20letter%20eu%20heads%20of%20state.pdf](http://www.ecsa.eu/images/NEW_Position_Papers/2015-03-31%20ship%20ping%20industry%20general%20letter%20eu%20heads%20of%20state.pdf) (accessed 28 May 2015).

EUNAVFOR MED. (2016). (EUNAVFOR MED, 2016). <https://www.operationsophia.eu/about-us/>

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). "A copy of all serious incident reports filed during Joint Operation Triton." European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 January 26.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_all_serious_incident_r#incoming-15771

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). "A copy of all serious incident reports involving commercial ships during Joint Operation Triton." European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 January 31.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_all_serious_incident_r_2#incoming-15841

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). "A copy of specific serious incident reports from JO Triton 2014." European Union. Freedom of information request at

asktheeu.org 2018 October 15.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_specific_serious_incid#incoming-18984

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2015.” European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 November 22.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_specific_serious_incid_2#incoming-19405

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2016.” European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 November 30.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_specific_serious_incid_3#incoming-19525

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2017.” European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 December 13.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_specific_serious_incid_4#incoming-19640

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “Boat Interception Data under Operation Triton from October 11, 2017 to 2018 termination.” European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2018 Dec 21.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/boat_interception_data_under_ope_2#incoming-19788

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “Data from terminated Operation Triton.”

European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2019 February 01.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/data_from_terminated_operation_t#incoming-20202

European Border and Coast Guard Agency. (Frontex). “A copy of specific (serious) incident reports for Operation Triton from Oct 2017 to termination.” European Union. Freedom of information request at asktheeu.org 2019 September 04.

https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/a_copy_of_specific_serious_incid_5#incoming-23475

European Community Shipowners’ Associations. (2014). Shipping Industry Calls on EU Leaders to be Decisive and Immediately Increase Mediterranean Search and Rescue Resources.

<https://www.ecsa.eu/news/shipping-industry-calls-eu-leaders-be-decisive-and-immediately-increase-mediterranean-search>

European Parliament. (2017). Code of Conduct for in the Mediterranean.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2017-005646_EN.htmlINGOs

Europol. (2016) Migrant Smuggling in the EU. Retrieved from

https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/migrant_smuggling_europol_report_2016.pdf

Faras Ghani (2020). Black lives matter, ‘even the ones drowning in the Mediterranean’

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/7/16/black-lives-matter-even-the-ones-drowning-in-the-mediterranean>

Fielding, N. G. (2012). “Triangulation and mixed methods designs: Data integration with new research technologies”, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 124-136.

- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population: lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. Springer.
- Foucault, M. (2008). Of other spaces. (1967). In *Heterotopia and the City* (pp. 25-42). Routledge.
- Forensic Architecture. (2018). Sea Watch vs the Libyan Coast Guard. <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/seawatch-vs-the-libyan-coastguard>
- Forensic Oceanography. (2018). Death by Rescue. <https://deathbyrescue.org/report/narrative/>
<https://qz.com/1514244/the-disturbing-reality-behind-the-drop-in-mediterranean-migrant-deaths/>
- Frontex (2015). *Frontex Risk Analysis for 2015*. European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Frontex. (2016). *Frontex Risk Analysis for 2016*. European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Frontex. (2017). *Frontex Risk Analysis for 2017*. European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Frontex. (2018). *Frontex Risk Analysis for 2018*. European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Frontex. (2019). *Frontex Risk Analysis for 2019*. European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Gayle, D. (2015). Hundreds of migrants believed to have drowned off Libya after boat capsizes. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/14/400-drowned-libya-italy-migrant-boat-capsizes>
- Gard. (2020). *The Maersk Etienne rescue highlights the difficulties in disembarking migrants rescued at sea*. <https://www.gard.no/web/updates/content/30502985/the-maersk-etienne-rescue-highlights-the-difficulties-in-disembarking-migrants-rescued-at-sea>
- Gard. (2015). *Refugee rescue- P&I cover and assistance*.

- Garelli, G., Heller, C., Pezzani, L., & Tazzioli, M. (2018). Shifting bordering and rescue practices in the central Mediterranean Sea, October 2013–October 2015. *Antipode*, 50(3), 813-821.
- Gloninger, G. M. (2019). From Humanitarian Rescue to Border Security: Managing Migration in the Central Mediterranean. *European Journal of Migration and Law*, 21(4), 459-485.
- Hammerstad, A. (2014). The securitization of forced migration. *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies*, 265-276.
- Hasty, W., and K. Peters. (2012). “The Ship in Geography and the Geographies of Ships.” *Geography Compass* 6 (11): 660–676.
- Hawthorne, C. (2021). L’Italia Meticcia? The Black Mediterranean and the Racial Cartographies of Citizenship. In *The Black Mediterranean* (pp. 169-198). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Heck, G., & Hess, S. (2017). Tracing the effects of the EU-Turkey Deal. *Movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 3(2), 35-56.
- Heller, T., Pezzani, L., & Studio, S. (2012). Report on the “left-to-die boat”. *London: Forensic Architecture Project Goldsmiths University of London*, 11.
- Heller, C., & Pezzani, L. (2016). Ebbing and flowing: The EU’s shifting practices of (non-) assistance and bordering in a time of crisis. *Near Futures Online*, 1(1).
- Heller, C., & Pezzani, L. (2016). Death by rescue: The lethal effects of the EU’s policies of non-assistance.
- Herzfeld, M. (2005). *Practical Mediterraneanism: excuses for everything, from epistemology to eating*. na.
- Hughes, R. (2015). Migrant crisis: Should ships help those in need?
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32387439>

