

Identity Crisis in Italy



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Edited by
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Introduction

The rich historical context of the Italo–Hungarian relations and partnership, the common problems and challenges of the two countries inspired and motivated the National University of Public Service in Budapest to launch an international research project entitled *Challenges of the Contemporary Italian State* in 2016. The project spurred an international academic dialogue by organising conferences and workshops with the participation of Italian and Hungarian professors and involving famous Italian and European universities and research centres (Bocconi University, European University Institute, LUISS Guido Carli, Sapienza University of Rome, the University of Bologna, the University of Milan, the University of Naples Federico II and the University of Siena).

One of the most important events of the project was a workshop held in Budapest in the summer of 2017, organised in cooperation with the Italian Cultural Institute. The workshop, among others, addressed the Italian identity crisis, which consists of a political crisis, an economic and financial crisis, the crisis of the regional state and the crisis of insecurity.

The workshop discussed several of the most important causes and elements of the different aspects of the Italian identity crisis. The participants identified the causes of the political crisis such as the clear deficit of general trust, the low level of trust in political institutions and the limited institutional legitimacy, feelings of instability, injustice, the heritage of *Tangentopoli* and its long-lasting consequence: an extremely powerful wave of antipolitical sentiment, as well as some aspects of the crisis of the regional state and Italian regionalism. Furthermore, the scholars, among others, presented the aspects of the economic and financial crises leading to the erosion of social cohesion; the dilemmas of the Italian foreign policy and the crisis of insecurity linked to the intensity of immigration flows in recent years and the late and, in some cases, less efficient regulations in this area.

The papers of the present volume are mostly based on the discussions and talks presented at the workshop. Despite the inevitable eventuality of the topics discussed by the authors, I believe that this volume gives an instructive overview of the Italian identity crisis. It presents the challenges to be faced and hopefully offers some possible solutions.

I am grateful to all the scholars who put their time and effort into participating in the workshop and working on this volume, for thinking together and for the common reflection in the two-year period of the project.

Budapest, August 2019

Fanni Tanács-Mandák
Editor

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Stefano Bottoni

Wasted Opportunity? Italy and Central Europe at the End of the Cold War

1. Introduction: Scope and Methodology of the Research

The aim of this chapter is to describe the Italian role in the elaboration of a policy of pragmatic convergence towards the Eastern European countries of the Soviet Bloc during the last decade of the Cold War. As the less dogmatic communist regime in the region, Hungary played a pivotal role in the establishment of good working relations with Italy. This rapprochement was facilitated by the fact that Italy occupied a special position in East–West relations, in which the PCI, the largest and most influential communist party in the West, served as an especially important intermediary. Literature has focused so far on the economic aspects of the intensification of bilateral relations (Bottoni 2016, 245–249; Fava and Gatejel 2017, 11–19; Kansikas 2017, 345–369).¹ The activities of business enterprises specialising in East–West trade during the Cold War constituted a parallel economic system, which political and state security officials were familiar with, and largely accepted. Behind the persistent political and diplomatic conflict between the countries of Western Europe and Eastern Europe, there existed a formal and, to an even greater degree, informal sphere of cooperation, and investigations of the transnational economic contacts that took place within these formal and informal spheres of cooperation produced surprising and valuable results. This contribution examines the issue of bilateral cooperation from a broader, diplomatic and political perspective. After briefly summarising the international context, the paper focuses on the milestones of the gradual re-discover of Central and Eastern Europe by the Italian foreign policy through local initiatives like *Alpe-Adria*, and secondly on the decisive role Hungary played in the late Kádár era in the creation of regional networks such as the *Quadrangular Initiative*. The final part of the paper explains the complex set of reasons that made bilateral and regional cooperation efforts ineffective after the demise of the Soviet Union, and determined the overall failure of the Italian strategy of economic and political penetration into the post-communist region.

The study relies both on a critical reassessment of existing scholarly literature, and on new archival evidence. As a general rule, Italian archival sources tend to be limited,

¹ I have summarised the state of the art on this field of study in the introduction to a study devoted to interparty trade between Italy and Hungary (Bottoni 2016, 245–249). See also the researches carried out on East–West trade and economic cooperation in the car industry by Fava and Gatejel 2017, 11–19. Intro into the special issue and into the energy sector by Kansikas 2017, 345–369.

due to the severe restrictions to the access to important collections, such as the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the operative files of the internal secret service during the Cold War period. However, sources from the Gramsci Institute (Fondazione Istituto Gramsci) in Rome concerning the Italian Communist Party's activities represent a valuable, albeit limited, exception to this rule.² For the purposes of this study, I have gained crucial insights from the personal collection of former Italian dignitary Giulio Andreotti, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1983 and 1987, and Prime Minister between 1989 and 1992, and who played a tremendous role in the elaboration of the Italian foreign policy from the 1970s to the early 1990s. Although the Giulio Andreotti Archive has been catalogued as a personal collection since the Italian politician donated it to the Luigi Sturzo Foundation in 2007, this material has a special relevance to the historical research on post-1945 Italian political, diplomatic and social history. Andreotti systematically collected private and also official (and often classified) files from a wide range of state institutions that he had entered in contact with during his long political career: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's Cabinet, the High Command of the Army, and the foreign counterintelligence. At the present moment, around 600 out of the 3,500 boxes of the Andreotti archives have been reordered and made available to scholars, and well more than one hundred of them contain references to the Italian *Ostpolitik*, to the Soviet Bloc, or to the bilateral relations with the Soviet Union and its East European satellites.³ Hungarian sources are theoretically abundant at the National Archives of Hungary (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár*). Among these sources, documents from the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*) and the files of the Foreign Ministry of Hungary relating to Italy are particularly valuable. Unfortunately, shortly after starting the present research, the National Archives of Hungary underwent a reorganisation and the mentioned funds were temporarily closed to researchers, forcing me to shift the focus of my research on the Italian side.

2. Italy in the International Context from Détente to the “Second Cold War”

According to Silvio Pons, Agostino Giovagnoli and Marco Gervasoni, the late 1970s and the early 1980s can be regarded as the most critical period for Italy of the conflictual interaction between the international system and the national context. The most relevant feature of this systemic crisis was certainly the emergence of a “blocked democracy”, which in the previous decade had been closely monitored from the outside, but also challenged in an unfinished and limited way from within. The permanent division between a moderate government block and a sizeable left-wing opposition, albeit anachronistic in the eyes of many observers, continued to distinguish the Italian democracy from other European democracies (Pons et al. 2014, 35–53; Gervasoni 2010; Giovagnoli 2005). The evolution of the international context

² An online guide is accessible from the following link: www.fondazionegramsci.org/archivi/inventari-degli-archivi (Accessed: 13 December 2017.)

³ A detailed description is available on the webpage of Istituto Luigi Sturzo: www.sturzo.it/archivio-andreotti/1-archivio (Accessed: 13 December 2017.)

is fundamental for the understanding of the room for manoeuvre of the main actors of the Italian foreign policy, from the Christian Democrats to the Communist Party.

West Germany's *détente* policy, a model for the Western European states, reached its zenith under the leadership of Chancellor Willy Brandt. In December 1972, the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany signed the basic agreement that determined the course of interstate relations between them until the end of the Cold War (Fink and Schaefer 2009). West German *Ostpolitik* was part of the global process of *détente* that culminated with the signing of the Helsinki Final Act at the end of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on August 1, 1975 (Bange and Niedhart 2008). The agreement stipulated the following common objectives: refraining from the threat or use of force; the inviolability of frontiers; the territorial integrity of states; the peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, belief and movement; and development of technical and scientific cooperation. For the Soviet Union and its allies, the agreement signified the West's recognition of the division of Europe into two inviolable zones of influence, while its stipulations regarding human rights and the freedom of movement represented only symbolic concessions with which they would not be forced to comply (Graziosi 2008, 418; Savranskaya 2009, 26–40).

The "normalized" regimes of Eastern Europe were able to take advantage of opportunities emerging from the increasingly interconnected and continually growing world economy. These regimes concluded agreements that made it possible for them to increase both the volume and the quality of trade products in Western markets (to which Eastern European countries exported foodstuffs) and Middle Eastern markets (to which they exported arms in exchange for oil derivatives). In this way, Eastern European countries were able to withdraw themselves from the framework of "protected" barter and raw-material exports conducted through intermediary companies associated with Western communist parties. In the economic domain, talks between Comecon and the European Economic Community that the Soviet Union had initiated in 1972 continued for years without success: the two organisations recognised each other only following Gorbachev's rise to power in the middle of the 1980s (Romano 2013, 163–173).

The boundaries of international *détente* began to emerge in the second half of the 1970s: the stipulations in the Helsinki Final Act regarding respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which the socialist countries of Eastern Europe had initially downplayed, became a means for the West to assert its interests in the region. Paradoxically, the West began to selectively attack Soviet Bloc economic interests just when Eastern European communist regimes began to abandon their practice of mass repression.⁴ The renewed confrontation between the capitalist and communist blocs prompted the Soviet Union and its allies to take active measures aimed at destabilising the West. The rise in ideological tensions represented a severe blow to Eastern European governments in spite of their stability and their location on the border of East–West conflict.⁵

⁴ On the substantial change in US foreign policy toward the region, see Miller et al. 2007; Kraemer 2008.

⁵ On the shocking effects of the economic and political changes of the 1970s on the Western world see Ferguson et al. 2010.

In the critical decade 1975–1985, Italy occupied a special position in the Western political and military bloc due to its limited sovereignty and also to the survival of the old notion of “vincolo atlantico”, the privileged relationship that anchored Italy to the United States and then to the Atlantic alliance. After the Second World War, Italy was integrated into the Western system and became a middle power at the geopolitical crossroads between West and East. During the Cold War, national security was granted to Italy as a matter of fact. Paradoxically, the factor that might have made Italy so vulnerable – the communist “threat” – contributed to increase the appeal of a country that always needed to be *helped and financed* to overcome its multifaceted internal crises. This generous albeit not disinterested help by the United States and NATO balanced in the eyes of the Italian elites the limited sovereignty Rome was forced to accept in major foreign policy issues until the middle of the 1980s (Pons et al. 2014, 15–34).

This peculiar situation of the Italian foreign policy helps to explain why Italy did not play a crucial role in the European *détente*. In this field Italy was suffering a growing disadvantage *vis-à-vis* West Germany, which after the mutual recognition with the GDR could put the long-standing German knowledge of the region, as well as the human capital and the networks of the former ethnic German communities at the service of the politics of opening to the West. (The same applies to the neutral but Western-oriented Austria). Italy did not possess any pre-existing networks to reactivate, and was under the constant pressure of Washington which feared that expanding political and economic ties with the Soviet Bloc might have brought exclusive advantage to the Communist Party.

The prudent stance of the Italian foreign policy makers toward the Soviet Bloc in the 1970s was deeply rooted in the security concerns over the real aim of Soviet-supported *détente*. A two-pages memorandum called “La strategia sovietica della distensione” and prepared on May 4, 1973 for the then Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti by the Italian military counterintelligence (*Servizio Italiano di Difesa – SID*), reflects the deep security concerns over the real aim of Soviet-supported *détente*. The memo was the Italian reproduction of a similar document which had been transmitted to SID by a “friendly secret service” (almost certainly the CIA). According to this memo, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev had summoned the Soviet Bloc countries to intensify their Western contacts for at least ten years, while strengthening “ideological penetration” and imposing “economic hegemony” over the continent. In the light of the memo, *détente* appears as a mere Trojan horse for Soviet interests, and the West should avoid falling into this pitfall.⁶

The military and security factors played a crucial role in the limitation of the Italian interest for the region and especially Hungary in the 1970s and early 1980s. Until as late as 1987, Italy was considered as the “main enemy” for Hungary in the framework of the Warsaw Pact’s offensive posture. Both the border regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy and the Hungarian western counties were heavily militarised. According to the Warsaw Pact’s military doctrines, Hungary would have given the task of invading Northern Italy with the assistance of Soviet ballistic missiles secretly stored in Hungary (Horváth 2016). The internal security issues are also to be considered. Starting from the early 1960s, the

⁶ Archivio Giulio Andreotti (AGA), Istituto Sturzo, Roma. Busta 691, Politica estera. Appunto segretissimo del SID (Servizio Italiano Difesa) per il presidente del Consiglio Giulio Andreotti, 4 maggio 1973. “La strategia sovietica della distensione.”

Hungarian state security was assigned by Moscow the task of penetrating into Western sensitive targets in Italy, for example the Vatican, the Italian catholic left-wing press, as well as military structures like the NATO Defense College based in Rome (Bottoni 2008, 147–176). From the late 1970s, the Soviet Bloc countries developed a cooperation with international terrorist networks like the notorious “Carlos group”, whose members spent longer periods in Hungary (Selvatici 2010). On its part, the Italian Government offered shelter and widespread opportunities to former Hungarian Ambassador József Száll, who had become a dissident and asked political asylum to Italy after leaving his position.⁷

Until the middle of the 1980, the standoff between East and West froze the political and economic relationships. The long Euromissile crisis started in 1979 provided both parties with a test bed and an identification tool. The new Italian centre-left founded by Andreotti, Cossiga, Forlani and the socialist leader Bettino Craxi in 1980 benefited from the Atlantic constraints strengthened by the NATO response to the Soviet SS-20 and the Reagan Administration. The “preamble” that constituted the manifesto of the new alliance employed an explicit argument of international character to motivate the *conventio ad excludendum* of the communists, who he did not present a contingent face but linked himself to the antecedent republicans and it projected itself in the coming decade, putting a third of voters on the margins of the democratic constituency. The PCI in the meantime carried out a defensive move: it distanced itself from the Soviet Union, condemning the invasion of Afghanistan and renouncing the direct funding of Moscow, without, however, cutting the umbilical cord that bound it to the Soviet Bloc. As Silvio Pons pointed out, under the leadership of general secretary Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI challenged the old block logic but faced domestic and international isolation, which soon forced it to retrace its steps and turn back to the previous system of alliances (Pons 2006).

3. Acting from Below: The Alps-Adriatic Working Community

In the late 1970s, regionalisation processes ongoing in Western Europe, and the atmosphere of détente between the two military blocs made possible the conception of a new transnational framework of cooperation in the large region between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea. The Alps-Adriatic Working Community (officially known as the Working Community of the Länder, the Regions and the Republics of the Eastern Alps) was founded in Venice on 20 November 1978 at the initiative of the Veneto regional government and in particular its president, the Christian Democrat politician Carlo Bernini, who also held the presidency in the years 1982–1984. Bernini and the local socialist strongman Gianni De Michelis understood long before many others that the resumption of trade flows and technological exchange offered to Italy and in particular to its north-eastern fast-developing areas (Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia), geographically placed at the crossroads of European networks, an enormous opportunity to put Italy at the heart of the process (Raito and Ferrazza 2015, 32–34). The document, formally referred to as the “Memorandum of Understanding”, bore the signature of the Presidents of the nine institutions that founded the Community, belonging to four

⁷ The Hungarian documentation of this case in the state security archives in Budapest. Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, fond 3.1.9., file 159771. See also Andreides 2017.

different States. Four Austrian Länder (Carinthia, Styria, Upper Austria and Salzburg) joined the Working Community, two Italian regions (Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia), a German Land (Bavaria) and the socialist republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which were then part of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. In the course of the 1980s, the following were added chronologically: the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige (1981), Lombardy (1985), the Austrian Land of Burgenland (1987), the Swiss Canton Ticino (1989), and the Hungarian counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas (1986), Somogy and Zala (1988), and Baranya (1989). The document, composed of only thirteen articles, was drafted in a short and generic form, thus highlighting the willingness on the part of the founders to create a lasting but not excessively bureaucratic structure (Fedrigotti and Leitner 1993, 22–24).

The provisions of the Protocol included, besides simple and flexible rules for the conduct of the meetings, also the topics to be dealt with in the context of the work of the Community. In particular, Article 3 of the Memorandum of Understanding specified that the Community had the task of “dealing in common, at an informative and technical level, and of coordinating problems that are in the interest of its members”. The same article also listed the issues to be dealt with precisely and provided for the establishment of special committees for technical assistance, confirming the intention to act with the maximum degree of concreteness within a political and institutional situation that did not leave many other spaces for the free initiative of the Community. Having been signed by representatives of non-state institutional realities, the Memorandum of Understanding could not find its legitimacy according to the classical canons of international law. Embracing a “minimalist” vision of international relations, Alpe-Adria tried to overcome the barriers of the Cold War through a local cooperation from below and focused on concrete issues such as environment, tourism, enhancement of the territory, education and culture (Delli Zotti and De Marchi 1985). The true element of novelty of the document was therefore in its wide and innovative political value and in the firm will of the participating organisations to create a strong base that would allow them to pursue a lasting program of collaboration and cooperation between states belonging to different geopolitical spheres.

The Alps-Adriatic Working Community organised itself into working committees that dealt with four fundamental issues: 1. territory and environmental protection; 2. land and sea transport; 3. culture and information; 4. local economy. Through a series of research projects and conferences, the Alps-Adriatic, which was initially characterised by a two-year rotating presidency, issued concrete plans on the development of international connections such as the Graz–Zagreb highways, the Karawanken and the Monte Croce Carnico tunnels respectively on the Klagenfurt–Ljubljana link, and the Trieste–Munich railway line, as well as the development of the Venice–Munich line. On the cultural level, the Working Community favoured an agreement among the twelve universities of the territories for collaborations on research concerning the territories involved in the new institutional framework (AAVV 1992). Even if Bernini’s pro-European initiative could not fully achieve its initial aims, it worked as the harbinger of a more sustained development on the subject of transnational cooperation. Alps-Adriatic symbolised on the one hand the attempt by Italy to project itself beyond the Iron Curtain with a project based on the idea of soft diplomacy and initiative from below. On the other hand, as Giorgio Dominese has argued, it already demonstrated in the course of the 1980s that European regionalism no longer represented a verbal exercise of a few idealists or restricted political circles. Veneto, with its president Carlo Bernini, had

animated the ambitious project to build the assembly of the regions of Europe (the ARE), no longer restricted to the partners of the CEE countries or the countries that formed the Council of Europe at that time, but “open” to the regions located beyond the borders of the Iron Curtain (Agostini 2013, 248). This proposal contained a challenge to the political divisions within Europe and a reasonable prediction of the prevalence of the reasons of the “common roots” on the logic of the contingent opposition between apparently irreconcilable political systems. Carlo Bernini and “his” Alpe-Adria were not a mere transnational political project resulting from a utopian dream, but a concrete political vision. Between 1987 and 1989, Carlo Bernini was elected President of the Assembly of the Regions of Europe, at the peak of an action consistent with the ideals sustained during the legislature of the government of the region. And precisely the resolution approved in Bled, Slovenia, on October 16, 1987, laid the foundations for a greater institutionalization of transnational cooperation that now involved several areas still belonging to the socialist bloc, such as the western counties of Hungary (Poropat 1993, 20–31, 36).

4. Towards a More Assertive Italian Foreign Policy: From Osimo to the Quadrangular Initiative

The year 1975 marked a milestone in the post-war history of Italy. The Helsinki Final Act provided the necessary framework for a more sustained cooperation between the countries belonging to different political systems, and the long-awaited Osimo agreement between Italy and Tito’s Yugoslavia closed the territorial quarrel on the formerly Italian territories in Istria and Dalmatia. According to Massimo Bucarelli, after the 1975 Osimo treaty the Yugoslav Federation came to be regarded in Italy not only as a partner of growing importance for the Italian foreign policy and economic planning in South-Eastern Europe, but also a physical and ideological stronghold between Western-oriented Italy and the Soviet Bloc countries. Italy assumed the task to strengthen its cooperation with Belgrade and to defend the territorial integrity as well as the political independence of Yugoslavia from the attempts of Moscow to bring it back to Soviet orthodoxy (Bucarelli 2014, 263–280).

Yugoslavia was a key country to the Italian foreign policy: partly for the problems inherited from the Second World War (territorial issue over Istria and Dalmatia; the expulsion of 250,000 Italians, and the subsequent reciprocal claims of compensations for the human losses and the economic damages), partly for Yugoslavia’s privileged status of bridge between East and West. It must be noted, however, that Italy’s policy was far from linear. Different segments of the political sphere pursued antithetic goals through the assistance to reciprocally incompatible partners. After the death of Tito in 1980, the manifold crisis of the Yugoslav multiethnic federal state sparked growing concern in the West. Until 1991, the official line of the Italian foreign policy was total support to the preservation of the Yugoslav unitary state, followed by economic help through the “Adriatic” plan – a free-trade area to be created under Italian leadership including Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro on the model of Alpe-Adria but with the active involvement of the Italian Government and the Yugoslav authorities under the coordination of Belgrade. Especially from 1988, the Italian diplomacy actively supported economic reforms started by Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic to manage the financial crisis of the multinational state (D’Alessandri and Pitassio 2011,

207–292). However, the position to be taken over Yugoslavia divided the Italian elites at the post-1989 crossroads of world order. While until late 1991, the Italian Government did not change its official stance, starting from 1990 it became clear that maverick Italian President Francesco Cossiga, the Christian Democrat local leadership of Veneto (Carlo Bernini) and Friuli Venezia Giulia (Adriano Biasutti) – through the discrete but effective support of branches of the Italian intelligence community – had been openly pushing forward a policy of economic and political integration of the Italian “North-East” with the Adriatic and the Danube region. Their main partners were the Austrian Popular Party ÖVP – one of the most important sponsors of Slovene independence and, from 1991, the Slovene conservatives of Slovene Christian Democrat PM Lojze Peterle and its Alpine Christian Democratic Alliance (Sema 1994, 216–219).

Coming back to the 1970s, to compensate the north-east region of Friuli Venezia Giulia and especially the border city of Trieste for the definitive loss of these territories, the Italian governments started to implement an ambitious development plan aimed at boosting the capacity of the port of Trieste, that should have become more attractive for investors and contribute to the growth of the local economy. The renewed attention of Rome to the demands of this previously neglected border area was made necessary by the emergence from the early 1970s of antisystem radical movements in the north-eastern parts of Italy. The already mentioned Andreotti archive stores many relevant documents of the so called “questione di Trieste” emerging after 1972, when the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* gathered over 12% of the votes at both parliamentary and local elections. In the second half of the 1970s, the growing dissatisfaction of the local Italian population with the Osimo agreement stimulated the success of a local protest party, the *Lista per Trieste*, which became in fact a prototype model of the latter protest parties of the 1980s like the *Lega Lombarda* and the *Liga Veneta*. *Lista per Trieste* contested the party-system on the basis of a pragmatic, non-ideological approach that tried to overcome the traditional left-right cleavage. In his capacity as prime minister between 1976 and 1979, Giulio Andreotti devoted time and energy in getting information about the political and social crisis of the city through the local authorities (police headquarters, prefecture) and the Yugoslav consulate in Trieste. Andreotti played a key role in transforming a non-issue into a national-level priority of industrial policy.⁸

Among the factors that made possible the start of a more assertive Italian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe, one has to mention the election in 1976 of Bettino Craxi as general secretary of the Italian Socialist Party. The new party leader was strongly committed to the support to dissident movements in Eastern Europe, and stimulated an anti-communist turn in the Italian cultural policy when he personally sponsored in 1977 the so called “Biennale del Dissenso”, an international intellectual meeting held in Venice and dedicated to the violation of human and political rights in the Soviet Bloc (Ripa di Meana and Mecucci 2007). The more confrontational stance of Craxi and his entourage towards the Soviet Union and its satellites, entered into conflict with the business-as-usual (or to put it less bluntly: the “small steps forward”) stand of the Italian foreign policy adopted until that moment on the

⁸ AGA, Serie Trieste, especially buste 343 and 344 on governmental economic support to Trieste and the border region of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

initiative of Giulio Andreotti.⁹ Although Andreotti was well aware of the internal problems of the Soviet Bloc, and was deeply concerned for the repressive turn of the late Brezhnev era, he argued in accordance with the Italian diplomats in Moscow that no regime change should be stimulated in the Soviet Union and more generally in the socialist camp.¹⁰

On the contrary, the younger, talented, and unrestrained Craxi was betting from the late 1970s on the lethal character of the crisis of “really existing socialism” in Eastern Europe. Once he became prime minister in 1983, Craxi moved forward on the path of using foreign policy for domestic goals that had been inaugurated in the 1960s by Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro and then followed by Andreotti. Between 1983 and 1987, the Craxi Governments attempted to reframe this nexus by bringing back the idea of national interest. Foreign policy was then interpreted as a leadership problem, and the decision centre in the most important foreign policy issues was moved from the Farnesina to Palazzo Chigi. Under the leadership of Craxi, its anti-communist and “sovereignist” socialist party did not escape unprecedented conflict with the United States over the Middle East (the Sigonella affair of late 1985), while it used the appeal of the “Italian way of life” to promote Italian economic interest beyond the Iron Curtain. As we have seen in the previous paragraph, the north-eastern Italian regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and especially Veneto were able to intercept this window of opportunity and became active supporters and even actors of what Italian analyst Sandro Viola called once “small Italian *Ostpolitik*” (Viola 1983).

5. The Role of Hungary in the Italian *Ostpolitik*: The Road to Quadrangular Initiative

In the 1980s, Kádár’s Hungary played an outstanding role in the Western policy of attention towards the ongoing differentiation within, and collapse of the Soviet Bloc. The carefully constructed image of the deeply liberalised, almost “Western” *Goulashcommunism* coupled with the collapse (Poland) or the hopeless greyness and sadness (Czechoslovakia; German Democratic Republic) of the rest of the Soviet Bloc. Hungary became more attractive to the Italian politicians and even more importantly to those businessmen, who were seeking for new opportunities of expansion and regarded Central and Eastern Europe a primary target due to its geographic proximity. In his recent contributions on the Hungarian reception to Eurocommunism and the reformist tendencies within the international communist movement in the West and especially in Italy, István Simon has analysed how the ideological revision started by Enrico Berlinguer influenced the Hungarian understanding of the hopeless situation of the Soviet-type socialist regimes in the 1980s (Simon 2016).

The Craxi Government followed a line of distinguished attention towards Hungary, as demonstrated by the groundbreaking official visit paid in April 1984 to Budapest by Prime Minister Craxi and Foreign Minister Andreotti. Shortly before their trip, the Italian Ambassador

⁹ The Andreotti papers lavishly document the cautious, *realpolitiker* approach of the Christian Democrat statesman to the United States and the Soviet Bloc. See AGA, Serie Unione Sovietica, busta 704, 705, 706 (first trip to Moscow, 1972), busta 707 (1979 trip to Moscow), busta 708 (trips to Moscow in 1984 and 1985 as Minister of Foreign Affairs).

¹⁰ See on this AGA, Serie Unione Sovietica, busta 683 (dissenso anni Settanta-Ottanta); see also the diplomatic cables from the early 1980s included in busta 691 (foreign policy and Soviet Union).

in Budapest, Paolo Emilio Bassi communicated that there was palpable excitement for the arrival of such a high-level Italian delegation, and Hungary intended to give a “decisive push for bilateral cooperation”. According to Bassi, the visit represented for the Italian side “an almost unique opportunity to give greater impulse and cohesion to our policy towards this country”, and to establish a “somewhat special” relationship, even within the limits allowed by the global conditions. On the other hand, it would have been a natural way from the moment that Hungary itself, “orphan of Mitteleuropa”, felt culturally linked to the West, to which it was also projected by the need for economic relations and contacts of all kinds. For this reason, Bassi suggested to Andreotti to intensify the cultural and economic relations with Budapest in order to consider them “a useful political investment, more or less in the long term, in our specific interest and also of the West”. From a practical point of view, then, Bassi proposed to deepen the Italian–Hungarian relations in every possible sector, to finance and organise for the next year the Italian week in Budapest and, more thorny, to clarify the question of the Siberian gas pipeline whose Hungarian pipeline would supply Soviet gas to Italy and for which Rome maintained a silence of reflection. Although relations between the two countries had always been good and cordial, at the beginning of the 1980s, the mutual will and interest emerged on both sides to further increase them (Nicolosi 2013, 121–22). After the visit, the Italian communist functionary Antonio Rubbi wrote a detailed report on the talks for party leader Berlinguer in which he admitted that Craxi’s visit – the first of an Italian prime minister since the Second World War – could be considered fruitful and successful despite the international tensions due to the “Second Cold War” and the mutual nuclear threat. Kádár and Craxi paid attention in separating multilateral issues related to the bloc dynamics from the development of good working bilateral relations.¹¹

In the second half of the 1980s, the Italian political elite started to overcome its post-war self-restraint and claimed the right of affirming the middle-power status of the country, with a peculiar focus on the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe. Prime Minister Craxi promoted new interest groups and entrepreneurial circles to positions of power on the Eastern European market, which were unwilling to accept communist-controlled trade mediation. Reports sent from the Hungarian embassy in Rome to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Budapest show that, at this time, Italy’s dynamically developing small- and medium-sized industry, particularly that located in the north-eastern part of the country, showed particular interest in establishing operations in the Adriatic–Danube region. The various governments of Italy had long impeded the expansion of Italian commercial activity in this region due to their affiliation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and restrictions imposed by the CoCoM. However, some members of the Craxi Government supported the efforts of new economic interests to acquire positions on Eastern European markets. The protectionist policies associated with Italian Minister of Finance Rino Formica prevented Hungarian enterprises from importing semi-finished products from Italy, thus forcing them to continue to focus on the agricultural and livestock sectors of bilateral trade, the value of which rose from 500 million dollars in 1985 to 750 million dollars in 1988. Meanwhile, private Italian companies and financial institutions affiliated with various non-communist political forces,

¹¹ Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Roma. Archivio Partito Comunista Italiano, Fondo Enrico Berlinguer, Movimento Internazionale, fascicolo 182. Antonio Rubbi to Enrico Berlinguer. Informazione dell’ambasciatore ungherese sui colloqui fra Craxi-Andreotti e Kádár (13 aprile 1984).

such as Fiat, the Italian Commercial Bank (*Banca Commerciale Italiana*), the Sicilian Bank (*Banco di Sicilia*), General Insurance (*Assicurazioni Generali*), the ASSO companies, and Mescia, as well as state-owned companies such as Eni, IRI-Italstrade, and Montedison, signed cooperation contracts and founded joint ventures with Hungarian concerns. These initiatives, unlike their predecessors, operated using company credit for imports from Hungary.¹²

Kádár's Hungary represented an ideal bridge during the 1980s due to internal liberalisation and Western-like orientation prompted by a new generation of young pragmatic technocrats. Italy stably occupied the second and later the third position among the most important Western economic partners after West Germany and Austria. In 1986, the appointment of a skilled and open-minded Hungarian ambassador to Rome, György Misur, boosted the already started process of revitalising the economic and cultural contact that had been forcibly frozen for several decades. As Misur recalled in an interview, upon his departure to Rome he was given by the Hungarian party headquarters the precise instruction of "linking the two countries in every possible way".¹³ Over the following years, bilateral contacts intensified, as business trips and institutional contacts became more and more frequent. In 1987, the Hungarian National Bank had working relationships with more than 30 Italian credit institutions and on the cultural plan, eleven chairs of "Hungarian language and literature" operated in the Italian higher education network (just to make a comparison, as at 2017 only four Italian universities offer such an opportunity, and most enrolled staff is close to retirement age). In 1988, Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy travelled to Italy and first met with the key figure of the Italian diplomatic *Ostpolitik* of that period, Deputy Prime Minister and future Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis. Hungary's recent history had a special role in the Italian political debate: the contested heritage of the 1956 revolution and the reburial of Imre Nagy in June 1989 offered Craxi's Socialist Party a revenge over the declining communist party led by Achille Occhetto.

The most ambitious Italian plan to implement regional cooperation under Italian leadership was started in 1989 under the initiative of Gianni De Michelis and its north-eastern economic and political circle of associates. In 1989, the irreversibility of the change in Eastern Europe – first in Hungary and Poland, then in East Germany in Czechoslovakia – suddenly opened up unimaginable scenarios. The political transformations going on in the Soviet Bloc Eastern Europe were also the theme of a conference of the Aspen Institute, which took place in Castelporziano in June 1989. De Michelis, then president of Aspen Italia Foundation, proposed the idea of an international cooperation body that supported the transformations under way in the Eastern European countries and allowed Italy to guide the process. The project drafted during that behind-the-door meeting took shape in the following months, when De Michelis became foreign minister.

The central role played by De Michelis in the elaboration of an Italian policy for the Danubian area can be grasped with particular effectiveness in a 2010 in depth interview realised by historian Simona Nicolosi with the former Foreign Minister. According to De Michelis, at the end of the 1980s Central Europe represented a privileged carrier of economic

¹² Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest (MNL OL). MNL OL, XIX-J-1-j. Box 117, 1986 001868/3. Data regarding commodities trade turnover can be found in a memorandum sent from the Foreign Trade Ministry to the Council of Ministers, Chairman György Lázár in preparation for his October 15, 1986 trip to Italy.

¹³ György Misur. Personal communication to the author. Budapest, May 25, 2010.

expansion and political-cultural influence for Italy: “Immediately after becoming Foreign Minister, I made a report in September 1989 to the joint Foreign Commissions and to the Senate of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate. I tried to outline the guidelines the government and myself should try to follow in the governance of that part of Europe that was opening and which then led to the end of the Cold War. Historically speaking from the time of Rome, Italian foreign policy, for obvious reasons of geography, has always had three possible directions of development: North-West, North-East, and South. And I supported in this report that the high moments, in terms of Italy’s international role, were always those in which circumstances, the context allowed the simultaneous development of initiatives in the three directions. While Italy has had a more marginal international role when circumstances, the context made it difficult to develop initiatives in one or two of these directions. And I concluded by saying that the phase that ended, that of the Cold War, and that which opened up, and which still lasts today, was and should have been taken by Italy, its ruling class, its *pro tempore* government as a phase in which completely new opportunities were offered because suddenly two directions were opened that had been effectively blocked during the previous decades” (Nicolosi 2013, 146).

The Andreotti files used by Antonio Varsori in his path-breaking study on the Italian foreign policy at the end of the Cold War confirm that in September 1989 a confidential memorandum drafted by newly-appointed foreign minister De Michelis on the creation of a “quadrilateral” political initiative between Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia and Hungary reached the Italian Prime Minister’s Office (Presidenza Consiglio dei Ministri). On October 20, 1989 the Quadrangular Initiative was discussed and approved in a government meeting in Rome (Varsori 2013, 27).

Several weeks after, on 10 November 1989, the official and public ratification of that document in Budapest occurred under exceptional conditions, just a few hours after the opening of the Berlin Wall and the symbolic end of the Cold War, while on November 11–12 the delegation of the four involved countries held multilateral consultations at the level of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to mark the unicity of the event. As De Michelis puts it in the already mentioned interview: “The very first initiative that took Italy in those weeks led to the result that we signed the so-called Quadrangular Treaty in Budapest and signed it the day after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I remember that night, we arrived in Budapest the night before, I received the call from Genscher [Foreign Minister of West Germany, first, and of United Germany, then, from 1974 to 1992] who warned me that the Berlin Wall had fallen at that time and we were at the Italian Embassy in Budapest and the next day we had to sign this treaty and I remember that we spent most of the night arguing that the event was actually quite unique” (Nicolosi 2013, 147).

The Andreotti papers keep several diplomatic records concerning the early impact of the Quadrangular Initiative. Before the European Economic Community Paris summit on 18 November 1989, the Italian Foreign Ministry issued a position paper to explain Rome’s partners the content of the new diplomatic initiative. The main points of the confidential position paper were the following:

- De Michelis stressed the importance of this initiative to reduce the risk of dis-integrating processes in the region. The only possible answer to the evolutionary processes in the region should have been the acceleration of the push towards integration.

- De Michelis stressed the special role of Italy in this alliance in connection with its NATO and EEC membership.
- The Hungarian and the Yugoslav delegation placed much emphasis on the urgent need for financial support from the Western countries to consolidate the transition to democracy.
- All parties highlighted the need for a more sustained relationship between neighbouring regions with explicit reference to the Alps-Adriatic area.
- A summit meeting between the Prime Ministers and the Foreign Ministers was agreed to take place in Venice in the summer of 1990 during the Italian presidency of the EEC.
- Thematic meetings and roundtables on concrete issues would be held every six months in a different country. The first would be hosted by Hungary until June 1990.
- The involved countries detected four priority sectors of collaboration. Transport would be coordinated by Italy, environment by Austria, telecommunications by Yugoslavia, and culture and small and medium-size business by Hungary.¹⁴

6. Why the Italian Plans for Central Europe Remained Unfulfilled

In the crucial years 1989–1990, the Italian diplomacy backed two major initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe: the previously mentioned “Adriatic Initiative”, focused on environmental issues and infrastructure development like the Pan-European Corridor No. 5 through a motorway network and fast train connection to Hungary and Yugoslavia, and the already discussed “Quadrangular Initiative”, focused on economic and diplomatic cooperation among member states. According to Antonio Varsori, the vaguely conceived “Adriatic Initiative” was only aimed at calming down Belgrade and the Serbian leadership in Yugoslavia. From 1990 onwards, the attention of the Italian Government was diverted from Central and Eastern Europe to other crisis flashpoints (Iraq; the German reunification and the new European architecture; the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the final crisis of the Soviet Union). The Adriatic Cooperation disappeared from the diplomatic schedule in 1991, while the Yugoslav crisis started to escalate and the Italian stakeholders showed disagreement over how to handle a conflict that triggered the Italian border area.

On the contrary, the Quadrangular Initiative started as a great success and became “Pentagonal” in 1990 with the inclusion of Czechoslovakia, and “Exagonal” in 1991 with the adhesion of Poland. As De Michelis explicitly admitted in a later interview, the Italian plan was to become a regional player in the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe, taking the lead from Germany. The Quadrangular Initiative aimed at helping the Euro Atlantic integration of Central European post-communist countries; linking the Danube region with Northern Italy and the Alps; and last but not least favouring Italian investments and the Italian economic leadership in the region. The political structure followed the model of “soft power” or *soft institutionalisation* as defined by Joseph Nye (Nye 1990). In 1992, Quadrangolare became a “Central European Initiative” (CEI), with the inclusion of Slovenia,

¹⁴ AGA, Serie Europa, Busta 382. Vertici Europei 1989–1990. Telegramma da Segretario generale Ministero degli Esteri. Urgentissimo, Roma 16 novembre 1989. Oggetto: Collaborazione quadrangolare.

Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The initial focus on economy and infrastructures shifted towards political cooperation and *minority rights issues* (on Hungarian initiative). Its declared aim became the implementation of the third priority of the post-Cold War Italian foreign policy: NATO, Mediterranean area, and Central-Eastern Europe from the Adriatic Sea to the Carpathians. A former Italian diplomat called the CEI a “useful instrument of foreign policy” (Ferraris 2001). At that time, however, the appeal of this Italian diplomatic initiative had radically decreased, contributing to downgrade it to a not more than formal multilateral forum. What might have been the reasons for such a failure? Even if the systematic analysis of the evolution of the Italian political system and of the path of the European integration from 1989 to the early 2000s goes beyond the scope of this paper, I would like to close my contribution with some tentative answers and research hypotheses.

To start with, the Italian *Ostpolitik* formulated in the late 1980s very ambitious and comprehensive goals, and was left soon out of soft power and financial resources to be successfully implemented. After a promising start in 1989–1990, Italy failed to consistently put into effect its soft power in the region, and ultimately lost competitiveness to Germany even in those countries, like Hungary, where Italy enjoyed wide sympathy, and the Italian businessmen held strong position on the eve of the privatisation process. The Italian lack of capacity to manage and coordinate the economic *Drang nach Osten* of the early 1990s was coupled with Germany’s international and regional comeback after the successful reunification in 1990. Germany’s economic hegemony over Europe has been “unintended” and probably “unwanted”, as Wolfgang Streek has recently claimed, but it happened indeed and represents today a common burden for the European people (Streek 2015). Italy was the most affected country by this change of leadership originated from the 1992–1993 internal crisis and anti-corruption campaign. From a systemic perspective, this largely self-induced collapse has brought to a creative destruction but also left the country unprotected vis-à-vis the European competitors. From that moment on, Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe as a whole have almost disappeared from the map of the Italian geopolitical priorities. It is high time to start a pragmatic reset of this interrupted albeit essential relationship.

