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Libya: Hosting or Transit Country for Migrants from the Horn of Africa?

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Abstract:

The Horn of Africa highly contributes to regional and global mobility and Libya assumed a pivotal role for Horn migrants over time. Using the estimates provided by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Refugee Agency, and the International Organization for Migration, I investigate the relationship between Horn migrants' incidence and prevalence in Libya since the early 90s to understand if they perceive it as a hosting or transit country. Moreover, I analyse how the interconnection between geopolitics and human mobility have affected Horn migrants' attitudes and status.

Introduction

Migration, together with fertility and mortality, is an important determinant of the total population; unfortunately, the former's paucity of quantifiable evidence greatly challenges its study. Hosting countries usually gather demographics about migrants, but selection biases make such samples unrepresentative (De Haas et al. 2018). In migration statistics, common biases usually derive from the exclusion of particular groups from the sample, from the difficulty to trace migration trajectories or to gather information, and from misclassification. Therefore, migrants often become a hidden population due to the lack of sampling frames and the potential threat stemming from public acknowledgement of membership in that population (Heckathorn 1997: 174).

This is the case of migrants from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia).

The nature and scope of human smuggling and trafficking[1] into and from the Horn of Africa and Libya have been the topic of considerable scholarship, mainly concerned with thematic issues, such as circumstances of migrants and refugees (Boubakri 2004; Morone 2017a; Attir 2010), routes (Ciabarri 2014; Hamood 2006; Bredeloup, Pliez 2011), drivers of migration (Salt, Stein 1997), and general demographic trends (De Haas 2008; Fargues 2008; De Haas et al. 2018). However, these analyses appear to minimize migration's inherent complexity and risk losing the phenomenon's dynamism and inclusion into a sequence of interwoven events, thereby denying its processual nature, or taking it in only faint traces (Gesano 2011). Therefore, a critical approach to sources and metadata helps clarifying the statistics' real content. Similarly, considering the interconnection between geopolitics and population mobility allows investigating the broad consequences on migrants' attitudes and demographic composition. Indeed, the trans-disciplinary nature of political demography, despite the weakness of available statistics, allows reconstructing the progressive and consequential stratification of migration flows towards and from Libya which reshape international security issues and politics.

Far from reproducing already-existing reporting about migrants' conditions and routes, the purpose of this paper is to intertwine data about Horn migrants' incidence and prevalence in Libya or, in other words, to relate Horn migration's rates with the actual numbers of Horn migrants in Libya over time. In particular, considering the numbers about Horn migrants' arrivals, departures, and (un)voluntary stay in Libya, the essay investigates the possible inferences that can be drawn about migrants' choice to stay there as their elected destination country or rather as a "mere" transit zone to Europe. Moreover, I also would like to highlight important differences based on country of origin. Undoubtedly, understanding such dynamics means calling into question demographic data's availability, suitability and reliability, which are often misinterpreted by media's narrative of crisis and political use of such data. This essay is based on the estimates of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Starting from these data, I focus on migratory trends from Horn countries into Libya, identifying migrants' reasons and numbers and the main route that led Libya to become an important hub in migration projects. Affecting the intensity of demographic behaviour, time - along with space - is an essential parameter in population studies; therefore, I focus on a precise time span (1990-2015) that encompasses the socio-political events affecting the demographics of countries of origin, hosting and transit, and the role assumed by Libya in such time span.

After a brief presentation of Horn countries' demographics, and their contribution to regional and global mobility, I analyse when, why and how Horn migrants started

heading to Europe. Then, I highlight how Libya assumed a pivotal role for Sub-Saharan African mobility. Finally, I focus on the opening of the Eastern Route to North Africa and then Europe, and the presence and status of Horn migrants in Libya.

Horn of Africa: from structure to mobility

Africa is depicted as a continent of mass migration and displacement toward the Global North because of poverty, violent conflicts and environmental stress; but such perceptions are shaped more by stereotypes rather than theoretically-informed empirical research (Flahaux, De Haas 2016: 1).

The International Migrant Stock 2017[2] compiled by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat - shows that in the last quarter of the century the African migratory trend remained remarkably stable, with a high incidence and prevalence of movements within the continent that fuel South-South migration.[3] Indeed, Europe is the selected destination for merely less than half of African voluntary migrants, although geographical proximity still makes it the main destination of South-North migration. Moreover, in addition to voluntary migration, in Africa socio-political and environmental instability result into forced migration. UNHCR estimates that there are at least 6.3 million refugees within the continent. The phenomenon of forced migration shows fluctuations (mainly depending on the instability of origin areas); however, only a minority of the world refugee-population ends up in wealthy countries. Thus, the so-called European 'immigration emergency' is just the tip of the iceberg of global migration, because the flow of migrants from Africa to Europe has never exceeded a few hundred thousand people a year, while African internal migration involves millions of people. Actually, according to the International Migrant Stock 2017, only one third of more than 35 million African emigrants has left the continent, with 5.6% of African migrants dislocated in the Horn of Africa, where migration is (also) a security issue because the region has become the source, transit, and final destination of trafficked and smuggled migrants. The great differentiation of the region's mobile population (in terms of age, gender, civil, social, legal, and economic status) makes mixed migration a defining feature of Horn countries. As population structure affects political in/stability - a catalyst for migration -, the demographic evolution of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia helps to understand who is moving, while national internal affairs suggest the causes of such movements. In order to outline the main demographic trends in the Horn countries, I rely on the 2017 Revision of World Population Prospects compiled by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; this source suffers from reliability issues but provides consistent and comparable estimates.[4] Djibouti had a population of less than one million people between 1990 and 2015 and presents a decreasing population growth rate (from 5.2% in 1990 to 1.3% in 2015) due to a declining total fertility rate[5] (from 5.85 in 1990 to 3.3 in 2015). Regarding

migration flows, it is a hosting country (like Ethiopia): in 2015, Djibouti hosted the highest percentage of migrants (slightly above 14%) and refugees (slightly above 2%) among the Horn countries (Martín, Bonfanti 2015). However, this figure depends also on the country's nature of transit point for Ethiopians and Somalis smuggled by sea from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula (Kifleyesus 2012; Zaccaria 2018; Thiollet 2016).