- Howell, A., & Richter-Montpetit, M. (2020). Is securitization theory racist? Civilizationism, methodological whiteness, and antiblack thought in the Copenhagen School. *Security Dialogue*, 51(1), 3-22.
- Hyndman, J., & Giles, W. (2011). Waiting for what? The feminization of asylum in protracted situations. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 18(3), 361-379.
- Hyndman, J., & Mountz, A. (2008). Another Brick in the Wall? Neo-Refoulement and the Externalization of Asylum by Australia and Europe. *Government and Opposition*, 43(2), 249-269.
- Hyndman, J. (2009). 13| Whose bodies count? Feminist geopolitics and lessons from Iraq. *Feminism and war: Confronting US imperialism*, 194.
- Hyndman, J., & Giles, W. (2017). *Refugees in extended exile: Living on the edge*. Taylor & Francis.
- Ignatiev, N. (2003). Whiteness and class struggle. *Historical materialism*, 11(4), 227-235.
- International Chamber of Shipping. (2014). *Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea Guidance on Ensuring the Safety and Security of Seafarers and Rescued Persons*.
<https://cryptome.org/2014/12/large-scale-rescue-at-sea.pdf>
- International Chamber of Shipping. (2015). *Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea Guidance on Ensuring the Safety and Security of Seafarers and Rescued Persons second Edition 2015*.
<https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/large-scale-rescue-at-sea-min.pdf>
- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) (1974) 1184 UNTS 3, 1 November 1974 (entry into force 25 May 1980). Available

at:<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201184/volume-1184-I-18961-English.pdf> (accessed 22 July 2015).

International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) (1979) 1403 UNTS, 27 April 1979 (entry into force 25 March 1980). Available at:
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201405/volume-1405-I-23489-English.pdf> (accessed 22 July 2015).

International Maritime Organization, United Nations High Commission R, ICS. (2015). Rescue at Sea: A Guide to Principles and Practice as Applied to Principles and Practice as Applied to Refugees and Migrants. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54b365554.html>

International Maritime Organization. (2020). Women in Maritime.

<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime.aspx>

International Maritime Rescue Federation (2018). SAR matters: Defining distress continued. <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/news/sar-matters-defining-distress-continued>

International Maritime Rescue Federation. (2018, February). *LIFELINE: The Newsletter of the International Maritime Rescue Federation*. <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=a6086df7-033f-4f95-9290-9f131264ae9e>

International Maritime Rescue Federation. (2018, May). *LIFELINE: The Newsletter of the International Maritime Rescue Federation*.

International Maritime Rescue Federation. (2019). Mass Rescue Operations Guidance Chapters. Available at: <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/Pages/Category/chapters>

- International Maritime Rescue Federation. (2019). The International Maritime Rescue Federation Mass Rescue Operations Project: Providing support on scene. Available at: <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/chapter-15-providing-support-on-scene>
- Jacobson, M. F. (1999). *Whiteness of a different color*. Harvard University Press.
- James, C. (1989). *The Black Jacobins: Touissant L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Random House
- Kanter, J. (2019). European Union Reaches Deal With Turkey to Return New Asylum Seekers. *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/world/europe/european-union-turkey-refugees-migrants.html>
- Kilpatrick Jr, R. L. (2017). The Refugee Clause for Commercial Shipping Contracts: Why Allocation of Rescue Costs Is Critical during Period of Mass Migration at Sea. *Ga. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*, 46, 403.
- Kingsley, P. (2016). Refugee crisis: What does the EU's deal with Turkey mean? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/18/eu-deal-turkey-migrants-refugees-q-and-a>
- Kingsley, K. (2020). Privatized Pushbacks: How Merchant Ships Guard Europe. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/20/world/europe/mediterranean-libya-migrants-europe.html>
- Lehner, R. (2019). The EU-Turkey-'deal': Legal Challenges and Pitfalls. *International Migration*, 57(2), 176-185.

- Lewis, A. & Scherer, S. (2017). Italy tries to bolster Libyan coast guard, despite humanitarian concern. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-libya-idUSKCN18B2E5>
- Lutterbeck, D. (2006). Policing migration in the Mediterranean: ESSAY. *Mediterranean politics*, 11(1), 59-82.
- Mafu, L. (2019). The Libyan/Trans-Mediterranean slave trade, the African Union, and the failure of human morality. *Sage open*, 9(1), 2158244019828849.
- Maltzman, J., & Ehrenreich, M. (2014). The Seafarer's Ancient Duty to Rescue and Modern Attempts to Regulate and Criminalize the Good Samaritan. *Tul. L. Rev.*, 89, 1267.
- Maritime Executive. (2020). Merchant Vessels Caught in the Middle With Mediterranean Migrants. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/merchant-vessels-caught-in-the-middle-with-mediterranean-rescuees>
- Merrill, H. (2011). Migration and surplus populations: Race and deindustrialization in northern Italy. *Antipode*, 43(5), 1542-1572.
- Mertens, D. M., & Hesse-Biber, S. (2012). "Triangulation and mixed methods research", *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 6(2) 75–79.
- McCarthy, J., & Hague, E. (2004). Race, nation, and nature: The cultural politics of "Celtic" identification in the American West. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 94(2), 387-408.
- McDowell, L. (2008) Thinking through work: Complex inequalities, constructions of difference and transnational migrants. *Progress in Human Geography* 3:491–507

Miglierini, J. (2016). Migrant tragedy: Anatomy of a shipwreck. *BBC News*, Catania.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36278529>

Mintz, S. (1986) *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin

Moreno-Lax, V., Ghezelbash, D., & Klein, N. (2019). Between life, security and rights: Framing the interdiction of 'boat migrants' in the Central Mediterranean and Australia. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 32(4), 715-740.

Mustăţea, M. (2020). From the Italian Mare Nostrum Operation to the Frontex Triton Operation (November 2014-February 2018). Italy and Search and Rescue Operations.(SAR operations). *Euro-Atlantic Studies*, (3), 69-89.

