# High risk migration via the Central Mediterranean:

## understanding causes of flight and gender heterogeneity



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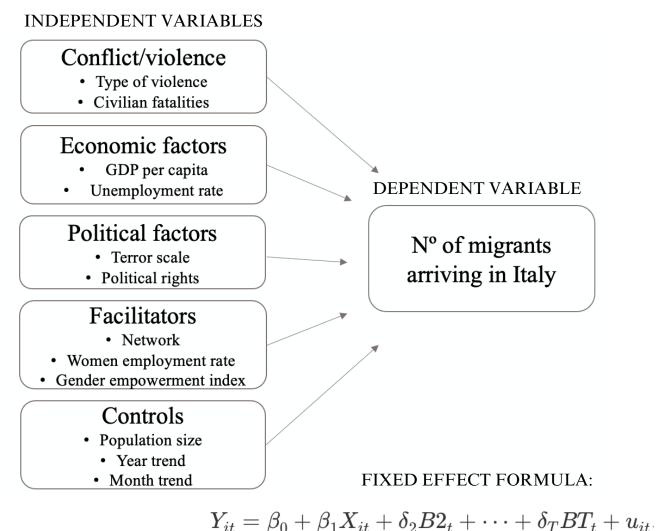
This research aims to investigate the main causes of irregular migration to Europe via the Central Mediterranean from 2011 to 2018. Since 2014, at least 17,000 migrants were recorded as dead or missing in this irregular route. Besides the humanitarian component, the migration crisis resulted in a political turmoil in Europe, threatening European cohesion and stability. Understanding how events happening in other countries affects the flow of migrants using the Central Mediterranean would allow for better migration policies to be designed. By using arrival data in Italy from IOM and Frontex, geolocated conflict data from UCDP, and economic and political indicators from World Bank and Quality of Government (Gothenburg), this research provides evidence on the push factors of irregular migration via the Central Mediterranean. The second part of this research focus on how causes of flee affect women and men differently in their migration behavior, contributing with empirical evidence on gender heterogeneity to the literature of aggregated level of causes of forced displacement.

#### **Research Design**

Fixed effects regressions are used to analyze how changes in the context of countries in Africa, Southern Asia, and Western Asia affected the number of migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy from 2011 to 2018. To test for gender heterogeneity, two other models are constructed using the same independent variables, but using arrivals of men and women from 2014 to 2018 as the dependent variable. The questions that guide this research are: What are the main causes of migration flow via the Central Mediterranean route? How push factors affect men and women differently in their migration behavior?

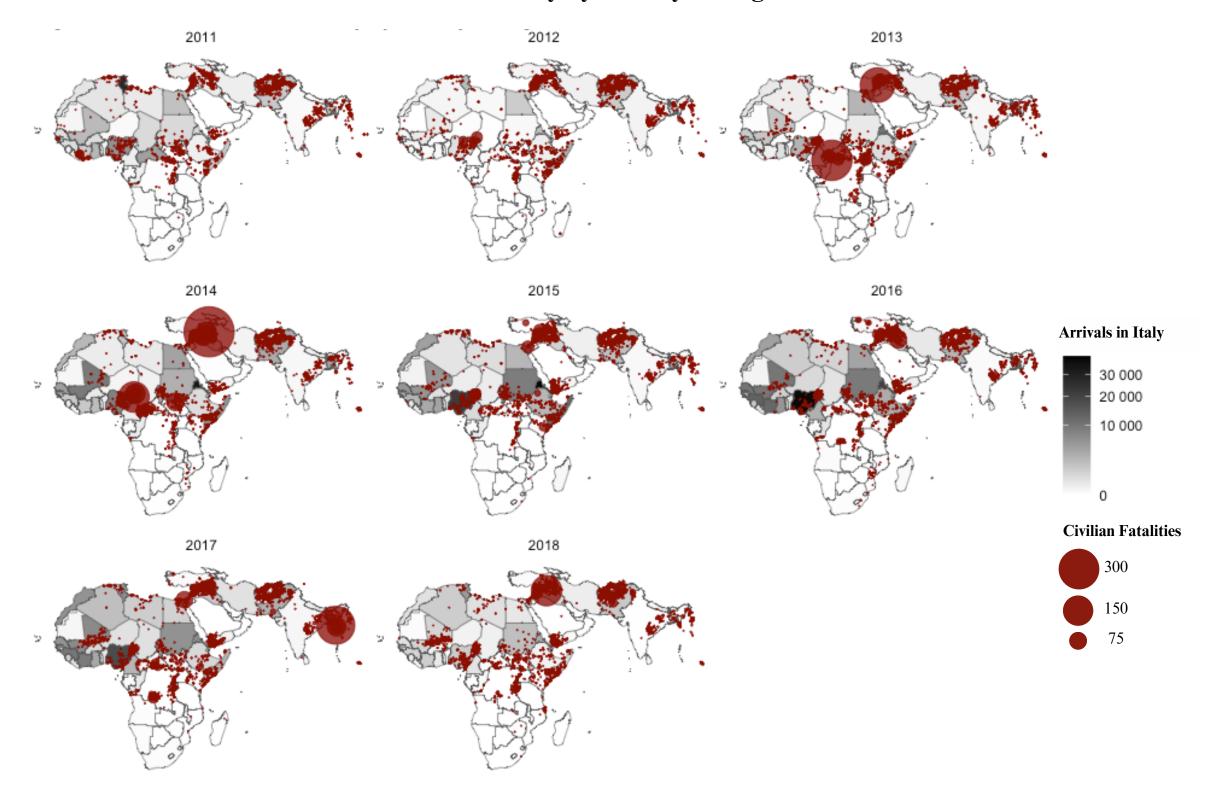
H1: conflict increases the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean.