Eritrea has a slowly increasing population: the last reliable Population and Health Survey reports a figure of around 3.2 million in 2010 while international estimates report a figure of 4.8 million in 2015. The average number of children per woman remains far above the generational change (5.6 in 2000 and 4.0 in 2015), but it is weakened by a strong migratory culture, couple separation (Blanc 2004; Woldemicael 2008; Fusari 2011), and a "state of exception" (Woldemikael 2013). [6] Indeed, Eritrea's diaspora, temporarily paused after gaining independence in 1993 following a thirty-year liberation struggle, greatly increased after 1998 when the aftermath of the border conflict against Ethiopia led to the introduction of the Warsay Yikealo Development Campaign in 2002 (Kibreab 2013). The resulting negative migration balance, similar to Somali, made Eritrea one of the largest refugee-producing countries.

Ethiopia, instead, is the second African demographic power; indeed, because of a stable population growth (steadily above 2.5% in the last quarter century) and a balanced net migration rate, it is the first Horn country whose population more than doubled: from around 48 million in 1990 to around 100 million in 2015. Ethiopian women gave birth to more than 7.0 children in 1990 and 4.0 in 2015; however, the nation is currently experiencing a so-called fertility stall (Bongaarts 2008; Garenne 2013). Moreover, despite producing both voluntary and forced migrants, Ethiopia hosts mainly Eritrean and Somali migrants settled in major cities, or in refugee camps run by UNHCR together with the Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs.

Finally, Somalia has a low population compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries. However, its population more than doubled over the last 25 years (from over 6 million in 1990 to almost 14 million in 2015) and, therefore, Somalia is the second Horn demographic power after Ethiopia. Despite its high total fertility rate (only since 2010 under 7.0), and a high population growth rate (3.3% in 2000 and 2.5% in 2015), Somali diaspora has grown extensively. A negative net migration rate (-8.0% over the past 15 years) characterised the early 1990s and recent years, and led Somalia to become the third largest refugee-producing country after Afghanistan and Syria (Lindley, Hammond 2014).

Fertility trends in all the above-mentioned Horn countries are influenced by political stability and health conditions, as well as the status of women; indeed, the greater the gender equality in family and society, the greater the possibility for women to have bargaining power in choosing if and when to marry, and access to education and contraception. However, all Horn countries have a young population, with a median age

between 16 and 19 years in the entire span of observation; except for Djibouti, where since 2010 the median age has been above 22 years. This situation may lead to an even higher natural population growth, but also to higher migration rates due to the region's peculiar migratory culture and political changes resulting in outflows of people in their re-productive age and therefore in a declining natural population growth.[7]

Even if all Horn countries share similar population structures, their mobility is different: on the one hand, Eritrea and Somalia determine the vitality of transnational migration in the region, whereas Djibouti and Ethiopia play more the part of hosting or transit countries. As a result, in 2015, 12.7% of the Djiboutian population was foreign (mainly from Ethiopia and Somalia), but only 1.7% lived abroad. Similarly, 0.7% of the Ethiopian population lived outside its borders, and 1.1% was immigrant. On the contrary, Eritrea shows the opposite trend (only 0.3% of the Eritrean population was foreign, but 8.7% lived abroad); and so does Somalia (hosting 0.2% of foreign population and dislocating abroad 15.6% of its population).

Between 1990 and 2010, the global number of refugees declined, but both the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat[8] and UNHCR & World Bank (UNHCR, World Bank 2015), registered an increasing trend in refugee and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa, mainly Eritreans and Somalis. Indeed, in the 2000s, the exacerbation of several push factors (poverty, war, military conscription, persecution, and lack of opportunity for education) led Horn migrants to flee in search of economic opportunities and humanitarian protection.[9] These factors reinforced the mixed-migration scenario, increasing the number of individuals motivated by both protection and non-protection reasons to migrate using the same routes and facilitators, and typically experiencing the same levels of exclusion and abuse.[10] Nevertheless, migrants explored the same types of agency, developed during the navigation process in order to capitalize the perceived opportunities and negotiate with border guards, smugglers, and officers (Belloni, Fusari 2018; D'Orsi, Massa 2018).[11]

Heading North

Understanding these push factors favouring the abandonment of the countries of origin is essential to comprehend how Libya became an important junction (almost a mandatory transit zone for Horn migrants heading to Europe) over time. Actually, recurrent warfare within the Horn of Africa fuelled migration to Egypt and Sudan, and from there into Libya, which suddenly became the only alternative path to reach Europe by sea.