OHCHR.(2019). The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) Italy: UN experts condemn criminalisation of migrant rescues and threats to the independence of judiciary.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24833&LangID=E>

Paggi, M. (2004) Bossi-Fini law and migrant citizens' rights: Pros and cons. Speech by Dr Marco Paggi, legal advisory, to the meeting on the enlargement to Non-EU citizens the right to vote in administrative elections. redazione@meltingpot.org (last accessed 24 March 2010)

Patalano, A. (2015). Night Mare Nostrum? Not Quite: Lessons from the Italian Navy in the Mediterranean Migrant Crisis. *The RUSI journal*, 160(3), 14-19.

- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and policy in mental health and mental health services research*, 42(5), 533-544.
- Pallister-Wilkins, P. (2015). The humanitarian politics of European border policing: Frontex and border police in Evros. *International Political Sociology*, 9(1), 53-69.
- Peters, K. (2010). Future promises for contemporary social and cultural geographies of the sea. *Geography Compass*, 4(9), 1260-1272.
- Pollard, J. S., & Sidaway, J. D. (2002). Nostalgia for the future: the geoeconomics and geopolitics of the Euro. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 27(4), 518-521.
- Proglio, G., Hawthorne, C., Danewid, I., Saucier, P. K., Grimaldi, G., Pesarini, A., & Gerrand, V. (Eds.). (2021). *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*. Springer
- Nature.Pred, A. and M. Watts (1992) *Reworking Modernity*. New Brunswick, New Jersey:Rutgers Univ. Press
- Razack, S. H. (2007). Stealing the pain of others: Reflections on Canadian humanitarian responses. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 29(4), 375-394.
- Robinson, C. (1983) *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press
- Roediger, D. (1991). *The Wages of Whiteness Revised Edition*.

- Roediger, D. R. (2006). *Working toward whiteness: How America's immigrants became white: The strange journey from Ellis Island to the suburbs*. Hachette UK.
- Reich, M., Gordon, D. M., & Edwards, R. C. (1973). A theory of labor market segmentation. *The American Economic Review*, 63(2), 359-365.
- Reitano, T., & Micallef, M. (2016). Breathing space-the impact of the EU-Turkey deal on irregular migration. *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 2016(297), 1-24.
- Rupprecht, A. (2016). 'Inherent vice': marine insurance, slave ship rebellion and the law. *Race & Class*, 57(3), 31-44.
- Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage. *Find this resource*.
- Sampson, H. (2003). Transnational drifters or hyperspace dwellers: an exploration of the lives of Filipino seafarers aboard and ashore. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26(2), 253-277.
- Sampson, H., & Zhao, M. (2003). Multilingual crews: communication and the operation of ships. *World Englishes*, 22(1), 31-43.
- Saucier, P. K., & Woods, T. P. (2014). Ex aqua: The Mediterranean basin, Africans on the move, and the politics of policing. *Theoria*, 61(141), 55-75.
- Saul, J. (2015). Special Report: Commercial ships scoop up desperate human cargo. *Reuters*.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-ship-specialreport-idUSKCN0RL0W320150921>
- Soegard, Kis. Safe disembarkation of the 27 rescued persons from Maersk Etienne. *Maersk Tankers*. <https://maersktankers.com/newsroom/caught-at-sea-after-rescuing-27-people>

- Sorrenson, R. (1996). The ship as a scientific instrument in the eighteenth century. *Osiris*, 11, 221-236.
- Slovic, P., Västfjäll, D., Erlandsson, A., & Gregory, R. (2017). Iconic photographs and the ebb and flow of empathic response to humanitarian disasters. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(4), 640-644.
- Sparke, M. (2007). Geopolitical fears, geoeconomic hopes, and the responsibilities of geography. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97(2), 338-349.
- Sparke, M. (2018a). Globalizing capitalism and the dialectics of geopolitics and geoeconomics. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 50(2), 484-489.
- Sparke, M. (2018b). Geoeconomics, globalisation and the limits of economic strategy in statecraft: A response to Vihma. *Geopolitics*, 23(1), 30-37.
- Spearin, C. (2008). Private, armed and humanitarian? States, NGOs, international private security companies and shifting humanitarianism. *Security Dialogue*, 39(4), 363-382.
- Spivak, G (1988) Can the subaltern speak?, in: C Nelson&L Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, pp 271–313 (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press)
- Squire, V., Dimitriadi, A., Perkowski, N., Pisani, M., Stevens, D., & Vaughan-Williams, N. (2017). *Crossing the Mediterranean Sea by Boat: Mapping and documenting migratory journeys and experiences*. University of Warwick: Coventry, UK.
- Steinberg, P. E. (2001). *The social construction of the ocean* (Vol. 78). Cambridge University Press.

- Steinhilper, E., & Gruijters, R. J. (2018). A contested crisis: Policy narratives and empirical evidence on border deaths in the Mediterranean. *Sociology*, 52(3), 515-533.
- Stierl, M. (2018). A fleet of Mediterranean border humanitarians. *Antipode*, 50(3), 704-724.
- UNHCR (2015) UNHCR proposal to address current and future arrivals of asylum-seeker, refugees and migrants by sea to Europe, March 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55016ba14.pdf>
- Stoler, A. L. (1995). *Race and the Education of Desire*. Duke University Press.
- Struthers, M. (2020). *Libya: Renewal of migration deal confirms Italy's complicity in torture of migrants and refugees*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/libya-renewal-of-migration-deal-confirms-italys-complicity-in-torture-of-migrants-and-refugees/>
- Tazzioli, M. (2016). Eurosur, Humanitarian Visibility and (nearly) Real-Time Mapping in the Mediterranean. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 15(3), 561-579.
- Tondo, L., & Rankin, J. (2019). Rescued migrants hijack merchant ship off Libya. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/27/rescued-migrants-hijack-merchant-ship-off-libya>
- Total, M. (2003) Fortress Italy: Racial politics and the new immigration amendment in Italy. *Fordham International Law Journal* 26:1438–1504
- Trouillot M-R (1995) *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon
- Trouillot M-R (2003) *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- UNHCR. (2017). Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