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Daniele Scalea

How Immigration is Changing Italian Demography: Statistics and Perspectives

1. Introduction

In terms of population, Europe is going through a phase of epochal change. This applies both to the age distribution and the ethnic composition, and will also have a profound influence on the social, cultural and political future of the continent. In Italy, the process is particularly evident, since the changes are coming on a time period relatively shorter than in other large European Countries. In this article, we will observe the macro-demographic dynamics at the global level and some of the projections on the effects for the next fifty years on Italy. We will use international and national official statistics and projections to obtain a long-period picture of the demographic future.

2. The Population Implosion of Europe, the Explosion of Africa

According to the United Nations data (United Nations 2017), the average age in Europe increased from 28.9 years in 1950 to 41.6 years in 2015. While the average age of the world has grown by 25%, that of the European Union grew by 44%. In 1950, the average age in North America was greater, but Europe has overtaken in the 1960s and today exceeds it of 11.8 years. In the middle of the last century, the average age of Europeans is 6.8 years more of that of Asians and 9 years more of that of Latin Americans; today it is respectively of 11.3 and of 12.4 years more. The difference is most impressive, however, with the average age of Africa. In fact, the latter remained almost constant: it was 19.3 years in 1950 and 19.4 in 2015, respectively (after reaching a minimum of 17.5 years in 1985) (United Nations 2017). It can be said that a continent of 20-years-old confronts today with one of 40-years-old, separated one another only by a narrow sea.

In 1950, Europe hosted the 21.7% of the world's population; in a little more than half a century, this percentage has fallen to 9.8% and for the mid-century will be 7.3%. From 1950 to 2050 the percentage of Asia will also drop (from 55.2% to 54.2%) and North America (from 6.8% to 4.5%), while in Oceania it will grow (from 0.5% to 0.6%), Latin America (from 6.7% to 8.1%) and especially Africa (from 9.1% to 25.5%). At the end of the century, Africa will have 40% of the world population, compared to 42.7% in Asia and 5.8% in Europe.

In the next century, Africa could return to be, for the first time since the Stone Age, the most densely populated continent by humans (United Nations 2017).

The cause of the population explosion in Africa mirrors the one of the decline of the European: in both continents, life expectancy is increasing rapidly, but while in Europe fertility is in decline since the 1960s, in Africa that happened only from the mid-1980s, starting from a much higher standard. Although the United Nations (hereinafter: the UN) projections foresee a progressive alignment between all the continents, fertility in Africa will remain still higher than in any other continent at the end of the 21st century. In these same years, we are going to experience the moment of maximum gap in fertility between Africa and Europe.

Can the black continent host this massive surplus of the population? According to the World Bank data (World Bank 2017), between 1961 and 2016 the population density in the world rose from 24 to 57 persons/km² of land, equal to + 133.3%. The growth of the density in the Middle East and North Africa was of 290% (from 10 to 39 p/km²), in Sub-Saharan Africa 340% (from 10 to 44 p/km²). In the same period of time, the growth of density in the European Union (hereinafter: the EU) was 23.5% (from 98 to 121 p/km²). The density of population in Africa is still below the world average, but is rapidly approaching it (it was little more than a fourth in 1961, and is almost eight-tenths today) (World Bank 2017).

From 1961 to 2015, the arable land per capita has decreased in the world from 0.37 to 0.20 hectares per person, a fall, therefore, of 45.9%. In the Middle East and North Africa the decline is of 71.1% (from 0.45 to 0.13 ha/p), in Sub-Saharan Africa of 61.4% (0.57 to 0.22 ha/p). The decline in the availability per capita of arable land is therefore more than proportional in Africa, unlike the European Union where it was just of 34.4% (from 0.32 to 0.21 ha/p). Referring to the current values, it is observed that the physiological density (i.e. the availability of arable land in relation to the population) in Sub-Saharan Africa is almost equal to that of the European Union, while that of the Middle East and North Africa is much lower (World Bank 2017).

The massive population growth is putting pressure on Africa, in spite of its indubitable progress in the economic field. For example, between 1961 and 2013 in Sub-Saharan Africa the FPI (FAO's Food Production Index) has more than tripled, but at the same time the population has nearly quadrupled. The GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa is nearly six-fold today than in 1960, and grew up in the first fifteen years of this century at a place consistently above the world average. However, its GDP per capita, which increased in absolute terms, in relative terms sees Africa languish still more backward than all the other continents. In 1960, the average income of an African (in current dollars) was one and a half that of the South Asian, nine-tenths of the East Asian, a third of the Latin American, one-seventh of the European and a twentieth of the North American. Today, an African earns an average of nine-tenths of the South Asian, a sixth of the Latin American, one-seventh of the East Asian, one-twentieth of the European, one-fortieth of the North American (Fao 2018).

This is the reason why the emigration from Africa, which only in 14% of the cases is linked to wars, conflicts and other situations of refugee, is increasingly orienting itself towards the outside of the continent: in 1960, 77.1% of migration was inter-African, while in 2013, this was 65.6% (in the presence, moreover, of a diaspora of 1.1 million immigrants of second generation, spreading between Australia, Europe and the USA) (Flahaux and

De Haas 2016; Knomad 2016). Since decades Europe has already established itself as the main destination for the extra-continental emigration from Africa.

3. Who is Coming to Europe?

In 2014, excluding the returns to their homeland by European citizens, the majority of immigration in the EU has focused on people coming from extra-EU countries: 1.6 million people, compared to 1.3 million citizens of EU member states which moved within the Union (Eurostat 2017a). In 2015, the immigration recorded in all the EU countries by individuals who are not EU citizens has reached 2,353,224 (Eurostat 2017b) (equal to 0.46% of the total EU population, 0.48% of EU citizens).¹⁵ In the same 2015, the extra-EU foreign residents in the EU amounted to 19,817,545, equal to 3.9% of the total population. This means that, assuming a constant share of immigrants from non-EU countries, in two hundred years they and their descendants will reach the current number of citizens of the Union. In reality, the amount of time it would be much lower considering the higher fertility of immigrants compared to that of European citizens.¹⁶ This is, however, a too large period to make reliable assumptions, but we want to give a meter of comparison.

As of January 1, 2016, 48.3% of foreign residents in Italy came from Africa, Asia, the Americas or Oceania (Istat 2017a). It is interesting to note as well that Africa is the only continent with more male than female immigrants. Only three years before, in 2013, a research on the nationalities with more than 50,000 residents in Italy counts just 38.97% of foreign residents coming from Africa, Asia and Central and South America (the figures for North America and Oceania were negligible); the same research observed that over the previous five years (2008–2013) the number of residence permits issued to non-EU citizens increased by 95.07% (Ministero degli Interni 2016). A further increase of 29.7% was recorded in the three years from 2013 to 2016 (Istat 2017b).

Let us now observe the identity of applicants for political asylum in Italy (Ministero degli Interni 2017). European applicants have had a couple of peaks in conjunction with the conflicts in disintegrating Yugoslavia, and then went decreasing also because of the enlargement of the EU and the subsequent freedom of movement for citizens of many more countries. Applicants from the Americas and Oceania remain in the order, which is negligible, of the hundreds. Those from Asia are on the rise in 2016 with 29,051 asylum seekers. The rise, which began in 2013, could make one believe that it is a peak quota, linked to the civil wars in Syria and Iraq: in reality, the asylum claims from these two countries were only 3,128, or a little more than 10% of those from Asians. The most is in fact represented by citizens of Pakistan and Bangladesh, which together amounted to 70% of the total number of requests from Asia. The lion's share of asylum seekers in Italy, however, it is for Africa, and this is true for now almost fifteen years, but with an exponential increase from 2013. Certainly, the civil war in Libya has a primary role in these flows: two peaks had already been recorded in 2008 and 2011, but the growth of arrivals from Africa had been temporarily contained

¹⁵ In the same year, 727,671 non-EU citizens acquired the citizenship of an EU country.

¹⁶ In 2011, the total fertility rate of foreign women in EU countries plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland was 2.11, in contrast to 1.52 of native women (Eurostat 2017c).

due to the help of Libyan authorities. From 2013 this is no longer the case and the asylum seekers from Africa have gone from 9,561 in 2012 to 88,487 in 2016 (71.6% of all asylum seekers). However, the number of Libyan applicants in Italy is minimum, a demonstration that the increase in the flow of Africans has its structural causes in that population explosion which we have already described. Nigerians, Gambians, Senegalese, Eritreans, Ivorians, Malians, Guineans, and Ghanaians are, overall, 86% of all African applicants, and 62% of all applicants in Italy. In particular, Nigerians alone account for 31% of all African applicants, and 22% of all applicants in Italy (Ministero degli Interni 2017).

Not surprisingly, Nigeria's population is rapidly increasing and the future trend is not expected to change. According to the UN (United Nations 2017) projections the current population of 182 million should arrive, at the end of the century, to almost 800 million, with a high variant of over a billion and a low variant well over half a billion (the range of the forecast at 95% is located between 350 million and 1.5 billion).

4. Demographic Forecasts for Italy

The total fertility rate in Italy declined from 2.7 children per woman in 1964 to 1.19 in 1995: since then it has risen to 1.5 (still well below the replacement rate), but this is recognised as an effect of immigrant women who are more fertile than indigenous ones (Istat 2017c; Noi Italia 2017). It is no coincidence that the maximum fertility is no longer found, as was an established tradition in Italy, in the South, but in the North and in Lazio, regions where the presence of immigrants is greatest. At the same time, life expectancy has increased from 69 years in 1960 to today's 83 years. The average age has thus risen to 45.1 years: with the exception of certain micro-states, only Japan and Germany have older populations (CIA 2017). It is in this context of denatality, prolonged survival and consequent aging, that Italy has been hit by an unprecedented migratory flow in size.

On 1 January 2017, according to Istat (2017d), 5,047,028 foreign nationals residing in Italy were present. This is a 25% increase compared to 2012 and about 270% compared to 2002. At the time foreigners were 2.38% of the population; fifteen years later they rose to 8.33%. To these we must add those who in the meantime have been naturalised.

Istat (2017e) certifies 474,017 naturalised persons between 2012 and 2015. Assuming that the percentage change between 2014 and 2015 is repeated between 2015 and 2016, for this last year we will have a further 244,033 naturalised persons, for a total of 718,050 between 2012 and 2016. Taking as a reference for our future projections 2065, and applying the natural growth rate of -2 per thousand inhabitants (average of the rates recorded between 2013 and 2017 by Istat [2017f] in Italy), this population of naturalised persons will be reduced to around 650,000 units. Between 2002 and 2011 another 260,000 naturalisations had occurred (Gallo and Palazzi 2005; Briguglio 2017): by applying the same method of calculation, we can assume for the year 2065 a population of about 230,000 units. In half a century surviving naturalised persons and their descendants (mostly second- or third-generation immigrants) will be about 880,000.

Let us go back to the little more than 5 million foreign residents. Always adopting a natural growth rate of -2 per thousand inhabitants, in 2065 we would have a population

of 4,562,513 individuals. An almost identical figure is also obtained by applying the fertility rates specific to the age pyramid of the current immigrant population in Italy.

A recent Istat (2017g) publication foresees, in the median scenario, that between now and 2065, 14.4 million people will immigrate to Italy, which net of the deaths will produce 2.5 million additional children in the same period of time, for a total of 16.9 million units.

We can now sum the three components (naturalised, resident and future immigrants) to reach a total of about 22,350,000 people. In 2065 they will represent the community of first and second generation (and, to a lesser extent, third) immigrants. Out of a total expected Italian population of 53.7 million, in 2065 immigrants in a broad sense (including the first successive generations) will be 41.6% of the inhabitants of Italy. If we consider that only in the 2001 census, the percentage of foreigners residing in Italy has officially exceeded the 1% threshold, we realise the extreme rapidity of the current process; there is no equal for this speed and magnitude in the history of our peninsula.

Also one of the peculiarities, until yesterday, of immigration in Italy has changed: the fragmentation of countries of origin, which preserved from what happened elsewhere in Europe, namely the formation of closed and homogeneous communities not integrated with the host society. In the 1970s, the top ten nationalities represented 12.8% of immigrants, while today their weight exceeds 64% of the total population (Bettin and Cela 2014; Istat 2017d).

5. Comparison with the European Situation

The dynamics underway in Italy can also be found in other Western European countries. In Great Britain national projections on ethnic composition have not been published since 1979. Professor David Coleman (2010) of the University of Oxford has sought to fill this gap, concluding that the complex of non-British ethnic groups, which accounted for 13% of the population in 2006, will reach 43% in 2056. By then, half of the children under 5 years old will be non-British, thus highlighting a growing trend, which will lead the British to no longer be the absolute majority around 2065 (Brown 2013). The forecast by Coleman is that in 2056 there will be 7.99 million non-British whites, 14.01 million Asians (mostly from the Indian subcontinent), 4.79 million blacks (Africans and Caribbean), that will represent respectively 10.2%, 17.9% and 6.1% of the total population.

In Germany, official statistics (Destatis 2017) report that, as of 2015, 17.1 million inhabitants had a “migrant background”: this indicates the first or second generation immigrants but also the Germans repatriated after 1949 and their children (those repatriated to East Germany are not computed). 31% of these people with migrant backgrounds are non-European; 45.4% are foreigners: the latter class does not include children of mixed couples or those of foreign parents if they have benefited from the *ius soli*. Consider that today almost 2.5 million naturalised citizens live in Germany. Altogether the inhabitants with migrant background reach 20.8% of the population. It is interesting to note that today in Germany, 36% of the children under the age of 5 are children of immigrants. According to a projection of the beginning of this century (Ulrich 2001), which to date has been confirmed in line with what happened in the meantime, foreigners in Germany will be about 20% of the population in 2050: this figure does not include neither the naturalised nor the second-generation immigrants beneficiaries of *ius soli*.

In France it is forbidden by law, since 1978, to compile demographic statistics concerning the ethnicity or religion of citizens. For example, in 2015 the Mayor of Béziers was fined for having calculated that 65% of the baptismal names of students enrolled in city schools was Muslim. We know that in 2013 there were 5,719,761 immigrants (including naturalised), 63% of whom came from outside the EU (Ined 2017). The demographer Michèle Tribalat (2017) estimates that first and second generation immigrants have already exceeded 20% of the population.

6. Conclusion

The proposed figures show a picture of rapid and profound demographic change in Europe and, in particular, in Italy. In the history of our continent, there are no comparable phenomena. Take for example the barbarian invasions that disfigured the Western Roman Empire and inaugurated a new hybrid, Romano-Germanic civilization, and marked an epochal turning point, from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: historians believe that the newcomers did not reach numerically 5% of the indigenous population; and their influx was distributed over a century. To find instead a profound impact on the genetics of Europe, we will probably have to go back to Indo-European migrations, whose duration is measured however in centuries when not millennia. The Europeans, in their turn, have in the past centuries fed massive migratory flows to the Americas, Australia and New Zealand, in large regions completely supplanting pre-existing populations, and everywhere imposing their own culture or at least hybrid forms.

Mass migratory movements and multicultural society are often no longer described as problematic: on the contrary, in the culture of Western Europe and North America, it is much more common to find stressed the moral value of hospitality, the economic value of masses of low-cost young workers, and the political one of diversity and of the contamination between cultures; the threat of a biological supplanting of the European populations is hardly taken into consideration, or the concern is stigmatised as a form of “racism”. Instead, in Eastern Europe and in Russia, more traditional discourses prevail, linked to the ideas of preservation of a peculiar and distinct European civilization, to acceptance of the host culture by immigrants, and to the biological survival of the indigenous lineages.

Whatever the chosen position, bare figures and statistical projections are often absent from the debate, as well as everything that is objective to serve in order to realistically frame the moment in which Europe is living. The aim set out in this discussion is precisely to provide the debate with elements that cannot be ignored, which are essential for developing an informed opinion.

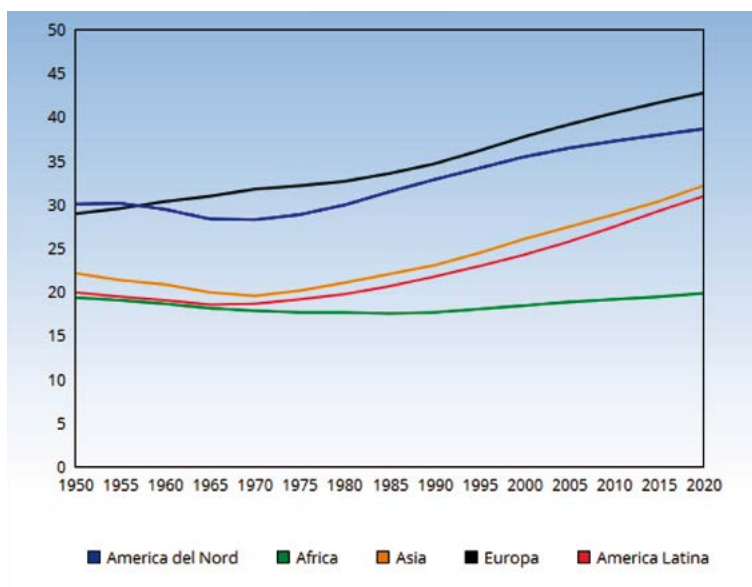


Figure 1.
Average age of the population

Source: United Nations 2017

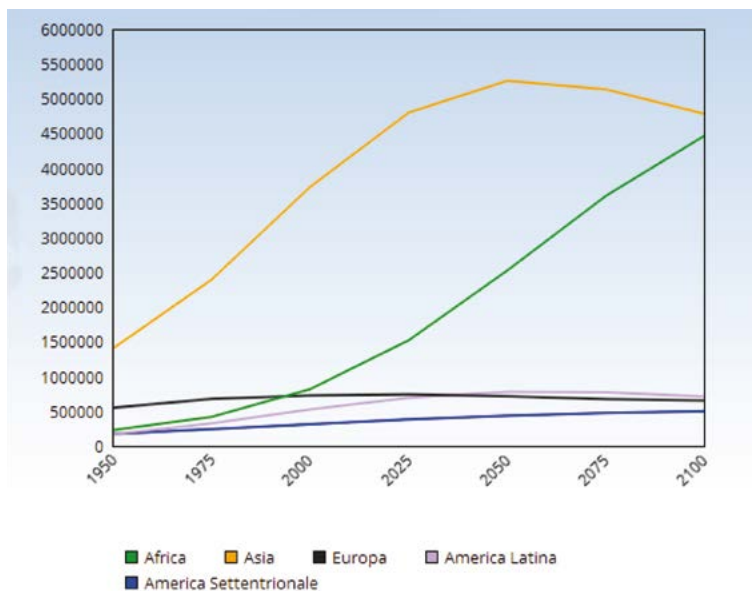


Figure 2.
Population according to continents

Source: United Nations 2017

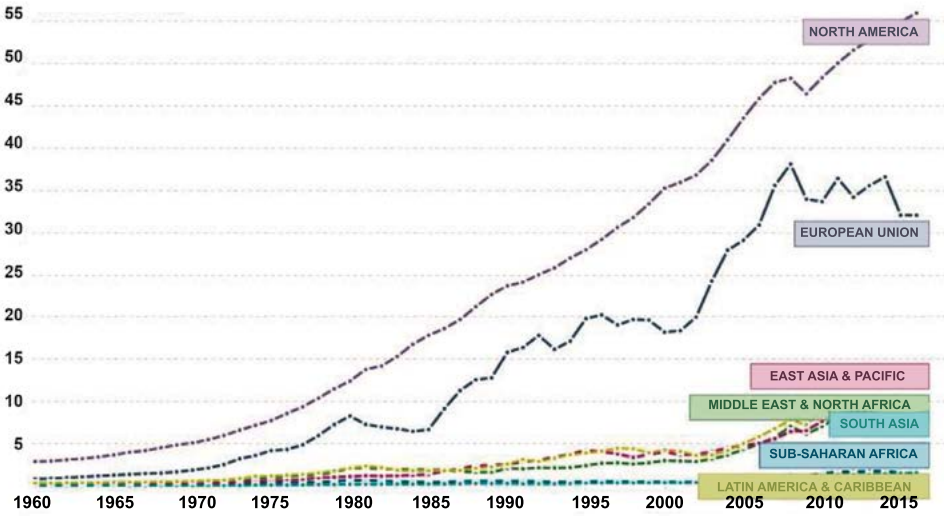


Figure 3.
GDP per capita according to continents

Source: World Bank 2017a

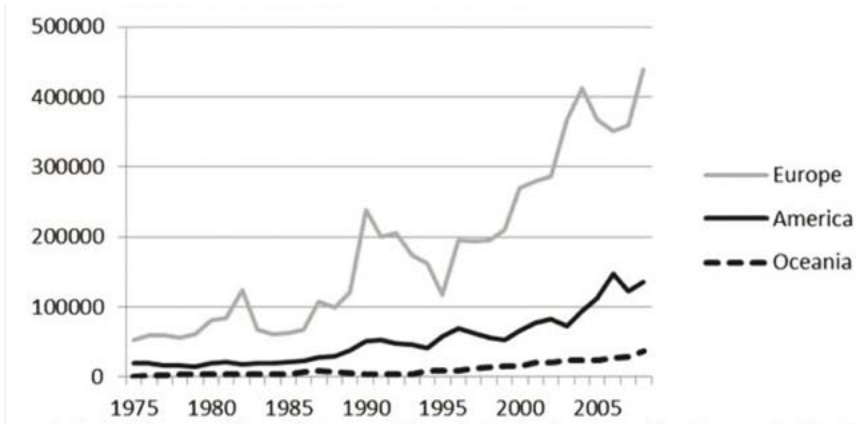


Figure 4.
African migration waves towards the OSCE countries

Source: World Bank 2017b

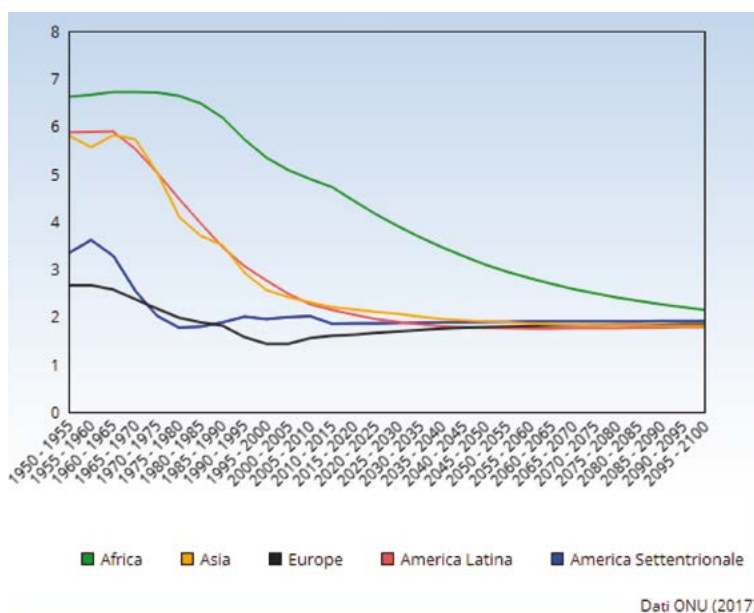


Figure 5.
Total fertility

Source: United Nations 2017

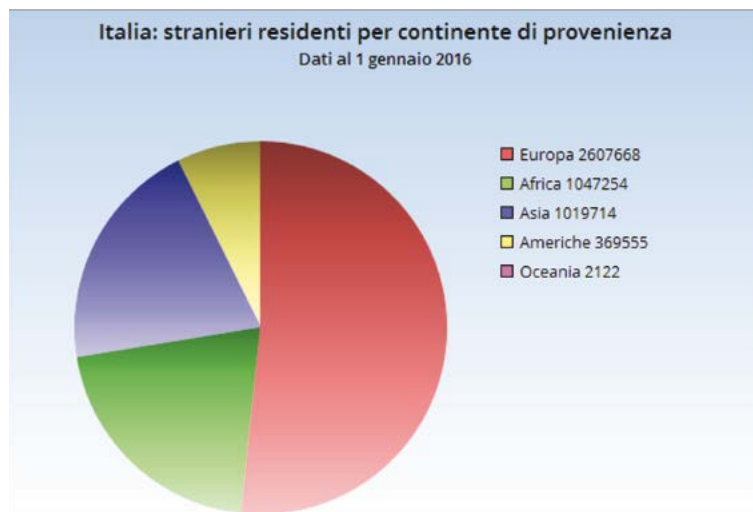


Figure 6.
Italy: foreign residents according to the country of origin

Source: Istat 2017a

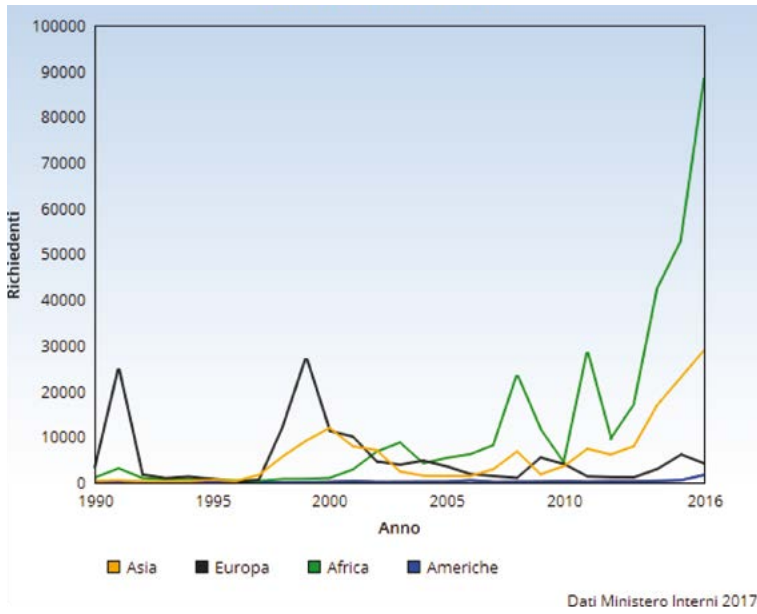


Figure 7.
Asylum seekers in Italy

Source: Ministero degli Interni 2017

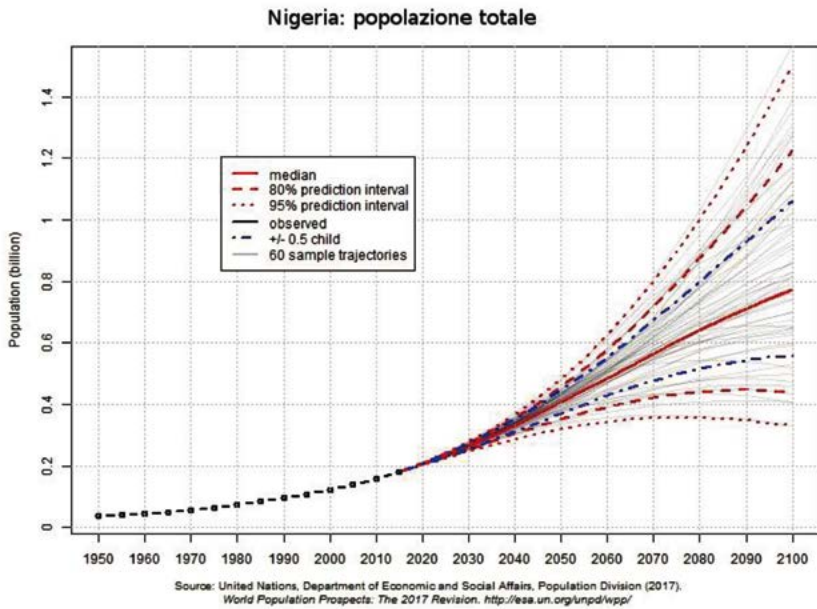


Figure 8.
Nigeria: total population

Source: United Nations 2017

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Fortunato Musella

The Italian Governors from the Constitutional Reform to the Crisis of Regionalism

1. Introduction

After the constitutional reform introduced in the Nineties, the Italian Regional Presidents were endowed with relevant powers and direct legitimacy, so becoming one of the main actors and symbols of the new majoritarian political phase Italy was trying to launch. Yet, almost two decades past, most of the promises and mirages of those reforms appear as unfulfilled, so that recently regional political systems have represented a source for political and identity crisis rather than a driver for political change. Indeed, the *governatore* is still facing three relevant (political, institutional and identity) challenges: the difficult relationship between his personal leadership and national presidents' ones; the tension between his monocratic power and other collegial bodies, such as regional councils; the unclear definition of regional competencies and role vis à vis central government, also due to the absence of a parliamentary chamber in defence of local autonomies. The paper aims at investigating consequences of such instability of the Italian constitutional system on the role and performance of Italian governors, and consequently on citizens' perceptions.

2. The Fragile Cornerstone of the Second Republic¹

They are the symbols and protagonists of a new political era, able to show potential, character, limits and contradictions of the Italian political system. Regional presidents have represented the highest office with direct democratic legitimacy in Italy over the last fifteen years. In the late 1990s, the constitutional reform enhanced the role of regional presidents who moved from being a *primus inter pares* to a *dominus* of governmental activities, achieving

¹ Paper presented at the *Identity Crisis in Italy International Workshop*, 30 June 2017, Budapest.

changes that were unlikely to occur a few years before.² The media have done the rest, by recognising regional leaders as fully responsible for the intermediate level of politics, and rising expectations among people. At the same time, presidents have gained a national visibility, and sometimes even an international notoriety, as they have become the engine of regional machines. Thus powered by both popular vote and a bipartisan federalist rhetoric, they have assumed the name that evokes, even if improperly, the federal reality of the United States of America: the regional presidents have become, *sic et simpliciter*, the governors.

Regional presidents have assured a source for political identity, tying their fate with that of Italian regionalism. Indeed, empirical data have showed that citizens' positive judgment on regional presidents was strongly associated with a degree of trust toward regional institutions in the mid-1990s (Vassallo 2001), so that it contributed to support the political project of the Italian Second Republic. The introduction of direct election of regional Presidents coincided with the collapse of the governing parties and a major transformation of the party system after Tangentopoli, so constituting both "a potential challenge of legitimacy for Italian parties but also an opportunity to use by their presidents [...] to strengthen new organizational structures at sub-national levels" (Wilson 2016, 67). By setting into motion processes that promise to influence the efficacy of regional governments, as well as the evolution of relations between the centre and the periphery, the reform was a way of searching a new identity for both Regions and the Italian State (Baldini and Vassallo 2001).

Yet, almost two decades past, most of the promises and mirages of that reform appear as unfulfilled, so that recently regional political systems have represented a source for political and identity crisis rather than a driver for political change. Less than two decades from their ascent to the apex of the regional political system, regional presidents are the main targets of criticisms, along with Italian regionalism. In fact, they represent the crisis of a country that seems to be halfway across a ford, hesitating between a new and different Republic and the bowing to the past. In a short amount of time, Italian governors have gone from the control room to the witness stand. Indeed, the higher are the expectations, the higher the responsibility for what have been done, or postponed. In such a scenario, regional presidents have been the crucial actors of the problematic change in regional political systems, which have remained in "transition" for too much time (Bull and Rhodes 1997; Morlino 2013).

² Constitutional Law n. 1/1999 introduced the direct election for Regional Presidents. More in particular, it created a form of government typical of Italian transition, as a mix composed by "a) direct election for the monocratic apex of executive; b) attribution of relevant power to the executive chief; c) contextual election of the president and members of regional council; d) assembly composition which reflect majoritarian principles of seats attribution; e) parliamentary power to dissolve the cabinet leading to new contextual electoral consultation for council and prime minister [...]" (Fusaro and Stroppiana 2001, 30; Ciarlo 2001). Subsequently, a reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution shifts competences from central government to regional level of government (Constitutional Law 3/2001).

3. The Rise of Personal Politics

Difficulties of Italian regionalism are not surprising when one considers the presidents' posture in the middle of three important and impetuous processes of transformation.

The first one is the development of personal politics. This phenomenon brings Italy and other contemporary democracies together, by denoting "the shift of political power resources and autonomy to the benefit of individual leaders and a concomitant loss of power and autonomy of collective actors like cabinets and political parties" (Poguntke and Webb 2005, 7). As regards democratic executives, we could talk of "presidentialization", an expression we use to describe the political reinforcement of the chief executives, direct relationship they have with citizens and full governmental responsibility. In fact, parliamentary systems are becoming more similar to the presidential ones in manifesting the centrality of leaders, despite the fact that constitutional charters may remain unchanged. With reference to political parties, Italy has represented the country of the "triumph of personalization" (Calise 2010; Pasquino 2013), with parties founded and dominated by single leaders (Musella and Webb 2015). From an electoral point of view, the decline of boundaries between parties and voters has led to a new procedure for the acquisition of electoral consensus, based on the personal appeal of candidates. Voters' loyalty no longer lies with the party but with the leaders, who have become more and more able to have control over parties and/or coalition thanks to their charisma.

Personal politics has been the keyword also in the Italian Regions, where new post-1999 constitutional rules have acted as a formal base for the presidential strengthening. Indeed, at the intermediate layer of government, regime change has appeared more abrupt than at the national one. Until the late 1980s, regional councils had the supremacy over both legislative processes and administrative activities, although this became, in the long run, the primary cause for lack of transparency and unsustainable confusion between institutional roles. Reflecting the constitutional idea of the centrality of legislature typical of the Italian First Republic, and as a consequence of the fully proportional electoral system, regional assemblies were able to control most of the policy lines defined at the regional level. Instead the regional president was not normally "able to achieve neither a strategic role in the decision making process at the regional level nor the political prestige of a national top politician" (Cotta and Verzichelli 2007, 183).

On the contrary, the council's prerogatives have been lost after the rise of demo-elected *governatori*, who for the first time were endowed with popular legitimacy. Focusing attention to the index of macro-personalisation, that is the ratio between preferences to the president and votes for parties/coalition, it was very significant in the 2000 election, the first consultation after the constitutional reform: indeed, the average score in Italian ordinary Regions was 1.05, with peaks in Lombardy (1.12), Campania (1.08) and Apulia (1.08). The average value of this index remained quite constant during the latest fifteen years (Table 1), with the Southern Regions presenting a lower score in comparison to the rest of the national territory. In the 2015 regional election, the index of macro-personalisation reached an average value of 1.08. In this way, data are very clear in showing that the results of regional elections are very dependent on the electoral performance of the candidates to the presidency.

Table 1.
Index of macro-personalisation

Areas	VII (2000)	VIII (2005)	IX (2010)	X (2015)
North	1.09	1.16	1.11	1.09
Centre	1.05	1.14	1.12	1.09
South	1.03	1.04	1.03	1.04
Italy	1.08	1.11	1.09	1.08

Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it>

Regional presidents and the executive also obtained new tools to govern. Indeed, an empirical analysis of deliberative process at the regional level let to figure out the rapid expansion of normative powers of regional executives. First, most of the regional charters tend to provide regional executives with regulatory powers over a wide range of subjects, while regional regulations were attributed to the councils before the constitutional reform. Moreover, from a quantitative point of view, regulations were also used much more frequently compared to the past, with 1-to-4 ratios with ordinary laws.³ Conversely, regional laws have been largely decreased in the period after the reform: the annual average of regional laws from about 1,070 norms adopted during the period 1980–2001 presented an average of 650 laws in the years 2002–2007. More importantly, Italian regional governments were able to control legislative activities in regional assemblies more effectively than in the previous period. Indeed, bills proposed by the executive branch showed high probability to gain success, in several Regions close to 90%⁴ (Musella 2009; Marangoni 2013). Rather of resulting from the assembly-executive interaction, regional legislation has appeared as a ratification of decisions taken by the regional executive and, more in particular by the President, somewhere else, despite the many attempts of balancing the form of government on the part of regional councils (Viceconte 2014). The governors became the crucial actors at the regional level, by concentrating power and prerogatives once attributed to the regional assembly. As some authors pointed out, the “roar of the governor” (Bin 2000) was heard in regional political systems that had been an institutional mess devoted to immobility or scarce transparency only a few years before.

However, there have been internal tensions within Italian Regions. The reform, leading to the regional leaders’ centrality, made the regional council more and more jealous of the ancient prerogatives, and transformed the legislative assembly in one of the major pitfalls for new governors. The formulation of the new regional charters could easily show such a process. Indeed, at a first stage the constitutional reform seemed to have given to every Region the power for defining a regional statute with a possibility of intervening in the form of government and the fundamental principles of regional organisation and functioning. Yet

³ See Istituto di Studi sui Sistemi regionali, Federali e sulle Autonomie “Massimo Severo Giannini” (ISSIRFA-CNR). *Il punto sulle regioni a 7 anni dalla riforma del titolo V della Costituzione*. Roma 2008.

⁴ Several statutes also allow for the formation of the so-called “commissioni redigenti” or “commissioni deliberanti” – parliament committees are able respectively to draw up or enact a law instead of the plenary session – and such provisions help the executive to increase its success rate in the ordinary legislative process. See Damonte 2003.

regional assemblies have interpreted this provision in a very extensive way, by attempting to subvert the presidential order indicated by the reformed Italian Constitution, so that the Constitutional Court has to clarify limits to statutory activity through several sentences (Olivetti 2012). Consequently, although in a first phase the regional statutes have been celebrated as a new subnational constitutionalism, the Italian Constitutional Court has stated that the articles concerning rights and principles contained in the regional charters are neither laws nor legal ‘norms’, but only cultural statements (378/2004). Moreover, according to the Court, regional legislatures do not have the necessary competencies to rule on fields such as ‘form of government’, ‘organisation’, or ‘[regional] business’, so that the attempt of regional assemblies to use regional charters as an occasion to rebalance between council and executive remained unsuccessful (Delledonne and Martinico 2009).

Executive–Council conflicts have also been emphasised by regional electoral rules, which established single preferential voting for councillors along with the direct election of the president. Especially in a historical phase when political parties discovered fragility in preserving their linkage with society, individual candidates have become responsible for acquisition of their personal consent, mainly based on door-to-door campaigns and exchange vote (Bolgherini and Musella 2007; Fabrizio and Feltrin 2007). In fact, during the last regional elections, preferences toward individual candidates have unequivocally increased in comparison to the period before the constitutional reform, especially in Southern Regions where more than three-quarters of the voters chose to write the candidate’s name on the voting ballot: a behaviour that witnesses the diffusion of direct and personal links between candidates and citizens on the territory.⁵ This has caused the emergence of local powerbrokers as a feature of regional politics especially in those Southern Regions where mechanisms of distributional and sometimes clientelist politics are more developed (Calise 2013). More generally speaking, preferential voting leads councilmen to have big difficulties in feeling part of the party program or coalition once elected, and consequently they often adopt measures to maintain electoral promises or gain public visibility.⁶ Thus, regional institutional systems have remained suspended between two circuits of personalization: the one that provides the President with personal power, the other one that favours the councillors’ individualism.

4. An Uncertain Regionalism

Governors are also the key actors of a second line of development of the Italian Second Republic: the process of regionalisation. Arrived in 2001, two years later the introduction of the direct election for regional presidents, the reform of Title V of the Constitution regulated relations between State and Regions, by overturning the criterion that distributes the competences between levels of government. While the Regions have had legislative power

⁵ Rates of preferential votes in Italian regional elections show an average value of 50.5 on the entire national territory, with an increase of about 20% from the 1990s. Southern regions provide an average value of 81.2 in 2015 against a score of 53.1 in 1995.