Eritrea and Somalia are the Horn countries that mostly contributed to northward migration. The introduction of the Warsay Ykealo Development Campaign, *i.e.*, the Eritrean policy designed to foster the socio-economic development, allowed the government to exert control over society and the state after the border conflict with Ethiopia (1998-2000), resulting in the proximate cause of the current economic and

social weaknesses as well as of the citizenship and refugee crisis. Indeed, the stringent Eritrean policy, pursued to protect national sovereignty and control the economic and political spheres, resulted in continuous economic failures, regional political instability, social upheaval, and new refugees' waves, which augmented the Eritrean diaspora-communities around the world (Kibreab 2013; Woldemikael 2013).[12] Regarding Somalia, there are many reasons for migration, mainly: unemployment; economic difficulties; a privatized, unbalanced, and under-regulated education system; peer pressure; strong smuggling networks; lack of reliable security; and the overall fragile and weak state institutions failing to create hope for citizens (Wasuge 2018).

The trans-Saharan journey, generally framed in several legs, can take from a month to several years (De Haas 2006; Fusari 2011). On their way, migrants often settle temporarily in towns located on migration hubs to work and save money for their onward journeys (Belloni 2016; Costantini, Massa 2016). Between Sudan and Libya, migrants face serious risks, such as to be sold off to ransom collectors, dumped in the desert or left to perish; besides, traffickers and Libyan militia routinely rape women.[13] In Libya, migrants face a high risk of detention and subsequent severe beatings and torture if captured by militia (Morone 2017b). Travellers to Libya are carried from the border-regions towards Ajdabiya, Sabha or Rabyanah in pickup trucks mostly operated by Arab Zuwayya militias;[14] whereas in south-eastern Libya human smuggling and trafficking activities intertwine with local conflict dynamics. The Toubou militias[15] carry out systematic raids against Zuwayya convoys plying across this route with human cargo. Based on Horn migrants' interviews with UNHCR officers, the Eastern Route bifurcates into - on the one hand - the Eastern-West Route (crossing Sudan and Chad) that migrants pass through in order to reach Libya; and – on the other hand - the Eastern-Central Route crossed by the majority of Horn people. Moreover, it appears that Daesh has taken a strong interest in migrants, who are also the target of further human-trafficking exploitation, propaganda executions, and attempts at indoctrination. In particular, there is evidence of recent migrants' executions and beheadings by a Daesh-affiliated group taking control of Sirte and the surrounding area and operating in proximity to Ajdabiya and to the routes towards launching points in western Libya.[16] The main launching points for the Central Mediterranean Route are the beachheads of Zuwara, al-Khums, and Garabulli, near Tripoli. These locations (nominally under the control of various militia loosely aligned with the Libyan political authorities in Tripoli) are also used as entry and exit points for other non-human contraband, such as the smuggling of diesel fuel to Malta. Moreover, a much-smaller number of launching points reportedly exist in eastern Libya, near Tobruk.[17]

Migration rates and the choice of journey-routes depend not only on turmoil in the origin country and smuggling network, but also on the broader geopolitical scenario. After the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between the Republic of Italy and the Great Socialist Libyan Arab Jamahiriyya (30 August 2008), the northern

borders have been closed and patrolled, but no similar closure has concerned the southern borders, which remain porous (Morone 2015, 2017a). The lack of control on the southern borders has led to an increase in the number of people from Sub-Saharan Africa entering Libya in order to reach Europe. The choice of the Libyan route is also due to the closing of borders in Tunisia and Morocco, following these two countries' engagement in the fight against terrorism, thereby excluding the possibility to cross their territories heading to Europe. Moreover, important clues are also available from changes in migration policies in faraway Saudi Arabia and Israel. Indeed, until 2012 the majority of migrants and asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa headed either to the Gulf States through Yemen, or to Israel through Sudan and Egypt. In 2013, both routes were closed after Saudi Arabia built a 1,800 km fence along its border with Yemen and deported thousands of undocumented migrant workers.[18] Moreover, worsening conditions in Yemen also discouraged arrivals from Somalia and Ethiopia. Similarly, at the beginning of 2013, Israel completed its own fence along the border with the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, shortly after the passage of an Anti-Infiltration Law allowed for detentions of up to 3 years for so-called "infiltrators". Previously, around 1,000 asylum seekers had reached Israel every month, mainly from Eritrea and Sudan. Instead, once the Sinai route was largely shut off, people heading to Europe could not avoid passing through Libya, which then remained the only southern border still open, thereby making Libya the main gateway to the Mediterranean coast. Therefore, such change in migratory trajectories reflects the closures of borders and growing obstacles in using previous migration routes towards east (to Yemen and the Gulf States) and north (to Israel through the Sinai Peninsula) (Jacobsen, Robinson, Lijnders 2013).[19] Several safety risks (*e.g.*: abduction, human and organ trafficking, ransom, general abuse) in Sinai also facilitated the reorientation of migratory projects towards safer routes (Van Reisen, Estefanos, Rijeken 2013). Moreover, the increasing significance of the Libyan route for Horn migrants reveals the escalation of smuggling via the eastern routes by Horn organised crime groups (Malakooti 2013).[20]

Nevertheless, in order to understand how Libya emerged as a hosting or preferential transit country, it is important to go beyond the Horn geopolitical scenario, and assess how Libyan national policies affected the country's role over time.