- Tu, E., Zhang, G., Rachmawati, L., Rajabally, E., & Huang, G. B. (2017). Exploiting AIS data for intelligent maritime navigation: A comprehensive survey from data to methodology. *IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Transportation Systems*, 19(5), 1559-1582.
- UNHCR. (2019). Global Trends 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>
- UNHCR. (2019). Desperate Journeys: Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and at Europe's Borders January – December 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/>
- Maritime Executive. (2020). Merchant Vessels Caught in the Middle With Mediterranean Migrants. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/merchant-vessels-caught-in-the-middle-with-mediterranean-rescuees>
- UNHCR. (2020). <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2011). Issue Paper: Smuggling of Migrants by Sea. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Issue-Papers/Issue Paper - Smuggling of Migrants by Sea.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Migrant-Smuggling/Issue-Papers/Issue%20Paper%20-%20Smuggling%20of%20Migrants%20by%20Sea.pdf)
- Vanderbeck, R. M. (2006). Vermont and the imaginative geographies of American whiteness. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(3), 641-659.
- van Houtum, H., & Bueno Lacy, R. (2020). The migration map trap. On the invasion arrows in the cartography of migration. *Mobilities*, 15(2), 196-219.
- Wacquant, L. (2006) From slavery to mass incarceration: Rethinking the “race question” in the United States. In Macedo and Gounari (eds) *The Globalization of Racism* (pp 94–110). London: Paradigm

- Walters, W. (2015). Migration, vehicles, and politics: Three theses on viapolitics. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 18(4), 469-488.
- Weiss, T. G. (2013). *Humanitarian business*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Williams, K. (2018). Arriving somewhere, not here: Exploring and mapping the relationship between border enforcement and migration by boat in the central Mediterranean Sea, 2006 to 2015.
- Williams, K., & Mountz, A. (2018). Between enforcement and precarity: externalization and migrant deaths at sea. *International Migration*, 56(5), 74-89.
- Zoppi, M. (2020). The 'three absences' of black Africans in European migration debates. *Mediterranean Politics*, 25(5), 627-649.

Appendix A

Table 1. IMO Ship types

Ship Type	Definition
Passenger ship	Ship which carries more than twelve passengers.
Fishing vessel	Vessel used for catching fish, whales, seals, walrus or other living resources of the sea. Any vessel used commercially for catching fish
Nuclear ship	Ship provided with a nuclear power plant.
Bulk carrier	Ship constructed with single deck, top-side tanks and hopper side tanks in cargo spaces, and is intended primarily to carry dry cargo in bulk, and includes such types as ore carriers and combination carriers.
Oil tanker	Ship constructed or adapted primarily to carry oil in bulk in its cargo spaces and includes combination carriers
General cargo ship	Ship with a multi-deck or single-deck hull designed primarily for the carriage of general cargo
High-speed craft	Craft capable of travelling at high speed
Mobile offshore drilling unit	Means a vessel capable in engaging in drilling operations for the exploration for or exploitation of resources beneath the sea-bed such as liquid gaseous hydrocarbons, sulphur or salt
Special purpose ship (SPS)	A mechanically self-propelled ship which by reason of its function carries on board 12 special personnel

Table 2. Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Position	Organization	Description
Int. 1	Man	Senior Marine Adviser	International Chamber of Shipping	World's principal shipping organisation, representing 80% of world's merchant tonnage, through membership by national shipowners' associations
Int. 2	Man	Director of Campaigns & Communications	Nautilus Maritime Trade Union	Trade union and professional organization serving more than 22,000 maritime professionals
Int. 3	Man	Senior Secretary	Nautilus Maritime Trade Union	
Int. 4	Woman	Representative	International Group	International Group of Protection and Indemnity Clubs; the thirteen principal underwriting associations which comprise the International Group, between them provide liability cover (protection and indemnity) for approximately 90% of the world's ocean-going tonnage
Int. 5	Man	Captain/ Portmaster	Hutchison Ports	Hutchison Port Holdings Limited (HPH) private holding company comprised 48 port operations throughout Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, the Americas and Australasia
Int. 6	Man	Captain/ Harbour Master	ABP East Anglia	Associated British Ports Holdings Ltd owns and operates 21 ports in the
				United Kingdom, managing around 25% of the UK's sea-borne trade
Int. 7	Man	Port Chaplain	Seafarers Centre	Charity Organization
Int. 8	Man	SAR Boat Pilot/Maritime Consultant	MSF	International humanitarian NGO
Int. 9	Man	Captain/ Assistant Secretary General	International Federation of Shipmasters	The Federation is formed of around 11,000 Shipmasters from sixty countries either through their National Associations or as Individual Members
Int. 10	Man	Commodore/ Assistant Secretary General	International Federation of Shipmasters	
Int. 11	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 12	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 13	Man	Seafarer	N/A	Shipping company

Int. 14	Man	Academic	Forensic Architecture	Research Agency
Int. 15	Man	Lieutenant	Italian Coast Guard	Part of the Italian Navy under the control of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport; head office in Rome where it manages the MRCC
Int. 16	Man	N/A	Italian Coast Guard	
Int. 17	Man	Captain/ Secretary General	InterManager	The only international trade association for the ship management industry; collectively members are involved in the management of more than 5,000 ships and responsible for in excess of 250,000 seafarers
Int. 18	Man	Royal Marines Officer / Chief Executive Officer	SAMI (Security Association for the Maritime Industry)	NGO with over 180 Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) from more than 35 countries as members
Int. 19	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 20	Man	Captain	N/A	Shipping company
Int. 21	Man	Lawyer	Human Rights at Sea	Charitable Incorporated Organisation for the benefit of the international community for matters concerning engagement with human rights issues in the maritime environment
Int. 22	Woman	Claims Executive	N/A	P&I Club
Int. 23	Woman	Research Coordinator	International Maritime Organization	Specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating shipping
Int. 24	Man	Representative	International Organization for Migration	Intergovernmental organization providing services and advice concerning migration to governments

