

# **Mediterranean Big Bang**

# Mediterranean Sea

*c.1400, from L.L. Mediterraneum mare (...) (7c.), from L. mediterraneus "midland"  
Original sense being of "sea in the middle of the earth," or "between lands" from medius "middle" + terra "land, earth"  
This is on account of the sea's intermediary position between the continents of Africa and Europe.  
etymonline.com*

Mediterranean: global border which natural boundaries have been managed differently according to historical periods.

Once, the Mediterranean Sea was the center of trade and cultural exchanges.  
It was the scene of communication between peoples. It acted as a centripetal force.

Nowadays Mediterranean is a natural frontier between the lands surrounding it, those of North and those of South.  
The North, Europe, which dictates the rules of the economic-policy game. The South, Africa, forgets their own development, while trying to follow European rules. The Mediterranean Sea has become a centrifugal force.

Power relations change as time goes by.

We should not entrust in geopolitical borders that we perceive because they are changeables. They are manipulated to serve political choices. Are we aware that the justifications ours certainties are based on, are in fact volatiles, variables?

How will we react if the Mediterranean would not assure physical separation between the North and South?  
What will happen if the geography of the present geographic boundary becomes different because of a natural disaster?

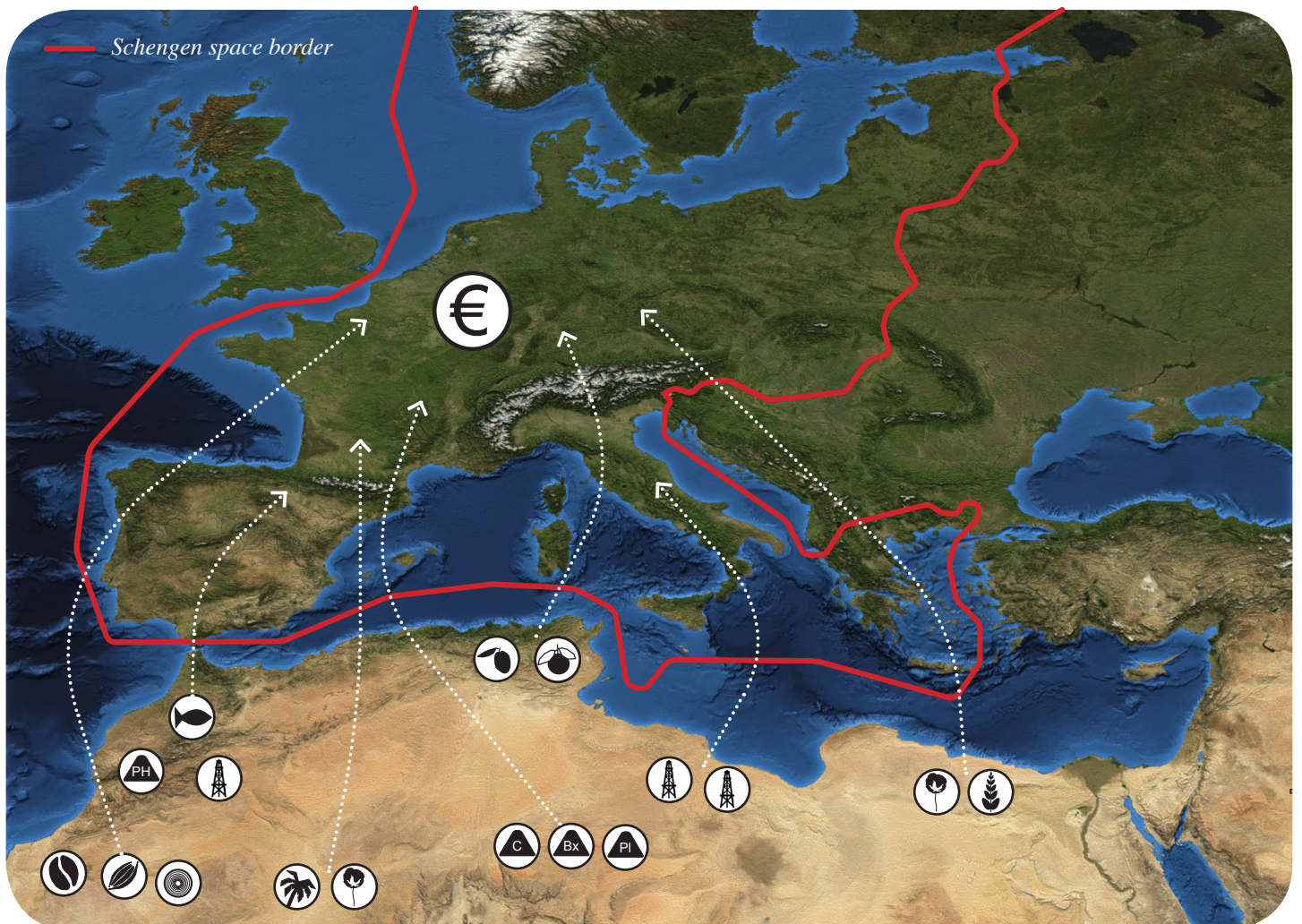
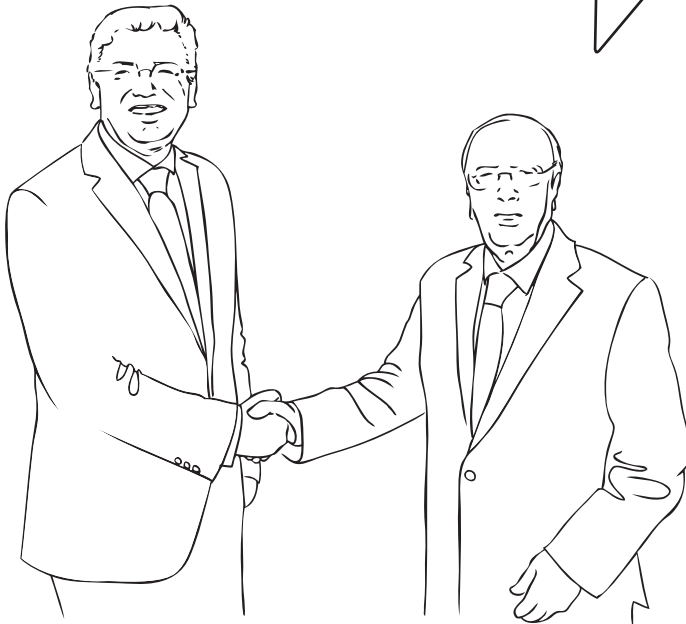
# Trade relations between the European Union and Africa are mostly defined by economic european interests.