The pivotal role of Libya in Sub-Saharan African mobility

Prior to the discovery of oil, Libyans used to emigrate. The sudden economic growth following oil discovery and production increased the demand of foreign labour, culminating in the 1969 adoption of an open-door policy for immigrants from the Arab world. With Libya welcoming legal and illegal inflows, the number of migrants in the country soon spiked to an estimated 2 million, out of less than 4 million Libyan nationals at that time.[21] Since the early 1980s, the economic recession deriving from a decrease in the price of oil and the American embargo,[22] drove the Libyan government

to implement an indigenisation of the workforce, despite local population's disfavour to engage in unappealing jobs. Moreover, the air and weapon embargo imposed on Libya by the United Nations Security Council between 1992 and 2000 played an unintended but decisive role in increasing trans-Saharan migration, and in consolidating migration routes and networks. Disappointed by the lack of support from Arab countries during the embargo, the then-Libyan leader Qaddafi reoriented Libyan foreign policy, shifting advocacy from pan-Arab to pan-African unity. Meanwhile, a series of treaties between the European Union and some Mediterranean countries to curb illegal migration gave Qaddafi the chance to use the issue of illegal migration as a bargaining chip to pressure European countries. Therefore, despite historical trans-Saharan migration,[23] transnational mobility at Saharan borders increased because of the combination – on the one side - of the pan-African immigration policies pursued by Libya and – on the other side – of the several civil wars, economic crises, stringent policies in West Africa, the Horn region, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (De Haas 2006). In the early 2000s, the embargo was uplifted, leaving Qaddafi to rebalance labour demand and supply by using Libyan unskilled labour market and repatriating Sub-Saharan African migrants. Such decisions pleased both European countries (worried of being 'invaded' by migrants) and Libyans (who blamed foreigners for several social troubles, including sanitary conditions) that had already manifested severe anti-immigrant attitudes culminating (in 2000) in clashes between local and foreign workers that resulted in the deaths of Sub-Saharan migrants. After such incidents, Libyan authorities tried to mitigate popular discontent by introducing a series of strict anti-immigrant norms, such as: restrictive immigration regulation, long and arbitrary detention in poor-condition prisons and camps, physical abuse, and forced repatriation. From 2003 to 2005, the Libyan government deported approximately 145,000 irregular migrants, mostly to Sub-Saharan countries and in 2007 implemented a mandatory entry-visa regime (Perrin 2009). The percentage of deportees repatriated to East Africa (less than 12%) was considerably less than the percentage of repatriations to West Africa (International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2008). Such trend seems to suggest that the majority of irregular migrants had come to Libya from West Africa. However, considering the (more or less contemporaneous) inflow of Horn migrants arriving to Italy from Libya, the trend might also imply that migrants from East Africa had until then been a hidden population in Libya, mainly settled in isolated areas near the launching points. Nevertheless, Sub-Saharan Africans from several countries and regions were increasingly migrating to North Africa, to either settle or transit to Europe (De Haas 2006). According to different estimates, in 2006 between 65,000 and 120,000 Sub-Saharan Africans entered the Maghreb (Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya) yearly, with 70 to 80% out of them migrating through Libya, and the remaining 20 to 30% through Algeria and Morocco.

Several elements are behind the evolution of migratory routes and the changing

dynamics of cross-border criminal smuggling and trafficking, *e.g.*: the country of origin's internal socio-political affairs and the implementation of new international and Libyan migration policies. Moreover, on 17 February 2011, similarly to other Arab countries, Libyan youth ignited a socio-political upraise. In these cumbersome times, nearly every Libyan household suffered one way or another; but immigrants suffered the most. Those able to cross to Algeria, Chad, and Niger did not face the same troubles of those who fled to Tunisia or Egypt. The latter were stocked in temporary refugee-camps close to the border and kept in dire conditions until they were eventually repatriated to origin countries or resettled to third countries as refugees. Other immigrants, however, decided to stay in Libya, perhaps because for some reasons they could not go back to their home countries or because they lived in the household of Libyan families who would protect them. Some others decided to stay and fight with Qaddafi's forces, hoping to rip some future benefit (IOM 2012). Rumours had it that Qaddafi had allegedly recruited Sub-Saharan mercenaries to kill rebels, rape and spread violence.[24] Such rumours negatively affected the dark-skinned immigrants that were trapped in the country. Indeed, all Sub-Saharan migrants faced unsafe conditions, and many suffered severe human-right violations.[25] The Arab Spring, loosening border control, opened a short 'migration window of opportunity', facilitating the flow of Horn migrants toward Europe.

From 2012 to July 2014, while the state was collapsing, smugglers and traffickers intensified their operations. In particular, the collapse of border controls after the Libyan forces had abandoned their positions on the Sudanese border in 2014 greatly benefited organised criminal groups. Thus, Libya experienced an escalation in conflict (from mid-2014 onwards) combined with a significant increase in migration flows. Most immigrants entered the country legally but they overstayed their visas, thereby becoming illegal immigrants. Most of the others who entered illegally and avoided crossing through official checkpoints came from Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly Horn countries), entering from the south and moving north to coastal cities.[26] Once in Libyan territory, local smugglers drove migrants through back roads relying for smuggling operations on a network of people holding key social and political roles.