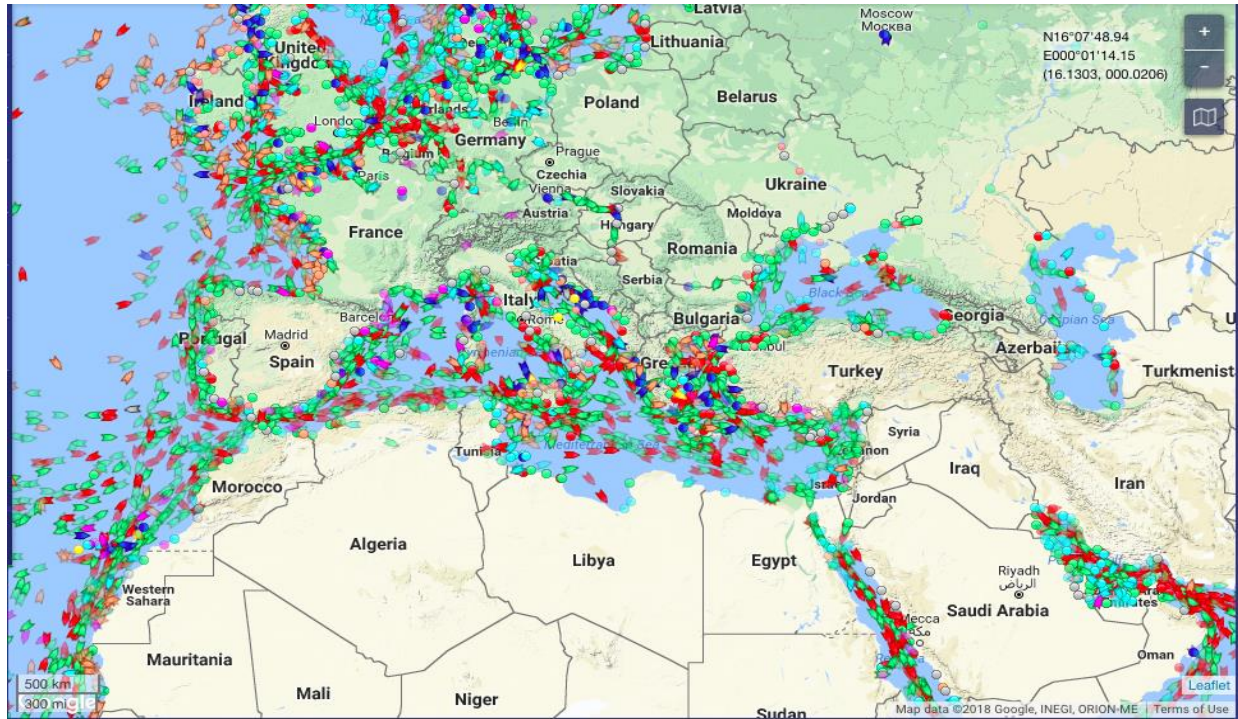
Table 3. Timeline of Freedom of Information Requests to Frontex

Date and Title	Request	Response/Release	Detected by a commercial vessel	Intercepted by a commercial vessel	Notes
Sept 02, 2018 A copy of specific serious incident reports from JO Triton 2014	7 Serious Incident Reports	Oct 15, 2018 6 Incident reports involving commercial ships	6	0	Frontex initially reported that there were no Serious Incidents Reports (SIRs) However, Incident Reports were available
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2015	132 Incident Reports	Nov 22, 2018 109 incident reports involving commercial ships	53	111	Frontex took nearly two months to respond, requests now included specific incident numbers and year
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2016	115 Incident Reports	Oct 30, 2018 96 incident reports involving commercial ships	76	84	In their Frontex defines Serious Incidents versus Incidents: see page of this article
Sept 24, 2018 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports from JO Triton 2017	104 incident Reports	Dec 13, 2018 86 incident reports involving commercial ships	76	76	Frontex asks to address requests submitted on Sept 24 in succession
Oct 8, 2018 Boat Interception Data under Operation Triton from October 11, 2017 to 2018 termination	Boat interception data under operation Triton from October 2017 to the 2018 termination.	Nov 14, 2018 288 incident reports	N/A	N/A	This response included a letter attachment that detailed Frontex decision to exclude key variables from release.
Jan 10, 2019 Data from terminated	Please provide data on variables "type	Feb 1, 2019 0 incident reports released	N/A	N/A	This response included a letter

Operation Triton	of intercepted by" and "type of detected by" type" for (terminated) Operation Triton incidents from 10/13/2017 (incident report #218101) to 31/01/2018 (incident report #229987).				attachment that detailed Frontex refusal to release the requested information. See page of this article (xx).
March 02, 2019 A copy of specific (serious) incident reports for Operation Triton from Oct 2017 to termination	A copy of the following 288 (serious) incident reports for Operation Triton from Oct 2017 to termination: Incident reports for incident numbers:	Sept 04, 2019 Frontex agreed to release 8 batches of 36 incidents the final release was on Sept 04, 2019.	N/A	N/A	Final release of information includes statement of how some parts of the document are expunged and the release includes information on "Disclaimers of non-disclosure.