⁶ Empirical research also shows that “candidates retain a more stable and predictable support over time with respect to parties and that candidates and their system of interactions are able to predict the electoral results better than parties and their alliances” (Emanuele and Marino 2016).

in enumerated policy fields during the first fifty years of the Republic, the reform changed the way of defining the sphere of legislative powers so radically that now Regions have general legislative power, while the central government has legislative power in a limited list. This led to a different interpretation of the principle of sovereignty of the State, with a substantial modification of the role played by the bodies making up the Republic: “There is no longer any general law-making and administrative competence vested in the State, as the law-making powers of Regions have been expanded, on the one hand, and general regulatory and administrative powers have been conferred, in principle, on the bodies below the State level” (Marchetti 2010, 93; Pajno 2009).

Governors, already at the forefront of media attention, have acted as effective “facilitators” of such reform, as voters’ perceptions toward Regions substantially improves when a strong and autonomous leadership was established (Vassallo 2001). As Pitruzzella (2004, 1239) put it, “once regional presidents strengthened political authority with the introduction of a form of government with “immediate democracy”, the increase in the “rate of regionalism” was claimed by all Regions, in the North as well as in the South”. Then, the presidents, in turn, took advantage of the devolution process to gain autonomy in important areas of policy, from health to agriculture, from environment to economic development, although the transfer of powers to the Regions was often limited by difficulties, or unwillingness, in realising an effective transfer of expertise and financial resources from the centre to the Regions.

In addition to this, the new framework of State–Regions relationships have still provided significant ambiguities. The reformed constitutional text, after having listed a series of subjects reserved for the exclusive legislation of the central State, also indicated areas of concurrent legislation. Thus the distribution of legislative competencies appeared very problematic as very often “the central State and Regions have not implemented institutional remedies in order to cooperate in defining the area covered by the single subject” (Caravita 2013). The Constitutional Court was called to intervene in order to avoid incongruences and overlapping activities, very often with the consequence of producing a recentralisation of legislative competencies. Thus, albeit political debate often tended to underline the necessity of devolution, many scholars have stated that an evident *de facto* and *de jure* centralism was at work (Mangiameli 2014).

It is no accident that in the aftermath of the reform, there has been the highest number of jurisdictional disputes between State and Regions in the republican history (De Siervo 2007). In fact, “in 2000 the appeals brought by the State against regional laws and from the Regions against national laws have been 25, with the entry into force of the reform there has been an immediate increase in the number with 95 appeals in 2002 and 98 in 2003 up to 115 in 2004” (Ronchetti 2008). According to one of the main scholars of administrative law and father of the decentralisation policy in Italy, Franco Bassanini, the strong increase of disputes has denoted the institutional conflict since “Regions were claiming powers and financial resources as assigned to them by the reform of Title V, while the State was refusing to hand them over in absence of adequate implementing measures” (Bassanini 2012, 246).

Moreover, we should consider the difficulty in managing and coordinating different Regions, also due to the absence of a parliamentary second chamber that would act as

a bridge between national and regional layers.⁷ Constitutional revision made possible to set competencies on the part of single Regions, so giving way to “differentiation” between Italian Regions.⁸ In fact, some Regions have explored the opportunities given by the new constitutional arrangement, by asking for the attribution of new exclusive competences, from the environmental protection to the communication order, from infrastructure to education: an orientation that makes the Italian experience closer to the Spanish asymmetrical model. For instance, it is worth noting – especially for its symbolic impact – the request for greater autonomy in the field of “foreign power of the Region” (Veneto) and “cross-border cooperation” (Lombardy), along with the application of more simplification in procedures of agreement with neighbouring States. Nevertheless, the more Italian Regions are different from each other, the more complex becomes the aim of creating a consistent framework of relations between the central government and intermediate level.

In addition to this, a knot to untie concerns of the “financial question” too: the one that Costantino Mortati rightly called the cornerstone of the autonomy building. Although the 2001 constitutional reform was potentially quite radical (Keating 2009), adequate fiscal provisions have not followed some substantial devolution in specific policy fields, such as health and social services. Empirical analysis of the financial autonomy of Italian Regions indicate an unsatisfactory level of federal development in Italy, showing that until 2005 Regions are responsible for less than one third of the public spending (Buglione and Marè 2008, 20; Baldi 2010). Thus, regional presidents are supposed to act as principal decision makers in several policy areas, where they have to bargain with the centre to achieve autonomy and resources. The image of a “hybrid State” – suspended between the strengthening of regional internal bodies and a process of tendential recentralisation – help to express that the equilibrium between functions and competencies of different layers of governments in Italy is still far to be reached.⁹

5. In the Shadow of Personal Parties

It is precisely the relationship between the centre and the Regions that lead us to consider the third process of transformation: the evolution of political parties.

If it is true that our democracy is becoming unrecognisable (Mair 2013; Calise 2016), party organisational changes mark, first of all, the distance from the past. In both new and old parties, leaders have acquired a leading role, often thanks to mechanisms that ensure a direct legitimacy (Musella and Webb 2015; Musella 2017). Party leaders have a stronger

⁷ The reform of the Italian symmetrical bicameralism was the object of the constitutional referendum held in November 2016, which rejected the proposals coming from the Renzi Government as an attempt to change roles and functions of the Senate.

⁸ On the problem of the combination between the devolution process and regional differentiation see the special issue of *Le istituzioni del federalismo* 29.1 (2008), entirely dedicated to the reformed Article 116 of the Italian Constitution. The reference is at the laws adopted by the Regional Council of Lombardy (Delibera 3 April 2007, n. 367) and by the Regional Council of Veneto (Delibera 18 December 2007, n. 98).

⁹ The far-reaching constitutional reform proposed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and rejected by referendum in fall 2016 also concerned this point, by severely curtailing the legislative autonomy of the ordinary regions and abolishing the principle of the concurrent legislative powers.

decision-making power and prerogatives – from the nomination of party members to the choice of candidates, up to say the last word on alliances and policy process. The experience of personal parties demonstrates the full “verticalisation” of powers. For instance, *Forza Italia* is the first experiment in Europe of the direct translation of a commercial enterprise from the world of market to the world of politics, so constituting a party completely depending on its leader to survive (Calise 2010 [2000]).

However, the new party organisation loses its ability to penetrate local territories by acting as a mediator between centre and periphery, according to a function that had represented one of the main features of traditional parties. On the contrary, new parties are no longer able to control flows of communication and electoral processes at the regional and local level as in the past (from the candidate’s selection to their election). This mirrors a cross-national tendency showing that political parties have a low number of local organisation units in Western democracies, with an average of one basic unit for parliamentary seats in countries such as Canada, Denmark, France, Israel and the UK. Italy may be included in the list of countries where political parties are not present across the entire territory generally, by representing a very extreme case with an average of 0.14 units for constituency (Webb and Keith 2017, 46).

As a result, contemporary political parties can no longer rely on the monopoly on political careers that instead represented the most powerful bridge between national and local sphere. Until recent times, in Italy as well as in other European parliamentary democracies, candidate selection represented one of the most significant and ancient prerogatives of party oligarchies, which were able to monopolise nominations for all layers of government. The traditional path of professional politicians followed a gradual advancement from local institutions to a prestigious position in institutional organisations or within the party. More in particular, during the First Republic, regional presidency has been a springboard toward national roles and this process have granted parties control over regional political systems. On the contrary, due to the weakening of party as organisation, new chances are now offered to those who may establish a direct and personal contact with the electorate.

Indeed, traditional political careers pattern has changed in the last few years. Presidential candidates may introduce themselves as outsiders, new men or, at least, autonomous from national leaders throughout the electoral campaign. In fact, every affirmation of remoteness from the traditional politics may give back good electoral results because of the widespread distrust toward the representative system. Thus while most of regional presidents’ career paths show previous party and/or institutional experience, presidents with no political experience at all moved from zero during the Italian First Republic to more than 10% after 1995 (Grimaldi and Vercesi 2016).

Moreover, focusing attention on the apex of regional governments, we can notice bidirectional mobility among different governmental levels. Very often expert parliamentarians or politicians with a long and honoured career within the party find unexpected political autonomy in regional governments. Indeed, personalisation of politics stimulates opportunistic attitudes of regional leaders, thus producing an incentive towards positions with a considerable concentration of political powers in their hands and a decent financial allowance (Lo Russo and Verzichelli 2010). As we can notice in Table 2, if in the period 1990–2000 regional presidents have largely come from an institutional position at the regional level (88.8%), in the latest fifteen years, the number of those heads of regional governments coming from

the national layer have increased: a quarter of presidents shows a previous experience as member of Parliament or Minister. At the same time, the fact of being regional president remains a good prerequisite for a political career at the national level.

Table 2.
Pre-presidency and post-presidency from 1990 to 2015

	Pre-presidency 1990–2000	Pre-presidency 2000–2015	Post-presidency 1990–2000	Post-presidency 2000–2015
Local	3 (5.8%)	8 (17)		5 (10.7%)
Regional	42 (80.8%)	19 (40.4%)	14 (26.9%)	19 (40.4%)
MP	1 (1.9%)	7 (14.9%)	10 (19.2%)	7 (14.9%)
National executive	1 (1.9%)	5 (10.7%)	2 (3.9%)	5 (10.7%)
Supra-national		3 (6.4%)	2 (3.9%)	3 (6.4%)
Private sector	1 (1.9%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (2.1%)
Other	4 (7.7%)	4 (8.5%)	23 (44.2%)	4 (8.5%)

Source: Italian Ministry of the Interior, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it>

It is also useful to recall that the regional executive has become the president's team in recent years: the governor could, for the first time, appoint it directly, and choose (and prefer) members of regional governments who are not also members of regional councils. This process represents a shift from what we have seen in the past. In fact, executive branches had depended on the legislative one, and this dependency was assured by the fact that all members of regional governments also retained a place in the assembly. After the constitutional reform, the number of *assessori*¹⁰ who belong to the regional council have decreased. Thus, the external regional ministers grew rapidly since the 2000 election in Italian ordinary regions, so representing more than 55% after the latest regional election. As in Table 3, while after the first election with the direct election of the president the percentage of external ministers in the regional executive was 36%, an increase of twenty points in the latest twenty years may be pointed out.

Moreover, very often regional presidents have preferred a stronger presence of “pure” assessors than in the past, that is civil society exponents without partisan affiliation. Thus, by recruiting regional ministers not affiliated to political parties at all, they have underlined their sole power to create the governmental team in absolute autonomy from party oligarchy and reflecting an anti-politics spirit in the current political phase. For instance, the executive of the Region Campania in 2000, led by Antonio Bassolino, was entirely, and deliberately, composed of experts, probably as a result of “the presidential desire to emancipate from the party that would have influenced decision-making” (Musella 2009, 219).

¹⁰ Assessori are members of an executive body, appointed by the Regional President and serving on specific aspects of regional affairs.

Table 3.
Number and percentage of external “assessori”

Region	2000	%	2005	%	2010	%	2015	%
Abruzzo	2	20	5	50	2	20	1	17
Basilicata	1	17	2	33	3	30	4	100
Calabria	5	50	2	20	6	46	7	100
Campania	12	100	12	100	11	92	8	100
Emilia-Romagna	7	64	8	67	12	100	8	80
Lazio	2	17	6	43	13	87	10	100
Liguria	3	37	9	75	6	50	1	14
Lombardia	5	37	6	40	5	31	11	79
Marche	2	25	6	60	3	30	1	17
Molise	3	50	3	50	5	55	1	25
Piemonte	1	9	14	100	9	75	3	27
Puglia	0	0	6	43	7	50	2	20
Toscana	8	67	11	85	8	89	5	62
Umbria	3	37	0	0	2	29	2	40
Veneto	2	17	2	17	1	8	2	20
Total	56	36%	92	55%	93	55%	66	56%

Source: Baldi 2016, based on the data of the Italian Ministry of the Interior

The new political opportunity structure has often created a fully-fledged party organisation at the regional level, exacerbating a more or less open opposition to the national party, to which the president himself belongs. The rise of national personal parties brings about the birth of a significant number of local and regional party structures, which may show a considerable level of autonomy from the party in the central office and an independent relationship with a dense network of local actors (Staiano 2014; Musella 2014b).

This trend has generated organisational tension since personal or personalised national parties are unable to adopt a federal structure that could enhance regional or local components (Calossi and Pizzimenti 2015). On the contrary, national leaders interpreted the rise of strong regional leaders as a challenge rather than an opportunity, as the latter have both local roots and personal consent.

6. Conclusions

After more than fifteen years since the introduction of the governor’s direct election, regional presidents appear as one of the main actors of both Italian new regionalism and its failure. At the end of the 1990s, they became a crucial source for collective identity in the Italian Second Republic, as beneficiaries of a good level of public trust. They also became important political figures “not only in their own Regions but also in the national political arena, often competing successfully with national politicians, and able to aspire to emerge

from the regional level for important national posts, as indeed has occurred in various cases” (Desideri 2013, 48).

Nevertheless, at least three areas may be highlighted in order to show relevant contradictions in ‘the presidential turn’ of Italian Regions (Musella 2009). On the one hand, a shift of power from regional assembly to the monocratic actor has occurred, with the regional presidents acquiring a high level of direct legitimacy, besides relevant prerogatives and instruments. On the other hand, regional councils have tried to challenge the presidential asset at the regional level, by searching to restore to old regional form of government. Consequently, the formulation of new regional charters have been often interpreted as a way to come back to the past.

Second, a new distribution of competencies between layers of government has been introduced by the reform of the second part of the Italian Constitution, so that presidents have enlarged powers and political legitimacy in a significant way. Yet the increasing number of juridical disputes between central government and regional level has shown the attempt of recentralising legislative competences. Moreover, although the reform of Title V of the Constitution has appeared as a way to strengthen the role of Regions in a significant number of policy domains, the lack of adequate fiscal provision has subverted some of the most explicit aims of the reformers.

Finally, while in the reformed constitutional setting the regional president is one of the most relevant expression of personal politics, the growing emphasis on his figure enters in open contradiction with the role played by national leaders. Indeed, a process of presidentialisation has occurred also at the political centre, despite the absence of any change in the constitutional charter, so that, according to a trend identified also in other democracies, centralising personalisation develops along with a decentralising one: thus two routes have been followed, the first implying the concentration of power in the hands of a few leaders, while the latter indicating a diffusion of group power among individual politicians (Balmas et al. 2012; Musella 2014a).

Particular attention has to be paid to the structure of new political parties, which, while emphasising the party head, tend also to weaken their capacity of bringing together centre and periphery in a single political system. The idea of an “iron law of leadership” (Musella 2017) may be introduced in order to emphasise the growing tendency of political parties to change internal rules and organisation towards a more leader-centric asset in Italy. Yet in spite of the recent strengthening of regional presidents, new forms of personal parties have not introduced an organisation structure that would comply with the Italian regionalisation.

As a result, in many cases, regional presidents have created a sort of regional personal party fully dependent on its head. Obviously, different models of regional leadership could vary along with territorial peculiarities and personal skills. *Fortuna e virtù*, as we could say five centuries after the Prince. With the unforeseen result, however, that Italy is losing the opportunity to balance unitary identity and regional processes.

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Paolo Soave

The Middle Power at the Geopolitical Crossroads: Italy and the Dilemma of Foreign Policy

A Historical Perspective

1. Introduction

Since its national unification in 1861, Italy has been representing a case study for its controversial international condition. For most part of its contemporary history, Italy played the role of a middle-power, that implies a continuous support by some allies in order to achieve the objectives of foreign policy. The national diplomacy always worked at best in keeping the country on the side of the most influencing powers, but sometimes the difficulties in doing so appeared almost unsolvable. In the present international scenario, Italy is experiencing a new condition: as it has to face some new global threats, there is no longer strong and direct support coming from allies, at least not so sure as in the Cold War era. Once again the reasons of geopolitics and the complexity of the national political system are seriously testing the capacity of Italy to preserve some international relevance.

2. Italy, a Dual Geopolitical Country

Italian history seems to have been deeply influenced by geography. The physical factors largely affected the development of the human and social behaviour, causing long-lasting diversities across the various regions of the country. To some extent, the historical course of Italy has something to do with geopolitics. According to the so called classic geopolitics, which was founded in Germany by Ratzel, there is a kind of physical determinism in addressing the political life of a national community (Diamond 1998, 13–32, 193–402). In general terms, a country surrounded by other powers has to struggle for its space and for some chances of development. This view was adaptable to Germany since the second half of the 19th century.¹ Many decades before Hitler, Bismarck led the reunification process pursuing a geopolitical view of Europe, basically a space organised by the Germans. Some years after, the Kaiser Wilhelm II turned this process in *Matchpolitik*, or power politics, that basically implied a removal of the old Bismarck diplomacy aimed at keeping isolated the

¹ As is well known, some concepts and basic ideas of the geopolitics developed by Karl Haushofer were adopted and exploited by the Nazi ideology.

opponents of Germany, especially France. As a consequence, the geopolitical hegemony of Germany over the European continent seemed less acceptable, and this contributed to the polarisation of the military alliances that finally erupted in the First World War. In general terms, the war was the answer to the unbalanced German hegemony, an issue that later oriented the Paris Peace Conference and the need for a new world order.²

The fact that a strong cultural opposition to this European tradition came from another part of the world was not the case. While Europe was facing the consequences of the continental geopolitics, implying the search of hegemony over the lands, in North America a different geopolitical approach was shaping the rise of a new power. Bordering with the seas was a controversial geopolitical condition: on the one hand, it gave an absolute security, but on the other hand, it could mean a weak perspective in terms of economic development. Despite the fact that some historiography exploited the real meaning of the Monroe doctrine and supported the thesis of the American isolationism, one could argue that free and widespread trade was the main reason in claiming for independence, also supporting a strong international mercantile vocation pursued in peacetime, as well as through the wars (Mahan 1895, 25–89).

To some extent, Italy was a dual geopolitical actor. If the period between the second half of the 1800s and the first part of the 1900s was the golden age of geopolitics, Italy was not an exception. A simple glance at the national geography makes clear the dual geopolitical condition of Italy, at the same time a continental and an insular country, between Europe and the Mediterranean.³ For many years the cultural diversity was a good reason for the romantic journey of many Europeans in Italy, but it turned to a serious political problem after the process of national unification. Historiography largely agrees that the so called *Risorgimento*, combining the heroism of Giuseppe Garibaldi and his *Mille* (one thousand volunteers) and the diplomatic action led by Cavour, was basically the conquest by the most advanced part, the Kingdom of Piedmont, to the rest of the country.⁴ After the military reunification, the State building process had to face many regional identities, administrative systems and social diversities. The way inspired by Cavour to shape a modern and European State was only in part successful, as well as the building of a national and common identity was not able to remove the old regionalism.⁵ The national leading class, according to its origins and cultures, contributed to strengthening the diversities rather than removing them. The most relevant historiographic findings in contemporary Italy concern the vicious circle between the geographic conditions of the country and the cultural diversities in hindering the process of a deep unification. Since 1861, it was clear that while the Northern part of Italy was well developed and strictly tied with Europe, fully involved in the diplomatic,

² According to President Wilson, defeating the German militarism and the geopolitical culture so widespread in Europe were good reasons to force the American people to war, despite the promise to keep the Americans out of war in his campaign for a second mandate to the White House. See Tucker 2007, 188–214.

³ Despite some political conflicting views, the scientific debate on the geopolitical conditions of Italy definitely agreed on the dual identity. See De Michelis and Sacconi 2010; Attinà 1998; Giglio and Soave 1996; Cremasco 1996; Folli 1985, 51–69.

⁴ Among the rich literature on the *Risorgimento* and the national unification see Duggan 2008; Cammarano 1999; Pécout 1997; Carocci 1993; Scirocco 1990, Spadolini 1990; Romanelli 1983; Ragionieri 1982; Salvatorelli 1957.

⁵ On the relation between national identity and diversity see Graziano 2010; Galli della Loggia 1998; Galasso 1994.

political and economic continental system, the peninsula, most part of Italy, was only Mediterranean and deeply affected by the different cultures of the basin. After the national unification, the Kingdom of Italy basically remained a way among Europe, North Africa and Middle East, without the emerging of a new, clear geopolitical direction or function. To some extent, it represented an overlap of continental and naval geopolitical theories, and a very interesting case study for scholars. The old romantic approach to Italy by the European political leaders, at best represented by the famous phrase of Metternich, who said that Italy was only a geographic expression, was replaced by the perception of a weak State, unable to take position with the most influencing European powers. In this essay the focus will be held on the difficulties in a consistent course of foreign policy, but it must be kept in mind that the lack of effective political leadership and the weakness in the institutional system were some of the most affecting causes for the Italian international troubles. Despite that the geographic determinism is no longer acceptable as a scientific approach and with time human behaviour is considered more relevant than the physical conditions in shaping the doom of the countries, the course of the Italian foreign policy along the last two centuries gives clear evidence of the difficulties in keeping together in the same alliance the continental and the Mediterranean directions.⁶ Italian foreign policy had always some troubles in acting consistently with the alliances and finally a bad international reputation occurred. However, for Italy the problem with the alliances was not only a question of reliability but also a matter of geopolitics. In peacetime, diplomacy was able to overturn the geopolitical complexity in a point of strength and pursued the role of “bridge” among different powers and cultures, a way to attribute to Italy a pivotal position. In wartime Italy had more troubles and was forced to take position and try to maintain it.⁷ A brief historical excursus will be helpful in showing some continuities from the unification until the present days.

3. The First Case Study: The First World War

Although the Kingdom of Italy was a typical latecomer, its ruling class was quite ambitious: since 1861, foreign policy was inspired by two main objectives: to put a positive end to the *Risorgimento* through the achievement of the so called *terre irredente*, in part inhabited by Italians or considered so for cultural heritage and controlled by Austria–Hungary, and a colonial expansionism, aimed at giving Italy the same international high profile of the most important powers (Monzali 2017, 59–101). The first objective was a question of national integrity and of security, mostly dependant by the Northern border with Vienna. In broader terms, it was a matter of relations with the other European powers, a continental issue. The second objective was related to the Mediterranean direction of the Italian foreign policy. Although soon after the national unification, Italy had achieved its first colonies in the Horn of Africa, it was in the Southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea that the presence of the

⁶ Geopolitics had some relevance in the Italian political debate mostly in the fascist era, when the geographers Ernesto Massi and Giorgio Roletto founded the journal *Geopolitica*. More recently, *Limes, Rivista italiana di geopolitica*, directed by Lucio Caracciolo, has relaunched the cultural interest in geopolitics.

⁷ For some references on the history of the Italian foreign policy, Goglia et al. 2006; Saiu 2005; De Leonardis 2003; Tosi 2003; Pastorelli 1998; Varsori 1998; Ferraris 1996; Gaja 1995; Pastorelli 1993; Romano 1993; Varsori 1993; Bosworth and Romano 1991; Cacace 1986; Di Nolfo 1986; Chabod 1965.

Italian flag was urged by the competition with the other powers, which were splitting the area despite the widespread presence of the Italian communities and some strong economic interests, especially in Tunisia, Tripolitania and Egypt. For a middle power, trying to combine these two objectives and the opposing geopolitical directions in the same course of foreign policy was immediately quite complicated. The best source that Italy invested in this effort was historically its diplomacy (Serra 1984, 33–161). As Italy invented modern diplomacy in the 15th century (Nicolson 1963, 20–25, 96–116), it gave evidence to be able to pursue at the same time different objectives in peacetime, even if it caused some ambiguity and loss of reliability.⁸

The first case study on Italy was the participation in the Triple Alliance. Italy entered it as founder in 1882 with Germany and Austria–Hungary (Serra 1990, 42–116). It was a paradoxical example of a weak and isolated power that was compelled to deal with its worst enemy, Vienna. The war was not a chance, and because of the troubled relations with France, the Italian diplomacy opted to make the Northern border stable by a treaty. In doing so, Rome achieved the best in terms of national security and diplomatic connection with Europe. However, despite the diplomatic efforts, the Triple Alliance could not satisfy the colonial ambitions of Italy. Soon after the signature of the first treaty, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, made a stunning statement saying that in no circumstances the new alliance could be considered against Great Britain, which was mostly influencing the Mediterranean basin (Barié et al. 2004, 79). Trying to balance the continental direction of the foreign policy, the Italian diplomats continued to deal with their French and British colleagues in order to get the keys for some Mediterranean colonial initiative, especially in Tripolitania, that eventually happened in 1911. One of the most prominent Italian Ministers of Foreign Affairs in this period was Visconti Venosta, the man who gave to the course of the Italian foreign policy the famous *colpo di timone* (change of direction), in order to improve the relations with the Mediterranean powers and prepare the diplomatic ground for the Italian colonial expansionism. Venosta found in the French Ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère, the best partner in dealing this change, which permitted to hope in a future course of the Italian foreign policy no longer hostile to France and maybe out of the Triple Alliance (Serra 1950, 47–100). With time, this dual behaviour was not fully compatible with the Triple Alliance, although this was renewed many times. Someone in Berlin said that Italy was like a lady dancing with too many gentlemen at the same party. However, one could also keep in mind the cultural attitude of the liberal diplomacy towards the French and mostly the British world, considered very friendly. In general terms, this first case study clearly shows the need for a well-balanced foreign policy in case of different or opposing geopolitical interests. Diplomacy was soon the best, if not the only one source for pursuing some international objectives. It proved to be flexible and clever even if the long term consequence of that ambiguous behaviour was a progressive loss of credibility.⁹

This ambiguity erupted at the beginning of the First World War, when the polarisation of the alliances in Europe forced Italy to take and keep a clear position. Soon Rome declared

⁸ The bad reputation of the Italian diplomacy was something known also in the past, at least if one assumes, as Skinner, that the British nickname for the devil, Old Nick, derived from the name of Niccolò Machiavelli.

⁹ The dramatic change of alliances in both world wars determined a still lasting bad reputation on the international reliability of Italy. Some lack of confidence on Italy was a common character for many partners, even in the founding process of the NATO.

its neutrality and tried to take time and evaluate any option (Vigezzi 1966, 29; Orsina and Ungari 2016, 386–575). In spite of the peaceful attitude of the Italian people and the existing constraints of the Triple Alliance that had been renewed once more in 1912, the most influencing figures, the Prime Minister Antonio Salandra, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sidney Sonnino, General Luigi Cadorna and finally King Vittorio Emanuele III, were able to force Italy to war on the side of France, the United Kingdom and Russia. In doing so, Sonnino completed the diplomatic evolution previously started by Antonino di San Giuliano, former minister, at the beginning of the war. It was a turning point that clearly showed the rationale that drove the Italian foreign policy in the most difficult moment. While the negotiations with Vienna aimed at achieving the *terre irredente* as a condition for a prolonged neutrality, mostly appreciated by the old allies, or in exchange for a participation on the side of the Triple Alliance, failed basically because Rome could not fully trust in Vienna, the secret deal that drove to the Pact of London, on April 1915, was surely the best diplomatic success in the history of the Reign (Varsori 2015, 87–104; Riccardi 1992, 22–27, 81–93). It was the first case of agreement setting for a new alliance that really provided for both the Italian geopolitical interests, granting for the *terre irredente*, as well as for some new colonial lands. As the Russian, French and British diplomats said, the cost of having Italy by their side was really high, but on April 1915 no one could really foresee the end of the enemy empires, and even Sonnino was not wishing the collapse of Vienna, which could erupt in a new Slav nationalism against Italy in the Balkans. In general terms, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs hoped that Italy could come out of the war, that would have deeply changed the world order, like a new emerging great power. Although the allies claimed for the Italian way in leading the war, basically focused against Austria–Hungary and with a very late declaration of hostility against Germany, Sonnino was deeply disappointed when in the Paris Peace Conference, even if sat by the side of the winners, the new allies continued to consider Italy only a minor partner. In doing so, French and British diplomats and leaders could justify themselves with the leading influence of Woodrow Wilson, who was openly against the old European diplomacy and the secret agreements that had deeply inspired the behaviour of Italy before and after the war.¹⁰

4. The Second Case Study: The Second World War

The difficulties experienced in war and the emerging of a new international order driven by the American President Wilson according to the new principles of self-determination and collective security pushed once again Italy in a peripheral position: it was the most insignificant of the winning powers and even its participation in the League of Nations was largely unsatisfactory (Costa Bona and Tosi 2007, 17–38). The myth of the so called *vittoria mutilata* (mutilated victory) was an effective argument for many nationalists and fascists, who were able to exploit the dramatic post-war social climate in Italy (Melchionni 1981, 195–216).

¹⁰ Sonnino and some Italian leaders saw with some suspicion the participation of the USA in the war because of the new attitude of Wilson towards peace and international order. At the same time Italy was deeply dependant on the financial aid of the Americans in keeping on the war efforts, see Soave 2016, 539–557.

Once he came to power, Mussolini experienced the geopolitical difficulties in driving the country's foreign policy. For many years he remained consistent with the liberal diplomatic tradition and the rule: Under the Savoia, never against England.¹¹ In spite of the weight of its ideology, fascism practised a pragmatic foreign policy, but obviously more aggressive than the liberal one. Mussolini acted like a revisionist who really could not afford the revision: he played like a revisionist when he was pursuing a new expansionism outside Europe and finally he got the empire, but concerning the most important issue, national security, that in large part was based on the continental stability, he was an anti-revisionist (Di Nolfo 1960, 244–288). At least until 1938, he tried to deal with the United Kingdom but finally he opted for an alliance with Hitler. He considered the Führer a powerful factor of change and he thought to be able to control and drive him according to the Italian interests. Along this dangerous way, for some years he could play the role of international broker (not so honest) between the democracies and Germany, and he really obtained some tactical advantage for Italy. The brief period between the conquest of the empire and the Munich Conference, where he really played as a moderate broker, gave Mussolini and Italy some diplomatic relevance in dealing with Hitler, a role to some extent urged by France and the United Kingdom in the years of appeasement (Wheeler-Bennett 1948, 136–266). However, despite Mussolini's unrealistic hopes, Hitler became the real master of the European politics, especially in the second half of the 1930s. He caused a new strong polarisation of the continent and finally Italy was forced to choose. The Pact of Steel, on May 1939, established an aggressive alliance that clearly encouraged the war according to Hitler's will.¹² Shallow or cynical that was, this decision soon alarmed the fascist regime. Mussolini was aware that the Italians did not want the war, disliked Germany and moreover the country was not ready in military terms. Once again, soon after a new international commitment, there was the ambiguous attempt to change the way and Rome sent to Berlin the so called *Memoriale Cavallero*, in order to say that Italy was not ready for war before 1942 (Toscano 1948, 186–188). The more likely the war was, the more the old liberal Italian diplomacy alarmed the regime, especially the Ambassador in Berlin, Bernardo Attolico, who suggested to denounce the Pact of Steel after the German 'betrayal' with the Ribbentrop–Molotov agreement.¹³ Although Hitler could offer Italy many chances in extending the empire because the Führer was basically interested in the hegemony over Europe, the trouble was that the only way to achieve these advantages was war, that finally proved to be unacceptable for Italy. Once again, geopolitics had some part in the Italian uncertainty: Mussolini was aware that in case of war, even if with German aid, Italy would not have been able to challenge the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and preserve its African empire. Even after the beginning of the war, Mussolini hoped to be able to mediate between Hitler and the democracies negotiating about Poland, but the time for ambiguous diplomacy was definitely over. In this case, the fascist diplomacy was clearly wrong and not so efficient as the liberal one before the beginning of the war. In 1914, Rome had been capable to exploit its strategic relevance opting for neutrality; on the contrary, in 1939, before the war, Mussolini had already chosen and lost some relevance. When the hostilities

¹¹ The rule was set by a diplomat, Carlo Galli, who served both under the liberal and the fascist era, see Sommella 2016. For the first foreign policy of Mussolini and some continuities of the liberal age, see Lefebvre D'Ovidio 2016.

¹² See Toscano 1948; Deakin 1962.

¹³ He who was forced to leave Berlin by the Germans because of its critics, see Attolico 1986.

erupted on September 1939, Italy declared the so called *non belligeranza* (non-belligerency), a very ambiguous position but not so useful as the previous neutrality of 1914. Finally, on June 1940, Mussolini felt obliged to enter the war because he had perceived the chance for an easy victory through the so called *parallel war*, a kind of autonomous conflict as regards Germany, but the bad conditions of the Italian army soon deprived Mussolini of this chance and compelled him to ask for some aid.¹⁴ The military failure opened the way to the political end of the regime.

5. The Advantages of the Cold War

After the Second World War, Italy was no longer a relevant power and the peace treaty forced it to accept the surrender of rights over its colonies, a case of early decolonisation legitimised by the birth of the United Nations and shared by the emerging superpowers, the USA and the USSR.¹⁵ However, the coming of the Cold War gave new relevance to Italy, once again because of its geopolitical position. As Winston Churchill said in his famous speech in Fulton, the new iron curtain reached Trieste, that was split between the Western sphere of influence and Tito's Yugoslavia, the new border enemy.¹⁶ The Cold War required also the control of the Mediterranean and Italy was seen like a natural aircraft carrier. As Italy became part of the Western Alliance Bloc, the Cold War also affected its political national life: for almost half a century, the new democratic governments were led by the Democrazia Cristiana, while the Partito Comunista, the most important Western communist party, was confined to opposition by a sort of *conventio ad excludendum*. This new condition was fully stabilised by the participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in which Italy was invited despite its weakness. Once again, geopolitics was relevant: in spite of the doubts of the Americans and of the British, the French asked for the Italian participation in order to enlarge the Mediterranean portion inside the alliance and take care of the French colonies. Finally, Truman accepted the practical considerations of the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, aimed at avoiding a serious crisis inside the emerging Western Alliance, of which Italy was, quite curiously, a founder (Reid 1977, 201–209). To some extent, the loss of national sovereignty in exchange for security, granted by the NATO, was a good deal for Italy all along the history of the so called *Prima Repubblica* (First Republic). Until 1989, it was not a relevant part of its GDP, usually less than 2%, that Italy spent on defence and its governments were able to practice a partly autonomous foreign policy. Once again the dual geopolitical interest emerged. The good relations with some Arab countries, mainly the independent Libya, and with some countries of the Soviet Bloc, were regarded with some suspicion by the Americans and inside the NATO. After the loss of the colonies, the new democratic foreign policy set by De Gasperi and Sforza was clearly in favour of the Third World, it was multilateral and aimed at dealing with as many countries as possible beyond the limits of the Cold War. In other words, the Italian diplomacy always took care of the national interests in a global approach through dialogue and cooperation. Italy pursued, mainly in

¹⁴ For Italy in war, see De Felice 2006; Candeloro 1993.

¹⁵ For the general issue of the loss of the Italian colonies after the Second World War, see Rossi 1980.

¹⁶ In the wide historiography over the Cold War, see Formigoni 2016; Di Nolfo 2010; Romero 2009; Fontaine 1969; De Leonardis 2014.

the Middle East, a regional and inclusive policy, that was quite far from the American view, inspired by the splits of the Cold War and aimed at selecting only some strategic allies in the area. In brief, the protection granted by the NATO gave Italy the chance for a widespread policy, driven by dialogue and cooperation in the Mediterranean, as well as in the East and Far East (Soave 2017, 161–179). This global approach was not only the heritage of the cultural and religious universalism inspired by Catholic ecumenism. It was also the consequence of the troubled national political life: while the communists remained out of the coalitions all along the Cold War, because of its wide social consensus it was able to force the governments to pursue a more shared foreign policy, not fully dependant on the USA. In general terms, the second post-war period clearly showed the strong influence of the national politics over the course of the foreign policy. This latter had to provide more for social consensus and for a wider coalition, than for national interests. In this way in the 1960s, the socialists could enter the government, following a political change driven in a large part by the leaders of Democrazia Cristiana (Amintore Fanfani and then Aldo Moro), and it was not a problem if the foreign policy of the so called *centro-sinistra* (centre-left) was largely unsatisfactory or ambiguous. In the same way, in the first part of the 1980s, the socialist leader Bettino Craxi was able to lead the entrance of his party into the government area choosing a new pro-Atlantic foreign policy. When Craxi became Prime Minister in 1983, he set for a new assertive and quite autonomous foreign policy, whose most impressive evidence was the Sigonella crisis with the USA.¹⁷ In both cases the most relevant consequence was not in terms of foreign policy but inside Italy: the communists remained out of the government. As the *centro-sinistra* was a formula conceived by Aldo Moro to isolate the communists and enlarge the basis of the government with the political blessing of Washington,¹⁸ the coalitions driven by Craxi prevailed over the so called Eurocommunism conceived by Enrico Berlinguer.¹⁹

6. After the Cold War: A Middle Power Alone

Although wished for so long, the end of the Cold War caused some troubles to Italy.²⁰ In the first part of the 1990s, the dramatic collapse of the old party system was favoured, to some extent, by the change of the world order that deprived the Democrazia Cristiana of its historical international legitimacy, as well as forced the former Partito Comunista to a political change. In those years of national and global transition, while the NATO was looking for a new legitimacy along with the emerging of the American unilateralism, Italy opted once again for a continental perspective. In doing so it was driven by the European Union, based on the German leadership and through a common currency. In other words, Italy

¹⁷ The Sigonella crisis was determined by the decision of the Italian Government not to deliver to the US forces the pro-Palestine commando who had hijacked the Achille Lauro boat in the Mediterranean and killed the Jewish and American citizen, Leon Klinghofer. Although it was the most serious trouble in the history of the Italo–American bilateral relations after the Second World War, Reagan and Craxi were able to relaunch the cooperation in the turning point of the Cold War. See Gerlini 2016; Silj 1998.

¹⁸ On the international origins of the *centro-sinistra*, see Nuti 1999.

¹⁹ In other words, the acceptance of the Euromissiles by Craxi prevailed over Berlinguer's openings to the Atlantic Alliance. See Caviglia and Labbate 2014.

²⁰ On the impact of the end of the Cold War over the national political life of Italy and its consequences on foreign policy, see Varsori 2013; Riccardi 2014.

invested in a new continental integration process in exchange for its economic sovereignty, and finally culminated its historical pro-Europe option.²¹ The country made a huge effort to meet the requirements of the new European common currency and definitely lost its main national political leverage, the public debt, in creating social consensus. To some extent, this process determined a dramatic change in the Italian political mentality and forced to a new and unique main objective: being able to respect the European economic rules. Along this way, Italy lost large parts of its national sovereignty, but what is more relevant, foreign and national policies basically became the same thing.²² This historical change which occurred in the last decade of the 1990s, seemed to be definitive, but then something went wrong with the European Union. Its clear absence of common identity, especially after the failure in promoting a constitution, and the global economic crisis starting from the USA made less than rhetorical the idea of a civilian superpower. The failure was heavy for Italy: historically, the ruling class had invested a lot in the European legitimacy after the Second World War. Moreover, at the end of the Cold War, the Atlantic community was no longer relevant in the national political debate. In other terms, with the doom of the European Union, Italy was more at stake, politically and economically, than the other partners.²³ Currently, while the country is still facing the consequences of the long term economic crisis, new global issues are seriously testing the roots of the Euro–Italian political confidence. At the moment, the European Union cannot provide for the support and protection that Italy is looking for in order to face the huge and continuous migration flows across the Mediterranean. At the same time, at least from the beginning of Obama’s first presidency, the USA are no longer considering the Mediterranean a main strategic issue. In general terms, while in the Cold War the geopolitical centrality of Italy as crossroads among different regions was a resource which could arouse the interest of the leading powers, in the present multipolar and unstable order it represents rather a factor of vulnerability and, to some extent, of isolation. This is a condition of serious danger for a country deeply focused – once again after the 1990s – on a new national political transition.²⁴ History, and particularly the Italian one, clearly shows that a middle power can no longer stand an ambitious international profile without the support of an effective alliance. For this reason, the Italian ruling class should consider very carefully the lack of a strong international partnership. Along with the chronic government instability, this lack of interest for foreign policy could cause the general decline of the country. In spite of the high expertise of its intelligence in providing for national security, Italy has been facing bilateral tensions with India for the Marò crisis²⁵ and with Egypt after the murder of Giulio Regeni, an Italian PhD student working on the trade union movement

²¹ Although Europe was a widespread benchmark for peace, democracy and development, in post-war Italy, the leading class rarely preferred the European political engagement to the national one, see Varsori 2010.