*“ The Agreement Morocco-EU is extended for four years. This agreement sets out the principles, rules and procedures governing cooperation (...). In return, the EU pays some □ 35 million per year to Morocco ”<sup>1</sup>*

*“ In 1991 Egypt signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund to privatize the public sector ”<sup>3</sup>*

*“ Because of the importance of catch taken, not only by Moroccan but also by European fishermen, fish stocks are dwindling rapidly in Western Sahara ”<sup>2</sup>*

*“ As a result both the standard of living and working conditions in Egypt plunged. Public factories were privatized, and markets were opened to exploitation by foreign companies by decreasing tariffs and import taxes and by introducing subsidies for agribusiness in place of those for small farmers ”<sup>3</sup>*





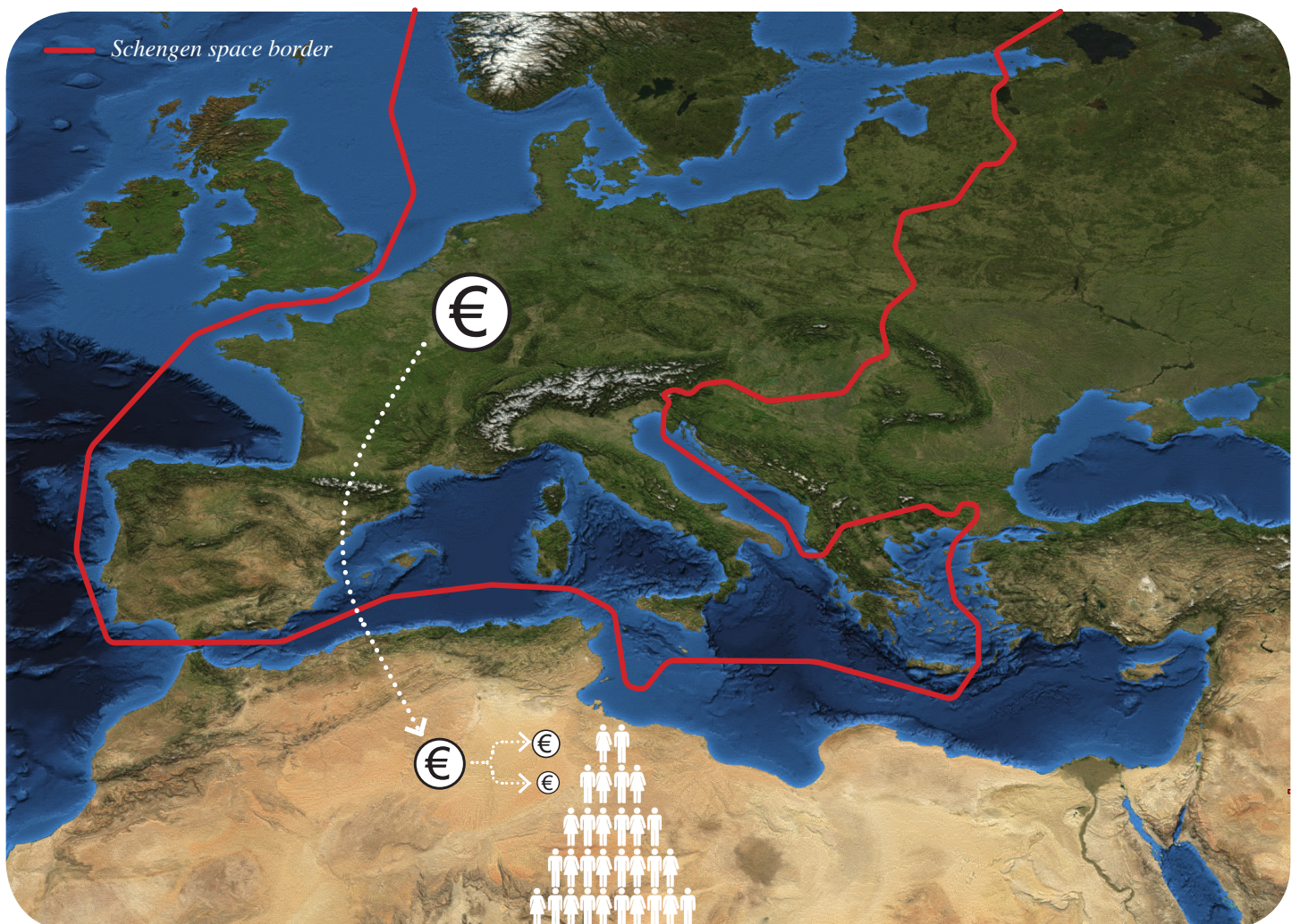
# Economic stability has been preserved by the European support to authoritarian regimes in Africa. The financial resources arising from the trade are not reinvested in developing african countries, but they suit the interests of a privileged minority.

*“ In Egypt, special economic zones were created for foreign companies. Foreign investment increased dramatically – \$13 billion in 2008 – but it was in sectors like finance and gas, which create few new jobs “*

*“A partnership must be based on transparency and participation of local actors. With the European Union, there is a lack of clarity in the negotiations, and also in the use of amounts of financial compensation “<sup>4</sup>*

*“ While national resources like natural gas have been sold at subsidized rates to the tycoon owners of iron and fertilizer factories, the cost of ordinary commodities like bread and cooking oil has spiraled ”<sup>3</sup>*

*“ The lack of currency and modern agricultural infrastructure pushes policy makers to facilitate the entry of foreign multinationals ”<sup>5</sup>*





# Because of no perspectives in their own countries, african people take their chances on the other side of the Mediterranean sea.

*"I arrived in Las Palmas to stay for a while in Spain. There was a friend of mine in Munich, Germany. But police put me under arrest in Bonn, and so I was repatriated to Senegal. The adventure stopped there. But it's sure I'll try to come again. Actually I would like to stay and invest here in Senegal, but there's no way to survive!"* <sup>6</sup>

