

Military Humanitarian Operations at a Crossroad? The *Mare Nostrum* Operation: the Expert's Assessment and Lessons Learned

On 13 October 2013, the Italian government decided to organize a humanitarian operation in rescue of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea at risk of life, and to fight the crime organisations exploiting the migrant condition. The Italian Navy was mandated to run the operation which was named "*Mare Nostrum*". The operation, which is active today 21 July 2014, is the object of the contrasting evaluation of the politicians, experts and Italian people at large due to the crucial issues it involves.

The research team members have **strong record of scientific works** in the field of institutional policies and non-governmental actions towards security and crisis management. A background in empirical methodology and speculative analysis about such a theme is also a plus of this team. The members' scientific training is in different social science areas. Thus, they bring complementary scientific expertise to the Project approach including (a) the political science approach to domestic and international policy-making and policy implementation; (b) the political theory approach to human rights theory and practice within the state and at the level of the international system and transnational society; (c) the political and sociological approach to the integration of immigrants in the receiving country, and the role and actions of non-governmental organisations and civil society in such an area; and (d) the methodology of survey research and experts' evaluation analysis.

The scientific significance of the Project is in responding to the demand for knowledge about the phenomenon of military humanitarian operations, in particular about the causes, conditions and implications of the operation run by a state alone, which is fairly understudied by social scientists. The existing literature calls the attention of concerned people to issues like the operation legitimacy, legality, sustainability, and efficacy. This Project deals with such issues by mutually complementing the explanations given by different social sciences. In such a way, the Project aims at filling the knowledge holes of one discipline with the evidence and insights of the others. In particular, the Project aims at fitting together the political science knowledge about the sustainability and legality of such operations, the political theory knowledge about legitimacy and justification of such operations, and the sociology knowledge about the sustainability and efficacy issues.

The Project is also of **significance to policy practice** because the humanitarian rescue of the migrants that miss the legal permit of entrance in a country (from here on, unauthorized migrants) is an action with ethical and political implications of great relevance to domestic and international politics today. The main issue of concern is about whether the government response to the unauthorized migrant problem involves prioritizing human rights. The issue at stake is whether prioritizing the migrant's rights to life and search for better conditions of living as well as the human right to movement can override the fact that such a priority turns rescue into a pull-factor of migration and an overloading factor to the capability of the aiding country to sustain the migrant inflow as well. Humanitarian operation analysts have not studied this issue so far. As the *Mare Nostrum* Operation was launched while the European Union's FRONTEX agency is mandated to surveillance tasks on the Southern border of the Union, another issue to study in this Project is the conflict between the state running alone and its own the rescue operation and the international organisation, the state is member of, acting in the same field and area but not running a rescue operation.

The Project has four research lines, related to one another.

1. The **inter-disciplinary analysis** of the Operation data, records and current actions. This analysis integrates in a unitary framework and applies to "*Mare Nostrum*" the existing

knowledge of different social sciences about (a) military humanitarian operations and (b) the management of the post-rescue treatment of unauthorized migrants.

2. The **survey of experts' evaluation** about the goals, actions and outcomes of the Operations. On account of missing research knowledge about crucial aspects of such operations, the research team will collect, by means of an online form, and scrutinize the evaluation of the Operation by military and security analysts, officers of the government, international organisations and humanitarian aid organisations, policy-makers.
3. The **definition of lessons learned** from the Operation by adding the empirical analysis findings and the experts' evaluation outputs.
4. The **advancement of scientific and policy knowledge** about military humanitarian operations run by a state alone. This part aims especially at giving advisement to policy-makers about same and alike operations in a future crisis.