²² In these terms, Sergio Romano, former Ambassador in Moscow in the years of the *perestroika*, then a famous columnist, said that the treaty of Maastricht, which established some new heavy financial duties, was to some extent the last act of the Italian foreign policy. Romano 1993, 211.

²³ As a matter of fact, both the Five Star Movement and the Lega, the less pro-European political forces, have strongly criticised the common European currency.

²⁴ The new political crisis was opened by the failure of the constitutional reform through referendum in December 2016.

²⁵ At the moment India and Italy are still waiting to clarify definitely this issue. They both accepted to deliver the case to the International Court of Justice.

in the country after the 2011 revolution.²⁶ These tensions clearly show that at the moment Italy, trying to get along by itself, can only give day by day answers regarding foreign policy without a long term perspective of action. A positive change might come from the Mediterranean, as Italy decided to deploy the Navy in compliance with the agreements with al Sarraj's Libyan Government in order to contain the migration flows. However, the Italian debate over this issue is more focused on a quite ideological controversy over the autonomy of the NGOs in rescuing lives and eventually on the present meaning of sovereignty, rather than on the key issue of national security.²⁷ As in the past, foreign policy tensions could arise deep political divisions and make Italy weaker as a middle power.

7. Conclusion

Through some continuities with the past, but in a most uncertain international scenario, the force of geopolitics is once again emerging. Italy is the most affected power by the potential consequences of the global change driven across the Mediterranean basin by the migration flows. This issue could really reshape in some decades the Italian social, cultural and religious identity. Recently even Pope Francis said that rescuing lives and welcoming immigrants should be considered more important than national security. This kind of global humanitarian doctrine seems to be hardly acceptable for some EU members, as well as for the parties recently emerged in Italy. It is a fact that the *Ius Soli* law proposal, a very divisive issue, is no longer on agenda in the Italian political debate. Facing the global challenges without international partners will force Italy to take some strong position and, to some extent, to accept the idea of change, in order to remain a European and Mediterranean relevant actor.

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²⁶ After the murder of the Italian scholar in Cairo, the Italian Government decided to withdraw its ambassador in order to press the Egyptian authorities to cooperate with the investigations, then the Gentiloni Government sent again the ambassador to Cairo. This decision caused some protests by the movements which are asking for the truth over the death of Regeni.

²⁷ An example of this stunning controversy between global humanitarians and State sovereignty defenders occurred when Gino Strada, founder of the NGO *Emergency*, said that the way of Minister Minniti in tackling the migration flows through the cooperation of the Libyan authorities was a typical police approach.

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Luigi Rullo

The Corruption of Regional Presidents in Italy from 1990 to 2015

Recent reforms have led to a rising predominance of regional presidents, guaranteeing them a stronger influence on Italian politics than in the past. Then, governors are facing a hard institutional challenge: the tension between their monocratic power and the judiciary. Indeed, the presidents' strengthening has resulted in an increased exposure towards other actors such as magistracy. Judicial inquiries against regional presidents involved in corruption scandals have exponentially increased over the last few years. This trend has exacerbated the political and identity crisis, prompting a downward spiral which has led to a low trust in regional political institutions. With this paper, we propose a study mapping judicial investigations in Italian regions, using primary media sources, for corruption-related charges against regional presidents from 1990 to 2015. Our objective is to understand the extent and the characteristics of the phenomenon of corrupt presidents and to map out the entire prosecution process, from the appearance of the first allegation to its conclusion. Therefore, we witness the establishment of a new relationship between magistracy and politics, which finds on high-level corruption its gear and in the media its booster. Moreover, we argue that the corruption of regional presidents represents a key element to understand the crisis of regionalism in Italy.

1. Introduction

Corruption represents a huge problem in Italian regions. Some works have highlighted the economic effects of corruption on regional economic growth (Fiorino et al. 2012; Lisciandra and Millemaci 2017); corruption also undermines the impact that public expenditure may have on the regional economies (Golden and Picci 2005). While a growing body of researchers examines the causes and consequences of corruption in Italy, less has been written about political corruption in Italian regions. Corruption scandals involving councillors, assessors and presidents have heavily increased in recent years. However, until now, no systematic studies have been developed on this subject, and very little information is available on the amount of regional political actors' investigations. Our objective is to provide a study mapping judicial investigations in Italian regions, using primary media sources, for corruption-related charges against regional presidents from 1990 to 2015. We want to understand the extent and characteristics of the phenomenon of corrupt presidents and to map out the entire prosecution process, from the appearance of the first allegation to its conclusion.

Therefore, before going to the core of our argument, a quick rehearsal of the key features that affect regional politics in Italy is necessary. In this respect, Section 2 analyses the nexus between the personalisation of politics, the magistracy and the media in Italian politics. Section 3 describes our methodological approach and how we construct our database. Data are presented in tables from our mapping exercise; in the last Section (4) we discuss how high-level corruption influences the democratic endurance of the regional political system and what has changed in the relationship between politics and magistracy in Italy. In this respect, we observe how the regional president, one of the actors considered fundamental for building the new Italian regionalism (and consequently the Second Republic), became an element of political instability.

2. Regional Presidents and the M Factor as a Turning Point in Italian Politics

During the 1990s, most of the advanced democracies have measured up against the personalisation of politics. This process was facilitated by the media's expansion in the political arena, which has led towards a professionalisation, centralisation and personalisation of the political message and its divulgation with a greater emphasis on the leader. The presidentialisation of politics (Poguntke and Webb 2005) has realised a shift of the political organisation from a collegial form to a monocratic one, and it has interested the Italian politics at a national level (Calise 2010) as well as at the regional one (Musella 2009). This phenomenon has led to a growing predominance of the new *demo-eletti Governatori* and a greater control on the regional government, becoming the focal point of regional politics the councils of which have dominated for a long time.¹ Furthermore, it enabled citizens to have familiarity with the regional administrative machinery. In fact, due to the reform of Title V of the Constitution,² the regional presidents were endowed with new powers and direct legitimacy, and a new institutional framework was established. Then, regional presidents became the basis of a new organisation for territorial governance and the vectors of the relaunch of Italian regionalism. At first, the personalisation of regional leadership had positive effects on citizens' perception of local politics. As noted by Vassallo (2001, 27), it "simplifies the competition, reduces the information costs of the electors to make a stand, but in doing so it pushes them to be less distrustful". Through a direct involvement of citizens in the selection of presidents, regional institutions gained more credibility and the heads of the executive bigger visibility than in the past.

¹ This process has enabled regional presidents to assume a name that evokes the federal reality of the United States, becoming the *Governatori*.

² The reform modified Article 122 of the Constitution and introduced the direct election of the regional presidents. The new *Governatori*, inter alia, have the power to appoint and dismiss the members of the regional executive.

Looking at the data from a 2001 sample survey³ (Vassallo 2001), we can observe that 46% of the Italian citizens knew with certainty who was the president in charge in their region, and 44% remembered their name after guidance from the interviewer. Then, only 10% of the respondents did not know the name of their regional president. Moreover, if we consider the level of trust in regional presidents, the research highlights that it could vary according to regional peculiarities while remaining relatively high. Confident citizens comprise some 52.8% of the sample, while 23.2% of the respondents have little faith in governors' action and 25% do not know or do not reply.

These two dimensions are interesting, although we need to consider that they are not often correlated. The regional presidents' notoriety, in fact, may arise from other sources, such as a good career at the national level, as party leader or from judicial investigations and corruption scandals. The latter have exponentially increased in recent years, affecting the reputation of presidents and the credibility of regional institutions in several regions. Therefore, the optimistic view that prevailed in the early 2000s seems to be eclipsed and, as observed by Sabino Cassese, the corruption problem is more and more deeply rooted at the regional and local level than at the national one (Merloni 2014). Now more than ever, during the era of *Governatori*, Italian regions share criminality, a high-level of political corruption, scandals and, consequently, a delegitimisation of the political class. The iron law of leadership (Musella and Webb 2015) is disclosing its weakest side, and the governors are facing the tension between their monocratic power and the judiciary. In such a scenario, the corruption of governors represents a common and still unexplored ground which deserves a detailed explanation.

To better understand the challenges in Italian regions, we should focus our attention on the motivations which have led political corruption to be permanently central in the Italian political discourse. The latter would not have been possible without the role played by the judiciary and the media (Piana 2014).

The process of judicialisation of politics⁴ has realised a greater contamination between politics and magistracy, and judges are increasingly making decisions that have a strong impact on the political arena (Guarnieri and Pederzoli 2002). These changes allowed the expansion of the judicial function, and a stronger courts' ability in limiting legislative institutions. Moreover, the judiciary empowerment was strongly favoured by the *Tangentopoli* earthquake in the early 1990s. The latter pushed "the issues of corruption and public ethics to prominence" (Hine 2015, 608), and represents a turning point for building a new relation between politics, the magistracy and the media in Italy.

As a matter of fact, the "transformation of judicial and political events into a scandal is by and large the result of media activity, which filters and communicates, but also simplifies, personalises and sensationalises information at high speed" (Pujas and Rhodes 1999, 56).

³ The empirical basis of this research is a sample survey carried out with CATI (Computer Assisted Telephonic Review) method on a sample of 2000 individuals (100 individuals for each region) through a gender and age-stratified sample. Here we present data that we have elaborated on this research, by focusing on two questions: "Who is your regional president?" and "How much do you trust in your regional president?" for the year 2001.

⁴ This process refers to the expansion of judicial power "at the expense of the politicians and/or administrators, that is, the transfer of decision-making from the legislature, the cabinet, or the civil service to the courts" (Tate and Vallinder 1995, 13).

Considering the gravity and high resonance of corruption scandals, the mass media recognise the judges as defenders of morality triggering a mutual support. In this respect, Calise (2016) has talked about the M factor, highlighting the affinities between judicial power and mass media and the dangers that this symbiotic relationship could provoke. Because of the shift of power from collegial to monocratic actors, “the M factor identifies in the leader the main object–subject of its attention” (Calise 2016, 68), finding in the political corruption a fertile ground to unleash its power.

On the basis of this theoretical framework, we are now able to address the core of our work, giving an insight into the corruption aspects of regional presidents over the last twenty-five years and presenting our data.

3. The Corruption of Regional Presidents from 1990 to 2015

The judiciary power and regional presidency had conflicts over the latest years, with the change of Title V of the Constitution defining the exclusive and shared competences between State and regions.⁵ Consequently, the power struggle between the Constitutional Court and regions could indirectly affect the presidents’ power and be considered a part of the democratic system of checks and balances. Moreover, we can find another arena where conflicts arise. It has a personal nature and may have an indirect and direct relationship. The former one (personal and indirect) occurs when members of the regional executive or the council are involved in corruption scandals. Accordingly, the president, who enjoys a higher media visibility than in the past, is heuristically pointed out as responsible or, at least, he could be the “victim” of the media representation of the scandal. The latter one (personal and direct), refers to a one-to-one relationship because the magistracy undertakes investigations directly against the head of the executive. It does not matter its nature (administrative, civil or penal), it should affect the president at first hand.

Our work deals with this kind of relationship, by focusing on 99 politicians who held the office of regional president in the last twenty-five years in fifteen regions with an ordinary statute.⁶ The analysis considers a total of six legislatures over a period dating from 1990 to 2015. The object of our study is the corruption aspects of governors. In a broad sense, we consider corruption the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, however, in compiling our database we have explained the various manifestations of this phenomenon.⁷ While for the

⁵ Articles 117, 118, 119 of the Italian Constitution define these competencies.

⁶ Italy is divided into 20 regions, each one is composed of several provinces, for a total of 110 provinces. Each region is governed by a legislative council (Consiglio) and an executive body (Giunta). Fifteen out of twenty regions have ordinary statutes (Piemonte, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lombardy, Tuscany, Lazio, Umbria, Abruzzi, Marche, Campania, Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata, Molise) and five have special statutes awarded because of their individual circumstances. These special regions are Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige, the Aosta Valley and Friuli Venezia Giulia and they are not included in our analysis.

⁷ In our definition corruption is: corruption, abuse of office, embezzlement, fraud, organised crime, loss of revenue, vote trading, facilitation, market manipulation, fraudulent misrepresentation, slandered threats, bid rigging, illegal financing, induction by compulsion, false accounting, improper influence, fraudulent bankruptcy.

elections of 1990 and 1995 the head of the regional executive was elected by the council,⁸ for the following four elections citizens could directly elect the president, due to the reform of Title V of the Constitution.

To construct our database, we have collected the names of each regional president from the website of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, providing gender, the number of legislatures they served, the party which they belonged to, the time spent in office, the age at the beginning of their first mandate, the election results, qualification and profession. Moreover, we have researched the presidents' position both previously and after the presidency. To analyse the corruption aspects of regional presidents, we have applied the same method used by Popova and Post (2013) and Dallara and Rullo (2018). We have used the Google Search Engine, entering some keywords such as "investigations" and "corruption" and the name of each regional president. Besides, we used data available on the major Italian newspapers (*La Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *Il Giornale*) and opinion magazines such as *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. We also consulted local newspapers available online and the *AGI* *archivio*. By doing so, we retraced the judicial process from the opening of the procedure (*avviso di garanzia*) until the end (if filed in court or *rinvio a giudizio* and final decision or *sentenza*).

Table 1 provides a relatively clear picture of the nature of the corruption investigations in Italian regions: over half of the governors have been subjected to (at least) one investigation for corruption charges. In fact, 56.5% of governors in office from 1990 to 2015 experienced at least a close encounter with the magistracy. A closer look at the evolution of the number of governors under investigation reveals in the first place that there is no clear difference between regions. In such a scenario, the governors most affected by this trend are concentrated in the *Mezzogiorno* (59%) and in the north (60.7%). It is interesting to shed light on the Lombardy region, where all regional leaders have faced corruption-related criminal charges, while in Piemonte (4 out of 5); only one president did not face any corruption allegation. However, the values of central Italy are very close to the northern and southern Italian one, mainly due to Lazio, where 7 out of 10 presidents (70%) were under investigation and Abruzzi with 5 out of 7 governors. The data obtained from Marche and Umbria underline that only 2 presidents out of 11 have received a notice of investigation.

This initial analysis helps to better understand who are the governors involved in corruption investigations and where they come from. However, it does not allow us to draw conclusions on other characteristics of the phenomenon, nor on the intensity of judicial activism. These aspects are evidenced in the second column in Table 1, where we may notice peculiarities about the extent of judicial activism. The overall number of investigations for corruption charges is 120. It is very high in southern Italy (57.5%), while the northern (24.2%) and central part (18.3%) lag behind. Substantially, the number of investigations in the south is three times larger than in the centre and more than twice higher than in the north. In this sense, it is interesting to note the 15 investigations in Calabria, and the data collected in two small regions such as Basilicata (10) and Molise (9). In any case, this picture

⁸ Until 1995, the members of the council were elected by a pure proportional system and remained in office for five years (Act 108/968, Article 3). The reform of the electoral system in 1995 (Act 43/1995) introduced a mixed electoral system. This change provided that 1/5 of regional council members are elected by a majoritarian system from a regional list, while 4/5 are elected from provincial lists by a proportional system.

underlines that *Governatori* who have faced corruption-related charges interest the entire country without exceptions.

Table 1.

Regional presidents under investigations for corruption-related charges and the amount of investigations from Legislature V to Legislature X (1990–2015)

Region	Regional presidents under investigation	Amount of investigations
Piemonte	4/5 (80%)	5 (4.2%)
Liguria	3/6 (50%)	5 (4.2%)
Emilia-Romagna	2/6 (33.3%)	3 (2.5%)
Tuscany	2/4 (50%)	2 (1.7%)
Veneto	3/6 (50%)	4 (3.3%)
Lazio	7/10 (70%)	8 (6.7%)
Campania	6/7 (85.7%)	26 (21.7%)
Apulia	5/9 (55.5%)	9 (7.5%)
Calabria	6/11 (54.5%)	15 (12.5%)
Basilicata	3/5 (60%)	10 (8.3%)
Umbria	1/6 (16.6%)	2 (1.6%)
Abruzzi	5/7 (71.4%)	9 (7.5%)
Molise	3/7 (42.8%)	9 (7.5%)
Marche	1/5 (20%)	1 (0.8%)
Lombardy	5/5 (100%)	12 (10%)
North	17/28 (60.7%)	29 (24.2%)
Centre	16/32 (50%)	22 (18.3%)
South	23/39 (59%)	69 (57.5%)
Italy 1990–2015	56/99 (56.5%)	120 (100%)

Note: North: Piemonte, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lombardy. Centre: Tuscany, Lazio, Umbria, Abruzzi, Marche. South: Campania, Apulia, Calabria, Basilicata, Molise.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the author's database

At this point, we may deepen our analysis in order to understand the dimensions of the corruption of regional presidents by looking at its evolution over time. Until now, our data do not allow to comprehend the overall changes for the last twenty-five years. Therefore, to give an insight into the nature of the phenomenon, we may look at Figure 1. The first element that can be learned from the figure is that the number of investigations drops sharply in the aftermath of the Tangentopoli earthquake, and it grows almost uninterruptedly until 2010.

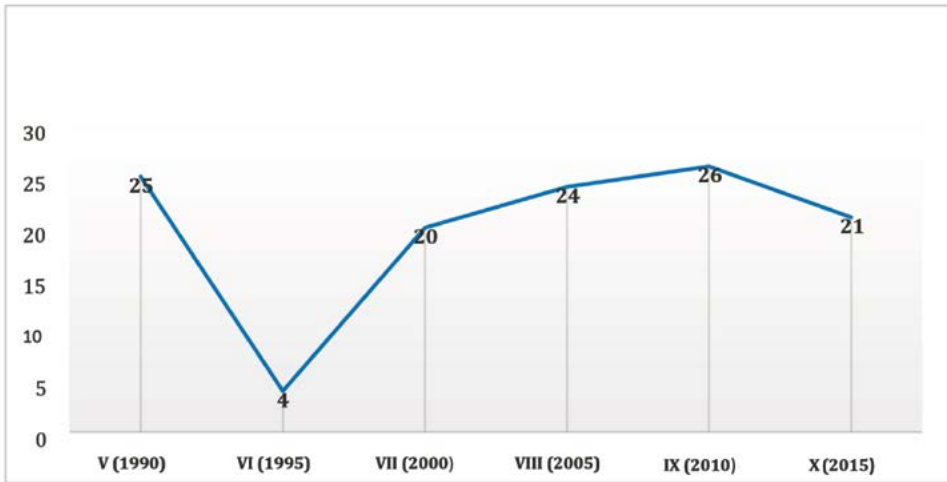


Figure 1.

Total amount of investigations in each legislature from Legislature V to Legislature X (1990–2015)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the author's database

The major peaks occur in Legislatures V and IX, with 25 and 26 investigations, respectively for corruption charges. The Fifth Legislature started off in a dramatic climate for the Italian politics, and it represented a turning point in the relation between politics, the media and the magistracy. The media coverage of the scandal and the investigative action led by the pool ‘Clean Hands’ delegitimated the whole political class. The traditional political system failed, and the main parties suddenly disappeared from both the national and the regional scene. Moreover, the figure informs us about the reduction in the number of investigations during Legislature VI (1995–2000). This trend may be understood in the light of the replacing of the old regional political class which followed the ‘season of investigations’. A deep regeneration was necessary.

In this respect, the regions and the cities played a key role. For instance, the direct election of the city mayors entered into force in 1993 and reanimated the “local Identity [...] because of the revival of the capillary relationship with citizens” (Calise 2010, 80). At the same time, the expansion of the media in the political arena strengthened the process of personalisation of the administration which was automatically associated with the mayor (Musella 2009). Furthermore, a process of decentralisation began, increasing the degree of expenditure in both competencies and tax autonomy of the Italian regions. At this juncture, administrators experienced a greater proximity than in the past with the citizens as well as with the magistracy. As Figure 1 shows, starting from Legislature VII, we may observe a significant increase in the number of investigations to prosecute political corruption involving top politicians testifying that the new political elite seems to follow the same scheme of the past.

The overall number of cases equals once again the levels of *Bribesville*. In a nutshell, Legislature VI is the exception that proves the rule, and this trend continues until 2015.

Furthermore, by focusing our attention on the era of the *Governatori* (2000–2015), we may note that investigations for corruption charges at the expense of individuals who perform the role of president of the region is as high as 91. These data are very interesting if we consider that the parliamentary term is still ongoing in all regions taken into consideration.

The party variable represents another area which is of key concern. Manifestly, during such an extended period, political actors continuously change, and it is necessary to organise the parties according to their position on the political spectrum. We distinguish the centre-left, from the centre and the centre-right, with the aim of examining the main changes in the political system between the First and the Second Republic.⁹ We may represent, in fact, two phenomena closely interconnected: the desertification of the centre and the “population” of the centre-right. The former corresponds to the end of the *pluralismo polarizzato* and the Democrazia Cristiana (DC) diaspora; the latter relates to the exponential growth of the centre-right because of two parties in the early 1990s: Berlusconi’s Forza Italia (FI) and Bossi’s Lega Nord (LN) (Di Virgilio 2006).

Among the presidents investigated, 25 out of 56 belong to centre-left parties, while 17 come from the centre-right parties. The presidents of the centre parties under investigation are 14, and they all belong to the DC, suggesting the judicial inquiries initiated during the Clean Hands’ era. Three of them have been arrested during their presidential mandate. We may think about Gianfranco Cremonese, President of the Veneto Region in the early 1990s, who resigned with his regional executive after being arrested for accepting bribes for public procurement. Another case involved Rocco Salini, President of the Abruzzi region from 1990 to 1992, who was detained with the entire *Giunta* for the misuse of 450 billion of European funds. Same story for Ferdinando Clemente di San Luca, who was the head of the Campania regional executive during the fifth parliamentary term (1990–1995). He was arrested in 1993 because of alleged bribes, and he was found innocent in 2002 and received a compensation of 160 thousand Euros as a repair for the wrongful detention.

Table 2.

The amount of investigations and party membership of regional presidents under investigation from Legislature V to Legislature X (1990–2015)

Region	Amount of investigations	Centre-left	Centre	Centre-right
Piemonte	5 (4.2%)	DS: 2, PD: 1	DC: 1	LN: 1
Liguria	5 (4.2%)	PD: 3	DC: 1	FI: 1
Emilia-Romagna	3 (2.5%)	PD: 3		
Tuscany	2 (1.7%)	PDS-PCI: 1, PD: 1		
Veneto	4 (3.3%)		DC: 3	FI: 1
Lazio	8 (6.7%)	PSI: 1, PD: 2	DC: 2	MSI: 2, PDL: 1
Campania	26 (21.7%)	PD: 10, Margherita: 1, PDS: 8	DC: 1	MSI: 1, FI: 5
Apulia	9 (7.5%)	RC-SEL: 3	DC: 4	FI: 2
Calabria	15 (12.5%)	PD-MPA: 4, PSI: 1, PD: 1		FI: 4, PDL: 5
Basilicata	10 (8.3%)	DS: 5, Ulivo-PD: 4, PD: 1		

⁹ Our database consists of 47 presidents who belong to centre-left parties, 27 to the centre and 25 to the centre-right parties.

Region	Amount of investigations	Centre-left	Centre	Centre-right
Umbria	2 (1.6%)	DS-PD: 2		
Abruzzi	9 (7.5%)	SDI-PD: 1, PD: 4	DC: 1	AN: 1, PDL: 2
Molise	9 (7.5%)	PD: 1	DC: 2	FI: 6
Marche	1 (0.8%)		DC: 1	
Lombardy	12 (10%)	PDS: 2	DC: 2	LN: 4, FI: 4
Italy 1990–2015	120 (100%)	62 (51.7%)	18 (15%)	40 (33.3%)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the author's database

Table 2 foregrounds the party membership of regional presidents under investigation and the amount of investigations for each one. It shows that the judicial attention goes beyond party distinctions. As a matter of fact, more than half of the investigations involve leftist presidents and 36 investigations interest the Partito Democratico (PD).¹⁰ Moving to the centre of the political spectrum, we notice 18 investigations for corruption-related crimes of 14 regional presidents. Looking at the centre-right data, we can see that 9 out of 17 governors under investigation belong to Forza Italia/Popolo della Libertà. The total number of investigations for regional presidents of this party equals 31, slightly less than the Partito Democratico (36). The total amount of investigations for centre-right politicians equals 40 (i.e. 33.3%), and a discrepancy of twenty percentage points in comparison with the centre-left (51.7%) is observable.

Therefore, at the regional level, our work seems not confirming other studies (Ceron and Mainenti 2015) which had pointed out the way how the behaviour of Italian magistrates depends on their political inclinations. The analysis echoes the research of Dallara and Rullo (2018), which focused on the corruption of ministers and undersecretaries in three Italian governments (Prodi II, Berlusconi IV and Monti). Then, we can see that the judiciary action seems to be independent of the political party of the president under investigation.

Hence, before analysing the outcome of the investigations, it is useful reminding its timing. Our study shows that half of the investigations opened (50%) took place when the president was in charge, bolstering the M factor thesis. The magistracy pays higher attention to high-level politicians, because of the greater attractiveness of this kind of target. Moreover, we may note that 33.3% of investigations are opened after the presidency, an element that may be connected to the presidents' strong power on the territory, and the ambiguous bonds they can tie. 16.7% of the investigations started before the presidential tenure.

Yet, we may consider one of the most important aspect of our research: mapping the judicial investigations. It was also complex because of the difficulty of finding information. Given the absence of official statistics, the information reported by the media focused mainly on the opening procedure or conviction. Although political scandals are not synonymous of corruption, the media usually intertwine those two phenomena, so we must be careful in

¹⁰ The Partito Comunista (PCI) disappeared in 1991 and the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS) (becoming later Democratici di Sinistra or DS) and Rifondazione Comunista (RC) were born. Moreover, because of the fusion between the Democratici di Sinistra (DS) and L'Ulivo, the Partito Democratico (PD) came to life in 2008.

utilising our sources. The media have the power to operate a selective news coverage and to influence citizens' perception (Sberna and Vannucci 2013), and, because of their political partisanship, they can also emphasise and instrumentalise corruption cases (Mancini et al. 2017).

Table 3 provides an interesting picture of the nature of the outcome of corruption investigations in Italian regions. We divided the outcome in five categories: dismissal (*archiviazione*), acquittal (*assoluzione*), conviction (*condanna*), statute of limitation (*prescrizione*), ongoing (*in corso*). In almost 53% of the cases examined, the judicial activity goes beyond the preliminary investigations and files the presidents in court. In fact, only 38 investigations are dismissed, out of a total of 120 cases. The motivations that may lead to a dismissal are various: extinction of the crime (*estinzione del reato*), the inadmissibility of the action (*improcedibilità dell'azione*), the non-existence of a crime (*infondatezza del reato*), the act does not constitute an offence (*il fatto non costituisce reato*) and so on. A quarter of the cases examined concludes with the judgement of acquittal (26.7%), while the convictions are 21, i.e. nearly 20%. The statute of limitation intervenes in 7 cases, and it can be explained by the slowness of the Italian legal machine.

Table 3.

The outcome of the investigations from Legislature V to Legislature X (1990–2015)

Region	Dismissal (Archiviazione)	Acquittal (Assoluzione)	Conviction (Condanna)	Statute of limitation (Prescrizione)	Ongoing (In corso)	Total
Piemonte	3	1		1		5
Liguria	3	1			1	5
Emilia- Romagna	2	1				3
Tuscany		1			1	2
Veneto	1	1	2			4
Lazio	4	2			2	8
Campania	6	4	6	3	7	26
Apulia	1	6	1		1	9
Calabria	4	5	2	2	2	15
Basilicata	2	4	3		1	10
Umbria			1		1	2
Abruzzi	1	3	2		3	9
Molise	2	2	1	1	3	9
Marche			1			1
Lombardy	9	1	2			12
Italy 1990–2015	38 (31.7%)	32 (26.7%)	21 (17.5%)	7 (5.8%)	22 (18.3%)	120 (100%)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the author's database

Hence, we can observe a strong judicial activism but a poor effectiveness in closing investigations. Accordingly, the result of the “judicial intervention, amplified by the media would have had, in most cases, limited specific and individual effects but a large as well as generic increase of discredit against the whole political class” (Calise 2016, 67). The decline of the electoral turnout can better explain this phenomenon. Over the last forty years, in fact, the voter turnout in the Italian regions decreased by 40%, and the last elections (2014–2015) witness that absenteeism began the first choice: almost one voter out of two did not vote (Bolgherini and Grimaldi 2015).

Furthermore, the electoral turnout in the Italian regions is now lower than the European elections. We observe a decrease of 30% (86.1% in 1979; 57.2% in 2014) over the past thirty years for the European elections; instead for the regional elections a reduction of more than 30% (92.5% in 1970; 52.2% in 2010). Then, these data may point out that citizens consider Europe more decisive in their everyday life and that regions lost credibility and faith in the possibility of change that regions embodied in the past.

Moreover, we may look at the index of macro-personalisation¹¹ (Table 4). The data related to Legislatures VIII (2005–2010) and X (2015) show a decrease of the index also in the northern regions where the ‘leader’s government’ was established¹² (Musella 2009). In this respect, we may focus on Lombardy data, which highlight that in ten years the index has fallen from 1.19 during the penultimate mandate of Roberto Formigoni to 1.05 of the former minister and regional president Roberto Maroni. This declining trend is also existing in Lazio, one of the regions most affected by corruption scandals over the last few years. We may observe a decrease from 1.21 obtained at the time of Piero Marrazzo to 1.12 during the Renata Polverini presidency up to 0.97 of the last elections. Although this trend is not homogenous in all regions and parliamentary term, it may suggest a spreading diffusion of the malaise that is bubbling at the regional level and may perhaps erupt in the next elections.

Table 4.

The index of macro-personalisation from Legislature VII to Legislature X (2000–2015)

Region	VII (2000–2005)	VIII (2005–2010)	IX (2010–2015)	X (2015)
Piemonte	1.10	1.21	1.17	1.13
Liguria	1.05	1.13	1.08	1.11
Emilia-Romagna	1.07	1.12	1.09	1.03
Tuscany	1.04	1.10	1.14	1.03
Veneto	1.07	1.11	1.12	1.15
Lazio	1.07	1.21	1.12	0.97
Campania	1.08	1.04	0.98	1.08
Apulia	1.08	1.10	1.14	1.03

¹¹ The macro-personalisation index equals the quotient of the vote for the presidential candidate by the vote for the lists of the coalition which he/she belongs to. It signals the relationship between leaders and citizens and enhance the establishment of a verticalized executive.

¹² By looking at the macro-personalisation index for the VII and VIII legislatures, Musella (2009) notes that in the northern regions presidents have a stronger impact on the electoral arena than in the southern ones, and defines these regions as an ideal type of “leader’s government”.

Region	VII (2000–2005)	VIII (2005–2010)	IX (2010–2015)	X (2015)
Calabria	1.02	1.00	1.04	1.01
Basilicata	0.94	1.00	0.94	1.00
Umbria	1.03	1.10	1.06	1.03
Abruzzi	1.05	1.07	1.15	1.02
Molise	0.99	1.06	0.8	1.02
Marche	1.06	1.10	1.06	1.09
Lombardy	1.12	1.19	1.09	1.05

Source: Musella (2009) for Legislatures VII (2000–2005) and VIII (2005–2010). Our processing of data from the Ministry of the Interior for Legislatures IX (2010–2015) and X (2015)

4. Conclusion

Our work has aimed at investigating the key features of the corruption aspects of regional presidents and the current crisis of Italian regionalism. Our methodology may give us a partial vision of the phenomenon as our information is filtered by the media which, sometimes, can also misinterpret corruption cases. However, media provides detailed news about the political actors involved in the investigations, especially in the first phases of the investigation when official data cannot be available.

In any case, we observed some changes in the relationship between politics and the judiciary and how it finds in the Italian regions a favourable territory to evolve and address the Italian transition. Moreover, the analysis would support a classic argument: the corruption follows the power as the shadow follows the body. But it suggests a new feature: contemporary political leaders are weaker than ever.

In fact, even if new regional presidents could appear more powerful than in the past, they are now deprived of the armour of parties which had protected their predecessors. They could discover themselves suddenly fragile, because of the impossibility to avoid – and control – the attention of the mass media and magistracy.

Then, even if the modern Constitutions ‘armour’ the separation of powers, we are observing a strong mutation of the system of inter-institutional accountability, which undermines the cornerstone of Italian democracy. This trend started with the Tangentopoli scandal. Because of the crisis of the traditional parties and the role played by the media in shaping public opinion, the scandal gave the impression that the judiciary could serve as the keystone of the Italian transition and the moral improvement of politics. However, it is evident that high-level political corruption still represents one of the most difficult problems to eradicate in Italy, and that the earthquake of the early 1990s is a missed opportunity (della Porta and Vannucci 2007). We noticed, in fact, how the magistracy activity tries to highlight a widespread nature of illegal political activities, and how political corruption is more and more present at the regional level.

At the same time, judicial activism reflects how judges have adapted to a changing environment, embracing a new role. They are casting themselves as defenders of morality and rights and are intervening in political controversies more often than in the past. The rise of the political judge “is due in large part to the changing relationship between state and

society” (Guarnieri and Pederzoli 2002, 4) and to the inability of other institutions to solve problems effectively. Then, the rapid growth of demand for justice, the centrality of judicial institutions in the political arena attests that judicialisation of politics is a fundamental characteristic of the Italian political system. In such a scenario, the judicial activism represents one side of this phenomenon, revealing how judges are expanding their role and using courts as a stage for their struggles. As we have seen, in some cases the judicial activity has shed light on oiled corrupt systems which affect the different levels of government, political hue or geographical location, but this high activism has often fluctuating results. The latter contributes to install a lower confidence in citizens’ perceptions of the institutions, “strengthening the feeling of alienation and powerlessness in those who had banked on the M factor to clean up” (Calise 2016, 68).

Therefore, the optimism that accompanied the governors in the early 2000s seems to be a distant memory. Hence, the crisis of regionalism is linked to the *Governatori’s* one, and vice versa, with clear consequences on the Italian identity in the complex construction of a new republican system.

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Paola Bordandini – Geny Piotti

A Geography of “Identity” Trust in Italy

1. Introduction¹

Many sociologists and political scientists have deemed trust to be the foundation of social cohesion, political stability, social participation, government efficiency and democracy in general (Fukuyama 1995; La Porta et al. 1999; Newton 1999; Putnam 1993, 2000; Uslaner 1999, 2002). In several comparative studies, prominent economists have demonstrated that trust and social capital are essential for economic growth (Algan and Cahuc 2010; Guiso et al. 2006; Knack and Keefer 1997; Tabellini 2010; Whiteley 2000), health outcomes (Kawachi et al. 2008) and happiness (Bartolini and Sarracino 2014; Helliwell and Putnam 1995; Helliwell and Wang 2011). Other academics have gone further. For Luhmann, without trust “we couldn’t even get out of bed in the morning” (2000), while Baier (1986) equates trust with fresh air, saying that we only appreciate its importance when it is becoming scarce or polluted. Given the importance of trust in everyday life for democracy and the economy, it is crucial to analyse and monitor cases in which the level of trust is particularly low. Since the first comparative study carried out by Almond and Verba in 1963, Italy has been considered a case of low trust. The overall low levels of civic culture and trust in Italy have also emerged from analysis of several cross national surveys, such as the Eurobarometer, World Value Survey, European Social Survey and European Value Survey. However, since the unification of Italy is relatively recent (157 years ago) with respect to the preceding 1,400 years of fragmentation, any study of trust as a part of Italian political culture and democratic institutions needs to take cross-regional differences into account (Cartocci 2007, 2011; Caciagli 1988; Putnam 1993; Trigilia 1986; Tullio-Altan 1986).

The main aim of the paper is therefore to provide an up-to-date picture of trust in Italy as a whole and in its regions, and to highlight new trends after the political and economic transformations of the last ten years.

The chapter is organised as follows: the second section examines the definition of trust and considers in particular two main interpretations of trust relationships – that based on “calculation or strategy” and that based on “identity”. The identity-related definition will be used to analyse empirical results for Italy. The third section concentrates on trust in

¹ This chapter was written jointly by the authors. Paola Bordandini wrote the following sections: “Calculated Trust”, “Trust as Identity”, “Generalised Trust and Institutional Trust in Italy”, “The Present Geography of Trust in Italy”, and “Conclusion”. Geny Piotti wrote: “Introduction”, “The Concept of Trust: A Plurality of Definitions”, and “Trust Deficit and Sociocultural Backwardness”. The authors would like to thank Roberto Cartocci (University of Bologna) for his suggestions and comments.

Italy in comparison with other major European countries. The fourth section focuses on the geography of trust in Italy at regional level. The paper concludes by discussing the results of the foregoing analyses.

2. The Concept of Trust: A Plurality of Definitions

Despite and perhaps precisely because of the attention paid to the concept of trust, it is difficult to settle for a single definition. As the literature demonstrates, trust is an unavoidably polysemic term because the concept has been appraised from many different angles (Pelligra 2007).

For some authors trust is a personality trait (Rotter 1980), an affective attitude (Jones 1996); for others it is an act of faith (Simmel 1908), sometimes based on a conscious “leap of faith” (Giddens 1990) or a moral value (Uslaner 2002); others see it as the product of a “probability calculation” (Gambetta 1988) or a tendency for people sharing “encapsulated interests” to cooperate (Hardin 2002). Trust is thus variously defined as a social value, a social structure, a personal proclivity and a rational choice.

Most definitions of trust, however, share the idea that trust is linked to positive expectations about another’s behaviour, expectations that may regard an individual (trust in others) or a collective subject (trust in institutions).

The main difficulty in defining trust lies in understanding individual trust, or rather in defining what motivates trustworthy conduct and what gives rise to the expectation of trustworthy behaviour.

Two explanations of trust can normally be singled out in the trust literature: the first (calculated trust) emphasises the instrumental dimension of trust. The second (identity-related trust) is grounded in the dimension of values (Bordandini 2015; Cartocci 2002; Uslaner 2002). In more general terms, the various definitions of trust may be read through two very different analytical approaches: a rational choice and a values-based approach (Cartocci 2011; Tullio-Altan 1995b).

3. Calculated Trust

With calculated or strategic trust, we are in the world of bets, statistical inference and probability calculation. On a hypothetical continuum, this type of trust lies between complete certainty and total ignorance. Specific experience makes it possible to place oneself between the two extremes with a “reasonable” level of trust.

In relations of calculated trust, self-interest motivates both the truster (X) and the trusted (Y). In a short-term logic, Y, a rational trusted person would surely gain from betraying the trust accorded to him, but he may decide to act in a trustworthy way because he is interested in the benefits flowing from long-term relations with X. Obviously, in order to decide whether or not to trust, the truster engages in a thorough assessment of the risk involved in her/his trusting. This calculation is more arduous and complex when prior knowledge about Y is limited, when the stakes are high, when the interval between X’s action and Y’s response is long, and when the interests between them are less “encapsulated”. According to Hardin (2002) – for whom trust is solely strategic – trust requires encapsulated interests between

truster and trusted, while in strategic cooperation between persons who do not know each other but who belong to the same group or organisation, calculation of the trusted person's reliability is based mainly on his or her reputation.