H2: conflict affects the migration of women and men in different intensities.



 $Y_{it} = eta_0 + eta_1 X_{it} + \delta_2 B 2_t + \dots + \delta_T B T_t + u_{it}$ 

#### Conflict incidence and number of arrivals in Italy by country of origin



### **Main Findings**

The table of the regression results show that one-sided conflict and civilian casualties have a positive effect on arrivals in Italy, controlling for economic and political factors, facilitators, and time trends. Although one-side conflict, lagged by 10 months, is not statistically significant for the female model, it is significant when using 11 or 12 month lag.

The log GDP per capita is positive and statistically significant across all models. This result is in accordance with the literature review that an increase in GDP per capita increases migration because it means that more people have more financial resources to migrate.

#### Regression results of Models 1, 2, 3 and 4 Dependent variable: Arrivals in Italy Model 2011-2018 Model 2014-2018 Model Male Model Female 0.184\*\* State-base conflict -0.036 0.088 -0.031 (0.063)(0.079)(0.077)(0.090)0.312\*\*\* 0.034 -0.049 -0.006 Non-state conflict (0.111)(0.149)(0.145)(0.170)One-side conflict 0.545\*\*\* 0.383\*\*\* 0.334\*\*\* 0.061 (0.075)(0.095)(0.092)(0.109)Civilian casualties 0.001\*\*\* 0.001\*\*0.001\*\*\* 0.002\*\*\* (0.0003)(0.0003)(0.0001)(0.0003)Unemployment -0.133\*\*\* -0.125\*\*\* -0.054 -0.032 (0.030)(0.035)(0.019)(0.029)(Log) GDP per 0.428\*\*\* 0.858\*\*\* 1.651\*\*\* 1.779\*\*\* (0.196)(0.102)(0.172)0.217\*\*\* 0.172\*\*\* 0.251\*\*\* Political rights 0.019 (0.059)(0.067)(0.035)(0.057)Terror scale -0.003 -0.067 (0.051)(0.058)Women employment -0.402\*\*\* 0.083 0.068 (0.090)(0.103)0.329\*\*\* 0.415\*\*\* 0.096 empowerment (0.099)(0.057)(0.096)(0.113)0.0001\*\*\* 0.00003\*\*\* 0.0001\*\*\* 0.00000Network effect (0.00000)(0.00000)(0.534)(1.305)(1.265)(1.493)Observations 2,423 2,423 2,423 5,966 0.277 0.149 0.331 0.2800.111 0.301 0.248Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> 0.264 $74.760^{***}$ (df = 30; $15.059^{***}$ (df = 27; $42.428^{***}$ (df = 27; $33.398^{***}$ (df = 27; F Statistic 2319)

#### **Conclusion**

• One-sided conflict and number of civilian fatalities have a significant effect across all regression models of this research. This corroborates previous findings and the H1 that violence is one of the main causes of forced migration. Evidence is also found for the effect of political rights, network effects, and women empowerment on the dependent variable. However, the coefficients are not statistically significant across all models.

Note:

- A positive effect of log GDP per capita on the dependent variable is also found. However, prior studies present mixed evidence of the effect of GDP on migration. It seems that underdevelopment and poverty are not a direct cause of migration via Central Mediterranean.
- Gender heterogeneity is found for one-sided conflict and political rights variables. The size of the effect of one-sided conflict variable is twice bigger for the male model, using a 11 months lag. This indicates that men and women are differently affected by conflict and political factors in their migration behavior, confirming H2.
- Another interesting finding concerning the gender heterogeneity is the migration timing. The results present evidence that women and men have different migration timings, with men migrating earlier than women. It could be that men flee earlier to escape forced military service, or to facilitate the migration of family members through family reunification. Or it could be that women are constrained in their migration decision for a lack of means and resources to migrate.

\*p\*\*\*p\*\*\*\*p<0.01