



Conflict Studies Report

OUTSOURCING MIGRATION : FUTURE OF EU BORDER CONTROL ?



Executive Summary

On 19th October 2024, an Italian navy vessel intercepted 18 migrants in international waters and returned 12 of them to Italy from the Albanian centers. This decision was taken as a response to the Italian court's decision challenging the government's strategy of delegating illegal immigrants to the Balkan nation.

A total of 18 migrants were caught and taken to the Albanian centers as a part of the bilateral partnership to manage the inflow of illegal migrants. However, an Italian court ruled that migrants shouldn't be held in Albania. This migration model of transferring asylum-seekers' housing to a non-EU country has been praised by several EU nations but is it a sustainable solution?



Historical Context

Italy was previously at the immigrating end of the trend however from the mid-1970s onward, the influx of immigrants began. People from North Africa, the Philippines, and Eastern Europe began appearing in the big cities and working in the service sector. In addition, Several migrants attempted dangerous sea crossings from Albania and North Africa to enter Italy. The influx of immigrants and refugees surged as the Syrian Civil War intensified, with more than 100,000 people seeking asylum in Italy in 2015 alone. Soon, Immigration became a national crisis. By 2000 Italy had more than one million non-natives. Initially to tackle mass immigration, back In 1993, Italy accepted the Schengen Treaty, which eliminated passport controls between its European member states and mandated rigorous controls for persons arriving from non-member states.



Current Developments

In 2023, Giorgia Meloni's government signed an agreement with the Albanian government to process intercepted asylum seekers in Albania. As per the deal, Italy committed to setting up a processing center at the Shëngjin port, a reception center for asylum seekers in the Gjader area with a capacity of 880 places and a detention center with 144 places.

The Italian government also agreed to send only adult men from designated safe countries to Albania to undergo a quick asylum process followed by quick deportation for those denied asylum. Recently the Roman court ruled against the detention of 12 intercepted migrants sent to Albania, citing the safety and protection of individuals under its care. The agreement was part of a broader strategy to reduce pressure on Italy's domestic asylum system by outsourcing migrant processing to a non-EU nation.



UK's Rwanda Experiment

Italy's partnership with Albania bears striking similarities to the UK's controversial migrant policy of sending asylum-seekers to Rwanda. In 2022, Under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak led the UK government to score a similar deal to transfer asylum-seekers to Rwanda, while their applications were processed. The aim was to deter irregular migration and relieve pressure on the UK's asylum system. However, like the Italian-Albanian deal, the UK-Rwanda experiment has faced significant legal and moral challenges. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) intervened to halt deportations to Rwanda, citing potential violations of human rights law, and concerns were raised about the safety and well-being of those deported to Rwanda. In Italy's case, Prime Minister Meloni described the Albania partnership as a "template" for EU migration policy, where non-EU nations could help manage the increasing number of asylum-seekers.





Geopolitical Context

This migration partnership highlights the broader European efforts to tackle the rising migration by dumping illegal immigrants in non-EU nations. The deal has been perceived as a part of a regional strategy to manage irregular migration by leveraging third countries. Similarly, other nations have attempted the same approach as their solution, including the UK's deal with Rwanda. However, these arrangements have sparked criticism from human rights organizations and raised legal challenges over the ethical and humanitarian implications of outsourcing migrant management. The Italian court's decision against the migration model spoiled it for other EU countries to emulate in the outsourcing of migration duties to non-EU states. The model only invites geopolitical uncertainty and this judgment may discourage other EU states from adopting this approach due to potential humanitarian fallout.



Impact Analysis

Economic Impact: If failed, the model only adds to the economic strain on the Italian immigration system. The processing of asylum seekers in Italy takes a country's resources to its limits. The Albanian deal was instituted to alleviate those strains by offloading some costs onto another country.