Strategic trust always has an interpersonal nature, even when directed to an aggregate, be it a group or an institution. The logic of strategic trust in institutions is atomistic. Since institutions are perceived as the sum of their individual components, trust is not directed to an institution in itself but to the individuals who work in it. The choice of whether or not to trust an institution is born of a rational and instrumental assessment, dictated by a perception of the effectiveness and efficiency of actions carried out by the members of that institution. The monitoring of institutional performance is continuous, allowing one to revise one's decision to trust (Bordandini 2015).

4. Trust as Identity

In contrast to calculated trust, identity-related trust refers to the sphere of values of an individual, to his sense of belonging, to his identity² (Uslaner 2002). It is an irrational trust, not subject to calculation; it is a form of faith that cannot be justified on the basis of rational criteria. To analyse this second type of trust we must consider another continuum that extends from unconditional faith to distrust and cynicism³ (Bordandini 2015). Betrayal of this second type of trust, permeated and sustained by strong value bonds, generates a deep and painful sense of defeat and disillusionment (Hirschman 1970; Cartocci 2007). Identity trust is therefore “stable”, i.e. it is able to overcome contingent crises. If, however, it encounters total disenchantment, it is difficult to rebuild. When the identification is authentic – and authenticity is dictated by the absence of risk calculation – identity trust is blind, unconditional, independent of the stakes. We might say that the stakes that the truster is willing to risk provide a measure of his identification (Bordandini 2015).⁴

Identity trust is formed within a community and is grounded in shared morals and values. It is to a large extent determined by cultural models learnt from the various agencies of socialisation, which explains why certain social or regional entities enjoy more widespread trust than others (Fukuyama 1995). Moreover, since it influences the degree of openness to others, identity trust also affects social cohesion and moral responsibility towards others.

According to Putnam (1993, 196), reciprocity and trust, as central elements of social capital, regulate coexistence and the civic associative networks enjoyed within a certain social

² Simmel (1908) distinguishes between “to trust” and “to be confident”, pointing out that the state of being confident (unlike that of trusting) is based on a form of knowledge.

³ According to Hart (1988) trust is part of a continuum between confidence and faith. The intention of this article, in contrast, is to break this continuum into two separate dimensions. Strategic trust, as mentioned, is on a continuum between confidence and indifference, identity trust, on the other hand, is on a continuum between faith and cynicism.

⁴ Identity trust, as we said, emerges from a symbolic transfiguration process. The world of the symbolic is that of the “must be” of values, some of which underlie collective identities: “the symbolic experience is an experience in which the subject does not find himself counterpoised to the objectivity of the world, as in the transaction that aims at discerning the aspects useful to the continuance of life: [...] if the concept gives meaning to the object insofar as it is useful, the symbol gives meaning to the subject, offering itself as a value with which to identify and from which to receive inspiration and guidance to live morally in the world” (Tullio-Altan 1995, 45).

context or territory. A shared ethos – based on generalised reciprocity and honesty – lowers transaction costs, improves the quality of life, and facilitates institutional performance, security, economic well-being and social integration. On the contrary, the prevalence of untrusting, uncooperative and uninformed citizens has negative effects on the functioning of democratic institutions. Citizens' mistrust discourages proper control of the work of those who govern and therefore the development of effective policies; ultimately it hampers good performance of democratic institutions.

Since identity trust is directed to unknown persons, it is also referred to as generalised trust, "moral trust" or "social trust". In an identity framework, generalised trust is based on the idea that people share the same moral values and this leads them to avoid taking advantage of others. It is the trust that comes from the perception of "sharing a common destiny", beyond different political or religious beliefs (Uslaner 2002, 3). As Putnam (2000) also suggests, generalised identity trust also conditions political and social participation, social cohesion and interest in the "common good", i.e. all the prerequisites that citizens need to cooperate with each other and appropriately assess the choices made by those who govern them. Generalised trust, trust in institutions, political participation and institutional effectiveness are therefore considered to be closely linked and to reinforce each other (Putnam 1993; Stolle 2001; Tavits 2006).

Unlike strategic trust, institutional identity trust is directed to an institution as such, not to its members at a given time. This is possible because the institution – perceived as a whole, having a weight greater than the sum of its parts – has undergone symbolic transfiguration and become the bearer of values the truster identifies with (Cartocci 2002). Thus the impulse to trust is not linked to the contingent efficiency of institutions, but rather to the sense of identity that supports it.

Although the presence of viable democratic institutions enables citizens to satisfy their instrumental needs and those of belonging, it is above all the identity bond that guarantees stable support for institutional frameworks. Identity trust is thus a basis for democratic legitimacy, which ensures widespread support to institutions, even in times of crisis.

5. Trust Deficit and Sociocultural Backwardness

With regard to Italy, the debate on identity trust cannot be separated from sociocultural backwardness. According to Tullio-Altan (1986), this type of backwardness is a cultural model from past centuries that survives despite the social, political and institutional transformations that have taken place in the country over time. Three main characteristics (Tullio-Altan 1995b) of this backwardness are:

- a) over-emphasis of family-related interests and values;
- b) social behaviour characterised by absence of solidarity, social co-responsibility and concern for the common good;
- c) a general inclination towards passive fatalistic submission to ruling powers, as embodied in secular and ecclesiastical institutions.

These characteristics have been noted by major scholars since the 1950s. Based on the results of a nine-month empirical analysis in a small town in Basilicata, Banfield established the

notion of “amoral familism”, namely “the inability [of a community] to act together for their common good or, indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interest of the nuclear family” (Banfield 1958, 10). This cultural trait goes hand in hand with radical mistrust of others and of institutions, which hinders collective action and resists change.

According to *The Civic Culture*, a famous comparative study by Almond and Verba (1963), Italian political culture of the late 1950s was characterised by apathy, alienation, isolation and deep, widespread distrust. Because Italians tend to view the authorities and politics as threatening unpredictable forces rather than as institutions that citizens may influence; the two political scientists judged Italy as not yet sufficiently mature for the development of “good” democracy (Morlino 2011).

Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work* (1993) confirms previous research but underlines the strong divide between Italian central and northern regions and those in the south; the latter connoted by lower levels of civic tradition and trust. Two decades later, the literature substantially confirms this picture of interregional divergence in terms of trust, social capital and economic development (Cartocci 2007), despite the huge support to southern Italy by State intervention and European Union structural funds.

It is useful to ask whether this picture still describes Italy as properly as it did before. The economic and financial crisis of 2007 caused massive unemployment in Italy, especially among the young, and this has further exacerbated the relationship between citizens and institutions. Sudden changes related to the crisis also had an impact on the “virtuous regions”⁵ of the so-called “Third Italy” which have been increasingly subject to slow transformation of their political identity. Indeed, recent studies on the areas characterised by a “red” subculture have recorded a growing separation between political identity and traditional voting behaviour for left-wing parties (Baccetti and Messina 2009; Caciagli 2017). Finally, the financial crisis led to the collapse of long-standing, trusted banks such as *Monte dei Paschi di Siena* and brought to light widespread mismanagement of public resources and corruption. The question that needs to be answered is whether contingent and structural transformations in Italy in recent years had an impact on trusting behaviours, and if so, how. In the following sections, we illustrate how the two components of identity trust, i.e. generalised and institutional trust, have developed recently and investigate the extent to which regional traits are still distinctive.

⁵ Basically, the traditionally left-wing central Italian regions of Emilia-Romagna, Marche, Toscana, and Umbria characterised by a strong political subculture, higher level of generalised trust and better democratic quality.

6. Generalised Trust and Institutional Trust in Italy

Based on comparative data from the European Values Study (EVS) and the World Values Survey (WVS), Table 1 compares identity trust measured as the percentage of respondents expressing trust in others⁶ and in fellow citizens in Italy and western Europe (the so called EU15).⁷ The data also makes it possible to compare the ratios of generalised trust at the first and last surveys considered (1990 and 2009, respectively), as well as the difference between Italy and the European average.

According to this data, the gap between Italy and the European average with respect to trust in “people in general” was 6.8%. With respect to trust in fellow citizens, the difference was considerably higher (21.5%). This generalised distrust has increased more in Italy than in the other EU15 countries (– 6.7%). Not only are Italians among the five European peoples that trust others the least (generalised trust slightly above 30%), but they are also those with the lowest percentages of trust in their fellow citizens (slightly above 42%, compared with a European average of 64%). Thus, whereas Portugal, France and Luxembourg compensate for low trust in others with an accentuated sense of national identity, Italy even struggles to consider itself a nation, showing an even greater degree of distrust.

Table 1.

Generalised trust (average percentage from 1990 to 2008 and percentage difference between 2008 and 1990) and trust in fellow citizens (average percentage from 1990 to 1999) in Italy and in the Europe of Fifteen (EU15)

Country	Generalised trust: average % (1990–2008)	Generalised trust: % difference 2008–1990	Trust in fellow citizens: average % (1990–1999*)
Portugal	17.1	– 4.5	76.6
Greece	22.5	– 2.4**	–
France	22.6	4.4	59.0
Luxembourg	27.9	6.3**	65.7
Italy	31.8	– 4.5	42.5
Spain	31.9	0.1	57.8

⁶ We assume that the survey data captures identity trust. To measure generalised trust as a part of identity trust, we concentrate on answers to the question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” The question is formulated in such a way that respondents should not normally think of specific persons they know and are therefore not tempted to answer on the basis of a calculation of their trustworthiness. Likewise, institutional trust is studied by asking respondents how much they trust institutions of different kinds (e.g. the parliament, the police, local government). Although certain authors (e.g. Hardin 2002) have pointed out that respondents may answer with persons they know or have heard of in mind (e.g. the local member of parliament, the neighbourhood policemen, a specific local government councillor), we argue that the question focuses on institutions and not on single representatives of institutions in order to elicit prevalently value-based rather than instrumental assessments (Offe 1999).

⁷ The EU15, i.e. the members of the EU in 2004, comprised the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Country	Generalised trust: average % (1990–2008)	Generalised trust: % difference 2008–1990	Trust in fellow citizens: average % (1990–1999*)
Belgium	32.2	1.1	51.4
Austria	34.0	5.0	75.5
Germany	35.8	5.9	72.4
Great Britain	36.1	– 3.4	61.2
Ireland	40.8	– 8.5	80.9
The Netherlands	54.5	8.2	56.9
Finland	58.7	2.0	73.9
Denmark	65.9	18.3	81.1
Sweden	67.3	4.6	74.9
Total (EU15 average)	38.6	2.2	64.0
Italy – EU15 average	– 6.8	– 6.7	– 21.5

* In 1999, trust in fellow citizens was gathered in only 5/15 EU countries: Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Britain.

** Percentage difference calculated between 2008 and 1999.

Source: The author's calculations based on data from the European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS) (1990–2009)

The lack of universalist-national identity trust is an indicator of the Italians' difficulty in promoting solidarity and social co-responsibility. This weakness is also flanked by a lack of trust in democratic institutions. Trust in institutions, albeit based on an assessment of their performance, has a large identity, as distinct from instrumental components.⁸

Table 2.

Trust in various institutions in the Europe of Fifteen (EU15) – average percentages of trust between 1990 and 2009

Country	% trust in the Parliament (1990–2009)	% trust in local governments (1990–2009)	% trust in the army (1990–2009)	% trust in the police (1990–2009)	% trust in the judicial system (1990–2009)	% trust in the Church* (2008–2009)
Austria	37.1	41.6	37.1	70.4	63.4	35.5
Belgium	41.2	48.3	41.4	59.2	44.7	35.5
Denmark	53.5	57.8	59.5	90.3	81.7	62.8
Finland	41.2	42.7	78.6	87.2	71.2	47.0
France	44.0	52.8	65.3	70.0	49.9	42.5

⁸ In particular, Offe (1999) argues that when asked to express how much they trust a particular institution, individuals are actually only providing a general opinion on its efficiency.

Country	% trust in the Parliament (1990–2009)	% trust in local governments (1990–2009)	% trust in the army (1990–2009)	% trust in the police (1990–2009)	% trust in the judicial system (1990–2009)	% trust in the Church* (2008–2009)
Germany	32.7	36.3	46.6	66.8	53.2	32.4
Great Britain	34.9	45.4	83.3	72.1	52.9	38.1
Greece	28.3	20.4	70.3	41.8	47.3	54.8
Ireland	44.1	61.3	65.6	81.4	51.1	56.5
Italy	32.9	33.9	59.8	71.5	37.7	65.6
Luxembourg	64.9	64.3	55.1	72.9	64.5	40.9
The Netherlands	45.9	38.4	41.9	66.3	52.1	35.7
Portugal	42.9	46.4	67.2	64.3	44.7	74.9
Spain	45.0	40.7	46.4	59.5	46.6	33.0
Sweden	51.4	50.5	47.0	76.5	64.4	40.1
EU15 average	40.2	43.5	57.7	70.8	55.8	45.8
Italy–EU15 difference	– 7.3	– 9.6	2.1	2.0	– 18.0	19.8

* For the Church, only EVS and WVS surveys between 2008 and 2009 were considered, so as not to include variations in the average caused by secularisation.

Source: The author's calculations based on EVS and WVS data

Table 2 shows the level of trust in institutions such as the Parliament, local governments, church, army, police and judicial system in 15 European countries.

This comparative data indicates that trust in institutions in Italy focuses mainly on the Church and institutions concerned with public order, the latter, however, having a very high average. In contrast, trust accorded to the Parliament and the legal and judicial system is still very low (18 points below the average).

Since identity trust in institutions is also closely linked to institutional legitimacy, i.e. to the authority that institutions are able to exert and to the widespread support they generate, identity trust can also be measured empirically through the level of satisfaction with how democracy is functioning.



Figure 1.
 The percentage of respondents who declared they were (very or fairly) 'satisfied' with democracy in Germany, Spain, France, Italy and Great Britain between 1973 and 2012

Source: The author's calculations based on Eurobarometer data

According to Figure 1, based on Eurobarometer data, Italy showed the lowest satisfaction with democracy in the survey period, far below the other four major European countries. Although satisfaction with democracy improved in the first decade of the new millennium, since 2011 dissatisfaction percentages have increased to 70% of the respondents.

7. The Present Geography of Trust in Italy

High levels of dissatisfaction, lack of identification of Italian citizens with Italian institutions, the legitimacy of political institutions and a prevalence of mistrust seem to persist even in recent times. However, national data may hide regional differences, since the unification of Italy after centuries of political division, in which the Holy See exerted great influence on much of the country, is relatively recent. Moreover, the so-called Third Italy (Bagnasco 1977) has traditionally been characterised by the development of political subcultures⁹ that produced a high degree of political and social participation, interpersonal and institutional trust, voter loyalty, strong work ethic and a deep sense of local identity (Caciagli 1988, 2017; Trigilia 1986). Finally, even the later success of the Lega Nord has a strong territorial connotation, traditionally successful in northern Italy. These established regional differences in political culture can also be assumed to produce differences in the geography of trust in Italy in recent times. To obtain a more differentiated picture of trust in Italy and its recent development, we show how (mis)trust is distributed among the Italian regions.

To do so, we base our analysis on the classification of Italian macro-regions developed by the Istituto Cattaneo of Bologna in the 1960s. This classification has proved to account for the main trends in political culture in recent years (Cartocci 1990). Our analysis divides Italy geographically into five areas: Northwest (Piedmont, Valle d'Aosta, Liguria, Lombardy), Northeast (Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia), Centre-North or "red zone" (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria and Marche), Centre-South (Lazio, Abruzzo and Sardinia) and South (Molise, Basilicata, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily).

Table 3 shows the distribution of generalised trust and other classic indicators of political and social participation by macro-region. The other indicators include newspaper reading, participation in political discussions and donations to volunteer organisations. The data is drawn from the multipurpose household surveys ("Aspects of daily life") conducted by the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) in the period 2010–2012, which include more than 142,000 respondents.

The question used by ISTAT to explore trust in others is similar to that suggested by the World Value Survey and the European Value Study. However, since the ISTAT data is based on a bigger sample,¹⁰ the results presented here can be considered statistically more solid, and therefore suitable for cross-regional analysis.

⁹ The "red" subculture was due to the political weight of the Italian Communist Party in central Italy. The "white" subculture is associated with the strong Christian Democrat tradition in the north-eastern part of the country.

¹⁰ The World Value Survey and the European Value Study surveyed about 1,000 to 2,000 individuals per country, respectively, on each occasion. Unfortunately, the data in the database is only available for a restricted time horizon, which reduces the possibility of distinguishing between stock and trend of institutional trust.

Table 3.

Generalised trust (average percentage from 2010 to 2012) and some political and social participation indicators (average percentage from 2010 to 2012) in Italy by macro-region – correlation coefficients (r) between generalised trust and the other variables

Macro-regions	Regions	% of generalised trust (average 2010–2012)	% of who do not read newspapers (average 2010–2012)	% of who do not talk about politics (average 2010–2012)	% of who donate money to volunteer organisations (average 2010–2012)
Northwest	Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta	24.3	32.3	33	20
	Lombardy	23.8	35.5	30.3	23.3
	Liguria	27.7	34.7	29.2	17.8
Northeast	Trentino-Alto Adige	36.4	19.5	22.5	34.7
	Veneto	22.2	32.7	28.2	22.3
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	27.3	29.4	28.2	24.2
Centre-North	Emilia-Romagna	22.3	35.5	32.2	23.2
	Tuscany	22.2	35.1	34.6	23.3
	Umbria	21.0	45.4	38.4	17.9
	Marche	20.0	43.6	40.0	18.6
Centre-South	Lazio	23.9	40.1	31.5	14.1
	Abruzzo	20.2	47.3	41.1	12.6
	Molise	17.3	55.4	45.3	11.4
	Sardinia	22.3	27.9	30.1	19.4
South	Campania	15.8	56.8	43.8	6.7
	Apulia	16.6	54	47.1	9.4
	Basilicata	15.1	58.2	47.7	13.8
	Calabria	18.3	52.2	48.6	10.4
	Sicily	14.9	54.6	48.7	7.1
Total Italy		21.7	41.2	36.6	17.4
		142,409	142,409	142,409	142,409
Correlation coefficients (r) between generalised trust and the other variables		1	– 0.895(*)	– 0.891(*)	0.859(*)

* Correlation is significant at 0.01 (2-tailed *p*-test)

Source: The author's calculations based on ISTAT data: “Multiscopo, Aspects of daily life”

At first sight, the data seems to confirm the persistence of a low level of trust in Italy as a whole, with regional differences indicated by the decreasing trend in trust in others from North to South. In Trentino-Alto Adige, generalised trust resembles that of central European countries reflected by the WVS and EVS data (36%), whereas in the rest of the North and Centre-North, generalised trust is clearly lower (22–27%), and in the South it is extremely low (16–17%).

The data also confirms the high correlations between trust in others and the indicators of political participation (Table 3). Those who do not trust people in general tend not to read newspapers or talk about politics. In contrast, trust in others is positively correlated with donation of money to volunteer organisations ($r = 0.86$). Therefore, it is not surprising that in the Northwest and Northeast about 70% of the respondents (80% in Trentino-Alto Adige) declare that they read newspapers at least once a week and often discuss politics with others. These percentages drop to 60–65% in the Centre and are lowest in the South (40–50%). The share of those who donate to volunteer organisations also decreases progressively from North to South.

The data on generalised trust also suggests that regional differences, especially between the Centre-North and South, continue to characterise the present Italian geography of trust. Our study therefore basically confirms past results in the literature.

Table 4.

Trust in various institutions in Italy by macro-region – average percentages of trust between 2011 and 2013 on a 0–10 scale

Macro-regions	Regions	% of trust in the Parliament (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in the judicial system (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in political parties (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in the police and the fire service (average 2012–2013)	% of trust in local governments (average 2012–2013)
Northwest	Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta	3.3	4.4	2.4	7.3	4.4
	Lombardy	3.4	4.2	2.4	7.4	4.2
	Liguria	3.8	4.7	2.8	7.4	4.2
Northeast	Trentino-Alto Adige	3.2	4.5	2.8	7.5	5.3
	Veneto	3.1	4.0	2.1	7.4	4.2
	Friuli Venezia Giulia	3.3	4.2	2.3	7.5	4.6
Centre-North	Emilia-Romagna	3.4	4.3	2.4	7.5	4.5
	Tuscany	3.5	4.5	2.4	7.3	4.2
	Umbria	3.4	4.3	2.4	7.2	3.9
	Marche	3.4	4.2	2.2	7.4	4.0
Centre-South	Lazio	3.6	4.4	2.4	7.2	3.5
	Abruzzo	3.6	4.3	2.4	7.4	3.9
	Molise	3.6	4.6	2.6	7.2	3.6
	Sardinia	3.1	4.5	2.0	7.2	3.4

Macro-regions	Regions	% of trust in the Parliament (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in the judicial system (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in political parties (average 2011–2013)	% of trust in the police and the fire service (average 2012–2013)	% of trust in local governments (average 2012–2013)
South	Campania	3.6	4.6	2.6	6.8	3.4
	Apulia	3.6	4.6	2.4	7.0	3.7
	Basilicata	3.7	4.5	2.5	6.9	3.5
	Calabria	3.5	4.6	2.4	6.8	3.3
	Sicily	3.4	4.8	2.1	7.3	3.2
Total Italy		3.4	4.4	2.4	7.3	3.9
N		140,388	140,388	140,388	92,779	92,779

Source: The author's calculations based on ISTAT data: “Multiscopo, Aspects of daily life”

However, at second glance, some differences, especially in terms of institutional trust, could pave the way for future changes. Table 4 shows levels of trust in the Parliament, the judicial system, political parties, the police and fire services, and local governments by macro-region.¹¹

According to this data, only the police and fire services have managed to gain the citizens' trust all over the country. Moreover, if we exclude local institutions such as municipalities, provinces and regional governments, the level of trust in the institutions of democracy seems very low in all areas. Even in the Centre-North regions traditionally characterised by high levels of generalised and institutional trust, the latter has declined and is approaching the lower values of the South.

Disarticulation of regional political subcultures, both “red” and “white”, may have radically altered the characteristics of social integration, institutional legitimacy and efficient policies in those areas, opening the way for deep and steady deterioration of trust and the virtual circle it was once able to generate. What is striking, however, is that the decline in institutional trust in relatively “trusting” regions seems to be unrelated to the development of generalised trust in the same regions.

8. Conclusion

In this study we analysed the concept of trust by comparing trust as “calculation” with trust as “identity”. While calculated trust is grounded in the principle of utility, identity trust is based on the sharing of values that takes on different characteristics according to whether the trustee is known (particularist trust) or unknown (universalist-generalised trust).

After clarifying the difference between these two interpretations of the concept of trust, we analysed identity trust in Italy, focusing on generalised trust, indicators of “diffuse

¹¹ This data also comes from ISTAT “Multiscopo” surveys (“Aspects of daily life”) and relies on samples of more than 140,000 individuals for the period 2011–2013 and over 92,000 for the years 2012 and 2013.

support” (Easton 1975) and institutional trust, by comparing Italy with other European countries and by highlighting interregional differences within Italy.

Compared with other EU countries, Italy shows a clear deficit of generalised trust, little trust in its institutions and limited institutional legitimacy, which in turn are deemed to affect participation in political life, social cohesion, interest in the common good and the quality of democracy.

While this result mainly confirms other reports in the literature, our intra-national analysis brings a new picture to light. In the past, such studies showed sharp differences between the main macro-areas of Italy. Compared to the work of Robert Putnam in the early 1990s, we find a steady downward levelling of intra-national differences. Although differences between the North and South in terms of generalised trust and political and social participation are still evident, the most recent trend concerning trust in institutions shows that the difference between the South and the traditionally more civic areas (“Third Italy” and the Northwest) have been drastically reduced, if not eliminated.

Mistrust has been perpetuated in Italy through long-standing networks of patronage and cronyism. People have increasingly viewed patronage-like behaviour and short-radius trust as a necessity for survival. A sense of moral responsibility towards other persons is an unaffordable luxury for many, for others a childish illusion once nurtured by ideological incrustations that have now disappeared.

The analysis presented in this article shows that these cultural phenomena, which were considered to be more widespread in the South, may become increasingly common in other more civic Italian regions as a consequence of the economic and financial crisis and the transformation of political subcultures. At the moment, institutional trust seems to have decreased significantly without excessively affecting generalised trust. However, it is unclear whether erosion of trust in democratic institutions will have repercussions on people’s capacity for social cohesion and fostering responsibility towards others.

Be that as it may, good democracy presupposes interpersonal trust that extends beyond the restricted circle of relatives, friends and clientele and institutional trust capable of supporting the democratic system through difficult times and even times of economic crisis.

In case of Italy, growth of trust requires institutions capable of ensuring rights, imposing duties, countering favouritism and promoting equality among citizens. Italians need to be able to perceive democratic institutions as close and reliable. It is the task of politics to see to it that these institutions arouse a feeling of loyalty, cooperation and respect, if not identification. This means investing in policies that can overcome social and cultural backwardness. It means re-establishing the framework of daily interactions between the State and citizens under the aegis of good governance, public ethics and participation.

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Lorenzo Castellani

Administrative Traditions Matter

Continuity and Change in the Italian Civil Service: From Post-war to the Twenty-first Century

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyse Italian administrative reforms made after the Second World War. The work focuses on the changes of the civil service, the bureaucracy which works in the central and local government and performs administrative tasks, considering in particular the evolution of ideas, rules, organisation and policy-making process.

An appreciation of history is essential to understand public administration (Melis 1996; Raadschelders 2000; Painter and Peters 2010), and most of the works on this issue do not take it into account very much (Borgonovi and Ongaro 2011; Natalini 2006). To have an in-depth knowledge of the Italian civil service in the 2000s, it is fundamental to reconstruct the state-building process through history, beginning from the creation of the unitary State in the mid-19th century and tracing all major organisational changes and path-breaking reforms from that moment until the 2000s.

In the first part of the paper I analyse the history of the Italian central bureaucracy before the Second World War, enhancing the sedimentation of the administrative traditions that will have shaped the characteristics of the civil service later on; in the second part I offer a historical picture of the Italian civil service from post-war to 1990s; in the third, I look at administrative reforms of the 1990s and 2000s, highlighting benefits and disadvantages of these reforms; and in the conclusions, I outline the historical ‘persistence’ that has characterised the politico-administrative system and how it has shaped the administrative organisation and the policy paradigm of the Italian civil service.

2. Within the Origins of the State: The History of the Italian Civil Service before the Post-war Constitution

Over the more than 150 years since the unification of the country, many changes have occurred in the Italian political system (constitutional monarchy, mass democracy, fascism, democratic republic). Compared with these enormous changes, the administrative system has remained

relatively insulated from the political domain, in the double sense of its connections with the latter and of being tempted to exert a political role itself (Lewansky 2000).

The first significant administrative reform dates back to the Piedmont reign in 1853 when a law separated the political role from the administrative one. The ministers and political personnel were directly appointed by the King. They were in charge of directing public administration and taking care of both policy-making and implementation, and they were solely accountable to Parliament for their activities. This model established a *Segretario Generale*, generally a political man who acted as a bridge between the minister and the bureaucracy. Civil servants were directed by both ministers and the secretary general. In 1888 the *Segretario Generale* was abolished and a void was created in the relationship between politics and administration. The role was filled by a figure “similar to the British parliamentary secretary” (Lewansky 2000, 231), whose powers were decided upon by the minister. At the beginning of the 20th century another position was created to coordinate political and administrative power, the *Direttore Generale* (General Director), which became an increasingly independent and less political role, at least in appearances. However, despite the innovation introduced by the 1853 law, the administrative and political elites remained very close to each other. Personal ties and political membership were used as tools to occupy higher echelons of the administrative system. These characteristics were progressively weakened by the unitary state; indeed, by the end of the 19th century, civil servants were recruited from different areas and social classes because the public administration could no longer be managed simply through patronage among the Piedmont elites (Melis 1996).

Mixed careers, political and administrative, were still possible until around 1890, but later on they became increasingly rare. With the two important exceptions of the Giolitti Government in the first decade of the 20th century and the Nitti Government in the 1920s, where there were high levels of technocrats involved as ministers, the cases of ministers coming from high administrative echelons became less frequent (Sepe et al. 2007).

The functions of the administration began growing in complexity beginning in the 1880s, and a process of professionalisation was set up; new and more qualified civil servants were required: doctors, geographers, statisticians, engineers, accountants and lawyers. In 1882 the *Genio Civile* was created, a civilian engineering corps inspired by military administration and by the French model of the technical grand corps. The statistical service represented another example of these attempts to professionalise the bureaucracy of the young Italian State (Melis 1996). Until the end of the 19th century public administration was still permeated by organisational theory, which exerted some influence on the training of civil servants. In this period Italian bureaucracy still had a professional orientation and a dedication to efficient and effective organisation (Lewansky 2000).

It was with the new century that the influence of legal theory founded by V. E. Orlando in the 1880s made the legalistic paradigm predominant in Italian public administration (Dente 1988). A law degree was required to access the higher civil service. The activity of the public administration was completely legalised through the notion of ‘administrative act’ (Melis 1996, 13). Technical careers lost importance and influence, and civil servants became interpreters of laws and regulations. The system established in the 1860s with the creation of the account bodies such as the *Corte dei Conti* and *Ragioneria Generale dello Stato* implemented this legalistic approach through the principle of the formal legitimacy of decisions, and it determined a loss of responsibility on the part of the administration

(especially the parallel administrations, created by the beginning of the 20th century, that escaped centralised accountability and financial control). In this period legalism became the dominant characteristic of the Italian administrative system. As Dente (1988, 5) argues, “Administrative law—based on procedural legitimacy, pervasiveness of preventive controls, uniform interpretation of provisions, distribution of tasks by law, lack of discretion—actually is Italian administrative culture.” Both the political and administrative posts were a ‘monopoly by jurists’ (Guarnieri 1988). Italian bureaucrats considered their job as applying and interpreting precisely laws and regulations and not as obtaining results (Putnam 1975). Thus policies which found the opposition by civil servants were sabotaged, creating implementation problems and failures. Indeed, the legalistic culture constituted an effective protection that allows civil servants to defend themselves from intrusions from the outside and in a way to strengthen their positioning. The history of public administration in Italy can be seen as the history of the progressive institutionalisation of a hegemonic paradigm which, alongside the jurisdictional development of the nation state, was based upon administrative law.

The growing dimensions of ministries and the new legislation, established in 1908, which aimed to protect public employees against the interferences from the political sphere made it increasingly difficult for the ministers to overcome obstacles to organise the administrative machine and to direct the personnel they were in charge of. The policy “security (of tenured) in return for less power” between civil service and politics began. The government provided guarantees and long-life jobs to civil servants but it excluded them from most of the decisions and policy-making processes.

During the Fascist regime politics and administration remained substantially separated. The regime aimed to select civil servants who did not oppose it. The political executive became dominant and prominent in policy-making, and the civil service was subordinated to it, but the party’s ideology did not colonise the administration. This independence was guaranteed by the Crown and by the conception of the administration as politically neutral, shared by documents of the *Consiglio di Stato*, a liberal ideology institution (Guarnieri 1988, 75). The regime imposed a compulsory membership to the party for every civil servant, but this rule did not imply a real selection of those who ideologically supported fascism (Guarnieri 1988, 76). The hierarchical organisation of the regime was empowered in 1923 by the De Stefani reform. The regime won a consensus among civil servants by offering stability and status, the latter fed up with the ‘absolute State’ rhetoric and theory. This policy for the civil service, namely ‘few powers and many guarantees’ (Cassese 1984, 37), will have been applied even further during the Republic and used as one of the techniques to maintain the prominence of political parties over public administration in policy-making processes.

The regime applied an extreme spoils system, based on trust by Mussolini and his inner circle and ideological commitment, only for the role of the *prefetti*, who were the guardians of public security on the periphery. However, the prefects remained a separate institution from the Fascist party and they were not included in the party’s hierarchy. During the Fascist era, they developed very much as parallel administrations. Parallel administrations were entities separated from both the central and local administrative bodies which managed socio-economic policies. Here the situation differed. For parallel administrations which operated in the welfare field, a political spoils system was applied to remunerate the regime’s friends, but the economic–financial agencies established by Alberto Beneduce, such as IMI

and IRI, were often led by managers coming from the private sector and staffed by highly specialised technocrats.

The Fascist period was a path-breaking period in the relationships between the political and the bureaucratic systems, based on mutual non-interference in each other's functions. The maintenance of a certain level of autonomy from the regime by the public administration fostered the idea that bureaucracy represented the core of the state, whatever the political regime of the moment might be (Guarnieri 1988).

2.1. Post-war Italy: state structure and administrative system

Let us begin on post-war civil service with the analysis of the constitutional background of the relation between government and administration. This is ambiguous because, historically, several models are superimposed upon one another, while the Constitution does not make a clear choice.

The 1948 Constitution accepts the parliamentary model, according to which the administration is an organisation that serves the government, which is put in charge and responsible for them. After having established in Article 94 that "the government must have the confidence of the two Chambers", the Constitution lays down in the following article that ministers are responsible for the acts of their ministries. On the other hand, in Articles 97 and 98, the Constitution seems to design a different structure in favour of a conception of the administration as a set of offices in the service of the community. It is established in these articles that the first fundamental principle of the public administration is impartiality, and they contain norms that aim at avoiding the political influence induced by the presence of the government at the top of the administration. Second, it is written that "civil servants are in the exclusive service of the nation". With this approach, having recourse to a term extraneous to the Italian juridical tradition and to the constitutional lexicon itself, the idea of the civil servant as 'the Crown's servant' is abandoned (Cassese 1984).

Article 95 establishes that organisations, functions and numbers of ministries have to be determined by a law of Parliament. This legal principle introduces a high level of rigidity, limiting the autonomy of the Head of the Government to manage directly the organisation of the administrative offices in the central government.

Furthermore, the Constitution of 1948 aimed to decentralise the historically centralised and hierarchical model as shaped by the Napoleonic administrative tradition, created a decentralised (regionalised) unitary state. The creation of the 20 Regions prescribed by the Constitution, five regions with 'special statute' and 15 with 'ordinary statute', remained to a large extent unrealised until the 1970s. Furthermore, the persistence of the hierarchical and centralised structure has remained evident in the central ministries in Rome and their subnational administrative units, in particular at the level of the 109 provinces. For the latter, a key role was played by the *Prefettura* (prefectures), which were established historically from the French department structure, as well as the *prefetti* appointed by and hierarchically subordinate to the central government. An attempt to overhaul the centralised State was made only in the late 1990s after a deep domestic political crisis triggered by corruption scandals (Mani Pulite) and the collapse of the worn-out party system in the early 1990s, by transferring administrative tasks downwards with a process of administrative decentralisation.

In the new Article 117, the Constitution modified in 2001 went so far as to stipulate that “administration is generally a matter of the municipalities”, thus introducing a subsidiarity principle that aimed to devolve a general competence for most of the administrative tasks to *Comuni* (municipalities), the local self-government. Moreover, the reform assigned more functions to the Regions, especially in public service management. However, on the level of the provinces, state administration continues under the supervision of the central government-appointed *prefetto*. The 2001 Constitutional Reform was confusing: it had multiplied levels of sub-national government (Regions, Provinces, Metropolitan Areas and municipalities), it has created disorder in the distribution of functions among different levels of government, and it has laid down the basis for a ‘constitutional conflict’ on legislative and administrative functions between regions and the central government that has to be solved, case by case, by the Constitutional Court. Moreover, the strong organisational and functional importance which the central government still has in the sub-national areas is expressed by the fact that even today more than 55% of the entire public personnel force are employed by the State rather than by local government levels (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014).

3. A New Republican Administration: Continuity and Changes from the 1950s to the 1970s

The reforms, especially at legislative level, in the post-war period were considerable. Following the historical periodisation made by Cassese (1984), we can identify four different reforms from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The first is the regulation of the administrative class, articulated in career levels. In 1954, Decree No. 1181 of 20 December 1954 delegated the government to legislate on the civil service, and with the Decree of the President of the Republic No. 3, this reform, a unified text concerning the statute of civil servants, became effective. This law established new guarantees for civil servants. The essential part of this statute remained, but it was afterwards partly reviewed by Decree No. 1077 and No. 1079 and with Act No. 310 of 11 July 1980, which attempted to modernise the structure of the central public administration.

The second reform established, among civil servants of the administrative class, a higher category called ‘*dirigenza*’ (managerial level) and it was subdivided into five levels, of which only three could be found in all the ministries (*primo dirigente*, *dirigente superiore*, *dirigente generale*). Here, a difference between lower and higher civil service was set up, with the latter receiving its own differential statute (while the lower was still regulated by the 1956 unified text of law).

The 1972 decree assigned to the senior civil service, and in particular to the directors general, autonomous powers of supervision and coordination, decision-making and control. These duties had to be fulfilled within the guidelines set by the minister, based on lists of acts to be presented by the senior civil servants to the minister. The minister could then overrule, amend or reform the acts of directors general.

A third change regards human resources and turnover. Indeed, with the 1972 reform of the ‘*dirigenza*’ and with Act No. 335 of 14 August 1974, the ‘voluntary leave’ from the civil service was stimulated with a retire-in-advance policy. Important economic incentives of various types were launched, such as a pension higher than the last salary received, in

order to induce civil servants to retire in advance. These regulations had a great impact on the public administration. In fact, a wide process of personnel renewal was undertaken in the 1970s. Robert Putnam (1975) calculated that 95% of the Italian civil servants who had entered the civil service before the Second World War, by the end of the 1970s, would have entirely retired.

The fourth and last reform of this period was a new institutional relationship between the Parliament and the civil service, which led to a great opening of the public administration. Indeed, parliamentary regulations were emended (Article 143 Chamber and Article 47 Senate) to provide for the hearing of higher civil servants by Parliamentary Committees. This was a sign of the crisis of ministerial responsibility, of the weaknesses of the governments owing to political instability compared with the continuity and the 'ossification' in the higher echelons of the public administration (Cassese 1999).

However, these changes did not transform the model of relations between politics and the civil service. In the post-1945 period, the Italian administrative-political system has been shaped by the influence of political parties. One sign of this control is that the weakness and instability of governments have always been determined by the control of parties' secretariats over the executive power.

The turnover in human resources did not change this model. Indeed, beyond the physical structure, there was a continuity owing to the common territorial origin; as Cassese underlined in the 1960s the number of southerners within the senior ranks of the civil service rose to 84%, to preserve an old and gerontocratic model in the career's framework. Furthermore, the two main policies of the 1970s (*exodus* and *dirigenza*) could be seen in two very different ways (Cassese 1984, 44). On the one hand, these measures marked the reaction of the political class against a civil service which, by the 1960s, advocated for an acceleration of the administrative process of decision and of public expenditure. On the other hand, they can be interpreted as a compensation policy, chosen by the political class through the higher civil service, which had been 'hollowed out' of a considerable number of competencies with the creation of the regions (1970). Hence, party patronage provided the long-life tenured post for loyal followers. Although entrance into the civil service is officially regulated via formal examinations, the majority of new civil servants did not pass that formal route, but a political one based on electoral loyalty.

Furthermore, all these attempts to reform public administration found implementation failures.

Indeed, higher civil servants never made use of the autonomous powers assigned to them. On the one hand, senior officials preferred not to take responsibility for autonomous acts to be submitted to the minister. On the other hand, laws continued to provide for a majority of decisions to be taken through ministerial decrees. Very few directives were ever passed; they had vague objectives; the lists of acts to be communicated to the minister were never prepared; and, in consequence, ministers did not have to overrule, amend or reform any proposals from the directors general. Moreover, private offices of ministers continued to expand their prerogatives and to invade the sphere of competence of the civil service.