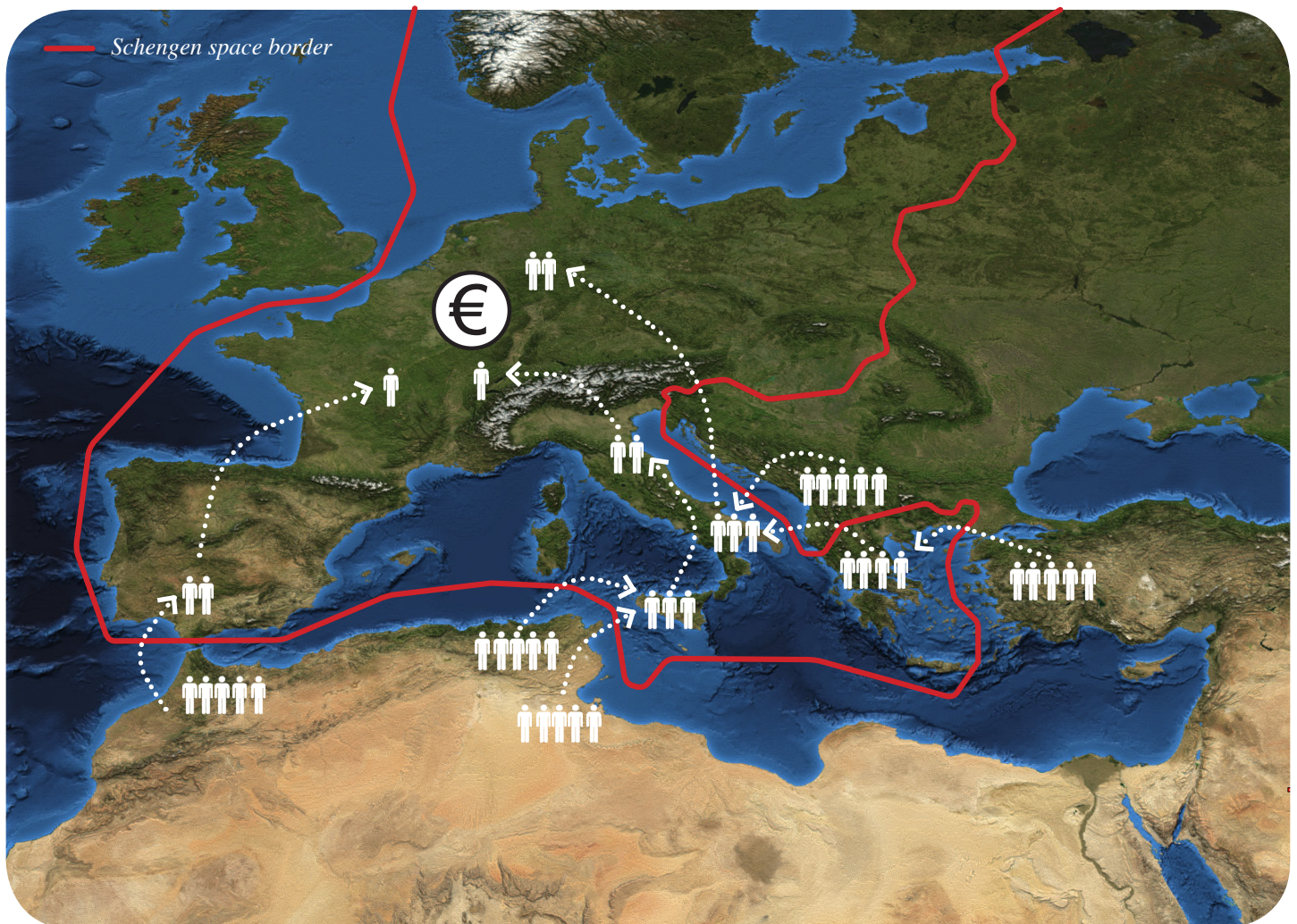


Ibrahim, fisherman from Senegal

*"Now I'm a small businessman here in Vittoria, I've got some aubergines' greenhouses, the only thing I can cultivate. But I want to come back to Tunisia, because overthere my kids could study French and English... but what am I going to do in Tunisia? It's not possible to cultivate aubergines like I'm doing here. No possibilities, no possibilities of growth"* <sup>7</sup>



Ali, Tunisian agricultural entrepreneur in Vittoria, Sicily





The situation become high-explosive in the African countries where people rose against their own authoritarian leaders.

People leave their countries to flee to safety: lot of them land in Italy.

The refugees' number grows up in the old continent. And European leaders? They leave the authoritarian oppressors to their fate. And refugees too.

*" I have asked that we reduce the number of people admitted under work immigration visas.  
We also continue to reduce the number of foreigners coming to France for family reunification " 8*