Appendix B

Figure 1. Maritime Vessel Traffic on the Mediterranean



Appendix C

Figure 2. Frontex Risk Analysis 2015

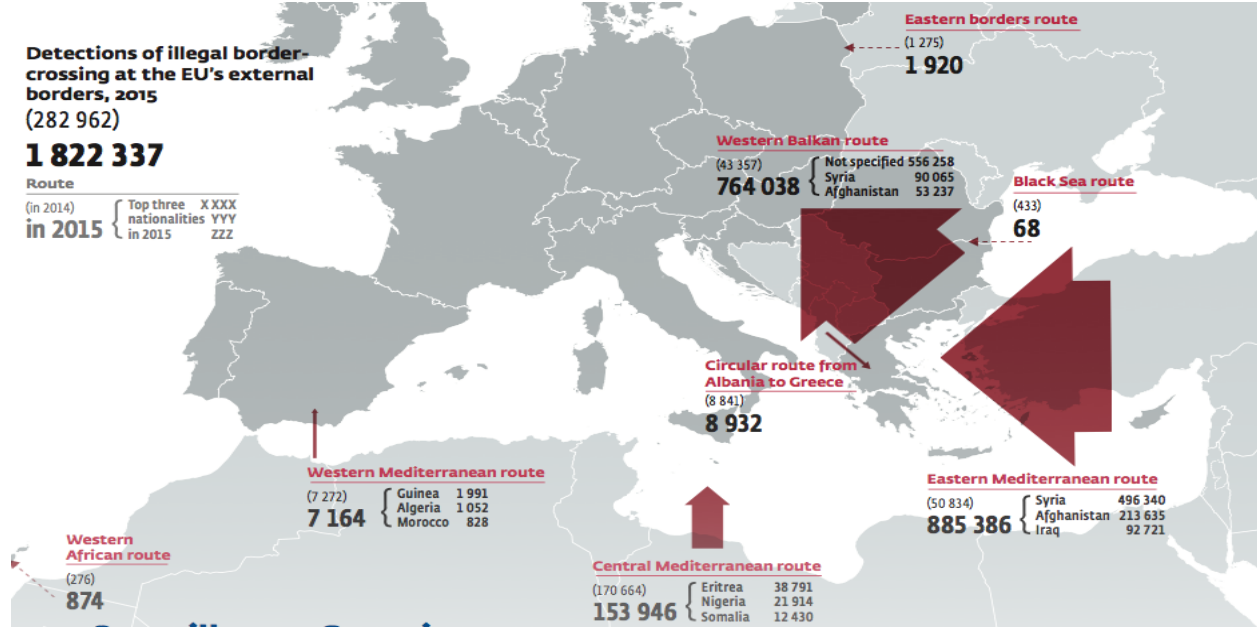


Figure 3. Frontex Risk Analysis 2016

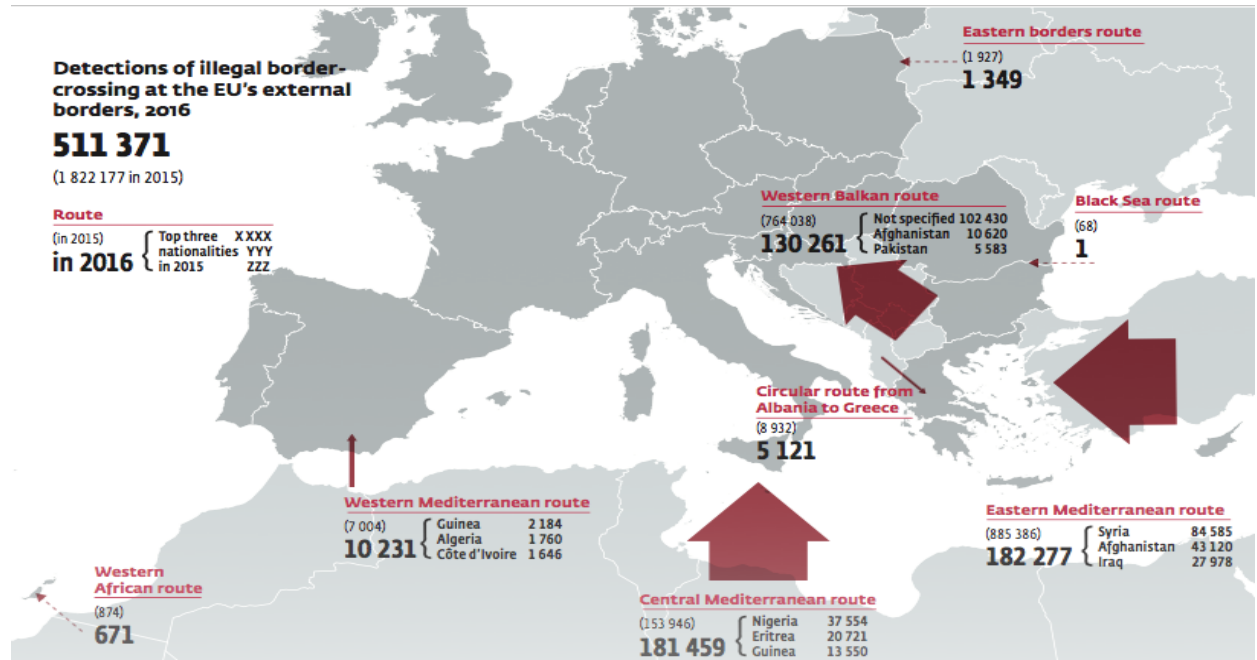


Figure 4. Vessel Traffic on the Western Route at the Strait of Gibraltar



Notes. This AIS map exhibits the density and variety of ships that frequent the Mediterranean. From a (2016) snapshot taken with MarineTraffic – Global Ship Tracking Intelligence (www.marinetraffic.com). The Western route refers to migration from Morocco to Spain through the Canary Islands Ceuta, and Gibraltar. This route has typically been travelled by migrants from Algeria and Morocco who have increasingly been joined by sub-Saharan migrants, fleeing conflicts in Mali, South Sudan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic (Frontex, 2017a). However, in 2015, Frontex reports that Syrians accounted for the largest share of detections on this route. In 2016, detections at Spain’s southern sea border increased to over 8,000. Most crossings were reported around the Strait of Gibraltar, where migrants were reportedly using small rubber dinghies (Frontex, 2019). After readmission agreements (discussed next) impacted the number of crossings along the Central and Eastern routes, in 2018 the Western Mediterranean became the most frequently used route to Europe, with 57,034 reported crossings (Frontex, 2018).

Figure 5. Vessel Traffic on the Central Route Between Libya and Italy



Note. This AIS map exhibits the density and variety of ships that frequent the Central Mediterranean. From a (2016) snapshot taken with MarineTraffic – Global Ship Tracking Intelligence (www.marinetraffic.com).