A similar failure characterised the new human resource management. In 1978 (six years after the redefinition of senior civil servants' career) there were made some attempts to set up the Advanced School of Public Administration, but the envisaged competitive entry and training periods were quickly replaced by short non-competitive training courses

under the management of individual ministries. Competitive selection based on merit was never applied, and the old method of promotion linked to length of service was continued (Melis 1996). Moreover, the provisions for external recruitment were never implemented. The selection of outside directors general for two-year periods was never carried out, while the appointment of outside candidates to permanent positions numbered fewer than a dozen cases in the first ten years of the implementation of the law (Cassese 1999, 61).

3.1. The 1980s: an age of missed opportunities

The 1980s can be considered an age of missed opportunities. In 1979, the most prominent public administration scholar in Italy, Massimo Severo Giannini, at the time Minister of Public Administration, drafted a report named *Rapporto sui principali problemi dell'Amministrazione dello Stato*,¹ which was then presented to a special parliamentary committee for administrative reforms.

The proposals made by Giannini aimed to change substantially the Italian civil service with a wide plan of privatisations, agencification, better coordination in central government, organisation and planning, contractualisation of public servants, introduction of productivity and performance indicators and devolution of competencies to Regions.

However, the Report was never implemented and Professor Giannini was dismissed as minister by the following Government settled in 1980.

This decade was characterised by many important studies in the field of public administration made within institutions: *Rapporto Giannini* in 1979, CNR's project on the organisation and functioning of public administration in 1985 and a study on the organisation of ministries made by Formez. However, in practical terms there had not been any advancement for the modernisation of the Italian civil service and the old vices of administrative system resurfaced stronger than ever.

Indeed, the number of public employees increased substantially and the number of senior civil servants grew to 7,400, the highest in Europe. Most of these new public servants were selected through patronage and clientelistic practices and not by a meritocratic examination.

Moreover, during this period there was a massive clientelism as Sabino Cassese writes, "it can be estimated that, in 1973–90, about 350,000 people were recruited without entrance exams, and then had their posts made permanent by 12 special laws. In the same period, in the same administration, about 250,000 people were recruited through regular exams. It seems therefore that titularisation is the predominant way of entry into the civil service"² (Cassese 1993, 325). The public sector also provided a social function. This was the function of alleviating social pressures "from below", from unemployed or insecure social categories of the population. Relevant examples included graduates of law, political science and faculties of humanities, high-school graduates without university education and internal migrants. The function consisted in offering them job opportunities in the

¹ Giannini, Massimo Severo. *Rapporto sui principali problemi dell'Amministrazione dello Stato*. Sent to Parliament on 16 November 1979.

² Titularisation involves hiring personnel to meet temporary labour shortages in the public sector and then granting this temporary personnel the status of civil servant or its equivalent (i.e. permanent job contracts).

public sector, during periods of rising unemployment or just before the conduct of general elections (Sotiropoulos 2004, 36).

Moreover, in the 1980s, the role of the Presidenza del Consiglio was strengthened. The employees in Palazzo Chigi were 63 in 1948, 300 in 1963 and they grew up to 800 in 1980. Between 1981 and 1988 the Presidenza was reorganised and new departments and offices were created. This transformation was definitely confirmed by the legislative Decree 400/1988 which strengthened the coordinating role of the President in the Cabinet and it established new departments and sub-governmental offices. With Decree 400/1988, policy-making became more centralised into the Presidenza del Consiglio and, particularly, into the hands of Palazzo Chigi's staff and top grade civil servants. This new framework of the Presidenza fitted better with the growing relevance of political leadership in the Italian political system which became particularly prominent during the Craxi Government (1983–1987).

A broader rationalisation of ministries and departments was undertaken along this measure. In particular, the Presidents of the 1980s aimed to eliminate the duplication of functions, to establish a clearer division of competences among departments and to sharply separate line and staff personnel. However, the rationalisation did not hamper the creation of two new ministries: the Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea Protection and the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research.

Furthermore, more investments were made on information technology. In 1985, there were 30,000 computers, but as Cassese pointed out, the government was investing too much on hardware and too little on software and training. For this reason, the computers were concentrated only in a few administrative units where there were civil servants skilled to manage innovation. At the same time, the government was spending most of the budget on technological development for private consultants in order to set up information technology infrastructure (Tosatti 2012). The result was a very poor training system for civil servants, who remained most unskilled on the use of information technology. At the end of the decade, in 1989, a legislative decree envisaged by Minister Pomicino provided new investments for public administration automation and a three-year plan was established on the automation of the central government offices. The decree of 1989 was important to foster technological innovation in the further years and it was one of the most significant effort to modernise public administration.

Concerning the professionalisation of the civil servants, proposed by Giannini's report of 1979, severe delays were occurring. Consequently, the number of civil servants who were involved in training programmes was really low: only 14,000 of the more than 3 million of public employees.

In the end we might consider the 1980s a decade of missed opportunities. The more substantial effort to reorganise the Italian civil service, the Giannini's report, was not implemented and its recommendations were discarded both by politicians and higher civil servants. Only the recommendation of the Report which concerned the reorganisation and rationalisation of pay grades was achieved. Some changes occurred in the organisation of ministries and departments but they seem like mere maquillage operations. The only innovation was the real strengthening of the coordinating role of the Presidenza del Consiglio, particularly at policy-making level. Concerning manpower, the government failed to reduce the number of public employees, to make civil servants more productive and to establish

a comprehensive training system. Moreover, technological innovation suffered from organisational and training shortcomings.

In conclusion, despite some attempts to modernise public administration at the end of the 1980s, the Italian civil service appeared to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the country. Lack of organisation, very low productivity, slowness in decision-making, poor policy implementation and high risk of corruption characterised the Italian bureaucracy at the beginning of the 1990s.

4. The Reforms of the 1990s: Cassese's Project to Strengthen Responsibility and Efficiency in the Civil Service

Italy entered a phase of continuing political and policy change following the biennium 1991–1992, when the party system started to collapse (Bull and Rhodes 1997; Ongaro 2009; Radaelli and Franchino 2004), and the criminal investigations for corruption and illegal finances of political parties, named 'Mani Pulite' and led by a pool of magistrates in Milan, exploded.

At the dawn of the 1990s, the Italian public administration was placed under pressure both by the public, who demanded "less corruption and more efficiency" in the political system as a consequence of the criminal investigations of Mani Pulite, and by the Europeanisation of public policies (Cassese 2004; Knill 2001) that imposed more fiscal budget discipline for national governments and new rules from above to implement for law-makers and civil servants. Furthermore, the widespread paradigm of New Public Management, which aimed to import private sector managerial techniques into the public sector and to promote liberalisations and privatisations of public services (Christensen and Læg Reid 2001), was adopted by the Italian policy-makers too (Bassanini 2000c).

These dynamics of the political system determined over the 1990s and the 2000s a number of substantial reforms that deeply reshaped the civil service.

The 1993 reform package was initiated and promulgated under the Amato Government and put into effect during the technocratic government led by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. The reform was envisaged and supervised by Sabino Cassese, the then Minister of Public Administration and one of the most prominent Italian scholars of public law.³

The reform made advances with respect to the definition of powers of senior officials. The decree envisaged that the government should set the objectives and the programmes and verify the results and effectiveness of the actions of the administration with reference to the general guidelines. Senior civil servants were given responsibility for the technical, financial and administrative implementation of all guidelines, including all decisions which involved contact between the administration and the outside world. Senior officials had autonomous powers over resources, personnel and control. They became responsible for policy implementation and its results. It followed that, on the basis of the 1993 reform, senior officials had more control over expenditure, the management of personnel and employees.

³ The first action made by Cassese as Minister of Public Administration was the publication of the report *Rapporto sulle condizioni delle pubbliche amministrazioni*, Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica, 1993 which pointed out deficiencies and weaknesses of the Italian civil service.

The minister could take specific decisions only when there was a clear need or urgency and, in any case, in agreement with the Prime Minister.

The principal aim of the reform package was the introduction of separation of the ‘managerial sphere’ and the ‘political sphere’: the paradigmatic model became one in which the political level (e.g. ministries) established the objectives of the administration, allocated the resources and evaluated “the efficacy of the results achieved by managers” with the assistance of specialised advisory bodies, while managers were in charge of making all the decisions about the utilisation of resources for achieving the chosen objectives (Cassese 1999).

In exchange for this decisive shift of powers in favour of the senior civil service, the law promoted two other fundamental changes: on the one hand, a strong reduction in the number of top officials by 10% and, on the other hand, the introduction of competitive training courses and exams. Such training was to be common for all departments, it was to have lasted two years and it was not to be restricted only to those already employed in the civil service but to all those under 35 years of age with a university degree. The training course was to be open to all those passing an initial competition; there was to be an intermediate examination followed by a six-month internship in the public or private administration, leading to a final competition.

This second reform was not implemented. The number of senior civil servants did not decrease. The new powers conferred by reform to higher civil servants were not used, and directors general preferred not to take full responsibility for the management of their departments, especially as a result of the increase in the ex-ante control through the *Corte dei Conti*, a protection which many directors general would want reinstated. And, in this context, their concerns could be linked with the growing dynamism of magistrates: embezzlement charges in Italy amounted to approximately 450 a year until 1989 and climbed to more than 1,000 a year since 1991; extortion charges amounted to 100 a year until 1989 and up to 500 since 1992; corruption charges, which were fewer than 100 a year until 1991, remained over 400 since then; and charges for abuse of authority numbered between 6,000 and 10,000 since 1992.⁴ Faced with such an aggressive stance on the part of magistrates, senior officials retreated into a defensive position, avoiding the assumption of new powers and responsibility. As far as open competition is concerned, by late 1997 only one competition procedure to select new civil servants had been initiated.

However, the reform produced some major changes: the overarching transformation was that public employment became subject to the general rules of private employment. From a juridical point of view, managers were no longer appointed on the basis of an administrative law act, but were “accepting a hiring proposal”, exactly in the same way as their private sector colleagues do.

As a consequence of the privatisation of the public employment, labour contracts, negotiated between the government in its capacity as the employer (operating through an agency called ARAN) and the unions, became a major source of regulation of the civil service.

Furthermore, performance-related pay was introduced, and managers could be removed as a result of poor performance. Managerial levels were reshaped through the introduction of only one major distinction between the top officials, *dirigenti generali*, or ‘general managers’, and *dirigenti*, all the other public managers, that had a partly different regulation prior to

⁴ Data reported by Cassese (1999, 60).

these reforms. Previously, there were three levels of organisation of managers in the Italian public sector, with only the managers in the upper tier enabled to occupy the top positions in the organisational pyramid.

As we have written previously, only a part of the reform package of the 1990s was implemented, while a large part of it (particularly performance evaluation and competitive training) was abandoned. The reasons for this failure were multiple (administrative traditions, legalistic culture, institutional confusion, political instability), but, as Minister Sabino Cassese argued, there was a red thread running through all of them: “The answer lies not so much in the higher civil service as in the echelons below it: it is these groups which oppose any reform attempt, fearing a reduction of their career prospects without any accompanying benefits. In other words, the trade-off contained in the reforms remains asymmetrical. It gives more powers to the bureaucracy in exchange for mobility. But the benefit is to the advantage of senior officials, while the burden lies on the shoulders of middle-rank categories, those of directors, who have cultivated hopes of promotion and oppose any interference of merit over age and years of service. This asymmetry explains why the reforms remain blocked” (Cassese 1999, 65).

4.1. Between the old and new century: Bassanini’s reforms and the resilience of administrative traditions

A second major reform occurred in 1998, under the centre-left government, during the period of Franco Bassanini as Minister of Public Administration. The initiative was inspired by the rise of the “Second Republic” where “political bipolarism”, that meant alternation in government between centre-left and centre-right coalitions, was established and it offered a window of opportunity to reform public administration. Indeed, this new institutional framework, that developed after the collapse of the old political party system in 1992 and the new majoritarian law of 1993, ensured more political stability to governments and, by consequence, it shaped a new dynamic between the executive and central bureaucracy. In this context, Franco Bassanini, a jurist and then Minister of Public Administration for centre-left governments (1996–2001), envisaged a reform which aimed to build a new relationship between politics and civil servants and to modernise public services.

The reform package⁵ introduced a form of ‘spoils system’, restrained only to top-level positions.⁶ Another major change regarded managerial appointments, that all became temporary (ranging between a minimum of two and a maximum of seven years), with confirmation of the incumbent in principal subject to an appraisal of the performance of the manager in his/her position.

It was also made easier to appoint managers picked from outside the administration, be they non-career civil servants picked from the private sector or the academia, or officials seconded from other administrations – a practice that was already spreading at the local

⁵ Outlined in the Legislative Decree 80/1998.

⁶ 55 top executive positions, whose incumbents could be replaced within 90 days following a vote of confidence for the new government.

level,⁷ though a ceiling to the total number of non-career civil servants holding a managerial position was defined;⁸ also for the lower ranks, new flexible contractual arrangements for the employment of personnel were introduced, completing, after more than twenty years, the bulk of the reforms proposed by Giannini.

The reform of central administration aimed at “merging bodies with similar missions; eliminating duplication and segmentation” (Bassanini 2000b, 11); a “more flexible internal organisation” with “freedom to choose between organisational models” (Bassanini 2000b, 11); the presence “of just one ministry for each mission: 22 ministries in 1990, 18 today, 12 in the year 2001”; and the creation of numerous agencies, that is, “company-like technical–operative structures” (Bassanini 2000b, 11).

In 1993, an agencification process was set up.⁹ However, the reform had implementation problems. Just a few agencies among those laid down by the Government were effectively established. The creation of other agencies was hindered by the higher civil service itself, who refused to hive off some functions to semiautonomous administrative bodies. Furthermore, the agencies set up remained much more similar, in their organisation and functions, to a ministerial department rather than to a “company-like technical–operative structure”.

The reform of the public sector employment aimed to complete the privatisation of the working relationship and the further emphasising of the separation of politics from administration. With regard to the first of these two changes, collective bargaining was extended to virtually all public sector employees,¹⁰ with even the rules regarding the careers of public employees being defined by employment contracts. As far as the second of the two features characterising the public sector reform is concerned, the legal foundations of the separation of powers were further strengthened: it is now the duty of politicians to “define policies and strategies, assess results, appoint general directors but to have no further direct involvement in administration”, whereas administrative directors and managers “are given broader powers but also greater responsibility, and higher salaries linked to results and performance” (Bassanini 2000a, 16).

The aim of the reform was to transform public administration into a sector that “serves the citizen–user” (Bassanini 2000b, 18). This is to be accomplished by means of a “cultural revolution” based on “the quality of the service provided and on customer satisfaction” and “on a new form of control of performance, together with more efficient, less invasive checks on legitimacy”. This policy was accompanied by the promotion of “the professional betterment of public employees to be achieved through the introduction of an extraordinary training programme” (Bassanini 2000b, 18). This modification of the institutional objectives of Italian public administration, from a form of administration in which only the rules and procedures matter for anything to a performance-oriented administration, was set up through the use of the following instruments: the temporary nature of managerial posts and the “firing of incapable managers”; “performance-weighted salaries”; a thorough system

⁷ Some mayors introduced the figure of the ‘director general’, or city manager, appointed on a private law contractual basis.

⁸ In the central government, the ceiling was 5% as a proportion of the total number of public managers.

⁹ Legislative Decree 300/1999.

¹⁰ Only small groups of individuals, such as university lecturers and professors, prefects and members of the armed forces, were excluded.

of internal controls (strategic management and managerial accounting); citizens' charters (Bassanini 2000b, 19).

The legislative Decree 80/1998 introduced the *ruolo unico* (single role) for the higher civil servants. Central government managers were no more in the payroll of the specific administration they were working for, but there was a single role for all public managers in the central government. The aim of the reform was to enforce horizontal mobility by creating a market of the central government public managers. Also 'vertical' mobility was strengthened. Furthermore, the 1993 reform was completed in terms of empowering public managers in the exercise of their function; indeed, a number of provisions strengthened managerial decision-making powers over the allocated budget and over the internal organisation of the office.

Other changes were introduced over the period 2001–2002 by the second Berlusconi Government, with Act 145/2002 on the regulation of personnel in the central government. Some of these provisions further strengthened, to some extent 'stretched' up to the limit, provisions contained in previous reforms (Borroni and Ongaro 2011, 114). The most important intervention was the extension of the spoils system: it was established that the higher civil service appointments lapsed by default with the beginning of the new legislature.¹¹ Other influential interventions concerned the repeal of the minimum length of the appointment of managers,¹² which meant that some managers were appointed to a role for just a few months, subject to renewal. With this provision, a new form of job precariousness, totally unknown to civil servants in Italy, was introduced creating an "acephalous" civil service (Cassese 2014; Melis 2015); even the proportion of the managerial positions that could award the non-tenured officials, hired from outside the administration, was enforced by law: the cap was set at 10% for top executives and 8% for the other managers.

As far as human resource management was concerned after the Bassanini reform, only the staff with a seniority of some years in the public sector could apply for a tenured managerial position, the only alternative way of access to the managerial roles in the public sector for 'outsiders' being the *corso-concorso*, the competitive-entry course whose graduates have direct access to the managerial role after the completion of the course and a final examination.

In 2007, Act 145/2002 was judged partly unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, even if it obviously produced effects during the five years in between. A subsequent reform intervention during the same legislature (Act 168/05) reintroduced a minimum length for the duration of the appointment of managers to a position (three years), as well as fixed the maximum length of the appointment at five years – not a very effective provision, and probably too rigid, particularly if we take into account the short duration of the Italian governments.

A series of negative outcomes characterised Bassanini's reforms. For example, the collective bargaining of conditions of employment became an instrument guaranteeing the rights and privileges of employees, rather than an instrument of human resources management (Bordogna 2002; Capano 1998); the privatisation of public employees' contracts was never completed, remaining a hybrid system. The figures for this are somewhat baffling: during the

¹¹ Before Act 145/2002, the appointments' renewal hinged on the decision taken by the new Minister within 90 days of the election of the Government.

¹² Legislative Decree 80/1998 previously set the minimum length of two years.

contractual period 1997–2001, 60% of the Italian public administrations used the seniority criterion as most relevant for the promotion of employees; this percentage increases to 90% in case of the central ministries (Bordogna 2002). Furthermore, the evaluation of the performance of management and employees became a way of distributing money, rather than a management tool designed to encourage learning (Bonaretti and Codara 2001; Corte dei Conti 2001); in the ministries, for example, only 30% of the employees and 44% of the managers had their performance formally assessed (Bordogna 2002). The citizens' charters became only a symbolic expression of good intent, and not a manual of fair conduct for organisations with respect to their own clients (Pasini 1999), and the majority of the public administration sector had not complied with the formal need for its own citizens' charter (Formez 2001).

Last of all, although the reform was devised in terms of introducing the economic and the measurable into the domains of bureaucracy and formal compliance, its legal articulation seemed to be informed by the very logic and ethos it was called upon to change (Panozzo 2000).

4.2. The experiment of Brunetta's Reform (2008–2010): a 're-legification' from above

A further reform was passed in 2009–2010, promoted by the fourth Berlusconi Government.

In 2008, after a wide electoral victory, the government launched a new comprehensive administrative reform projected by Mr Brunetta, Minister of Public Administration and Innovation, and designed by the legislative Decree 150/2009.

As a reaction to the weak effects of collective bargaining on productivity, the reform was meant to reduce the veto power of trade unions over public employment regulation. By introducing a new performance assessment system and linking additional wage benefits and performance results, the new reform also aimed to implement the performance management system, a key component of the previous waves of New Public Management-inspired reforms. Further, the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector had been closely linked to transparency as a key driver of reform, providing the public with open rough data on salaries, management of resources, and performance evaluations, as the evidence basis for pressure against public administration malfunctioning (Di Mascio and Natalini 2015).

The objectives of Brunetta's reform included the strengthening of transparency, through measures such as the publication of the payroll of public personnel on the webpage of the Public Administration Department; the redesigning of the system of controls to enhance public employees' accountability; and the re-launching of performance measurement in the public sector.

First, the Minister of Public Administration and Innovation, Brunetta launched a new public personnel policy (Act 133/2008) at the beginning of the new legislative period and he gained popularity by launching a crusade against the 'fannulloni' (slackers), widespread among the Italian public servants: tough measures against absenteeism were introduced by reducing sick leave compensation and increasing monitoring practices.

In the same year (2008) the government launched a new comprehensive reform that was still under way when the effects of the economic downturn begun in 2008 became more serious, making it necessary to launch austerity measures.

The downsizing of the public workforce was pursued by means of the extension and tightening of the replacement rates already in place. After setting a cap on staff turnover in 2009 at 10% of employee terminations in 2008, for the period 2010–2013 the reduction of recruitment was set at 20% of the previous year's terminations, while in 2014 and 2015 the limit would increase respectively to 50% and 100%. This attempted sharp reduction in the actual staff numbers caused a continuous run-up of horizontal cuts in the national staff aimed at consolidating this result: Law Decree No. 112/2008 established a decrease in the number of managers (by 20% for first-level and by 15% for second-level managers), the unification of logistics offices, and the reduction by 10% of the (potential) spending for non-managerial personnel. Temporary workers were hit especially hard, as public organisations had their budget for fixed-term contracts slashed to 50% of the amount allocated in the year 2009 (Ongaro et al. 2013, 21).

Brunetta's reform presented some modernising ideas, such as the overcoming of collective bargaining with unions to weaken the veto power of the latter and the improvement of performance management, and some weaknesses, such as the massive use of laws and regulations to establish a performance-related pay system and an exclusively top-down approach to complete the reform. Citizens and civil servants were not involved in policy design. Essentially the reform paid too much attention to legal rules rather than to organisational and cultural change within the offices of the civil service (Melis 2014). The reform brought about a 're-legification from above', made through government legislative prerogatives (decrees). There were even some policy implementation failures, such as performance-related pay, which was not implemented owing to the lack of resources and the salary freeze imposed by the sovereign debt financial crisis. In 2012, only 129 of the 14,000 public administrations had sent their performance and transparency plan to the central government demonstrating how law was not sufficient to implement the reform. The evaluation system, made by independent bodies composed of politically appointed professionals and civil servants, did not work effectively: in 2012 more than 90% of the higher civil servants (*dirigenti*) were promoted with the highest mark and the highest merit pay level.¹³ Performance assessment became a tool for redistributing additional money rather than to introduce a meritocratic system of pay-for-performance for civil servants. Considered these dysfunctions, it became natural that most of the higher civil servants were appointed to their posts on the basis of political patronage and seniority rather than on performance evaluation. Furthermore, despite the emphasis on specialisation and the interdisciplinary approach to recruiting new civil servants promoted by the Minister, a law degree remained the main requirement for a civil service career. Then, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the legalistic doctrine continued to permeate administrative reforms and civil service organisation (Panozzo 2000).

¹³ ANAC. *Relazione sulla performance delle amministrazioni centrali 2012*. Roma, published in February 2014.

5. Conclusions – Persistence in the Italian Public Administration

In the conclusions, it is worth focusing on the ‘historical persistence’¹⁴ that has characterised the Italian civil service. The history of the Italian public administration is permeated by a ‘dynamic conservatism’ in its path of institutional change. Reform is possible but only adapting and recasting the new policies in the administrative traditions. The history of the Italian civil service demonstrates the resilience of these traditions and their capacity to influence and model the development of reforms. As the administrative historian Geoffrey Elton (1953) pointed out, revolutions in public administration are rare and continuity in values, practices and structures is a dominant trend in this field. This is true even for the Italian State, in which some characteristics have persisted from the creation of the unitary State until today.

a) *Ministerial model and centralism.* The Napoleonic State was organised into ministries and departments with a hierarchical structure and a top-down chain of command (Painter and Peters 2010; Raadschelders 2000). This model still characterises the Italian civil service of the twenty-first century. The central government remains organised into ministries shaped by public law and divided into two sections: ministerial cabinets,¹⁵ selected through political patronage, and departments under the lead of a director general, who is appointed by the Head of the Government from among professional civil servants. This framework survived the administrative reforms of the 1990s and 2000s: the partial spoils system introduced by the Bassanini reforms produced instability and precariousness for the top-level positions of the civil service but did not scratch the Napoleonic model of ministries. In this context a typical reform developed during the 1990s in many Western democracies (Campbell and Wilson 1995; Castellani 2015, 2018), under the influence of the New Public Management paradigm (Hood 1991), which is the separation of policy advice, usually a function reserved to top-level civil servants, and policy implementation, developed by line management, did not occur. The organisation has remained hierarchical and unitary, and policy advice monopolised by ministerial cabinets composed of temporary civil servants chosen through political patronage. Furthermore, this model centralises the financial budget into ministries, especially into the Treasury through the *Ragioneria Generale dello Stato*. This centralisation was further strengthened by 2008 in order to achieve more control over public expenditure and to promote a spending review. Moreover, the *Prefetti* and their offices, a symbolic institution of the centralistic Napoleonic State, are still working within the national territory with the main function of ensuring public security and managing emergency policies. There is a *Prefetto* office in every Italian province, another sign of the persistence of the centralistic framework in public administration. However, despite

¹⁴ This concept of historical persistence, or regularities, was particularly developed by the Italian political scientist Gianfranco Miglio (1988). He analysed recurrent political/institutional structures and behaviours through history that characterised a State or a political system.

¹⁵ Ministerial staff offices are organised in: a) ministerial cabinet, which exerts functions of coordination with other institutions in order to plan the policy-making process and it produces studies and report on policy issues; b) legislative office, which drafts laws and regulation both in the phase of policy formulation and in the phase of policy implementation; c) technical secretariat, which drives the policy-formulation process establishing, in agreement with the Minister, principles and guidelines for policy action; d) press office, that manages relationships with the press for ministerial activities.

this prominent centralism, the centre of government has remained weak and dominated by local governments and parallel administration interests. Indeed, many differences occur in public policy implementation among different local governments, and the Italian central government does not seem strong enough to harmonise this process. To conclude on this point, as Cassese (2001) argues, the impact of the New Public Management paradigm, in comparative perspective, has not fostered separate and different administrative systems towards convergence, but it has produced similar policies on a global scale that, in their national implementation, have led to different results. Indeed, in every Western nation, the outcomes of the reforms have been influenced by and adapted to the national public administration tradition, demonstrating how understanding historical legacy matters in understanding the process of administrative reform.

b) Legalism and poor implementation. The dominance of administrative law has not been undermined by the intense efforts of reformers during the last twenty-five years. The legal paradigm continues to represent the shared framework around which a cohesive and decidedly impermeable civil service developed. It has been developed through history by a policy community (politicians, public service employees, trade unionists, journalists and experts) that has shared the language and the legal perspective, with its fundamental values and its administrative culture, as well as the criterion for the eventual access of external participants: in order to become a member of the community, it has been necessary to demonstrate a knowledge of legal terminology, with all the socio-cultural implications this had (Capano 1992, 2003; Dente 1999). The fact that, during the implementation phase of the reforms, policy guidelines on the instruments of reforms and strategies are all interpreted in ways that do not correspond to expectations is owing to the re-elaboration performed by the hegemonic paradigm and the theoretical coherence of the legal system. As Capano (2003) pointed out, due to the discretionary nature of the interpretation, it enables those charged with the duty of implementing legislative innovations to normalise the real impact thereof. Thus new policies were recasted within a grounded cultural framework and moulded by administrative traditions. Indeed, the Italian civil service has absorbed the most radical and innovative reforms undermining them with a poor or inexistent organisational implementation. Furthermore, legal accountability continued to prevail over accountability based on economic effectiveness and efficiency. Administrative reforms have been translated by the law educated civil servants into their juridical language, as the reforms had to be framed in legislation (Kickert 2007). Economic management discourse was translated into legal discourse, diverting attention from policy implementation and results (Ongaro 2009). Administrative reforms have been reduced to laws and regulations, eliminating the phase of organisational change and performance audit. For the action of the hegemonic paradigm of legalism, the gap between ‘legal administration’, what is written into the laws and the aims expressed by the legislator, and ‘real administration’, the administrative organisation and practices, remained wide.

c) The lack of high-level civil service training. The attempts to set up an Advanced School of Public Administration to train higher civil servants failed. Furthermore, the preeminent model of civil service training has remained obsolete and based on juridical studies. Civil servants have remained more focused on formal accounting procedures than on managerial and operative practices (Tosatti 2000). The difficulties in attracting talented and skilled persons who can work and grow into the civil service have not been overcome

by the age of administrative reforms of the 1990s and 2000s. Hiring restrictions imposed on the public sector after the financial crisis of 2008 contributed to strengthen this trend.

d) *The unsolved relationship between politics and administration.* As we have seen, the separation began with the 20th century and it continued during Fascism, even if the regime's control over civil servants was tighter. During the First Republic, the dominance of politics over administration was evident: political parties in the government promoted the policy of 'power in exchange for (post) security' to the civil service. Political patronage for the higher civil service posts was widespread and the responsibilities of civil servants in policy-making remained limited. In the 1990s, Cassese's reform attempted to give more powers and responsibilities to the higher civil service, but a part of the reform was never implemented for the reasons we have described above. Furthermore, Bassanini's reforms at the end of the 20th century introduced a new spoils system into the Italian civil service. Political instability, which has remained high even in the last twenty years, and the new spoils system rules produced a continuous process of 'in and out' with regard to the higher civil service posts. The policy that ruled the relationship between the higher civil service and politics changed from security (of tenured) guaranteed by political parties in return for less power for civil servants to more administrative powers and money (for higher civil servants) in return of a new political patronage for political parties. The consequence has been a transient and acephalous civil service and the role of politics, through the ministerial cabinets made by temporary civil servants appointed from the outside by the Minister, has remained predominant in policy advice, policy design and policy-making. Indeed, policy-making is not carried out by officials. Preparation of legislation is done in the ministerial cabinets. Officials only perform executive routine work, yet even that can be sabotaged. Many laws and acts are not implemented and executed by the administration. The Italian civil service has remained weak in front of politics and spurious for the spoils system mechanism. Its instability and precariousness have put the higher civil service at the mercy of politics (Cassese 2014). Professional civil servants have continued to be mere formal enforcers of laws, means and aims established by politics.

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*Miklós Losoncz*¹

Italy's Major Economic Challenges: Large Government Debt and Fragile Banks and the EU

The combination of high gross government debt and the shaky state of the banking sector aggravated by slow GDP growth constitutes the major challenge Italy's economy and society are facing. It has wider implications for the sustainability of economic development in the long run, as well as for the European Union in general and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in particular since a debt and/or banking crises may endanger the financial stability of the euro area. The response to this challenge is primarily the task of the Italian Government based on short-term measures aimed at easing actual tensions and the implementation of structural reforms to reduce the government debt thereby making the general government more sustainable and raise the potential growth rate of GDP in the long-run. Cooperation with EU institutions, too, may contribute to the upgrading of the process.

1. The Challenges

The objective of this paper is to analyse the challenges represented by high government indebtedness and fragile banks and their implications for the European Union and the Economic and Monetary Union, respectively, in the context of sustainability. By international standards, Italy's gross government debt is extremely high not only in absolute terms (with EUR 2.6 trillion it ranks fourth in the world), but also relative to GDP (the second highest in the EU following Greece) as well. Nevertheless, government indebtedness is a symptom of deeper economic and structural problems.

The precarious state of the Italian banking sector with a large stock of non-performing loans is another source of tensions and concerns. This issue, too, is rather complex, and has much to do with the development trends of the Italian economy in the past decades. Since Italy is the third largest economy after Germany and France in the euro area and the European Union excluding the United Kingdom, due to orders of magnitude in terms of the volume of GDP, etc., the two challenges may have significant implications for European integration, as well. It is assumed that they may pose a threat to financial stability not only in Italy, but in the Economic and Monetary Union, as well.

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The situation is more serious than it may appear at first glance because of the interdependence between the general government and the banking sector. Banks hold namely a huge amount of Italian government bonds. On the one hand, the increase of yields of government securities reduces the balance sheets of banks that would have a negative impact on the supply of loans or in extreme cases may trigger a bank crisis. On the other hand, if a bank crisis looms or actually occurs, the Italian Government does not have the appropriate financial sources to rescue the financial institutions. In addition, according to EU legal rules, the rescue of banks from public money is not allowed or at least, in exceptional cases, it is very difficult.

The response of Italian economic policy to these challenges depend to a large extent on the approach of and cooperation with EU institutions. A crisis in Italy concerns a core member of the EU and – as many experts presume – may touch the fundamentals of European integration. However, this has not been the case earlier with Greece, Ireland, Portugal or Cyprus.

The economic situation of Italy characterised by enormous public sector indebtedness combined with a troubled banking sector may be aggravated by political instability or political division and the consequences of the refugee inflow from North Africa through the Mediterranean Sea. The latter is not only the problem of Italy, but that of the EU, as well. Nevertheless, political and refugee issues are not detailed in this paper.

The nature of the report is quantitative and qualitative analyses. The research methodology applied is based on the analysis and the interpretation of statistical figures related to the subject, the evaluation of government documents and various reports and comments published by international organisations and experts of the business sphere, the academia, etc., from which future oriented conclusions are drawn on the sustainability of government debt, the functioning of the banking system and the perspectives of economic growth.

In this paper the term sustainability is associated with survival and persistence. “The basic idea of sustainability is quite straight-forward: a sustainable system is one which survives or persists” (Constanza and Patten 1995). It follows from this definition that sustainability can be determined and assessed after the fact. Consequently, “definitions of sustainability are therefore often predictions of actions taken today that one hopes will lead to sustainability” (Constanza and Patten 1995). In this report, it is assumed that fulfilling the requirements, sustainable government finances and GDP growth is projected to be achieved.

The literature on the Italian economy is abundant. International organisations such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund frequently publish rather comprehensive country reports on Italy. The European Commission, too, discusses the Italian economic situation regularly in various contexts. These reports pick up many issues included in this study. There is no space for reviewing them, the relevant points are referred to and/or cited.

This report discusses first various aspects of the general government debt and economic factors associated with it. Second, the Italian banking sector is overviewed and evaluated. Finally, the summary and some conclusions are provided.

2. Government and Associated Risks

Italy's general government debt has traditionally been very high by international standards. Italy did not meet the fiscal criterion of the Treaty of Maastricht on gross government debt when the country joined the first phase of the Economic and Monetary Union in 1999 since its government debt relative to GDP exceeded the 60% reference figure. Nevertheless, due to its declining trend, Italy was allowed to join the EMU, and with the successful efforts of the subsequent Italian governments, the general government deficit and debt decreased in line with the convergence criteria enshrined in the Treaty of Maastricht. In fact, Italy's debt ratio declined steadily from 109.7% in 1999 to 99.8% in 2007.

As a consequence of the international financial and economic crisis of 2008 and 2009 and some other factors, this favourable trend came to a halt and due to the recession and the operation of automatic stabilisers, Italy's government debt ratio grew to about 132% of GDP in the average of the years from 2012 to 2016. The latest forecast of the European Commission expected 132.1% in 2017 and 130.8% in 2018 (European Commission 2017, 96–97).

In the EU, the public debt ratio of Greece that amounted to 179% in 2016 was higher than the Italian one, and the 130% figure of Portugal was comparable with that of Italy. Since Greece and Portugal are much smaller economies than Italy, the implications of their government debt for the EU and the euro area, respectively, are much more modest than those of Italy. Despite its huge public debt, public finances are in better shape in Italy than in Greece and Portugal.

In international comparison, Italy's general government debt is the fourth largest after that of the US, Japan and Germany in euro and/or dollar terms. It accounts for 23% of the total figure of the euro area. These orders of magnitude may explain why international financial markets consider Italy's government debt a risk factor. Annual interest payments account for 4% of GDP against an average of some 2.5% for the euro area. Markets worry that a significant shock such as a rise in interest rates might trigger a confidence crisis questioning the country's ability to repay its debt (Prometeia 2017b).

3. The Relationship between GDP Growth and Government Debt

In this context, the question arises on the causal relationship between GDP growth and government debt. Is slow growth the cause of high debt, or vice versa, high debt causes slow GDP growth? Reinhart and Rogoff (2010, 2011, 2013) pointed out the unfavourable impact of excessive government indebtedness on GDP growth and other macroeconomic indicators.

In the Italian case, large government debt with high interest payments was one of the major factors of slow economic growth preventing Italy from using fiscal tools to promote GDP growth and counterweigh adverse shocks in crisis situations. Since 1992, with the sole exception of 2009, Italy has been obliged to produce surpluses in the primary budget (net lending/borrowing excluding interest payments) to meet EU targets and avoid unsustainable indebtedness. Italy has not succeeded in breaking the vicious circle of high general government debt and slow GDP growth yet.

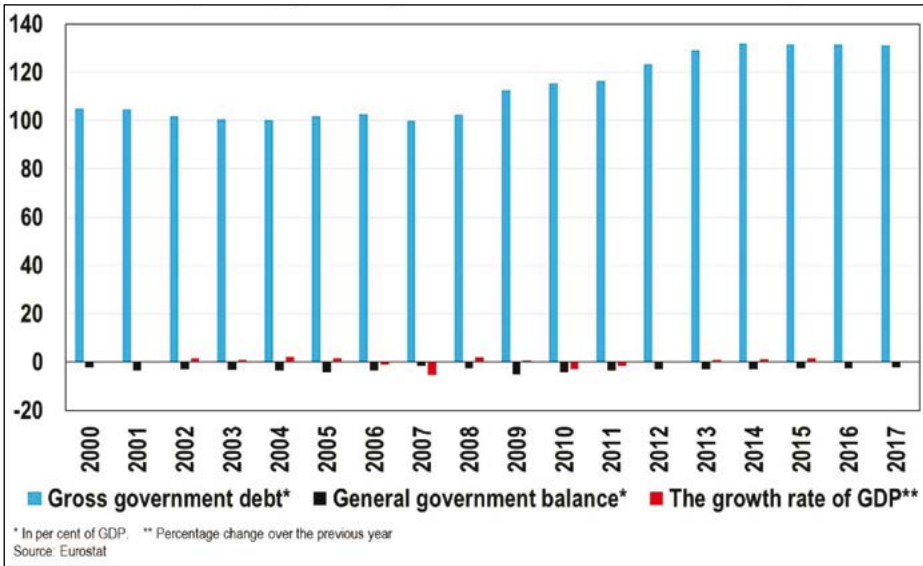


Figure 1.
GDP growth, general government deficit and debt in Italy

Source: Eurostat

In addition, there were other long-term factors inhibiting economic growth after 1999 such as weak investment in research and development, technology and education and a dismal productivity performance (Mody and Riley 2014). The deep analysis of these factors would go beyond the scope of this report.

Italy was not exposed to the subprime crisis in 2007 and 2008. There was no real estate bubble in the housing sector to burst. Nevertheless, although public finances deteriorated by a smaller extent relative to other member states of the euro area, the global or international financial and economic crisis triggered the greatest fall of output in 2008 and 2009 among EU member states in Italy. The economic policy had to compensate the fall in the cyclical component of revenues by intensifying fiscal efforts (Prometeia 2017b). Low inflation has exacerbated the unfavourable effects of chronically slow growth and high public debt.

Italy's recovery from the global financial and economic crisis was one of the slowest in the EU. Its GDP remains about 8% smaller than in 2007; among the EU members, only Greece and Cyprus have performed worse. Since 2008 Italy has been in recession as often as not. During the crisis in 2008 and 2009, Italy lost 7% of its GDP. Since the summer of 2009, it has regained only 2% of the loss due to sluggish growth. The growth crisis dates back more than that. In a broader perspective, the Italian economy has not expanded since Italy joined the Economic and Monetary Union in 1999, and real income per head is lower now than it was in 1999. Nevertheless, short-term prospects are promising, the European Commission expects Italy's GDP to grow by 1.5% in 2017 and 1.3% in 2018 (European Commission 2017, 97). This modest cyclical recovery enhances the room of manoeuvring of Italy's economic policy.

4. Italy and the Euro

Subdued GDP growth has been attributed *inter alia* to the introduction of the euro for a long time. Many Italians think that the euro is not working for them. Nevertheless, Italy's problems are only partially associated with the fixed exchange regime represented by the common currency. It is structural rigidities that basically matter.