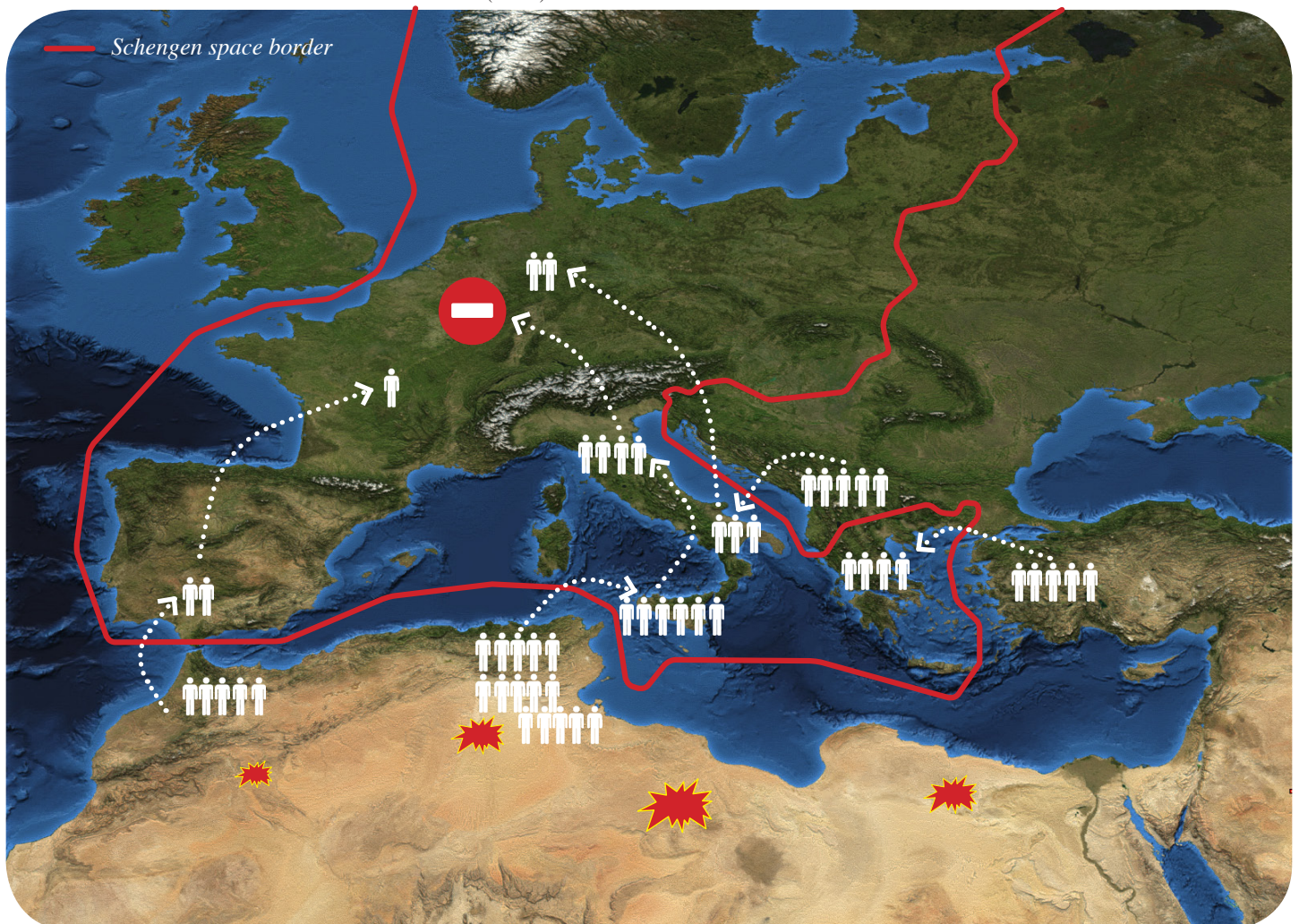
French Interior Minister Claude Guéant (7.4.11)

*" Tomorrow I will say to the French Minister of the Interior, Claude Guéant, that Tunisian people to whom we will give the temporary residence permit, have the right to circulate.*

*There's only one way to stop it : France need to come out of Schengen or to suspend the treaty" 9*



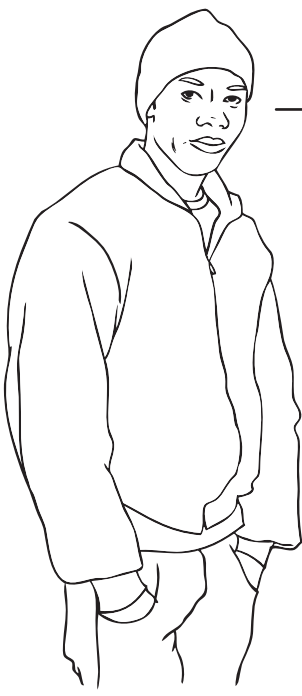
Roberto Maroni, the Italian Minister of the Interior (7.04.11)