As a result, illegal immigrants in Libya could be classified into four groups: those planning to stay for a protracted period; those planning to work temporarily and send remittances back home; those crossing Libya as a transitional country; and, finally, those with enough money to board a boat for Europe.[27] The latter group did not move within the cities as smugglers kept them secluded in farms on the outskirts of cities or in towns not far from the seaport from which they hoped to cross the Mediterranean. Moreover, irregular migrants were hostages taken for ransom and kept languishing in detention centres - run by organised crime, suffering frequent abuse and exploitation (Morone 2017b).[28]

In this scenario, Horn migrants could or would not apply for asylum in Libya. Indeed, despite the country's previous tradition to host voluntarily Sub-Saharan African

migrants seeking jobs, Libya lacked a refugee law;[29] moreover, its practice of migrant-detention made it an unsuitable destination for asylum seekers looking for protection, such as Eritreans, Somalis, and Ethiopians. Unsurprisingly in 2010, Qaddafi shut down the UNHCR office (originally opened in Tripoli in 1991). The office was later re-opened in 2011 as well as the UNHCR Community Development Centre in Benghazi on the verge of ever-increasing social insecurity. Nevertheless, gaps in humanitarian protection and troubles in reaching the offices still made it unsuitable for Horn migrants to apply for political asylum or humanitarian protection in Libya. For all these reasons, Libya essentially became a transit country for Horn migrants. This assumption seems reinforced by the assessment of the data about Horn migrants' arrivals to Italy between 2011 and 2014, provided by the Ministry of the Interior.[30]

Horn migrants: stuck in transit?

Currently, it is difficult to make a reliable estimate of migration flows from the Horn of Africa to Libya, because such flows feed a hidden population with unknown boundaries and no sampling frame. Moreover, being stigmatised and living illegally, individuals often refuse to cooperate, or give unreliable answers to protect their privacy (Heckathorn 1997: 174). The scarcity of reliable estimates on irregular migrants (smuggling or trafficking activities) has long caught the attention of major international organisations and government agencies, mostly because policy makers and advocacy groups need the support of empirical evidence. Indeed, population estimates are vital for gauging the magnitude of any social issue, but the hidden nature of human smuggling and trafficking poses many challenges (Tydlum, Brunovskis 2005). In addition, fieldwork on smuggling and trafficking is no easy undertaking: it is expensive, dangerous and faces major methodological challenges. As a result, most studies are qualitative and carried out in hosting countries (Düvell, Triandafyllidou, Vollmer 2010; Yalaz, Zapata-Barrero 2018), while international agencies such as the UNHCR and IOM provide quantitative data.

Such international agencies estimate that, before the Arab Spring, irregular migrants in Libya were between 1 and 2 million, mostly settled in Tripoli, Benghazi, Sebha, and Kufra (Mainwaring 2012), and came from Sub-Saharan Africa (Sudan, Chad, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia). However, given the lack of systematic information about actual deaths and the unsuitability in identifying and tracking victims, the methods used in these studies cannot produce reliable population estimates. Similarly, national sources (*e.g.*, the eight censuses conducted in Libya between 1931 and 2006) reveal very little about mobility, except for the awareness that regular migrants mainly came to Libya from neighbouring Arab and West African countries. Comparing such data suggests that legal presence of immigrants from East Africa was very short; however, once in Europe, Horn migrants reported different lengths of stay on the Libyan territory. Data provided by the International Migration Population

Division[31] suggest that Horn migrants who settled in Libya accounted for 1.6% in 1990, later increased to 8.6% in 1995, and then kept steadily at around 14.2% until 2017. More in detail, all sending countries contributed to this increase, but Somalis registered an exponential increase in the past three decades, moving from 3,917 units in 1990 to 76,918 ten years later, and to 106,880 in 2017; that is the 13.6% of all migrants in Libya. Djiboutians and Eritreans legally resident in Libya doubled from 1990 to 2017, respectively increasing from 694 to 1,456 people, and from 1,023 to 2,027; while Ethiopians show an oscillating trend between a minimum in 2000 (1,347 units) and a maximum in 2017 (1,872 units).

Between 1990 and 2015, according to the data by age, sex and origin provided by the International Migration Report released by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in 2017, the majority of migrants, regardless of their origin and status was between 20 and 40 years old. This evidence suggests that their migration was more the result of a selection made at the household or community level, rather than an individual choice. The last years registered an increase in the number of unaccompanied minors, together with a decline in their age, even below 15 years. Considering gender differences, during the 2000s Libya underwent a feminisation of migration due to a feminisation of poverty (Russell 2014; Morone 2017a: 133). Feminisation of migration is a multidimensional phenomenon; today, women are on the move because of the growing demand for migrant-women's labour in the global care chain. Horn women had previously experienced this kind of migration (Fusari 2011; Marchetti 2011) towards Europe and the Gulf States (Kifleyesus 2012). Moreover, women have become independent migrants and/or primary economic providers also because tradition, preventing women to enter the local labour markets, and neoliberal policies have led to higher poverty levels, social inequalities, unemployment, and informal economies. Gender inequalities and discrimination became important drivers: Horn women escape domestic violence, unhappy marriages, or pressure to marry; or they are compelled to migrate because of economic troubles and the idealized conception that women are more likely to sacrifice their own well-being for their families. As a result, more and more women are moving on their own, rather than to join their husbands or other family members: it does not matter if they are forced to move (Eritrea, Somalia) or they want to enter other labour markets (Ethiopia). Indeed, there is evidence of an increase in female transit migration to Libya, mostly from the Horn of Africa, around 50% in the case of Ethiopians and Eritreans.[32]