Italy's problem was not the euro but the lira that kept together a productive north with the Mezzogiorno at a rather high cost. In countries with economic problems and persistent slow GDP growth such as Italy and Greece, the euro and the rules of the Economic and Monetary Union were a scapegoat to hide the deficiencies of the national political, economic and social structures that inhibited to solve deep-rooted domestic problems. With the convergence of formerly high Italian interest rates to lower ones in the euro area, the general government could have been financed easily, that weakened the stimuli to implement major structural reforms. Nevertheless, it is not the institutional design of the euro that should be blamed but unforced policy errors (Sandbu 2014).

Leaving the euro would not solve Italy's problems, GDP growth would not accelerate, productivity would not increase. On the contrary, it would entail unbearable costs (Prometeia 2017a). In spite of deep-rooted structural problems, the performance of Spain was much better than that of Italy (Papadia 2017).

Italy's exit from the euro area would most probably trigger not only a deep financial and economic crisis in the country, but the collapse of the Economic and Monetary Union within a short period of time, as well. This scenario seemed to be unlikely at the time this report was written. A softer version of giving up the euro is the discussion of the introduction of a parallel currency. Any case, according to public opinion polls, Italian and Greek respondents view the EU's economic governance most negatively in the European integration. In spite of this, Eurosceptic political forces do not openly advocate Italy's departure from the euro area or the EU strongly because the public still supports Italian membership.

An important legal constraint is Article 75 of the Italian Constitution stating that the ratification of international treaties cannot be subject to referendum. The possible amendment of the constitution requires a large majority in parliament that cannot be achieved overnight. In any case, Italy should demonstrate its commitment to remaining in the euro area.

5. The Sustainability of Italy's Government Debt

It is an open question to what extent Italy's government debt is sustainable in the medium- and long-term. A rather great number of threats should be kept in mind. First, with low inflation rate, stagnating productivity and slow economic growth, the reduction of the general government debt requires a significant sacrifice in terms of GDP growth.

Second, it is rather difficult to reintroduce a rigorous austerity policy under the circumstances of fierce political competition and the banking and the refugee crisis (Schrader and Ulivelli 2017). Italy took more than 300,000 migrants from the Middle East and North Africa over the two years prior to March 2016 costing it well over EUR 3 billion a year. In addition, debt relative to GDP cannot be reduced simply by bringing down public spending. Simple cuts in budget spending would strengthen populist and anti-establishment movements.

Restructuring general government expenditures in favour of investments is difficult, with trade-offs between various objectives. The quality of spending and structural reforms is a key factor to improve productivity and competitiveness.

Third, the low interest rate policy of the European Central Bank will not last indefinitely. With the projected increase of interest rates as a consequence of the phasing out of the ECB's bond-buying program and the subsequent increase of borrowing costs, Italy's government debt may become less and less sustainable. Another challenge is that government securities in the amount of EUR 300 billion should be renewed annually in the next few years. With rising interest rates, this could be more difficult and costly than now.

Fourth, GDP growth forecasts do not support the assumption that the government debt relative to GDP could decrease substantially.

The high level of public debt alone is not a problem if the tax collection capacity of the government is satisfactory. The question is whether or not the Italian Government is able or willing to collect taxes necessary to meet its payment obligations and this way to fund the general government, should the necessity arise. Nevertheless, lifting taxes is not in line with political rationality. In addition, tax increases have a negative impact on economic growth.

On the other hand, lowering taxes to reinvigorate economic activity and thereby to grow out of the government debt has a negative impact on the general government balance. It is rather difficult to find the optimum between the promotion of economic growth and the maintenance of general government equilibrium.

There are counterweighing factors as well. Italian households account for the major part of the government debt at low interest rates. The absence or the low proportion of foreign investors render the general government a high degree of stability since the risk of capital flight in incidental crisis situations is modest. Thus, with low exposure to unpredictable external sources, the direct vulnerability of Italy's government debt is negligible.

The Italian Government obviously insists on complying with the prescriptions of the Stability and Growth Pact and other EU legal rules relating to the general government, otherwise it would risk the launch of excessive deficit procedure with negative consequences. Nevertheless, it is a rather wide-spread view among experts and the general public that the strict EU rules constitute a significant externally imposed constraint on the consolidation of Italy's general government. In mid-2017, the Italian Government asked for a deep discount on its 2018 deficit-cutting commitments, obviously with a view on next year's parliamentary elections. EU institutions envisaged some flexibility, but they were not willing to soften up the rules. Consequently, Italy was not allowed to run much larger general government deficits. In fact, the excessive stringency of EU institutions vis-à-vis Italy may have political implications since unjustified or even justified austerity measures could nurture the rise of anti-establishment and Eurosceptic political forces.

Germany's large current account surplus is considered another external constraint to consolidation. With the reduction of this surplus, other EU member states could increase their exports to Germany through higher import demand, provided that the decrease of the current account surplus is the result of recovering German domestic demand. In this context, the question is how German households could be stimulated to spend more and German companies to step up their investments in Germany. In fact, the consumption of households is increasing, nurtured mainly by buoyant wages and employment. As a general rule, corporate investments depend basically on business perspectives.

According to simulations of the European Commission, a two-year increase in public investments in Germany and other member states of the Economic and Monetary Union by 1% of GDP would raise Italy's (and other peripheral countries') GDP between 0.2 and 0.3% through trade linkages (Veld 2013). According to these findings, Italy's general government problem cannot be solved by external factors. Arguments on external constraints in terms of EU budgetary rules and German current account surpluses tend to be political ones that are not supported by hard economic facts. Consequently, Italy's problems cannot be solved by the EU or Germany.

It should be noted in addition that it is impossible to project at which ratio Italy's government debt would become unsustainable. It depends to a large extent on market psychology. Shocks triggering crisis of confidence may occur at any point and any time. Consequently, it does not matter much if the government debt ratio is a few percentage points lower than the current 130% (Prometeia 2017b). It follows from this conclusion that there is no urgent need to reduce the government debt ratio significantly within a rather short period of time. Instead, Italy's Government should strive to build down the debt ratio slowly in the framework of a comprehensive long-term strategy.

The way out of the vicious circle of low growth and huge government debt would be the continuation of ongoing structural and other reforms to reduce imbalances, narrow competitiveness gaps, raise productivity, stimulate GDP growth and support incomes of the most vulnerable.

According to the IMF, the comprehensive reform strategy should include the approval of decrees on public administration reform, progress in product and service market reforms, the modernisation of the wage bargaining system to better align wages with productivity at the firm level, the strengthening of active labour market policies, the acceleration of insolvency and civil justice reforms (International Monetary Fund 2017). Special emphasis should be laid on tax reforms in terms of strengthening the spending review, harmonizing VAT rates, shifting taxation from productive factors toward properties and consumption, etc. (Prometeia 2017b).

The reforms outlined above need political support. In case of success, the management of Italy's general government and the solution or at least the easing of the general government debt problem will be instructive to other member states of the euro area, as well.

6. The State of the Banking Sector

In addition to high government debt, the other challenge Italy is facing is the precarious state of its banking sector. Under certain circumstances, this may turn into a more serious problem or even crisis than large public debt. The fragility of the banks may lead to a loss of confidence of market players with far-reaching negative consequences in financial markets.

The major issue is that the banking sector is burdened with a huge stock of non-performing loans (NPL). As far as the details are concerned, in 2016, non-performing loans amounted to EUR 360 billion (EUR 329 billion due to change in definition in March 2015) representing about 20% of the banking system's total loan stock (NPL ratio) and corresponding to 20% of Italy's GDP. Around EUR 200 billion of these non-performing loans were considered defaulted debt that most probably would never be repaid. Some 75% of non-performing

loans are linked to the corporate sector. Banks allocated provisioned for only 45% of the total NPL stock. One of the consequences of the banks' deteriorating position was that the price of bank shares in the stock exchange decreased significantly. The major banks with the largest non-performing loans included Banco Monte dei Paschi di Siena (MPS, Italy's fourth largest bank and the world's oldest one), Banco Popolare di Vicenza, Veneto Banca and Unicredit.

Italy's non-performing loan stock accounted for a third of the euro area's total. In contrast, the share of Italian bank assets was only about 13%. Furthermore, Italy had the highest NPL ratio in the OECD. The high level of non-performing loans has implications for the Economic and Monetary Union. At first glance, it represents namely a systemic risk to the euro area's financial stability. In case of a worsening situation or the collapse of some banks, it may come to a new financial crisis in the euro area.

Tensions are likely to rise to the surface with the increase of interest rates, since the current low interest rate environment will not persist forever and Italian economic actors do not seem to be prepared for a lift. On the other hand, in the present situation of low interest rates, the profitability of the banks is rather meagre.

It should be noted furthermore that the negative spillover effects, too, are related to the fact that several banks registered in EU member states have inadequate balance sheets involving the risk of default in critical situations.

Finally, the exposure of Italian banks is significant not only to non-performing loans, but to sovereign risks as well, since they hold huge amounts of government securities. This highlights the interdependence of the state of the general government and the banking sector. The sovereign risk factor may be as significant as the NPL one (Gros 2016).

The problems of the Italian banking system were exposed by the results of the stress test of July 2016 (coordinated by the European Banking Authority working with the European Central Bank and national authorities), as well as by the consequences of the referendum on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. With the outcome of the British referendum, uncertainty was on the rise in financial markets that lead to the increase of risk premia of banks.

7. Managing Non-performing Loans

Non-performing loans are both a symptom of the adverse macroeconomic framework and a source of vulnerability. On the one hand, the increase of non-performing loans was partly the result of slow GDP growth in general and economic downturn in the crisis years in particular. On the other hand, according to empirical estimates, non-performing loans may inhibit or constrain economic growth at a certain critical level through the limits to lending. Only modest economic growth or no growth at all is feasible without credits. In the Italian corporate sector, more than 60% of total loans account for bank lending. Subdued availability of bank lending is particularly harmful for small and micro enterprises whose growth prospects are exposed to the access to bank loans.

Some other factors, too, such as domestic legal constraints played a role in the increase of non-performing loans. Just to mention some examples: winding up and bankruptcy procedures were slow, and the possibilities of extrajudicial agreements were limited. The

tax system did not promote the writing down of debts either. Collaterals on SME loans and provisions of banks for non-performing loans were inadequate. The reform of the banking system was delayed.

The Italian Government deliberately failed to restructure the banking system during and after the crisis since its priority was the reduction of the general government deficit. The recapitalisation of banks would have raised the government debt with the risk of breaking the budget rules of the EU according to which the general government deficit must not exceed 3% of GDP. Based on various calculations, some EUR 40 billion of additional capital would have been needed to write down nonperforming assets at a price approximating market value.

On the other hand, the Spanish Government pursued a different policy. It started to clean up the balance sheets of the banks in 2012 and Spain's GDP has been growing rather dynamically since then (Véron 2017).

Nevertheless, in the past few years, the Italian Government made some progress in managing the problem of the banking sector. It introduced a great number of measures to speed up the winding up procedures, although they concerned only new debts rather than the existing ones, as well. Measures were taken to enable the securitisation of bad debts. In February 2017, it approved of a law aiming at the creation of an EUR 20 billion fund to support the banking sector including the recapitalisation of problematic banks, the provision of guarantees for new bond issues, and the access to liquidity of the European Central Bank. In part as a result of these measures, net non-performing loans fell from EUR 86.8 billion in December 2016 to EUR 65.3 billion in August 2017 (The Economist 2017).

In April 2016, the Italian Government initiated the launch of Atlante Fund with private and public capital. Its task is to participate in the recapitalisation of banks and the disposal of securitised non-performing assets. The Atlante fund raised EUR 4.3 billion from 67 national and international institutions on a voluntary basis (Humblot 2017, 11). The fund intends to buy non-performing loans at a price much below the book value. Nonetheless, the capital endowment of the fund is by far not sufficient to solve Italy's NPL problem.

8. Too Big to Fail

The major feature of the present situation is that with the new EU rules taking effect, since January 2016, banks have been prohibited from being recapitalised by the state until their shareholders and creditors have been bailed in. The term bail-in implies that losses have to be borne by shareholders or bondholders up to 8% of liabilities. The objective of this provision was to enforce investors to take into account risks in their decisions, although a negative side effect of this rule was that it discouraged lending to other banks. This concept may be appropriate in most member states of the euro area where the ownership structure of banks is concentrated, but not in Italy with fragmented ownership. Here small saver households account for a high proportion of investors. Imposing the losses related to bank bail-ins on households would have hardly bearable negative political costs and consequences.

In principle the Italian Government could use public money for bailing out bad banks and compensate households for losses in a sophisticated way whose details should be elaborated with complicated and controversial calculations.

The trap situation the Italian Government has to face is the following. Italian banks overburdened with non-performing loans are too big to fail. Through the spillover effects, their default would have much more serious negative impact on the economy than their bailing out. According to EU legal rules, bailout by the state is not allowed. Any default or bail-in at the expense of small savers would lead to adverse political consequences. Nevertheless, domestic economic participants, including the government do not have the financial sources to bail them out. The capital needed to save all troubled Italian banks may even exceed the available financial sources of the euro area. The new banking regulation introduced after the financial crisis was apparently unable to solve the problem of systemic risks (it may have redistributed some of them, but made some problems worse).

The Italian Government requested special treatment in mid-2016 due to exceptional circumstances related to the risk of financial stability. The strongest argument of the government was that Italy deserves a one-off exception to provide it with the same opportunity as its fellow member states had received in greater size. E.g. formerly Spain and Ireland were able to bailout their troubled banks. First, EU officials and the German Chancellor insisted that Italy must stick to the rules (bank recovery and resolution directive and single resolution mechanism). Later they gave in with a compromise.

In early June 2017, the European Commission agreed in principle to the bailout by the Italian Government of Monte dei Paschi di Siena. The Commission approved a EUR 8.1 billion “precautionary recapitalisation”. According to EU rules, the precondition of such an aid is that “the bank should be solvent, the capital injection must not distort competition and the additional capital should be justified by a stress test that MPS failed in July 2016” (The Economist 2017). In addition to the injection of EUR 3.9 billion by the Italian Government, subordinated bonds valued at EUR 4.3 billion are being converted to equity (The Economist 2017). Small investors were offered the option of swapping their new shares for senior bonds. Non-performing loans of EUR 28.6 billion will be securitised separately. In addition, the bank will be streamlined and restructured.

For political reasons, the European Commission de facto undermined the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive to find a compromise to rescue MPS (Gros 2017). According to this legal rule, governments should not cover private losses. The rescue of two Venetian banks (Banco Popolare di Vicenza and Veneto Banca) took place in a specific way. The two banks were divided into two parts. The good banks were sold to a domestic competitor for a symbolic price. According to the official argumentation, since the bad banks do not operate and compete with anyone, state aid does not distort competition (Gros 2017). The price of these rescue operations was the increase of the government debt ratio. Political considerations outweighed economic issues (Merler 2017). Independently from the fact whether or not they are bailed out, all troubled Italian banks had to elaborate and submit credible recovery plans by the end of March 2017.

9. Summary and Conclusions

Italy is facing two intertwining challenges: a large government debt and an ailing banking sector associated with slow GDP growth. The high level of public debt, the still relatively high but decreasing budget deficits, structural rigidities, the precarious state of the banking

sector and the absence of growth dynamics expose the third largest economy in the euro area highly vulnerable to external and internal shocks. Due to their orders of magnitude, these challenges and their management may have implications for the financial stability of the Economic and Monetary Union in terms of systemic risks. Nevertheless, Italy is unlikely to turn a second Greece with domino effects that hit the euro area.

In spite of the significant legal constraints constituted by EU legal rules, the problems of the government debt can be managed more easily than those of the banking sector, particularly in the light of the latest short-term improvement in the overall economic situation. The risk of an imminent general government debt crisis does not seem to be on the horizon. Should the necessity arise in a crisis situation, in principle, the Italian Government, among other things, has the capacity to raise taxes to meet its payment obligations in spite of the opposition and the resistance of political parties and the broader society.

The task of reducing the debt ratio is primarily with the Italian Government. As a general rule, it cannot expect much help from external factors such as the softening up of the EU budgetary rules allowing larger general government deficits and the reduction of current account surpluses by other euro area member states to enable the increase of Italian exports. EU institutions and member states could render Italy much more help in managing the refugee crisis that impose a huge burden on the country's general government expenditures. The refugee crisis is a common problem of all EU member states.

Primarily due to the significant negative spillover impact on GDP growth, a sudden reduction of the government debt would be much more harmful than a slow gradual reduction. Considering the current magnitude, a substantial decrease of the public debt ratio would probably not improve much the confidence of foreign and domestic economic actors in the Italian Government. Restrained optimism is justified in the management of public debt, although negative external and internal risks are still present and not negligible. What matters more is a consistent and credible medium- or long-term strategy on the consolidation of the general government and public debt reduction.

The major challenge Italy is facing is not the general government debt, but the shaky state of its banking sector. Although the risk of a bank crisis has decreased, due to orders of magnitude, the default of large banks could put financial stability at risk not only in Italy, but in in the euro area, as well. Although the problems of Italy's banking system have eased recently, they are far from being resolved completely. The involvement of public money in the recapitalisation of banks in order to avoid a crisis alone does not solve the deep-rooted problems of the Italian banking sector, but it may postpone its streamlining and modernisation.

A considerable part of the problems of Italy's banking sector is associated with EU legal rules. The bank resolution system of the EU and the EMU, respectively has not been prepared for managing a problem of this size. Although it is politically difficult to implement, the completion of the banking union and the European deposit guarantee system is an important prerequisite of consolidation.

However, probably out of fear of unpredictable financial market reactions and Italy's economic weight in the euro area, the European Commission undermined the effective legal rules to help to rescue the two troubled Venetian banks (Banco Popolare di Vicenza and Veneto Banca) thereby providing a negative precedence.

Slow GDP growth indicates that Italy's economic and financial crisis has not come to an end yet. The dynamisation of GDP growth, too, may contribute to the improvement of the

government debt ratio and the state of the banking sector. This potential factor can be realised by continuing structural reforms and introducing new growth enhancing reform measures. Political and constitutional reforms aiming at the strengthening of political stability and economic governance, too, are part of this issue. This can be the outbreak from the vicious circle of looming government debt and banking crisis and slow economic growth. The major limiting factor is a political one, namely the requirements of political rationality often contradict those of economic rationality. This target conflict should be reconciled somehow. The success of the reforms will have positive political implications, as well. On the other hand, their failure may give room to anti-establishment and Eurosceptic political forces.

For a rather long time, Italy has seemed to be continuously on the brink of collapse, but it has always showed resilience and has never collapsed. Italy's economy seems to be too big either to bail or to fall. Italy is certainly not the sick country of Europe. To prove this, the words of the Italian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa should be realised: Everything has to change for nothing to really change. Hopefully, Italy is likely to muddle through with a mix of resilience and creativity.

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Balázs Vizi

Linguistic Rights and Small Minority Communities in Italy from Trento to Sicily

1. Introduction

National and cultural identity cannot always be defined by linguistic differences between groups, but in a European context, many times language provides the most significant building block of national, cultural minority identity. Preserving the language is also often seen as a way of maintaining group identity, as a way of maintaining inter-generational links with one's ancestors. In one way or another, language often becomes a key symbol of national identity and protecting it becomes an outstanding duty of the community in preserving its identity. Preserving the language is never just preserving a tool for communication: it is also preserving cultural traditions, political claims, historical consciousness and national identity (Kymlicka and Grin 2003).

Language was instrumental also in Italian history in the process towards national unity. During Napoleon's second rule (from 1800 to 1813–1814) he attempted to impose French as the official language in Italy, a policy which aroused Italian patriotism. Moreover, Giuseppe Mazzini, the intellectual leader of the Italian *Risorgimento*, was also presenting his ideas on the Italian nation from the perspective of Romanticism, much influenced by German writers on linguistic nationalism, especially Herder (Beales and Biagini 2010).

This historical background gives primary evidence why language policies gained eminent importance in the Italian state- and nation-building process since the creation of the Italian State. After World War I, with the peace treaty signed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Italy gained new territories in the North. The incorporation of South Tyrol (Trentino-Alto Adige) and Trieste with the Istrian peninsula implied the inclusion of large German and Slovenian communities. Especially under Mussolini, minority languages and minority communities were seriously under threat as the Fascist regime imposed a strict ("Italian only") monolingual and monocultural policy.

After World War II, the new Italian Republic adopted a more inclusive approach: on the one hand, the protection of linguistic minorities was recognised by the new Constitution, on the other hand, Italy had to engage in bilateral negotiations with Austria and Yugoslavia on the legal position and protection of German- and Slovenian-speaking minorities (De Guttry 1987). The protection of linguistic minorities is recognised by the Constitution under Article 6 stating that "the Republic safeguards linguistic minorities by means of appropriate measures". However, these appropriate measures were missing from the Italian constitutional

legislation for more than fifty years. Finally, the Italian Parliament adopted a special law on linguistic minorities in 1999 (Act 482/1999). This chapter focuses on the situation of small minority communities: Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian communities in Trento, who just like the traditional Albanian-speaking minority communities in Sicily, live in remote areas and face the challenges of increasing assimilation. Could Act 482/1999 offer new opportunities for the survival of these minorities? Does the current constitutional legislation provide effective protection to minorities? To answer these questions, it is necessary to take a look at the emerging European regime of minority rights that largely inspired the adoption of the law on linguistic minorities (see also Van der Jeught 2016).

2. International Law and Minority Language Rights

At international level, new developments emerged after 1990. For a long period of time, Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was the only reference to the rights of minorities under international law.¹ It could have been difficult to define specific state responsibilities based on the restrained wording of Article 27. Besides the prohibition of discrimination, States Parties enjoyed a large margin of discretion on interpreting minority rights. For example, the term “minority” or “linguistic minority” has never been legally defined in international treaties, leaving largely to the governments the recognition of minorities.

The international protection of minorities started to get more attention only in the 1990s, when, for the first time, the UN General Assembly adopted a declaration on the rights of minorities,² and when, especially in Europe, the rights of minorities have become a central issue in international relations. In a European context, international organisations took an active role in addressing minority rights protection in the 1990s in the perspective of extending international human rights protection and also as a tool for reinforcing international stability and security. The protection of minority rights emerged strongly in a security perspective, signalled by the adoption of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (after 1994 Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE]) Copenhagen Document and other CSCE/OSCE declarations including references to minorities. On the other hand, in their legal protection under international law, the adoption of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) in 1995 and that of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Language Charter) in 1992 were the most determining developments, which codified the specific rights of minorities in different areas from linguistic to political rights.

Italy has not yet ratified the Language Charter, but it ratified in 1997 the FCNM. The language provisions of the FCNM are rather complicated, and replete with various qualifiers. Moreover, Article 10 (2) of the FCNM introduces the concept of a minority area without

¹ Article 27 of the ICCPR reads as follows: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.”

² Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, G.A. res. 47/135, 47 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 210, U.N. Doc. A/47/49 (1992).

any specific definition, within the boundaries of which some extended minority rights are envisaged.

The right to use a minority language completes the freedom of expression set out in Articles 7 and 9. Probably the most powerful right set out in the FCNM regarding the use of minority languages is contained in Article 10, which underlines that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use her/his minority language without legal constraints, freely, both in public and in private sphere. Paragraph 2 of Article 10 goes even further when it declares: *“In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.”* A separate and more flexible paragraph was formulated on the use of minority language with administrative authorities. First of all, neither the FCNM, nor its explanatory report defines the criteria for areas inhabited by minority members “traditionally or in a substantial number”, and furthermore, for the implementation of this right, there must be a request and this minority request should correspond to a “real need”. The decision on realising such a real need is obviously vested on the respective governments.³

The first paragraph of Article 11 of the FCNM sets out a right to use names in minority language *“and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.”* This is followed by the right to display minority language *“signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public”*. The third paragraph states that the state in minority inhabited areas *“shall endeavour [...] to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications for the public also in the minority language.”* Here again re-emerges in the FCNM the concept of a “minority area” without providing any particular criteria for its definition.

Paragraph 68 of the explanatory report also states that Article 11 means, that persons who have been forced to change their names should have the right to revert to them. In such cases, it can be rightly expected that the costs of transcription will burden the state authorities and not the victims. The explanatory report comments the question of minority language signs visible to the public stating that this right does not prevent the individual being required to use the official language in addition to the minority language. This latter requirement has been widely criticised by experts, that this provision should not be applied as a blanket provision: there are a number of different situations (e.g. name of a house, a poster in the window, etc.) where there is no real state interest in adding the official language (Thornberry and Estébanez 2004, 106).

The third paragraph of Article 11 requires particular attention: in this case, in the public allocation of street names, it seems to be appropriate to require that official/state language enters in equation.

³ To give at least a minimal limit to the interpretation of this section, the explanatory report suggests that the existence of a real need “is to be assessed by the state on the basis of objective criteria”. The main issue in this regard is whether the state authorities could take a decision on the assessment of this need without any input from the minority community. The explanatory report suggests that if this need shall be based on objective criteria, then the involvement of minorities seems to be inevitable. This also means that lack of resources cannot be an excuse for inaction in this field.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in 1998. Unlike most documents related to the protection of minority rights, the Language Charter is not aimed at the protection of minority communities, its primary goal is the “protection of historical regional and minority languages of Europe”⁴ and it stresses that the “protection and promotion of regional or minority languages” is an “important contribution to the building of a Europe based on [...] cultural diversity”.⁵ The Charter defines “regional or minority languages” under Article 1 as languages that are: “i) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population; and ii) different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants”.

The Charter does not acknowledge individual or collective minority rights; its fundamental goal is to provide an appropriate framework for the protection of regional or minority *languages*. Thus, the terms “regional” and “minority” with regard to languages were used in the Language Charter in reference to less widespread languages.

The fundamental concept of the Language Charter is that regional or minority languages should be protected in their cultural functions, in the spirit of a multilingual, multicultural European reality. The Language Charter is composed of three main parts: the first part displays general provisions, including basic definitions, like the concept of “regional or minority language”, “territory in which the regional or minority language is used”⁶ and “non-territorial languages”;⁷ moreover it defines the concept of state obligations under the Charter. Part II of the Language Charter enlists under the title *Objectives and Principles* general obligations, binding for all signatory states. While the third part of the Charter offers concrete provisions for different activities of the use of language, it also provides for each activity different levels of commitments.

The “new regime” of international minority rights protection, which emerged in the 1990s, however, remains deeply embedded in the post-WWII international system of human rights protection and features some basic characteristics. 1. There is no legally binding definition of the term “minority”, leaving relative freedom to states in defining and recognising minority groups; 2. in principle it does not depart from the individualist approach of modern human rights protection; 3. it builds on the principle of equality and non-discrimination; 4. minorities are not acknowledged as political communities, the right to self-determination is not assigned to them; 5. the group character of minorities is not, or only, implicitly acknowledged; 6. the rights of minorities are usually formulated in vague terms, offering an ample room for divergent governmental policies and interpretations.

⁴ Preamble para. 2.

⁵ Ibid. Para. 6.

⁶ Article 1 (b) reads as follows: “*the territory in which the regional or minority language is used*” means the geographical area in which the said language is, the mode of expression of a number of people justifying the adoption of the various protective and promotional measures provided for in this Charter.

⁷ Article 1 (c): “*non-territorial languages*” means languages used by nationals of the State which differ from the language or languages used by the rest of the State’s population but which, although traditionally used within the territory of the State, cannot be identified with a particular area thereof.

3. National Legislation on Minority Language Rights in Italy

As it can be seen, international norms could only offer guidelines for the development of Italian minority rights legislation. The Italian Constitution does not contain any reference to general language arrangements or a national language, however, the political preference on linguistic minorities has not changed even after the adoption of the new law in 1999. Act 482/1999 on the “Rules on protection of historical language minorities”⁸ established the promotion of minority languages, at the same time, it stipulated clearly that Italian is the official language of the Republic. The Italian legal terminology has never used the term “national minorities”; instead, it used the form “linguistic minorities”. The Constitution uses exclusively linguistic criteria for the recognition of minorities. Palermo and Woelk argue that this clearly reflects the long-standing political approach to that ideology and in political terms all Italian citizens shall belong to the Italian nation (along the French nation state model) (Palermo and Woelk 2011, 283). Even if the term “ethnic” appears in regional statutes of Trentino-Alto Adige or Friuli Venezia Giulia, the intentions of the constitutional assembly in 1947 were clear in preferring to recognise exclusively linguistic identity. The political connotations of ethnic or national identity are still strong, and obviously not only in Italy, but in many other European countries, as well.

The protection of historical minorities is based on the linguistic criteria, but it does not mean that all linguistic minorities enjoy the same level of legal protection. In Italy there are various minority groups in very different demographic positions and under very different legal recognition. All together they may count around 4.5% of the population (approximately 2.5 million people) divided in at least twelve linguistic groups. Furthermore, neither the Constitution, nor Act 482/1999 do not introduce a general definition of linguistic minorities, so we have to distinguish between minorities recognised by law (as listed under Article 2 of the Act 482/1999, these are: Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian) and other minorities that do not get legal recognition. The situation becomes even more complicated if we consider the difficulties in differentiating between dialects and languages. The line between the two categories is rather blurred and there needs to be a political decision on categorising the different linguistic groups. In literature the different minority groups are usually distinguished along three main categories (Palici di Suni Prat 1999):

1. The so-called “super-protected” minorities (*minoranze superprotette*) living in the autonomous regions in North Italy, namely French-speakers in Val d’Aosta, German-speakers in Trentino-Alto Adige and Slovenian-speakers in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Although they enjoy rather different legal protection in each region, they are all historical minorities, traditionally living in their homelands and having special relations with their kin-states (France, Austria and Slovenia respectively). All the three minority communities are protected under the special autonomy statute of their region.

2. The minorities recognised by law (listed in Act 482/1999) are entitled to eventual protection, but the level of their protection differs according to the diversified implementation of the 1999 law.

⁸ Legge n. 482/99 “Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche.” 15 Dicembre 1999, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* n. 297, 20 December 1999.

3. The last group of minorities are not recognised by law and thus are not protected under Italian legislation, even if in subjective criteria they could qualify as minorities, without legal recognition they do not meet the objective criteria (they are not listed in the 1999 law) and thus they may not be entitled to any protective measures under public law. (Among traditional minorities Sinti and Roma fall in this category, but some consider also immigrant communities as potential minorities in this aspect) (Palermo and Woelk 2011, 284).

The most important characteristic of the Italian regulation of minority rights is that it applies a differentiated and gradual approach to the different minority groups. As it was mentioned above, the distinction between linguistic and other minorities is already featured in the Constitution, while Article 6 refers to linguistic minorities specifically, other minorities may only rely on the prohibition of discrimination (based on race, sex, language, religion, etc.) and religious minorities are protected under Articles 8, 19 and 20.

Another determining element is the territorial approach to minority rights, Act 482/1999 is in itself a framework law and specific rights are guaranteed at regional, provincial or local level. This means that it only establishes a potential protection mechanism, which has to be “activated” subsequently at local level. Local authorities may therefore use Act 482/1999 as a basis for granting genuine language rights, but must in so doing also respect the limits imposed by it. European states are inclined to link minority language rights claims to territorial competences and sovereignty; this approach leads to apply territorial restrictions for minority language rights. Following this logic, Italian minority rights legislation based on territorial principle does not target minority language speakers, but the territory where they live (Vizi 2016). The territoriality principle has been confirmed by the Constitutional Court when the Court abolished a regional law of Friuli Venezia Giulia, among others because it provided for the possibility of generalising the use of Friulian to the entire territory of the region.⁹

4. Act 482/1999

For legal scholars the interpretation and direct applicability of Article 6 of the Constitution was an important question (Piergigli 2000, 126–129; Bartole 1999). The constitutional provision under Article 6 apparently requires the adoption of special legislative instruments, as it reads as follows: “The Republic safeguards linguistic minorities by means of appropriate measures.” But for more than 50 years these “appropriate measures” could be found only in the special statutes of three autonomous regions (Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d’Aosta and Friuli Venezia Giulia) and in a few regional laws. The adoption of the specific law on the protection of linguistic minorities in 1999 signified a turning point in this aspect. Act 482/1999 was expressly adopted to implement Article 6 of the Constitution and “the general principles established by European and international organisations”. The law gives a taxonomical list of minority language communities that are entitled to specific protection, recognising for the first time the smaller minority groups as well (see above). The law empowers the provincial councils for determining the areas where the provisions of the law

⁹ Corte Costituzionale, Sentenza del 18 maggio 2009, 159/2009, pt. 3.1.1 of the part “considerato in diritto”.

may be applicable, requiring also the involvement of local citizens and local councillors belonging to linguistic minorities (Article 3). The provincial council shall adopt a resolution on the matter only if at least 15% of the local citizens residing in the municipality concerned or 1/3 of the municipality councillors submit their initiative for that. So the law relies on the individual citizens' self-identification and in this aspect on their free choice of identity.

The rights enshrined in the law intentionally follow the logic of the CoE Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (Palermo and Woelk 2011, 289). The law focuses on linguistic and cultural rights. The scope of the linguistic rights which may be granted to the minorities concerned is broad. It covers the use of the minority language in the local municipal council, dealings with the local administration, as well as before the Justice of the Peace, but it reaffirms the exclusive legality of Italian in judicial and administrative procedures (Article 8): only deliberations or acts made in Italian produce legal effects. In the field of education, the law guarantees the right to receive education on minority language, especially in elementary schools (Articles 4 and 6). Municipalities may also decide to add traditional or customary place names to the official Italian names (Article 10). Surnames and first names of persons that were changed into Italian or that were refused by the local administration before the entry into force of Act 482/1999, may be changed back without charge into the original linguistic form. Nonetheless, an important limit is put on the use of other languages than Italian. The national language may never be replaced by the minority tongue. The law contains a few provisions regarding the media as well, the Ministry of Communications shall stipulate an agreement with public broadcaster companies for securing the "conditions for the protection of linguistic minorities" [Article 12 (1)]. Moreover, the regions are entitled to sign on their own specific agreements with public or private broadcasters for providing news, cultural and other media programs on minority languages [Article 12 (2)]. It is also important to note, that the law recognises the importance of inter-regional and trans-border cooperation for the promotion of minority cultures [Article 19 (2)].

In sum, the law builds on three main pillars of Italian minority rights legislation: the sole linguistic criteria for identifying minorities; the need for legal recognition; and the territorial dimension of the acquired rights.

Since Act 482/1999 offers only a framework for regional, provincial or local legislation, it is particularly important what are the financial resources available for the implementation of minority rights. In this aspect the law introduces a financial limit for the central budget: besides establishing a provisional national fund for the protection of linguistic minorities (Article 20) and special financial means to the Ministry of Education, the law limits the budgetary resources maximising it at 10 million Euros. This provision is a clear sign to highlight the responsibilities of the regions, and enables minority communities to lobby for additional resources at local and regional level. Taking into account the demographic position of minority communities, it is more realistic for minority representatives to influence political decisions at local or provincial level than at national or regional level. Nevertheless, the limitation of central budgetary resources introduces an inappropriate differentiation between minority groups living in better-off regions and minority groups living in poorer areas, as the following comparison of Trento and Sicily will clearly show.

5. Division of Competences: A Model of Multilevel Governance?

Since the protection of minorities in Italian law is guided by the territorial principle, the actual autonomy of administrative units, where minorities live is of great importance. The more legislative (and financial) powers an administrative unit has, the easier will be for minorities living in that area to obtain appropriate protection and recognition of their rights. On the other hand, it seemed to be reasonable for the legislator to create the possibility for introducing minority protection measures in a flexible way at the administrative level, which stands the closest to minority citizens. Small communities that are almost invisible in respect to the total population of the country, in this way gain better access to decision-making regarding their rights at provincial or local level. In this aspect the creation of ordinary regions in 1970 was particularly important for minorities, because under Act 482/1999 not only special autonomous regions, but also ordinary regions are entitled to adopt legislative measures for the protection of linguistic minorities. The most important question in this aspect is to decide the limits of regional competencies in regulating minority rights protection. The constitutional provision under Article 6 does not specify any competencies in this regard and for a long time, the Constitutional Court adopted a strongly restrictive approach (Palermo and Woelk 2011, 295–296). However, as the political climate has gradually changed over the years since the 1970s and the specific law on linguistic minorities was adopted in 1999, the Constitutional Court took a more favourable position in this regard (see Acts 159/2009 and 170/2010 in particular), with the restriction that the regions can adopt minority protection measures only within the limits of national legislation on minority rights (Act 88/2011). Nicolini argues that in fact the protection of minorities does not create additional legislative competencies, so under Article 117 of the Constitution, it cannot be interpreted as a legislative subject under exclusive or shared regional competence (Nicolini 2009). According to the decisions of the Constitutional Court, minority protection is not a competence, it is much more a “value” (Act 88/2011) that shall be respected at all administrative levels. Following the same reasoning, Palermo and Woelk (2011, 297) conclude that since it is not a legislative subject, there cannot be a specific legislative competence in this field. So the protection of minorities does not create a regional legislative competence *strictu sensu*, but more a mode of exercising existing competencies at all administrative units that form the Republic according to Article 114 of the Constitution.

As it was seen above, the “super-protected” minorities living in special autonomous regions have specific guarantees for exercising their rights, established either in international treaties or in the special autonomy statutes of the regions. Other smaller minority communities recognised by Act 482/1999 do not have such guarantees and thus their rights are only eventually recognised depending on the political and legal conditions of the regions and provinces where they live. Act 482/1999 does not prescribe obligations for administrative units, it offers only a possibility for the adoption of minority protection measures. Even among the “super-protected” minorities, there are significant differences in their rights and legal position, but the support for smaller “ordinary” minorities may differ even more in the relevant provincial and regional legislations. In fact, the implementation of Act 482/1999 is rather complex and largely depends on the financial sources available which further complicates the existing differential treatment of minorities. Local, provincial and regional authorities may ask direct support from the government for financing minority language

programs and services, but such financial support does not cover all relevant activities and cannot cover the full costs of minority protection measures.¹⁰

In this way it is important to see what the main focus of regional and provincial regulations is. A positive example is provided by the Province of Trento, where a provincial law was adopted in 2008 on the protection of small linguistic minorities.

6. Trento

In the autonomous province of Trento, in addition to the majority Italian population (approximately 500,000 people) three small minority communities live: the Ladins (according to the 2011 census 8,060 people), the Móchenos (1,660 people) and Cimbrians (1,072 people).¹¹ Ladins in Trento are part of a larger Romance language group living in the Dolomites, in the province of Bolzano/Bozen, in the province of Belluno and in Switzerland (Rhéto-Romans). Mócheno and Cimbrian languages both belong to the larger family of Upper German languages and both are spoken by small, isolated village communities in the valleys of the higher Alps.¹² Neither Mócheno nor Cimbrian is recognised under the national law on minorities (i.e. Act 482/1999), however both are mentioned in the special statute of the Trento Alto-Adige/Südtirol region.¹³ The special statute declares to help the economic and social development of Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian communities taking into account their cultural identity and their special needs. Interestingly the special statute does not recognise Cimbrian and Mócheno as separate languages, but guarantees that in the municipalities where these communities live, schools may teach in Ladin or German (Article 102). Based on the existing national framework law and on the relevant provisions of the regional statute in 2008, the provincial assembly decided to introduce protective measures for these two small language communities, as well. The provincial law 6/2008 “Norms for the protection and promotion of local linguistic minorities” was adopted on 19 June 2008 (hereinafter: Provincial Law). It is based on the special statute of the region, and makes reference not only to the implementation of the relevant domestic constitutional and legal provisions, but also mentions international and EU law as a legal background for the protection of minorities. The provincial law goes beyond offering linguistic rights, it is combining administrative reforms and specific rights aiming at preserving the two tiny language communities (Woelk et al. 2014). The provisions of provincial law 6/2008 are built on two pillars: offer guarantees for specific language rights (in education, public administration, etc.) and on the other hand,

¹⁰ See Decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 10 novembre 2016, *Determinazione dei criteri per la ripartizione dei fondi di cui agli articoli 9 e 15 della legge 15 dicembre 1999, n. 482, in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche, per il triennio 2017–2019*; and Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri – Circolare D.A.R. 620 P – del 13 gennaio 2017, *Fondi previsti dagli articoli 9 e 15 della legge 15 dicembre 1999, n. 482, recante norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche – annualità 2017 – Circolare recante linee guida per la predisposizione delle richieste di finanziamento da parte delle Amministrazioni territoriali e locali*.