# In reality the Mediterranean sea is a natural border that 'protect' Europe. The danger: crossing the sea to the North.

*" What do you need to say ?  
Lots of people do that. I'm not  
the only one. Cross the Sahara,  
or cross the sea, that means  
you see a lot of people, some of  
your friends too, dying "* <sup>10</sup>



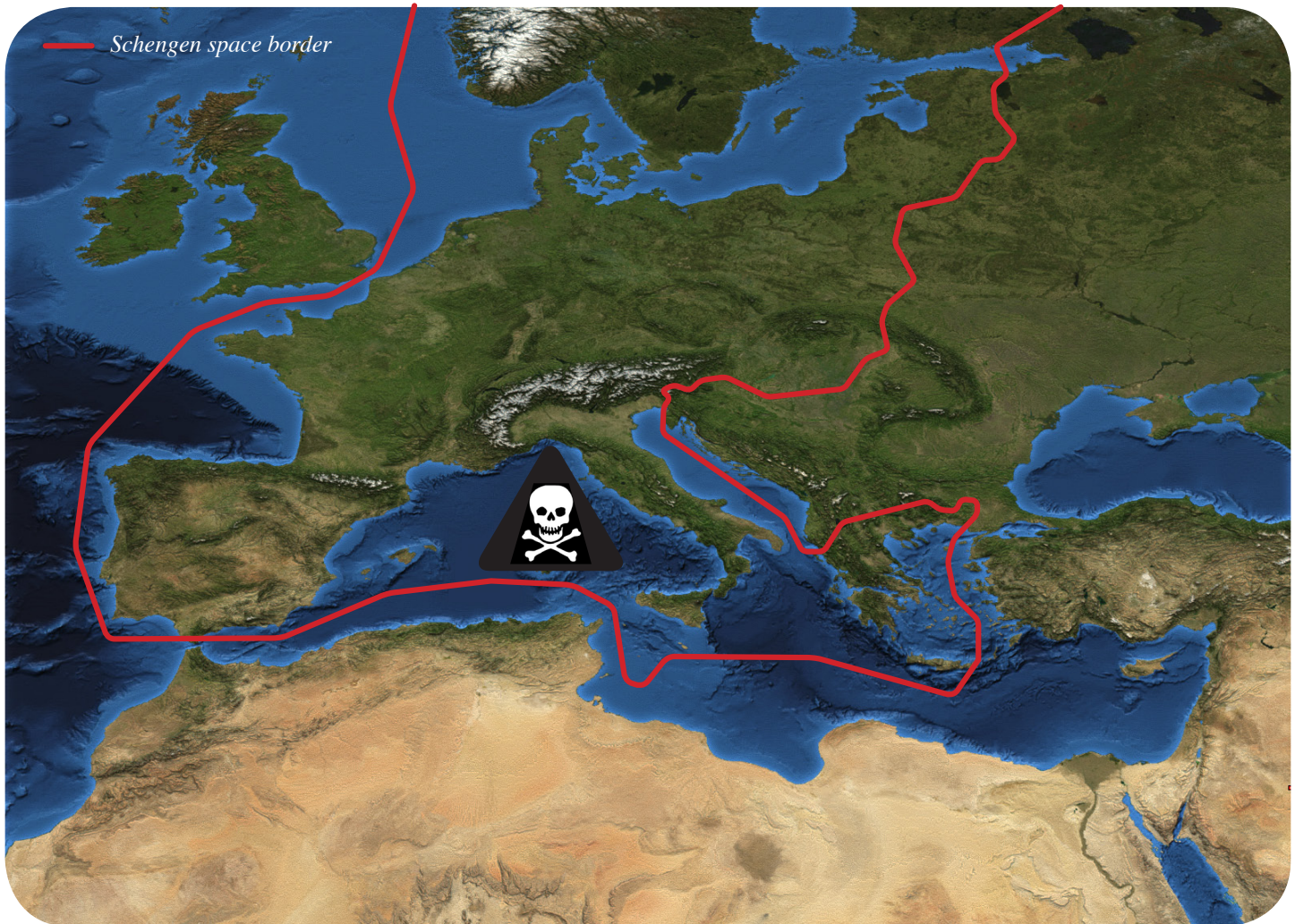
Frank Benson, 27 years old, from Nigeria

*" It's a chance for me to live in  
Sicily. Many dangers to join the  
island : from Africa, you need to  
cross the sea. It's not a joke, you  
take a chance on doing it "* <sup>11</sup>



Dkack Traoré, 31 years old, from Ivory Coast

Between 150 an 300 persons die drown, during the crossing of Mediterranean sea by boatload, which rolled over 70 km from Lampedusa 7.04.11 <sup>12</sup>