The first asylum seekers were registered in Libya only in 2003, despite the UNHCR had been active since 1991. Ethiopians rarely applied for asylum in Libya and were around 500 only after 2013. Having the highest number of refugees, Somalis had a greater number of asylum seekers since 2008, with an interesting growth since 2012, which only stabilised over 2,000 units in 2014. Finally, Eritrean asylum seekers were

the most numerous in Libya since 2005, showing an increasing trend, with a slight decline only between 2010 and 2012, followed by a new increase, leading to more than 4,000 Eritrean asylum seekers. The UNHCR Population Statistics Database allows to estimate Horn refugees (including individuals in refugee-like situation under the UNHCR protection or assistance), and asylum seekers in Libya in the timeframe under examination; it appears that there are no Djiboutian refugees and Ethiopians are irrelevant. On the contrary, Somali refugees were about 3,000 between 1997 and 2006, declined to about 500 between 2006 and 2010, reached a new peak (around 2,000 people) between 2010 and 2012, fell and then settled around 160 until 2015. As for Eritrean refugees between 1993 and 1998, the evidence records a peak of 730 units in 1994. They remained under 1,000 units in 2010-2011 and settled over 400 units in the following years. The trends of Somali and Eritrean refugees clearly reflect international agreements and instability in their countries of origin. More specifically in Somalia, after the fall of Siad Barre, the late 1990s have been harsh as the conflict and environmental problems affected both political stability and the economy. The new century started with the international-diplomacy effort to bring an end to the conflict. However, the rise of the Islamic Courts Union, the occupation of Mogadishu by Ethiopian troops, and the AMISOM mission, led to the revival of war between 2009 and 2010. In Eritrea, migrants' outflows recorded a strong increase following the border conflict with Ethiopia (1998-2000), but above all the introduction of the Warsay Ykealo Development Campaign, which extended the national service indefinitely, mobilising the Eritrean population for the socio-economic development of the country through coercive methods. Since then, according to UNHCR estimates, the outflow mainly to Ethiopia and Sudan has always kept steady around 3,000 people a month, including (in recent years) a considerable number of females and youth.

However, all these data concern only residents, not the present population, thereby missing information about the so-called irregular migrants passing through the Libyan territory, as shown by the numbers of asylum-seeker applicants in Europe. For instance, in 2015, an estimated 154,000 migrants entered Europe passing through Libya, an increase of nearly 400% over the previous year, and more than 1,000% over 2012, most of them from the Horn of Africa.[33] Again, going through the data of the Ministry of Interior about asylum applications in Italy since 1990, once abolished the geographical reservation for asylum, Ethiopians and Somalis maintained very low numbers until 2000, right about at the same time Eritreans started increasing their applications. In addition, Somalis' application increased, but less than Eritreans'; whereas Ethiopians reached their peak in 2003, then decreased and eventually disappeared in 2013. Several factors are behind this trend: the Dublin Regulation (1997), the agreement signed by the Italian government with Qaddafi (2008), the outbreak of the Arab springs, Italy's choice to let Eritreans and Somalis head towards northern Europe (around 2013; Dal Zotto forthcoming). In addition, the United Nations brokered agreements signed by different Libyan factions (2016-2017) to bring stability and help to combat the growing Daesh

presence affect the migrants' mobility. Nevertheless, Eritrean and Somali arrivals from the Libyan coasts kept steadily constant and scored among the first three nationalities of arrival since 2013 (Colucci 2018: 169).

The opening of the Eastern Route led to an increase in the arrival of Horn migrants to Libya; but Horn communities, before boarding towards Europe, settled in major-city ghettos or in isolated buildings near the coast. Their stay was shorter than West African migrants' who had chosen Libya as their final destination country. However, being exploited for profit in the local labour market by smugglers and other local actors, migrants end up fostering the local legal and illegal economy (Mafu 2019).

Conclusions

In late 2014, the ministers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Egypt, and Tunisia met with their counterparts from the 28 European Union countries, the European and African Union Commissioners in charge of migration and development, and the European Union High Representative. The issue of the meeting was the national, regional and inter-regional dimensions of smuggling and trafficking in the Horn of Africa, North Africa, Middle East and Europe. The result was the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, also known as the 'Khartoum Process' aimed at tackling trafficking and smuggling of migrants between the Horn of Africa and Europe.[34] Although Horn migrants have attracted great media attention, no reliable data about their actual numbers are available; only indirect estimates can be inferred through the narratives, collected in Europe, of asylum-seekers applicants. Furthermore, the UNHCR in collaboration with local partners has built transit centres near the borders where refugees and asylum seekers are identified and registered, as well as reception centres for migrants potentially delivering data sources. Missing data also depend on the troubles in estimating death rates (Brian, Laczko 2014) and ever-changing migration rates that make it difficult to collect accurate numbers about people moving in and from the Horn of Africa.

Even if post-Qaddafi Libya remains more a country of destination than transit (Morone 2017a), Horn migrants' prevalence can be traced back more to a series of geopolitical coincidences and instability in the countries of origin, rather than to a precise choice to reside in Libya. Despite the political-stabilisation process started in the Horn after the peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia (summer 2018), mobility is still far from decreasing and it may also result in an increase in illegal Horn migrants in Libya, staying for months or years, living in the shadow and inhumane conditions while waiting to reach Europe. The dire living conditions become push factors out of Libya as well as the deteriorating security situation, reinforcing migrants' desire to head to Europe. However, data suggest some differences related to both the countries of origin and religion. In Libya, Djiboutians increase without apparently giving rise to onward migration, therefore living in Libya as a destination country. Likewise, the number of Somalis is increasing over time, suggesting that a large community likely

resides there, although the cycle of arrivals in Libya and departures to Europe causes a continuous turnover. Further considerations can be made regarding religion. Eritreans and Ethiopians crossing Libya to reach Europe are Christians; Muslims follow other trajectories, mainly towards Sudan and the Gulf States. Their religious faith makes Christians heading north face a hostile environment experienced also by Christian West African migrants; whereas Muslim Djiboutians and Somalis seem facilitated in settling in Libya because of religious similarities. Such factors seem to account for something when it comes to considering Libya as a potential-hosting country in the long term.