Frontex (2017b) reports, Libya has long served as a meeting point for migrants on the Central Mediterranean Sea route to Italy and Malta. A 2009 bilateral readmission agreement between Italy and Libya almost completely stopped migration along the central route. According to Frelick (2009) the “Friendship Agreement” was a readmission agreement that for the first time since World War II a European state ordered its coast guard to forcibly interdict migrants on the high seas and return them to their country of origin without any screening (p. 2). Then, in 2011, the Arab Spring, the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, and displacement due to the war in Syria all contributed to an increased number of crossings by Tunisians, Nigerians, Somalians, Eritreans and Syrians (Frontex, 2017b). According to reports, in 2015, despite Syrian migrants shifting to the Eastern route, and a “shortage of boats”; the “smuggling networks remain well established in Libya” (Frontex, 2017b). In 2015 Eritreans, Nigerians and Somalis accounted for the greatest share of migrants attempting to cross the Central Mediterranean. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency has offered a number of reasons, as to why, “the vast majority of border control operations in the Central Mediterranean turn into Search and Rescue (SAR) operations,” including the use of “overloaded, unseaworthy and prone to capsizing fishing boats, small rubber dinghies and vessels equipped with poor engines, and/or a lack of proper navigation systems, and/or “insufficient fuel to reach Europe” (Frontex, 2017b).

In 2017, the current Memorandum of Understanding on Migration between Italy and Libya was signed, and similar to the 2009 readmission agreement, under the current agreement Italy supports the Libyan coast guard to interdict migrants at sea and return people to detention centres in Libya where “they are unlawfully detained and suffer serious abuse” (Struthers, 2020, para. 1). In the first three years since the original deal was struck at least “40,000 people including thousands of children have been intercepted at sea, returned to Libya and exposed to unimaginable suffering” (Struthers, 2020, para. 2). My study connects with research participants and maritime organizations responsible for transporting cargo and rescuing migrants. I analyze how the shipping industry narrates the physical and financial risks posed by rescuing migrants.

Figure 6. Vessel Traffic on the Eastern Route between Turkey and Greece




Notes. This AIS map exhibits the density and variety of ships that frequent the Eastern Mediterranean. From a (2016) snapshot taken with MarineTraffic – Global Ship Tracking Intelligence (www.marinetraffic.com).

In Frontex’s geographical terms, the Eastern Mediterranean route, which crosses the Aegean Sea from Turkey to Greece, has been a popular migratory route to Europe for many years. In 2008-2009, the route accounted for some 40% of all migrant arrivals to Europe, more than 40,000 migrants (Frontex, 2017c). By late 2015, the worsening weather conditions on the Central Mediterranean reduced the number of migrant crossings there and arrivals to Greece through the Eastern route rose substantially (Frontex, 2017c). In 2015, some 885,000 migrants arrived in the EU via the Eastern Mediterranean route – 17 times the number in 2014, which was itself a record year. According to the UNHCR (2015), most of the migrants on this route in 2015 originated from Syria, followed by Afghanistan and Somalia and migrants were disembarked at several Greek islands, but mostly on the island of Lesbos. There are also increasing numbers of migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa. The increase in migration, through the Aegean, was responded to with Frontex Operation Poseidon, which, like the Central Mediterranean Operation *Triton*, is principally focused on securing Europe’s Sea borders, not rescue (European Council of Refugees and Exiles, 2014; European Commission, 2016; Frontex, 2017c). In 2016, the EU organized a six-billion-euro readmission agreement in exchange for Turkey preventing onward journeys to the EU by asylum seekers (Lehner, 2019; Kanter, 2019). After the EU-Turkey agreement was reached in March 2016, the number of migrants arriving in Greece dropped significantly (Frontex, 2019). Overall, there 182,000 migrants were detected along the Eastern route and the vast majority arrived in the first three months, before the agreement in March, 2016 (Frontex, 2019).

Appendix D

Figure 7. Frontex Serious Incident Report no. 12



FRONTEX
EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

Warsaw, 05/12/2017

Serious Incident Report no. 12

Reporting date: 04/03/2015 09:52 AM
Reporting person: PERSONAL DATA

Last modification date: 03/12/2016 06:10 PM
Last modification done by: PERSONAL DATA

FSC SIR Category	1 Standard
Subject	SAR
Type of SIR	1 Initial SIR
JORA Incident number (if any)	103617
Joint Operation	EPN Triton 2015
Frontex SIR Coordinator	
Incident date/time	03/03/2015 01:15 PM
Detection date/time	03/03/2015 01:15 PM
Original source of the information	ITACG
Location of the incident	29NM X 173° ZUARA (LIBYA)
Is latitude unknown	No
Latitude	33.45000000000000
Is longitude unknown	No
Longitude	12.40000000000000
Reference to the operational area	No
Frontex resources involved (Human resources / co-financed technical equipment)	No
Type of resources / involvement	
Dead persons	10
Injured persons	

Serious Incident Report related to Search and Rescue action

SAR activated date/time	03/03/2015 01:15 PM
SAR activated by whom	MERCHANT SHIP OOC COUGAR
Boat in distress	
Type	wood
Flag, name, IMO if available	
Detected by	MERCHANT SHIP OOC COUGAR
Detection done by Frontex co-financed asset	No
Intercepted by	MERCHANT SHIP OOC COUGAR
Interception done by Frontex co-financed asset	No
Estimated people on board	150
Planned port of disembarkation	AUGUSTA (SR)
Departure country	Unknown
Involved authorities	ITALIAN MILITARY NAVY AND ITALIAN COAST GUARD

Fact of the case

ON 3RD OF MARCH 2015 AT 13:15 LT, MERCHANT SHIP "OOC COUGAR" DETECTED IN POSITION 33° 27'N - 012° 48'E (29NM X 173° OF ZUARA) A BOAT WITH MIGRANTS ON BOARD. DURING THE RESCUE OPERATIONS BOAT CAPSIZED AND MIGRANTS HAVE FALLEN INTO THE SEA. IN AREA DISPATCHED ALSO TUG BOAT ASSETS THAT RESCUED 11 MIGRANTS AND ITA NAVY ASSETS THAT RESCUED 11 MIGRANTS AND 10 DEADS THAT LATER WERE TRANSFERRED ON BOARD ITANAVY ASSETS. LATER ALSO ALL MIGRANTS WERE TRANSSHIPPED ON BOARD ITACG ASSETS AND CARRIED TO AUGUSTA HARBOUR.