**and if ...**

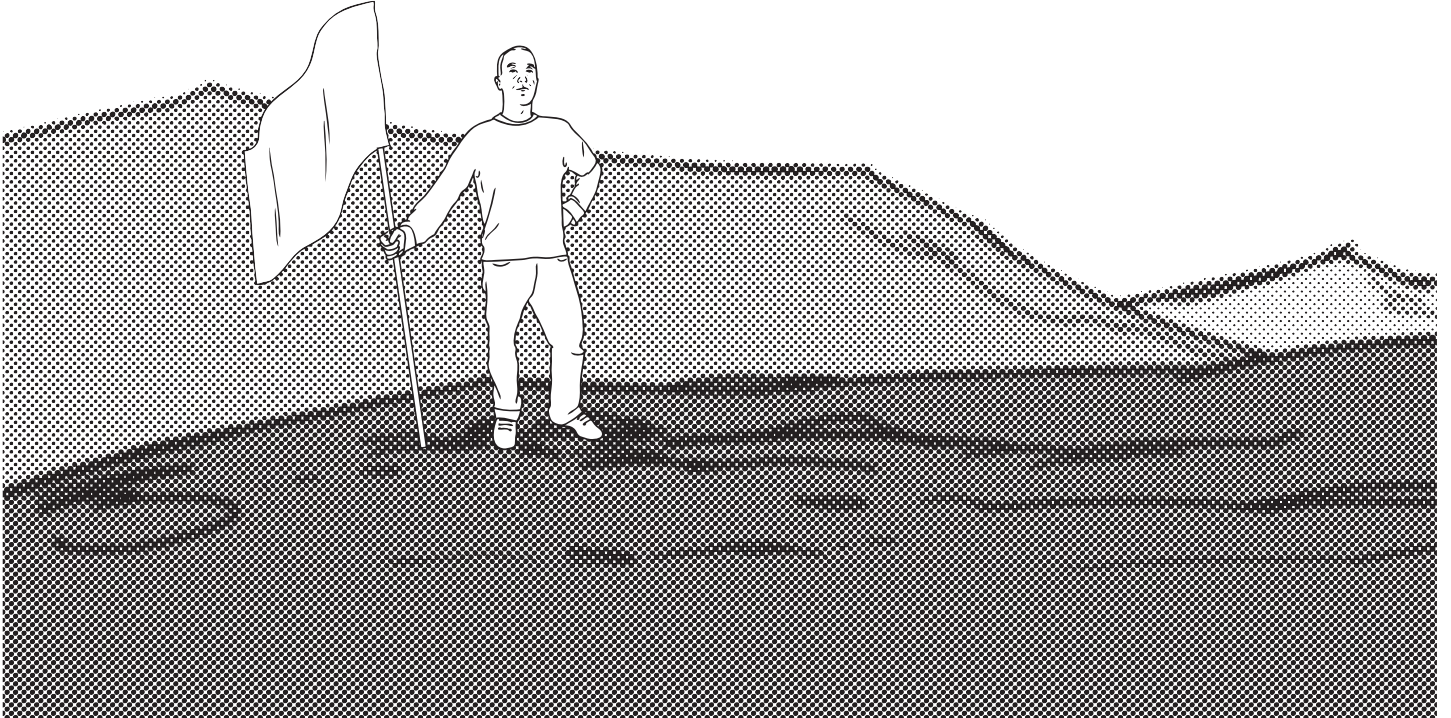


**An earthquake hits the Mediterranean Sea!  
The Strait of Gibraltar is closed due to the rapprochement of the African plate to the Eurasian plate.**



