

SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF MEDITERRANEAN MIGRANT ROUTES TO EUROPE

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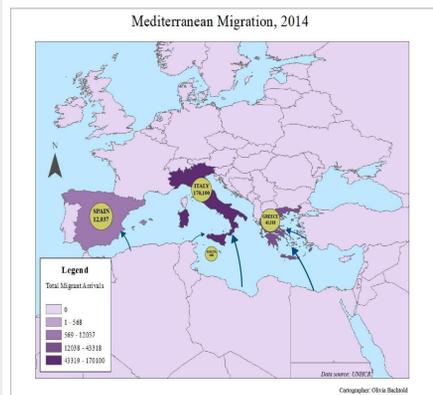
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ABSTRACT:

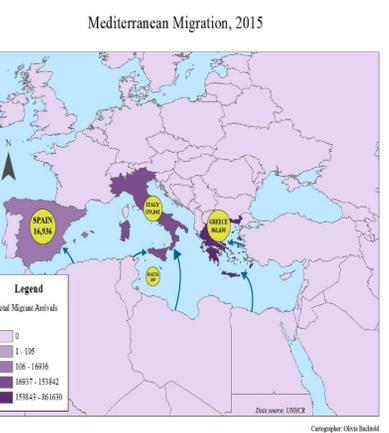
How has the flow of Mediterranean migrant routes fluctuated before, during and after the European migrant crisis? Since the migrant crisis peak in 2015, there has been a universal spotlight on the abundant migrant activity through the Mediterranean. A visual analysis of migrant route patterns within the Western, Central and Eastern Mediterranean Sea regions will allow one to see how the flow of migrants has fluctuated overtime due to policy changes in Europe. For my spring semester honors contract, I chose to focus my research on the spatial understanding of migrant data through a cartographic lens.

MAPPED MIGRANT DATA: 2014-2017

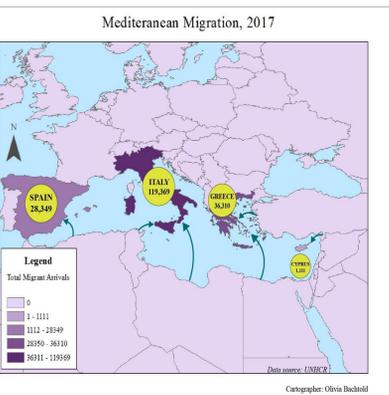
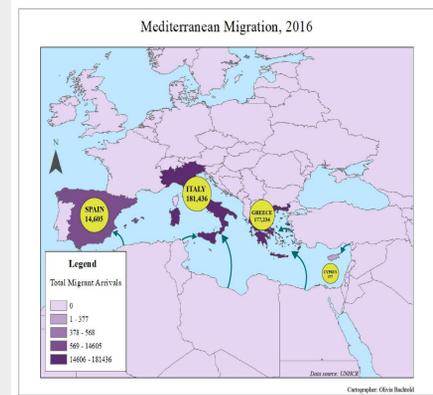
Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, there has been an urgency for the EU member states to provide financial assistance to Syrian refugees. The route to Greece from Syria experienced an overwhelming number of migrants in the following year.



Over 1.5 million migrants arrived in Europe within the year. The European Council came together to strengthen their surveillance on the Mediterranean sea. After a massive influx of migrants arriving in the summer months, especially in Greece, the EU-Turkey Plan was established in November 2015. The EU worked together with Turkey in relation to the civil war in Syria and illegal or irregular migration. The EU contributed three billion euros to build a refugee facility in Turkey that houses two million Syrian refugees.



Since the EU has pushed the Nigerian government to criminalize people smuggling to Libya and Algeria in 2015, there has been a decline in migration flow within the country of Niger in 2016 (Dennison, 2016). But Italy still had an increasing number of migrants mostly arriving from Tunisia, totaling over 180,000 migrants in 2016.



Spain experienced a larger migrant count, but Italy continues to have over 100,000 migrants year after year. Overall, the total number of migrants on all three routes descended in comparison to 2015 and 2016.