Figure 8. Frontex Serious Incident Report no. 578



FRONTEX
EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY

Warsaw, 05/12/2017

Serious Incident Report no. 578

Reporting date: 16/04/2017 10:16 AM

Reporting person: PERSONAL DATA

Last modification date: 26/04/2017 08:48 AM

Last modification done by: PERSONAL DATA

FSC SIR Category	1 Standard
Subject	3 dead persons left on a sinking rubber boat, approx. 30 missing
Type of SIR	2 Formal SIR
JORA Incident number (if any)	
Joint Operation	Triton 2017
Frontex SIR Coordinator	
Incident date/time	16/04/2017 12:00 AM
Detection date/time	16/04/2017 10:12 AM
Original source of the information	Commander NOR/OPV Siem Pilot
Location of the incident	Libyan Sea
Is latitude unknown	Yes
Latitude	
Is longitude unknown	Yes
Longitude	
Reference to the operational area	No
Frontex resources involved (Human resources / co-financed technical equipment)	No
Type of resources / involvement	M/V Zefirea
Dead persons	3
Injured persons	
Missing persons	30

Serious Incident Report related to Search and Rescue action	
SAR activated date/time	16/04/2017 06:30 AM
SAR activated by whom	MRCC ROME
Boat in distress	
Type	rubber
Flag, name, IMO if available	
Detected by	M/V Zefirea
Detection done by Frontex co-financed asset	No
Intercepted by	M/V Zefirea
Interception done by Frontex co-financed asset	No
Estimated people on board	90
Planned port of disembarkation	
Departure country	Åland Islands
Involved authorities	

Fact of the case
<p>At 0630 hr OPV Siem Pilot started to transfer approx. 90 migrants from Merchant vessel Zefirea in SAR Event 461. According to the crew of Zefirea, 3 dead persons from the SAR event were left onboard the rubber boat which was left adrift (already sinking) at the pickup position. Migrants who were transferred to Siem Pilot claimed that they were 120 in total when they had left Libya on Friday/Saturday night. Probably approx. 30 are missing - could have died before the rescue began.</p>

Appendix E

Figure 11. 2015 Incident Report

108244	13/04/2015	12/04/2015	Illegal border crossing	Pelagic Islands	out	Commercial/fishing boat	Civilian	12/04/2015	Sea	Text removed - Justification 2	Text removed - Justification 2	Yes	<p>ON 12TH OF APRIL 2015 AT 14:30 L.T., MERCHANT SHIP "MAERSK PROSPER" HAS DETECTED IN POSITION 33° 34' N - 012° 28' E, A WOODEN BOAT WITH MANY MIGRANTS ON BOARD. Text removed - Justification 2 WAS DISPATCHED IN AREA AND AT 20:00 L.T. INTERCEPTED TARGET, DECLARED SAR EVENT AND RESCUE ALL PEOPLE. ALL MIGRANTS WERE TRANSHIPED ON BOARD AND TRANSPORTED TO REGGIO CALABRIA HARBOUR WHERE THEY ARRIVED ON 14TH APRIL AT 12:25 L.T.. TOTAL MIGRANTS 535 (4 ARRESTED)</p> <p>EV. 218/219 - FLASH REPORT 27</p>	fishing boat
--------	------------	------------	-------------------------	-----------------	-----	-------------------------	----------	------------	-----	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	-----	--	--------------

Figure 12. 2016 incident Report

156638	EPN Triton 2016	29/05/2016	28/05/2016	Illegal border crossing	Pelagic Islands	out	Merchant vessel	Civilian	28/05/2016	Sea	TEXT REMOVED - Justification 2	TEXT REMOVED - Justification 4	Yes	<p style="text-align: center;">Country of departure Libya added ***</p> <p>On 28th of May 2016 TEXT REMOVED - Justification 1, M/V "Sea Eye" sighted a rubber boat with migrants on board. At TEXT REMOVED - Justification 1, 2 intercepted at 130NM south Lampedusa the rubber boat and started rescue operations. Later all migrants were transferred on board TEXT REMOVED - Justification 2 that carried them to Brindisi harbor where they arrived on 30th at 09:00 l.t.. Total migrants 101 (Ev 536).</p>	inflatable/rubber boat/zodiac boat/dinghy
--------	-----------------	------------	------------	-------------------------	-----------------	-----	-----------------	----------	------------	-----	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	-----	---	---

Figure 13. 2017 Incident Report

199031	Triton 2017	25/06/2017	24/06/2017	Illegal border crossing	Sicily	in	Commercial/fishing boat	Civilian	24/06/2017	Sea	TEXT REMOVED - Justification 2	TEXT REMOVED - Justification 1	Yes	<p>On 24.06.2017 at 18:00 LT, Lampedusa Cost Guard received a phone call by a civilian fishing boat "Graziella" who said about the presence of a small boat with migrants on board. At TEXT REMOVED - Justification 1, TEXT REMOVED - Justification 2 intercepted the small boat at TEXT REMOVED - Justification 3. 13 migrants were rescued. Boat status: unknown. On 24.06.2017 at 19:50 LT migrants were disembarked in Lampedusa.</p>	inflatable/rubber boat/zodiac boat/dinghy
--------	-------------	------------	------------	-------------------------	--------	----	-------------------------	----------	------------	-----	--------------------------------	--------------------------------	-----	---	---