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NOTES:

1 - 'Human smuggling' and 'human trafficking' are two distinct crimes. The first occurs when a person voluntarily enters into an agreement with a smuggler to gain illegal entry into a foreign country and is moved across an international border. It often involves procuring fraudulent documents and transportation across a country's border, although in some countries it can also include transportation and harbouring once in the destination country. The migrant consents to be moved and to pay the smuggler. The second, instead, is a crime involving the exploitation of an individual for the purposes of compelled labour or a commercial sex act through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

2 - This database provides estimates of international migrants by age, sex and origin, based on official statistics about the foreign-born or the foreign population.

3 - In 2015, South-South migrants are about 36% of the total stock of migrants, representing an increasingly significant factor in the economic and social development of many developing countries (Backewell 2009).

4 - In Djibouti, the Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies of the Ministry of Finance and Economy carried out the last census in 2011. In post-independent Eritrea, the country's first census programme was scheduled for 1998 but due to the border conflict with Ethiopia, it was postponed until now. Furthermore, the previous comprehensive population study carried out in 1984 across Ethiopia covering the sub-district level excluded the province of Eritrea due to security concern (Fusari 2011). The Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia undertook the third population and housing census in 2007, while the fourth, planned for 2017-2018, has been postponed due to security problems and ethnic tensions resulted in forced displacement. From late 2013 to early 2014, the Federal Republic of Somalia together with the UNFPA local office conducted the Somalia Population Estimation Survey to produce the first comprehensive estimates on the Somali population from a census conducted from 1985 to 1986. However, the census data are not standardized so they are not comparable. Besides, it was not possible to use the Demographic and Health Surveys because they are available only for Eritrea (1995, 2002, 2010) and Ethiopia (2000, 2005, 2011), while Djibouti and Somalia are not participating in the project. See Federal Republic of Somalia, UNFPA (2014).

5 - The Total Fertility Rate is the average number of children a hypothetical cohort of women would have at the end of their reproductive period if they were subject during their whole lives to the fertility rates of a given period and if they were not subject to mortality. It is expressed as children per woman.

6 - In Eritrea, the president Isaias Afwerki used the no-war-no-peace situation following the border conflict with Ethiopia (1998-2000) to exert absolute control over society and state. Thus, the perceived state of emergency became Isaias Afwerki's justification to exceed the rule of law for the public good, for not implementing the constitution, and for stripping Eritreans of their human and political citizenship and individual rights.

7 - V. Fusari, *Tra Eritrea e Etiopia è "scoppiata" la pace. E adesso?*, "ISPI Commentary", 17 luglio 2018:www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/tra-etiopia-ed-eritrea-e-scoppiata-la-pace-e-adesso-21003; V. Fusari, *L'abbraccio tra Etiopia ed Eritrea: come cambiano mobilità e migrazioni?*, "ISPI Commentary", 27 novembre 2018: www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/labbraccio-tra-etiopia-ed-eritrea-come-cambiano-mobilita-e-migrazioni-21647.

8 - Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Going West. Contemporary Mixed Migration Trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya and Europe*, "mixedmigration.org", 2014: www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/008_going-west.pdf.

9 - *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads. Mapping the Migration Routes from Africa to Europe and Drivers of Migration in Post-Revolution Libya*, "Altai Consulting", 2013: http://www.altaiconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Altai_Consulting-UNHCR-Mixed_Migration_Libya-1.pdf.

10 - Mixed Migration Hub, *Mixed Migration Trend Bulletin*, "MHub", Cairo, November 2015, p.8: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MHub-Trend-Bulletin-November-2015.pdf.

11 - See also, L. Meloni, A. Sakuma, *Damned For Trying*, "MSNBC", 2018: www.msnbc.com/specials/migrant-crisis/libya.

12 - See also *Just Deserters: Why Indefinite National Service in Eritrea Has Created a Generation of Refugees*, "Amnesty International", 2015, www.amnestyusa.org/files/eritrea-deserters-report.pdf.

13 - Many Ethiopian and Eritrean women also reported that they had purchased intravenous contraception in Sudan before their journey through Libya. See, SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, February 2016: https://igad.int/attachments/1284_ISSP%20Sahan%20HST%20Report%20%2018ii2016%20FINAL%20FINAL.pdf.

14 - Al-Zuwayya are a Murabtin tribe of Cyrenaica and Fezzan. Traditionally they practice nomadic pastoralism of sheep and camels in an area between Ajdabiya and the oasis of Kufra, subduing the local Toubou tribes in 1840, and employing them as workforce in palm groves (Ahmida 2009). During the Libyan crisis in 2011, Al-Zuwayya were on the side of the opposition and the head of the tribe, Shaikh Faraj al Zuway, threatened to cut off Libyan oil exports unless the Gaddafi government stopped the reprisal against protestors. Moreover, in their attempts to force the government to take decisive action against the Toubou, Al-Zuwayya also threated to stop the water supply to the coastal cities of Libya.