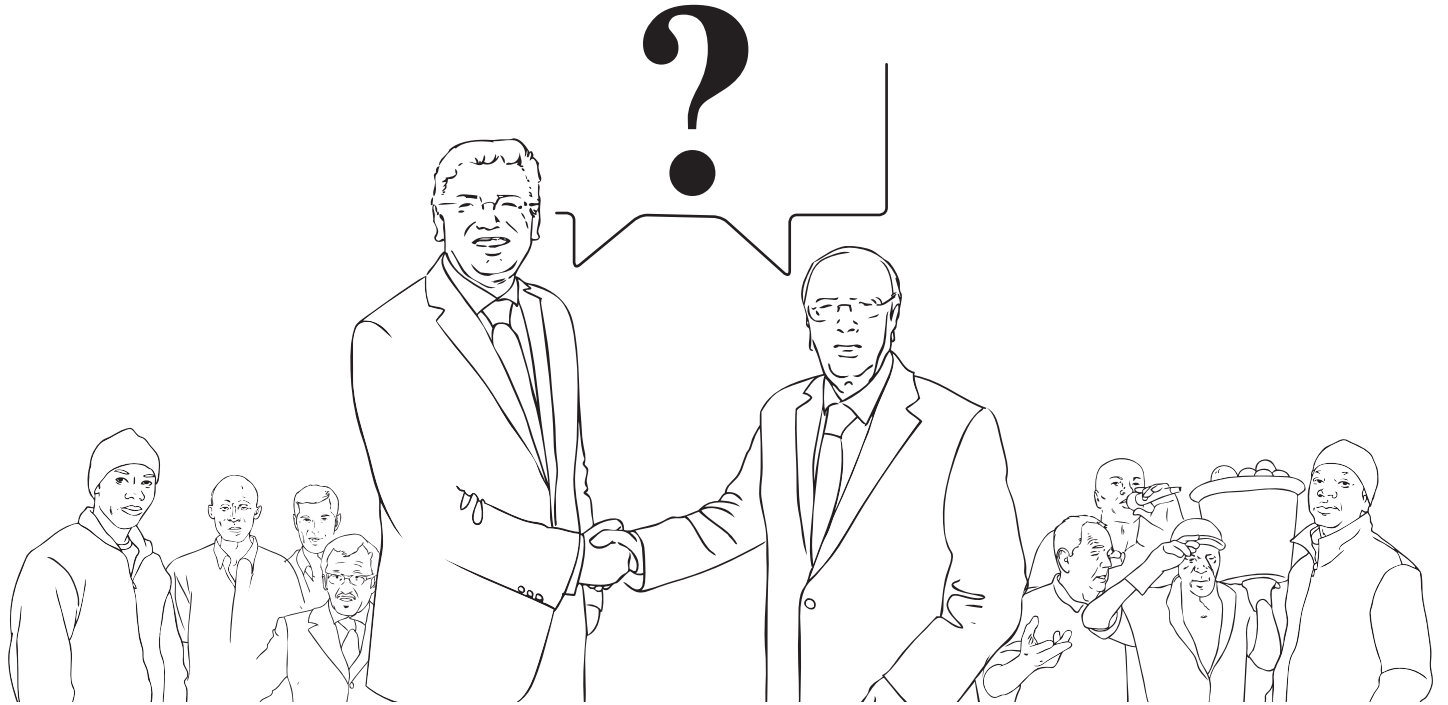


**The Mediterranean Sea is largely evaporated because of the lack of oceanic contributions after the complete closure of the Strait of Gibraltar.**





**What reaction if the current natural frontiers won't insure anymore the protection that supports the european system ? What response for a new geographic situation? A real commitment towards development or a most severe security policy ?**









# Sources

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<sup>1</sup> Econostrum.info, 28.02.2011

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<sup>2</sup> Legavox.fr, le 16.06.2010

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<sup>3</sup> Workers World.com, 28.02.2011

*Imperialist exploitation at the heart of every grievance raised at Tahrir Square*, Joyce Chediac

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<sup>4</sup> Cafebabel.com, 18.04.08

*Pêcheurs sénégalais : naufragés en sursis*, Fernando Garcia

<sup>5</sup> France 24.com, 27.04.2010

*Compétition économique : vers les agro-guerres de demain ?*, Alexandra Renard, Melissa Bell & Mounia Ben Aïssa

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<sup>6</sup> Cafebabel.com, 18.04.08

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<sup>7</sup> Interview to Ali, Tunisian agricultural entrepreneur in Vittoria, Sicily. 10.03.11

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<sup>8</sup> France 24.com, 7.04.2011

*French interior minister calls for less immigration*, Josef Bamat

<sup>9</sup> tg1.raï.com, 7.04.2011

*Tensioni Italia - Francia [Roberto Maroni Italian Interior Minister speech]*

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<sup>10</sup> Interview to Franck Benson, Nigerian refugee. Caltanissetta, Sicily. 16.03.11

<sup>11</sup> Interview to Djack Traoré, Ivory Coast refugee. Palermo, Sicily. 12.03.11

<sup>12</sup> leprogres.fr, 7.04.2011

*Demandes d'asile. Italie : au moins 150 migrants venus de Libye se noient près de Lampedusa*



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# Special thanks to Sicilian protagonists

Sicilia, mars 2011