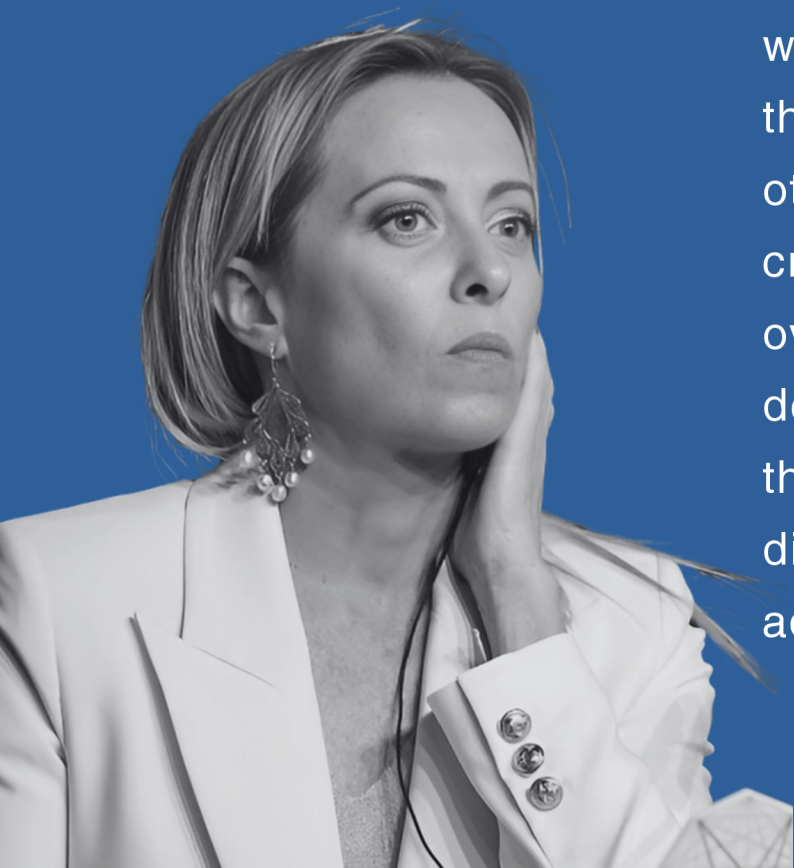
Security Implications: The influx of immigrants becomes a burden not only on the economy but also impacts the lives of its citizens. An increasing number of non-natives instils fear of criminal and smuggling activities. The court's ruling against the model faces the challenge of ensuring protection for the migrants in their nation-states. This calls for Italy to uphold its human rights duties.

Impact Analysis

Best Case Scenario: The Albania agreement is implemented successfully and it complies with the legal and humanitarian standards, allowing the transfer of migrants under strict surveillance. This would enable Italy to reduce its domestic asylum system while also ensuring that the migrants are well-treated and protected.

Most Likely Scenario: Most likely the Italy-albania partnership will have to be modified as per the court's ruling. Italy might have to find a way to develop new policies that comply with the legal and humanitarian obligations to regulate its migration system. The ruling will cease the agreements until proper measures are taken.

Worst Case Scenario: In the worst case, Italy might've to scrap the Albania deal as there is no other viable alternative to solve its crisis. This would lead to overcrowded migrant centres and deteriorating public. Furthermore, the fallout of this model will discourage other nations from adopting similar migration policies.



Recommendations

Diplomatic Recommendations: Rome should engage in diplomatic talks with Albania and alternative partner nations to develop a compliant framework for migrant transfers. They need to set up a committee with the EU and human rights organizations to ensure that their policies comply with international laws.

Economic Recommendations: Italy must invest in expanding its migrant processing infrastructure and enhance integration programs to alleviate the economic strain of housing migrants. They could also explore international financial support and partnerships to share the economic burden and ensure the efficient handling of immigrants.

Security Recommendations: Italy and Albania should enhance their security systems to have control over smuggling and illegal immigration concerns.

Policy Recommendations: Italy should advocate for a comprehensive EU migration framework that promotes collective responsibility and efficient migration management. Developing a central policy on outsourcing deals would ensure that neither parties suffer.

Conclusion

The Italy-Albania partnership was a significant step towards regulating the Italian migration crisis. Despite the court's ruling, a silver lining emerged for potential policies to be developed that will address these issues before implementing them on a larger scale. This experiment highlighted the legal, ethical and operational challenges for such agreements. While the model could serve as a template for EU migrations: how not to deal with migration. Furthermore, Italy's ability to navigate this legal setback will be crucial in shaping its broader strategy for managing migration pressures in an increasingly interconnected world.

The Italy-Albania deal was one of the bold steps towards legal regulation of the Italian migration crisis. Despite the court's ruling, through this, a silver lining came out: to create policies addressing these issues, which will be worked out before actual implementation on a bigger scale.



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