15 - Toubou are desert warriors living in the eastern and central Sahara Desert, mainly in the Tibesti Mountains on the Libyan-Chad border. Their harsh environment, extreme poverty, and remote location make them a very tough people, who have often had violent clashes with the neighbouring tribes (Ahmida 2009), such as the smuggling turf clash between them and Al-Zawayya. This friction developed into a war between the Toubou and the Libya army sent in by the authorities to restore law and order.

16 - SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, cit., p. 10.

17 - SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, cit., p. 10; see also, Lacher, Cole (2014).

18 - Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Global Migration Futures. Using Scenarios to Explore Future Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen*, "International Migration Institute", 2012: www.imi-n.org/publications/global-migration-futures-using-scenarios-to-explore-future-migration-in-the-horn-of-africa-yemen; Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Migrant Smuggling in the Horn of Africa and Yemen. The Political Economy and Protection Risks*, "Politieacademie", 2013: www.politieacademie.nl/kennisenonderzoek/kennis/mediatheek/PDF/92048.PDF.

19 - See also, Mixed Migration Hub, *Mixed Migration Trend Bulletin*, cit., p. 11.

20 - See also *Esodi/Exodi. Migratory Routes from Sub-Saharan Countries to Europe*, "MEDU", 2016: www.mediciperidirittiumani.org/pdf/Report_Medu_Exodi.pdf.

21 - M.O. Attir, *Illegal Migration in Libya After the Arab Spring*, 2012: www.mei.edu/content/illegal-migration-libya-after-arab-spring.

22 - Libya has been subject to United States sanctions since the early 1980s over its suspected terror links. Qaddafi nationalized Libya's foreign-controlled oil industry and ordered the closure of the United States Wheelus Air Base. However, Qaddafi's anti-communism allowed for some cautious optimism from the United States about the new regime, but diplomatic relations were downgraded in 1973, and then formally broken. Indeed, during the early 1980's, there was a series of military clashes between the United States and Libya, and in 1982, the United States initiated a series of sanctions against Libya, including an embargo on Libyan oil and a new requirement for export licenses for most American goods. Comprehensive sanctions were imposed in 1986 and lifted in 2004, including a freeze of Libyan assets and a ban of all trade and financial dealings with the country.

23 - Demographically, inhabitants who sit astride border areas are homogeneous and belong to the same tribes. It is customary to see members of the same family living on both sides of the borders that Libya shares with its neighbours. In the cases of Egypt, Tunisia, and Sudan the tribes are Arab, while those who live in border areas with Algeria are Tuareg. In the south and in areas close to both Chad and Niger, the tribes on both sides of the borders are from Toubou and Tuareg. When Libyans were exposed to crises in certain periods of recent history, they crossed the borders in large groups and sought help from their relatives. Such mass movements occurred many times when there was famine or war. M.O. Attir, *Illegal Migration in Libya After the Arab Spring*, cit.

24 - G. Smith, *In a Rebel Prison, any African Is a Mercenary*, «The Global and Mail», 28 March 2011: www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/in-a-rebel-prison-any-african-is-a-mercenary/article574355/.

25 - *Smuggled Futures: the Dangerous Path of the Migrant From Africa to Europe*, "The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime", 2014: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2014-crime-1.pdf.

26 - SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, cit.

27 - M.O. Attir, *Illegal Migration in Libya After the Arab Spring*, cit.

28 - Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, *Behind Bars. The Detention of Migrants in and From East and Horn of Africa*, "mixedmigration.org", 2015, www.mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/011_behind-bars.pdf; SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, cit.

29 - Libya has not ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but it is party to the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which in spirit incorporates the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Nonetheless, Libyan legislation recognized the principle of international protection for refugees as well as non-refoulement in art. 11 of the Constitutional Declaration issued on 11 December 1969, which prohibits the repatriation of political refugees. Similarly, art. 21 of the Law n. 20 (1991) promotes freedom and declares that "The Great Jamahiriya is a refuge for people oppressed and for those who fight for freedom and, therefore, refugees and protection seekers they cannot be subject to any authority". However, there were no procedures allowing asylum seekers to apply for asylum to the Libyan authorities, despite the creation of a commission charged with proposing a law on asylum that in late 2007 requested UNHCR technical and legal assistance. In May 2009, Libyan authorities confirmed that the new law was ready but not yet submitted to the General People's Committee to be examined and approved. However, the authorities recognize that they cannot deport some people like Eritreans and Somalis, although they are often considered illegal migrants. Therefore, applying to UNHCR office in Tripoli during its activity allowed to benefit from an international protection, including resettlement to a third country, while the weak national protection just guarantee to stay in Libya and the principle of non-refoulement. *Libya of Tomorrow. What Hope For Human Rights?*, "Amnesty International", 2010: www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/40000/mde190072010en.pdf.

30 - The Ministry of the Interior, through its Department for Civil Freedoms and Immigration, provides on a day-to-day basis a statistical dashboard of aggregate numbers about the arrivals by sea of illegal immigrants. All data are available at the following website: www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero.

31 - The International Migration Stock: The 2017 Revision estimates international migrants by age, sex and origin.

32 - SAHAN, IGAD, *Human Trafficking and Smuggling on the Horn of Africa – Central Mediterranean Route*, cit.

33 - *Ibidem.*

34 - The principal smugglers and trafficking kingpins who dominate the Central Mediterranean Route are predominantly Eritrean in nationality, but they collaborate with ethnic Somalis, Ethiopians, and Sudanese in order to be able to operate easily across borders and amongst the diverse communities of the Horn of Africa. *Ivi*, p. 18.

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