CRISIS INDICATORS:

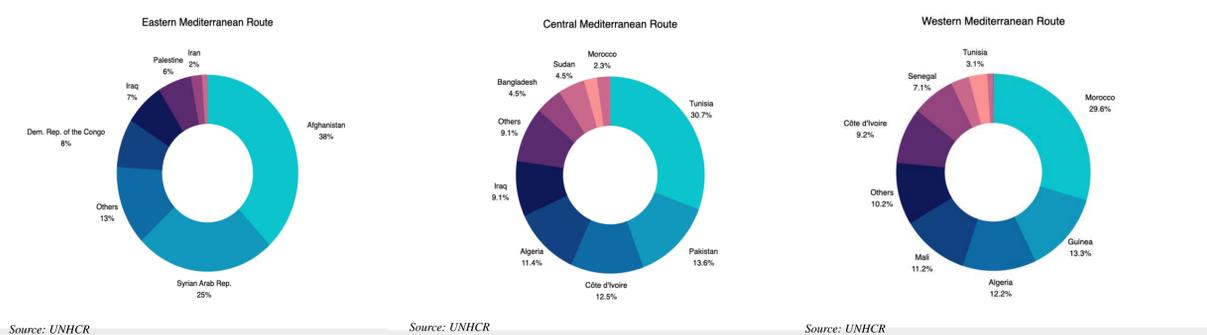
Before the peak of the migrant crisis, the EU lacked the collaborative effort to financially commit to the humanitarian operations in the Middle East and North Africa. This can be seen as a spark that led to the resulting influx of migrants to the nearest coastal countries in Europe: Greece, Italy and Spain. With the already existing war conflicts within these struggling countries, refugees have few options for their safety and survival.

PROCESS:

My method of analyzing migrant flow consisted translating numerical data of migrant arrivals (land and sea) into four maps of the Mediterranean countries that experience migrant flow. Through using the programs ArcMap and Adobe Illustrator, I was able to create a choropleth style map and display the common routes a migrant takes. This allows us to visually comprehend where most migrants arrived each year travelling through the Mediterranean Sea, especially with the European migrant crisis in 2015.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

- Primary reason for Middle-Eastern migrants was open armed conflict, personal safety and unemployment (Sobczykński, 2019).
- People-smuggling business has been correlated with financially contributing to terrorism in North Africa and Europe (DeLong, 2015).
- A social-political juxtaposition existed for migrants in the eyes of Europeans; Either accepting of migrant integration or hostile towards “immigrant-criminals” (Mangone & Pece, 2017).



UNDERSTANDING THE DATA:

The initial impact is seen to be on Greece, Italy and Spain, as these three countries are the first destination for migrants traveling through the Eastern, Central and Western Mediterranean Sea routes. The ongoing conflicts within Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and other war bound countries have been the primary reason for continuous migrant flow to Europe. Even after re-establishing border security on the Mediterranean, the business of illegal people smuggling from the Middle East and Africa to Europe has found loopholes within the system.

CONCLUSION:

The lack of consistent financial humanitarian efforts between the EU member states, as well their allies, played a major role in the number of migrants escaping war bound countries. Currently anyone who is outside the EU must apply for protection in the first EU country they enter. This does not necessarily mean that migrants who arrive in Italy will reside in Italy indefinitely. Many migrants who claim asylum have travelled north to other European countries like Germany and Sweden. These migrant route maps focus on the first stage in a migrant's journey to Europe, and do not display the financial and political contributions of each country. Signs of animosity after the Paris attacks showed in the actions of certain member states during the 2015 crisis, such as pullback from Poland, Hungary and Slovakia (Dennison, 2016). With that in mind, most Mediterranean and coastal countries are vulnerable to any abnormal flow of migrants coming from the Middle East and North Africa. History does repeat itself, therefore Europe will need to continue to manage international crises through humanitarian aid and investing in allies like Turkey.

SOURCES

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