¹¹ See regional statistical data at: www.statistica.provincia.tn.it/binary/pat_statistica_new/popolazione/RilevazionePopolazioniLadinaMochenaCimbra.1394031752.pdf (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

¹² For more see www.minoranzelinguistiche.provincia.tn.it (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

¹³ Decree of the President of the Republic n. 670, 31 August 1972 as modified by Article 4 of the Constitutional Law 2/2001, adopted on 31 January 2001.

institutionalise effective participation and control of minority communities over issues relevant for the protection of their identity.

Under the Italian constitutional provisions, the most important element is the territorial determination of the areas, municipalities, where minority rights and a minority language is protected. In this aspect one of the main challenges for small minority communities – based on the territorial principle – is, how can public administration be organised to respond to the needs of small, but still territorially concentrated minorities. The commitment to protect and promote minority languages and cultures as formulated by the law has to be translated to territorial administrative responsibilities. The territorial organisation of public administration is obviously the exclusive competence of each state, international standards impose only a negative barrier in this aspect, like FCNM Article 16 stating that “*The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention.*” Italian scholars already in the 1960s have highlighted the difficulties in finding an appropriate balance between an effective territorial administration and the protection of linguistic minorities. Pizzorusso argued that the lack of effective separation of public competences may easily lead to the assimilation of minorities (Pizzorusso 1967, 289–291). The adoption of Act 482/1999 at national level has given a good incentive for a positive turn in regional and provincial legislations in this field. Trento adopted a rather progressive approach in this aspect: in 2006 a new administrative unit was established (the *Community of the Valley/Comunità di valle*, under its official denomination the *Comun general de Fascia*) by the association of municipalities which cover all territories where Ladin-speaking communities live in the province.¹⁴ The special statute of the new administrative unit was adopted by the provincial law 1/2010. For the Mócheno and Cimbrian communities, it was not feasible to create a new administrative unit. The Provincial Law stated the territory of existing municipalities; the territory of three municipalities (Fierozzo/Vlarotz, Frassilongo/Garait, and Palú del Fersina/Palai en Berstol) constitute the historic settlement of the Mócheno population, while the municipality of Luserna/Lusérn constitutes the historic settlement of the Cimbrian population. Article 3 (4) of the Provincial Law however opens the way for non-state actors to overcome the territorial principle and states that for the minority protection activities of individuals and associations the territorial limitations shall not be applied. This is an important provision to guarantee horizontal subsidiarity; the distinction between public competences and private actions with regard to territorial limitations is important for these small minorities (Palermo 1999).

In general, the Provincial Law reflects a flexible approach in order to create more favourable legal conditions responding to the realities of these small minority communities. The Provincial Law opened different options, modifying existing administrative structures and institutions and creating also *ad hoc* administrative bodies (Woelk et al. 2014). The Provincial Law takes into consideration the demographic situation of these minorities and in this perspective sees their needs as a priority for the reorganisation of public administration. The principle idea reflected in the legal provisions is to create appropriate forms of institutional autonomy that enable minority communities to influence and take

¹⁴ Article 19 of the provincial law 3/2006.

responsibility for administrative measures aiming at the protection of their language and identity (Toniatti 2011, 360). The same approach was reflected already in the organisation of education (under Articles 45 and 50 of the provincial law 5/2006), when a separate school council and headmaster was created for the education institutions of the *Comun general de Fascia*, establishing a special form of autonomy before the adoption of the Provincial Law.

This institutional autonomy is also reinforced by Articles 7 and 8 of the Provincial Law, which recognise the municipalities where minorities live (listed by the law) as the bodies representing the respective minority communities both at political and at administrative-organisational level.

Moreover, new institutions were created by the law at different administrative levels to secure an effective participation of minorities in public affairs directly affecting them. The Provincial Law establishes the Conference of Minorities (*Conferenza delle minoranze*) as a political body dealing with the “policies on linguistic minority populations” (Article 9). All administrative bodies are represented in the Conference of Minorities, that have any competence in dealing with minorities. The Conference includes all parties interested: all members of the provincial executive body, the *Giunta Provinciale* (provincial government),¹⁵ the Ladin provincial counsellor, the presidents of the minority communities, the mayors of the Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian municipalities (listed by the law), school directors of Ladin, Cimbrian and Mócheno schools and the representatives of the Ladin, Cimbrian and Mócheno cultural institutes. The Conference of Minorities is convened at least two times a year, and it is responsible for deciding the policy guidelines related to minority protection programs. It is a political forum for discussing minority issues. But it is also a consultative body: it shall give an obligatory opinion regarding publishing and information services and regarding the division of provincial funds for minorities [Article 9 (2)].

The Provincial Law established separately the Authority for Linguistic Minorities (*Autorità per le minoranze linguistiche*), responsible for the implementation of the specific minority rights provisions. The Authority is composed of three members possessing high professional recognition and judicial, cultural and social capacities, who are elected by a 2/3 majority of the Provincial Assembly. The Authority’s president is nominated by a joint decision of the President of the Provincial Assembly and the President of the Conference of Minorities (Article 10). The Authority for Linguistic Minorities works in “full independence and autonomy” as an attached body of the Provincial Assembly and it operates as a control institution and also as a consultative body. It is entitled to evaluate, supervise and overview the proper spending of financial resources allocated for the protection and promotion of minority languages and submits its relevant report every year to the Provincial Assembly. Within its consultative competences, it assists the Provincial Assembly, the *Comun general de Fascia* and the Cimbrian and Mócheno municipalities in their activities and policies relevant to the protection of minorities. The Authority also acts as an ‘ombudsman’ institution (*difensore civico*) with regard to judicial acts and procedures that are related to the promotion and protection of linguistic minorities. The Provincial Law establishes also *ad hoc* administrative competencies for the minority cultural institutes, namely the Ladin Cultural

¹⁵ Since 2014, the president of the province is elected by the mayors and by the municipality counsellors (Law 56/2014). Besides the president, the assessors (*assessori*), responsible for specific policy areas are members of the provincial government. For the moment, in Trento there are 7 assessors nominated by the president of the province see www.giunta.provincia.tn.it (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

Institute,¹⁶ Mócheno Cultural Institute and the Cimbrian Cultural Institute.¹⁷ The cultural institutes have been reorganised as administrative bodies, responsible for the promotion and protection of the respective minority languages and cultures (Articles 12 and 14). The most important role assigned to them by the Provincial Law is their exclusive competence relative to the standardisation of minority languages. Since all the three languages (Ladin, Cimbrian and Mócheno) have been for a long time spoken languages, the centralisation and institutionalisation of language standardisation has particular importance.

The focus of Italian legislation, and consequently the effective minority rights provisions of the Provincial Law focus on the use of minority languages. According to Article 16, minority languages can be used in oral and written communication with provincial and local authorities, entities and institutions operating within the territory of minority municipalities. The Provincial Law introduces special measures for facilitating the teaching and learning of minority languages (Article 17) both within schools and professional training institutions within the territories of minority municipalities. The province, the minority municipalities and provincial public bodies guarantee the use of topographical names in minority languages. The Provincial Law orders to establish toponymical commissions for each linguistic minority, which is entitled to decide on the proper topographical denominations of streets, localities, etc. in minority languages. Special provisions are introduced to promote and prioritise the access to public employment of minority language speakers in the areas where the respective minorities live (see Articles 29 and 32). The cultural institutes play a decisive role in attesting the knowledge of minority languages (Article 18).

Article 24 of the Provincial Law establishes the Provincial Fund for supporting the protection and promotion of minority languages, it shall cover the costs of minority language media and information services, the costs of projects and initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting minority languages and the costs of the implementation of the specific provisions of the Provincial Law. In 2017 the Provincial Assembly assigned 749,000 Euros for the Fund (Risorse 2016).

7. The Situation of the Albanian Speaking Minority in Sicily¹⁸

After the end of WWII, at the time of designing Italy's new constitutional foundations, Sicily was granted a special autonomous statute under the Royal Decree n. 455, 15 May 1946. The idea of offering a relatively broad autonomy to the island was not only intended to counterbalance separatist movements, but it was also seen as a tool for helping the region's economic development (Verde 2016). Almost two years before the adoption of the Italian Constitution, this special autonomy was a unique test to introduce a differential administrative structure in Italy. While the special autonomy statutes of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trento Alto-Adige/Südtirol and Valle d'Aosta have already from the beginning included provisions regarding the protection of minorities, any reference to minorities is

¹⁶ Established by the provincial law 29/1975.

¹⁷ Both established by the provincial law 18/1987.

¹⁸ Special thanks are due to Pietro Manali, Secretary General of the "BESA" Union and to H. E. Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro, Eparch of Piana degli Albanesi for providing valuable information on the current situation of Arbëreshë communities in Sicily during my research stay in Palermo in May 2017.

missing from the special autonomy statute of Sicily. Among historical linguistic minority communities recognised by Act 482/1999, approximately 50,000 Albanians (Arbëreshë) live in small municipalities around Palermo in Sicily (the total population of the island is around 5 million people), but only 15,135 speak the language.¹⁹ It shall be noted that the Arbëresh language is a historical dialect of Albanian and has been the language of these communities for the past 500 years, ever since the Albanians came to settle in Sicily after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire. Arbëreshë communities proved to be successful in maintaining their language because of their isolation, as Orthodox Christians living in the mountain areas. Other factors were the relative prosperity of the community, which made them distinctively proud in respect to rural Sicilians. The Council of Europe Advisory Committee in its last evaluation report points out that small language groups such as the Albanian community are given scarce attention, their language is threatened by extinction, and that there is a clear lack of public funding (Council of Europe 2015, 5). The example of Albanian-language communities in Sicily highlights the relative ineffectiveness of Act 482/1999 if regional, provincial legislative measures are missing. Nevertheless, within the limits of their competences, municipalities having strong Albanian traditions are inclined to protect and promote the Arbëresh language and culture (see below).

At regional level, the first legislative initiatives for the protection and promotion of historical Albanian minority language appeared in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the State Commissioner, responsible for the constitutional control of the decisions taken by the Sicilian Regional Assembly, omitted all the relevant legislative provisions adopted by the Regional Assembly.²⁰ The first attempt was the adoption of the regional law 85/1981 (6 May 1981)²¹ on the promotion of learning the Sicilian dialect and the languages of ethnic minorities in schools. The State Commissioner abrogated the provisions regarding the teaching of minority languages, arguing that under Article 6 of the Constitution, this legislative subject is in the exclusive competence of the Italian State. A second initiative was presented to the Regional Assembly on 17 February 1992, on measures for the protection and development of the historic, cultural and linguistic heritage of the Sicilian community of Albanian origins. Based on this legislative proposal the Regional Assembly adopted the regional law 26/1998 on the protection and development of the historic, cultural, and linguistic heritage of the Sicilian community of Albanian origins and other linguistic minorities. Following its earlier reasoning, the State Commissioner abrogated most of the provisions of the regional law, based on the perception that the protection of minorities is an exclusive competence of the Italian State.²² Like the previous initiatives, the Regional Assembly intended to establish a regional institute for Albanian language and culture and wanted to assign a separate budget for the promotion and protection of minority languages.

¹⁹ 2011 national census see www.guzzardi.it/arberia/ (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

²⁰ The position of the State Commissioner (*Commissario dello Stato*) was established by Article 27 of the Statute of Sicily. Nominated by the Government, all regional laws adopted by the Regional Assembly had to be presented for approval to the Commissioner. If he/she found that the regional law is unconstitutional, he/she could submit a claim to the High Court which took the final decision on the constitutionality of the regional law. The Constitutional Court in its decision n. 255/2014 abolished the relative competencies of the State Commissioner, based on the relevant Act 3/2001 which extended significantly regional autonomy in Italy.

²¹ Legge regionale n. 85 del 06-05-1981, *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Regione Sicilia*. 09/05/1981. n. 23.

²² See *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Regione Sicilia* 16/10/1998. n. 52.

Since 1998, the constitutional framework has changed drastically: Act 482/1999 unquestionably opened the way to regional and provincial bodies for adopting minority protection measures. On the other hand the administrative reform introduced by Act 3/2001²³ grants broader autonomy to the regions, and the Constitutional Court abolished Articles 27 and 28 of the Regional Statute of Sicily which formed the legal basis for the State Commissioner to constitutional veto. Despite the positive legislative developments, the question of minorities has not appeared on the agenda of the Regional Assembly until 2017. A new legislative initiative was submitted in May 2017, largely building on the previous laws adopted in 1981 and 1998.²⁴ The new initiative focuses on three main issues:

1. Promotion and protection of the Albanian language. The law would establish a Regional Institute of Albanian Culture as a public authority responsible for the protection and promotion of the Albanian language. The main tasks of the institute would be offering Albanian language courses, doing research and publication on the Arbëresh language and culture. The cultural institute, based in Piana degli Albanesi/Hora e Arbëreshëvet shall co-operate closely with the department of the Albanian language of the University of Palermo.

2. Creation of an Arbëresh touristic district (“Skanderbeg”). The touristic district would cover all the municipalities where the legal provisions of the law would be applicable [Article 1 (2) names the municipalities of Piana degli Albanesi/Hora e Arbëreshëvet, Contessa Entellina/Kundisë, Santa Cristina Gela/Sëndastinhë, Palazzo Adriano/Pallaci and Mezzojuso/Munxifsi]. The regional assessor responsible for tourism shall provide financial means for the promotion of the new touristic district.

3. The new law would solicit the Region to sign agreements with the regional office of the public television broadcaster (RAI) and with private broadcasters to promote the inclusion of Albanian language programs in their television program.

The draft law also makes a proposal for allocating 150,000 Euros a year for the cultural institute.²⁵ The General Assembly asked its Committee “V” to examine the draft law, but until today it has not taken decision on the adoption of the law.²⁶

Even if at regional level Act 482/1999 has not yet been implemented, during the past decades, the municipalities where Albanians traditionally live, launched various local initiatives for the protection and promotion of Albanian minority interests. As the example of Piana degli Albanesi/Hora e Arbëreshëvet shows, municipality statutes may contain specific minority rights provisions.²⁷ Article 17 of the Statute declares that the municipality has Albanian origins and it is proud to protect its linguistic, religious and cultural heritage. The

²³ Adopted on 18 October 2001, “Modifiche al titolo V della parte seconda della Costituzione.” *Gazzetta Ufficiale Serie Generale* 24/10/2001. n. 248.

²⁴ The legislative initiative was submitted by four members of the Assembly (Pino Apprendi, Alice Anselmo, Giovanni Panepinto and Filippo Panarello – all representing the left-wing Partito Democratico) on 11 May 2017, n. 1318. URL: www.ars.sicilia.it/DocumentiEsterni/ODG_PDF/ODG_16_2017_05_18_426_P.pdf (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

²⁵ 30% of its budget would be assigned to the Department of Albanian Language and Literature of the University of Palermo.

²⁶ The mandate of the Regional Assembly (“XVI” legislature) ended in 2017 and on 5 November 2017, regional parliamentary elections were held. The winning parties (the right-wing coalition led by Forza Italia) are usually less inclined to take minority issues into consideration.

²⁷ For more details see www.comunepianadeglialbanesi.gov.it/images/Statuti_e_Regolamenti/statuto.pdf (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

Municipality promotes the teaching and use of Arbëreshë in its schools, it introduces bilingual street sign and topographical signs and it fosters international co-operation with Albanians living elsewhere in Europe, in particular with Albania and Kosovo. The other Albanian municipalities in the region maintain similar commitments. In 2001, the five municipalities established a union of municipalities under Act 265/1999 which opened the possibility for local governments to exercise jointly certain competencies as a union of municipalities. The “BESA” Union of Municipalities was created to promote and protect the Albanian language, traditions and culture in various fields.²⁸ Receiving financial support from the central budget, “BESA” could set up language help-desks which offer information and help in accessing public administration and services for Albanian speakers. The municipalities also co-ordinate their activities in promoting tourism, publishing periodicals and books on Albanian culture and language and also in promoting the learning of Albanian in schools. The local initiatives, however, cannot counterbalance the demographic tendencies and financial constraints that threaten the survival of the Albanian minority.

At administrative level, a serious problem is the lack of secondary school education in the Albanian speaking municipalities. After the first six years of elementary school, students have to continue their studies in Palermo. Consequently, even in the elementary school of Piana degli Albanesi, Albanian is taught as a special course and it is not the language of instruction. The improvement of education, the creation of better infrastructure and other necessary investments are impeded in lack of financial sources. Moreover the budgetary sources allocated from the central budget to the regional government for the protection and safeguarding of Albanian minority are often mismanaged by the regional government.²⁹ Further major problems of the Arbëresh community root in the economic deprivation of the region where they live, pushing young adults to migrate to other regions of Italy.

Even if Act 482/1999 created a favourable legal framework at national level for the protection of minorities, in lack of a proper legislative and administrative implementation at regional level, and especially in lack of accessible financial resources, the situation of the Arbëresh minority in Sicily could not significantly improve.

8. Conclusions

Italian republican constitutionalism aims at reconciling the need to be *una e indivisibile* (one and indivisible) while at the same time promoting linguistic minorities. The result is a complex and abundant legislation at national, as well as regional level which is also quite inventive at finding equilibrium between the two aims.

The multi-levelled legal protection offered by the Constitution, Act 482/1999 and implementing measures which may be activated on a local (municipal) level can be seen as an innovative approach to address minority issues. But the potential protection mechanism available to linguistic minorities through Act 482/1999 is not fully and equally implemented in the different regions of Italy. The Act seeks a balance between the need to grant linguistic

²⁸ These cover education, language learning, cultural activities, access to media, tourism, etc. (Article 5 of the Union’s Statute) see www.unibesa.it/statuto (Accessed: 07 January 2018.)

²⁹ Author’s interviews with Pietro Manali, Secretary General of the “BESA” Union on 31 May 2017, and H. E. Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro, Eparch of Piana degli Albanesi on 30 May 2017.

rights and the practical feasibility in cases where minorities are scattered throughout the territory (such as the establishment of a threshold to activate the minority language protection mechanism). On the other side, the twelve recognised minority languages do not enjoy an equal level of protection, they reflect a clear hierarchy (see above on the so-called “super-protected” minorities). The fact that linguistic minorities are granted different levels of protection is undoubtedly compatible with the Italian Constitution. The Constitutional Court has consistently held that the legislator has the discretionary power to decide the form and degree of language rights and autonomy to be granted. This is also consistent with international legal standards. Nevertheless, the financial decentralisation of minority protection causes serious problems for small minorities living in economically deprived areas as the case of Sicilian Arbëresh has shown. The lack of public funding to implement language promotion activities and the lack of reliable data on actual (minority) language use can be seen as a fundamental problem of the Italian minority protection regime.³⁰

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³⁰ It is also criticised in the most recent Opinion on Italy by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 16 July 2016. ACFC/OP/IV(2015)006.

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Anna Molnár

Italy and the Mediterranean Refugee Crisis

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to briefly analyse and introduce the background of illegal immigration and refugee flows from the Mediterranean Sea to Italy. I will also analyse and compare the responses of the Italian governments to this challenge since the end of the 1990s, focusing mainly on the relationship between Italy and Libya. This research is founded on political discourse (governmental, parliamentary standpoints), opinion polls, news items, speeches, interviews and reports. Using the methodology of document analysis, this research focuses on the social and governmental opinion on illegal migration. I analyse how the different government strategies regarding immigration policy changed during the last decades. This research is based on primary sources (government documents) and some secondary sources.

Italy has always been a destination and transit country for migratory flows. However, the rising illegal migration and refugee waves on the so-called central Mediterranean route have intensified in recent decades. The aim of this paper is to analyse illegal immigration and refugee flows from the Mediterranean Sea to Italy from the end of the 1990s, along with the responses of the Italian governments to this challenge. The focus is on the relationship between Italy and Libya.

Before the Arab Spring (2011) Italian governments, lacking a genuine European migration and asylum policy, used bilateral tools to tackle illegal migration. During 2001–2006 and during 2008–2011, political parties (especially the Northern League) of the centre-right governments of Silvio Berlusconi made illegal migration a national security issue. After the Arab Spring and Berlusconi's resignation though, the situation changed. The Italian governments of recent years have dealt with illegal migration using both bilateral and European crisis management tools. Although the major Italian political parties have been divided over the governments' responses to illegal migration since 2013, the Italian governments have managed to balance realist (pragmatic) and "Europeanised" approaches.

As a result of irregular migration and refugee pressures in the Mediterranean, and partly because of media interest in it, migration has become a national security issue. The attitude of the essentially inclusive and tolerant Italian society has changed gradually, and there is a growing number of people who reject the legitimacy of the current handling of the migration process. Social support for anti-immigration political parties like the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) is rising in proportion.

2. Immigration and Emigration

One of the challenges causing severe political debates and social tensions in Italy is the growth of illegal immigration. For the Italian society, the immigration of a wide range of people, from employed migrants to asylum seekers, from refugees to irregular immigrants (*clandestini*) – is a relatively new phenomenon. Recently, Italy has been transformed from an emigration country into a target and transit country. Between 1861 and 1970, 27 million Italians left the country (ISTAT 2011, 22). Between 1971 and 2001, the number of legal immigrants increased more than ten-fold, from 121,116 to 1,384,889, but was still relatively small. Moreover, until the 1990s, most of the legal immigrants came from member states of the European communities. In 2017, however, approximately 5 million legal immigrants chose Italy as their new home (ISTAT 2017a). This comprised 8.3% of the entire population of Italy, and the data does not include those who have received Italian citizenship or migrants without documents.

The reasons for this rapid growth are legion, but two seem more significant: a lack of migration regulation, and negative population growth in Italy as the number of births decreases. According to the Italian statistical office, ISTAT, in 2016 the number of people in Italy decreased for the first time since 1990. As of 1 January 2017, it is estimated that the population amounts to some 60,579,000 residents, which is 86,000 less than in the previous year. The average age is 44.9 years (ISTAT 2017b). The aging of society brings a decrease in the workforce, and the Italian economy increasingly needs immigrants, who provide cheap labour. Large numbers of immigrants work, for example, in the Italian construction and textile industries, and in agriculture (Molnár 2012, 113).

Legal immigration, however, has declined, particularly in the years of economic crisis. This suggests that Italy has been less attractive for economic migrants. In 2010, there were 350,000 requests for work permits; three years later, this figure fell by 76%, to just 85,000. Low-skilled migrant workers were less necessary because of the economic crisis. At the same time, however, emigration from Italy is increasing. In 2016, more than 4.8 million Italians, 7.9% of the population, were living abroad. Between 2006 and 2016, the rate of emigration increased by 54.9% (Licata 2016, 6; Rainews.it 2016). Every year about 100,000 people, mostly young and educated, are leaving the country. It is estimated, for instance, that around 600,000 Italian citizens live in the United Kingdom (Caporale 2016; Denková 2016). Italy is still an emigration country, as well. The number of irregular immigrants from crisis areas (Central Africa, North Africa, the Middle East), on the other hand, has been growing steadily even as legal immigration declined in the crisis years.

The social and political aspects of the immigration issue reflect a dichotomy that is difficult to resolve: immigrants both fulfil the need for labour and provide a challenge of social integration. Legal immigrants are important, and probably indispensable for the labour market; they also make significant contributions to the Italian economy overall. According to a recent report on the immigration economy, 2.4 million employed immigrants produced €130 billion in added value (8.9% of GDP) and paid €11.5 billion in social security contributions in Italy in 2016 (Carli 2017; Fondazione Leone Moressa 2017). Insufficient social integration, however, has led Italians (incorrectly) to link crime and immigration, and encouraged intolerance in Italian society. No link has been demonstrated empirically

(Crocitti 2014; Cecchi, 2011). In fact, “in the period 2004–2013, the total number of criminal complaints rose from 692,000 to about 897,000; but while the complaints against Italians increased by 28.0 percent (from 513,618 to 657,443) despite a slight decrease in the native population, those filed against foreign citizens decreased by 6.2 percent (255,304 vs. 239,701), although the latter population more than doubled during the same period” (IDOS 2015). According to data gathered by the Pew Research Center, in 2016 in Italy, however, 47% of the respondents said refugees are more to blame for crime than other groups (Pew Research Center 2016).

3. Irregular Immigration

Although the portion of foreign citizens living in Italy has not increased in recent years, the social attitude towards immigration has changed significantly as a result of the irregular migration and refugee crisis and the securitisation of the phenomenon.

This is not the first time Italy has faced a mass influx of immigrants; during the 1990s, Italy experienced a mass movement of people coming from Albania through the Adriatic. The dramatic events of recent years, however, attracted far more media attention and public interest. Growing immigration from the new EU member states (like Romania) that are seen as “foreign”, yet their nationals no longer needed a work permit, convinced people that immigration was a national security issue.

Table 1.

Estimate of foreign presence in Italy, by juridical and administrative status, 1991–2013

Year	Total	Regulars	Irregulars	% irregulars
1991	807,812	424,812	383,000	47
1992	754,998	461,998	293,000	39
1993	766,540	443,207	323,333	42
1994	822,421	468,754	353,667	43
1995	957,188	573,188	384,000	40
1996	1,052,738	790,738	262,000	25
1997	1,194,408	1,054,408	140,000	12
1998	1,300,000	1,055,000	245,000	19
1999	1,516,667	1,267,333	249,333	16
2000	1,750,000	1,562,000	188,000	11
2001	2,033,333	1,564,333	469,000	23
2002	2,188,667	1,438,667	750,000	34
2003	2,216,000	1,716,000	500,000	23
2004	2,685,000	2,435,000	250,000	9
2005	2,991,000	2,548,000	443,000	15
2006	3,410,000	2,760,000	650,000	19
2007	3,636,000	3,287,000	349,000	10

Year	Total	Regulars	Irregulars	% irregulars
2008	3,918,000	3,267,000	651,000	17
2009	4,345,000	3,923,000	422,000	10
2010	4,747,000	4,293,000	454,000	10
2011	4,713,000	4,270,000	443,000	9
2012	4,625,000	4,299,000	326,000	7
2013	4,901,000	4,607,000	294,000	6

Source: Papavero 2015, 5.

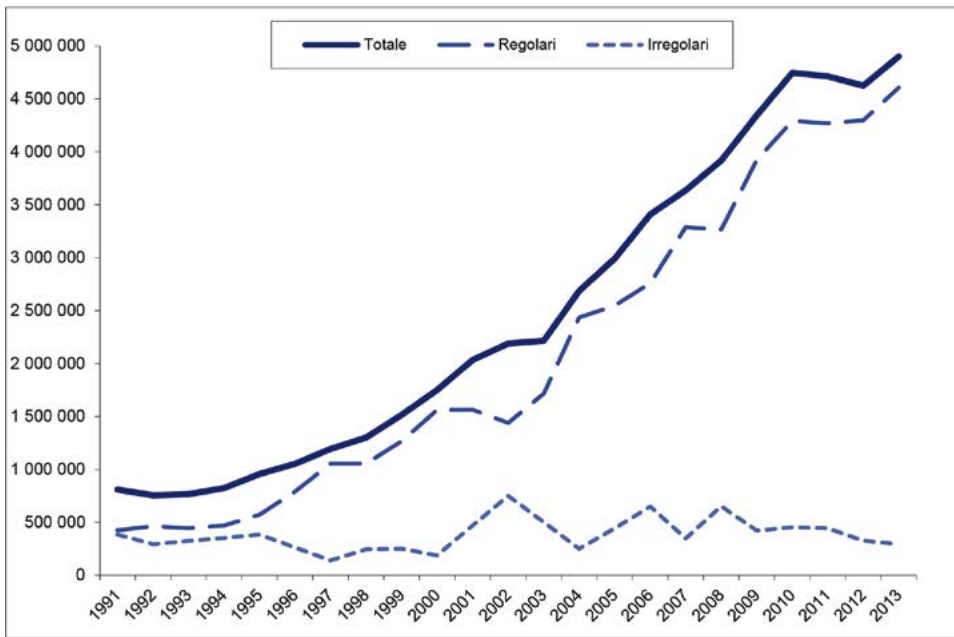


Figure 1.

Estimate of foreign presence in Italy, by legal and administrative status, 1991–2013

Source: Papavero 2015, 5.

The number of those irregular immigrants choosing the extremely dangerous Central Mediterranean route changes with the political stability (or instability) of the North African region, and with the degree of bilateral cooperation between the southern countries of the basin and Italy. In 1997, some 22,343 people reached Italy this way, while in 2000, the number was 26,817. The number was lower in 2003 (14,331) and in 2004 (13,635), not coincidentally a period of stronger bilateral cooperation between Italy and Libya (Martirano 2003). The legislation (the Turco–Napolitano, and Bossi–Fini Bills) of this period was intended primarily to control legal immigration through annually calculated quotas. The Turco–Napolitano Bill (1998), besides establishing transitory camps (e.g. on the island of

Lampedusa), increased the number of the expelled. The Bossi–Fini Bill (2002) introduced even more severe regulations. Illegal migration did not decrease in the following years though. In 2005, 2006 and in 2007 more than 20,000 irregular migrants reached the Italian coasts. In 2008 some 36,951 irregular immigrants entered the country through this route; however, after the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation between Italy and Libya was signed that year, illegal immigration through the central Mediterranean again dropped significantly. (Ronzitti 2009a; Legge 6 febbraio 2009, n. 7.) The numbers went from 64,300 in 2009 to 4,500 by 2010 (Molnár 2011). By 2014, however, the number had reached 170,100 (four times more than the previous year), as the Libyan situation destabilised and cooperation came to a virtual halt (FRONTEX 2017).

Table 2.
Central Mediterranean Route (1997–2016)

Year	Landed migrants	Asylum applications	Examined requests
1997	22,343	2,595	2,209
1998	38,134	18,496	5,066
1999	49,999	37,318	11,838
2000	26,817	24,296	36,776
2001	20,143	21,575	17,610
2002	23,719	18,754	21,552
2003	14,331	15,274	13,441
2004	13,635	10,869	9,446
2005	22,939	10,704	14,052
2006	22,016	10,026	14,254
2007	20,455	13,310	21,198
2008	36,951	31,723	23,175
2009	9,573	19,090	25,113
2010	4,406	12,121	14,042
2011	62,692	37,350	25,626
2012	13,267	17,352	29,969
2013	42,925	26,620	23,634
2014	170,100	64,886	36,330
2015	153,946	84,000	
2016	181,126		

Source: 1991–2014: Papavero 2015; 2015–2016: FRONTEX 2017 and Cesareo 2016.

These irregular immigrant flows are composed of both economic migrants, and “genuine” *refugees and asylum seekers*. The causes and motivations for leaving their home countries differ from case to case. We can find economic, political reasons, wars and civil wars or serious deterioration of the security environment in the origin countries. Fragile states with ineffective border management and tenuous security infrastructures have contributed significantly to the growth of refugee and migration flows in the Mediterranean area. *According to the Fragile State Index, a “fragile state” has institutions that are weak or*

*at the point of collapse, resulting in poor governance and a decline in legitimacy.*¹ The populations of these states suffer from arbitrary rule, which results in widespread poverty and violence; women, children, and ethnic or religious minorities especially are affected by violence. Consequently, many people flee these states, seeking asylum or better opportunities.

Political crises and armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Central Africa also have led to more fragility. In 2017, six of the ten most fragile states were in Africa, and three were in the Middle East (Fund for Peace 2017b). According to the Fund for Peace, the situation in Libya and Syria has worsened most dramatically. Libya went from 95th in the index of fragile states (2006) to 23rd (2017), and Syria rose from 33rd (2006) to 5th (2017) (Fund for Peace 2017a).

Libya was traditionally one of the Mediterranean centres for human trafficking and, following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, the unstable situation allowed human traffickers to act with *impunity*. This resulted in the consolidation and better organisation of smuggling groups and, since 2013, the flow of irregular migrants and refugees has increased. According to FRONTEX, 170,760 people reached Italian shores via the Central Mediterranean Route in 2014, while 153,946 did so in 2015, and 181,126 arrived in 2016. Following the closure of the Western Balkan Route after the EU–Turkey deal of March 2016, the numbers have increased further; by July 2017, more than 90,000 had chosen this route and thus Italy. The island of Lampedusa, close to the coast of Africa, has been a target of illegal migration flows and the symbol of the refugee crisis since 2013 (Gatta 2009).

A portion of the arrivals to Italy cannot be considered economic immigrants, and therefore, they have the right to lodge an asylum application. In 2013 about 28,000 people started this process, as did 64,000 people in 2014. In 2015 though, when more than 150,000 illegal immigrants arrived, only 84,000 refugee applications were submitted (Cesareo 2016, XI). Italian authorities have been criticised in many cases for failing to register immigrants; however, for most of them, Italy was primarily a transit and not a destination country.

4. Government Approaches before the Arab Spring

Libya has played an important role in Italy's foreign policy since colonial times. Despite this, and despite the presence of the Italian gas and oil giant ENI in Libya, Italy did not have good diplomatic relations with Libya. By the late 1990s, relations had normalised and the centre-left government of Italy initiated negotiations with Libya to control illegal immigration. Libya was isolated otherwise, and UN sanctions were suspended only in 2003 (Papavero 2015, 4). Following several meetings, however, on 4 July 1998 a joint communication was signed by Italy and Libya. Italy recognised some of the suffering caused under its colonial rule, and the management of illegal immigration was mentioned in this document (Paoletti 2010a, 116–117; Camera.it 2008). A high number of illegal immigrants arrived in Sicily during the summer of 2000, leading to a bilateral agreement to fight terrorism, organised crime, and illegal immigration in December of that year. In 2003, a permanent liaison office for the

¹ The Fragile States Index (FSI) is created by the Fund for Peace. The FSI uses 12 social, economic, and political indicators in order to analyse how wars, peace accords, environmental calamities, and political movements have pushed countries toward stability or closer to the brink of collapse.

prevention of organised crime and illegal immigration was created between the two countries (European Commission 2004, 15). Then – without a standard readmission agreement – the readmission process from Italy (“return flights”) started in 2004 (Paoletti 2010b). On 7 October 2004, the Libyan “day of revenge” was renamed the “day of friendship”, although Gaddafi was still demanding compensation for colonial-era injustices (Paoletti 2010a, 128).

During the Berlusconi governments (between 2001 and 2006) security rhetoric became increasingly prominent in Italy, and the Northern League (NL) initiated legislation made it more difficult for immigrants to receive a regular permit (Campani 2016, 168). Following a series of informal agreements, in 2007 another formal agreement was signed to create joint patrols in the Mediterranean along the coast of Libya (Perrin 2012; Human Rights Watch 2009).

Due to the *modus operandi* of this cooperation and the agreements reached between the two countries, this process is considered the externalisation of migration policy, namely transferring the management of migration policy to the countries of origin and transit (Paoletti 2010a, 169). This “outsourcing of migration policies” was criticised for weakening the protection of human rights and for creating “Fortress Europe” (Frelick et al. 2016; International Federation for Human Rights 2017; International Detention Coalition 2013, 10).

In 2007, during the centre-left government led by Romano Prodi (2006–2008), the Group for Strategic Reflection (*Gruppo di Riflessione Strategica*) was organised within the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By 2008, the group had finalised the *Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera* [2020 Report: the choices of foreign policy]. It noted that agreements with Albania, Tunisia and Libya were not sufficient to handle migration. There was a growing need for European and international cooperation. In 2008, according to one opinion poll, 90% of Italians saw control over immigration as one of the most important national interests of Italy (Dassù and Massari 2008, 87).

Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister, made a renewed attempt that year to consolidate relations with the Treaty of Benghazi (30 August 2008). The historic treaty, based on more than 10 years of negotiations, explicated the privileged relationship between the two countries. Italy became the first colonial power to compensate its former colony for damages, announcing a program of \$5 billion over 20 years. In exchange, Rome got control of illegal immigration and the right to invest in Libya (Ronzitti 2009b, 2009c).

Between 2008 and 2011, Berlusconi’s government focused on the personal security of Italian citizens. The growing level of concern about security facilitated the growth of societal support for the Northern League, an anti-immigration political party that doubled its voters base and became a member of the centre-right coalition government again. Roberto Maroni, a member of the Northern League, became Minister of the Interior.

According to Giovanna Campani, the 4th Berlusconi Government put an emphasis on the anti-immigrant security rhetoric. As a result, the Berlusconi Government regarded ensuring this kind of feeling of security among the people as one of its major tasks. The Italian Parliament, mainly under the influence of the NL, passed the so-called Security Package (Act 94/2009) in July 2009. This contained stronger punishments for illegal immigration and made illegal immigration a criminal act (Campani 2016, 168). These actions, along with the Treaty of Benghazi, were criticised not only by the centre-left opposition, but also by the Vatican and several human rights organisations (Molnár 2012; Maccanico 2011; Brambilla et al. 2016).

5. Government Approaches after the Arab Spring

Although the bilateral treaty of 2008 proved to be an effective tool in decreasing illegal immigration, the Arab Spring and the collapse of the Gaddafi regime sent a new wave of irregular immigrants to Italy, mainly from Tunisia. The Berlusconi Government responded by establishing a national state of emergency. Italy also signed new repatriation agreements with Tunisia and the Libyan Transitional Government (Open Society Foundations 2012).

In 2011 Italy was hit hard not only by the crisis in Libya, but also by Europe's debt crisis and this year Silvio Berlusconi, Italian Prime Minister resigned. Under the technocratic government led by Mario Monti, the simple practice of externalisation of migration policy became increasingly unacceptable. In February, the European Court of Human Rights sanctioned Italy for sending African migrants and asylum seekers to Libya in 2009, which it considered a violation of human rights (case of *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*) (Open Society Foundations 2012). In April 2012, Italy and Libya signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on combating the unauthorised departure of migrants from Libya. This referred to the 2000 UN Convention against transnational organised crime and smuggling of migrants, while facilitating their voluntary return in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). It called for training the Libyan police to control borders, and recommended more thorough information exchanges between the two countries (Perrin 2012). In May 2013, the Council of the European Union launched the civilian mission of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), EUBAM Libya, to support the Libyan authorities in improving border management. So far, the mission has had little success; in fact, following the deterioration of the security environment of Libya, it had to leave the country and it is currently located in Tunis (European External Action Service 2015).

Smugglers became stronger and better organised in Libya after 2013, and the flow of irregular migrants and refugees increased again. In October 2013, after the tragic death of 368 people in the sea near Lampedusa, the Italian Government launched a humanitarian and military rescue mission, the *Mare Nostrum* (Molnár 2015). The Italian Minister of Defence, Mario Mauro said that the *Mare Nostrum* "will be a military operation and humanitarian assistance and provides for the strengthening of the surveillance device and rescue on the high seas in order to increase the level of safety of human life." As the Italian Minister of the Interior explained it: "We have three levels to deal with migration flows. The first is international cooperation to make sure the ships that leave are not merchants of death; the second is the control of the border that is the European Union; and the third is the [...] national level [...] we have focused on the level of protection of the frontier" (Gruppo Europa 2013).

Italy could not handle the crisis on its own, it needed assistance at the European level. One of the priorities of the 2014 Italian presidency of the EU Council, therefore, was to develop genuine European solidarity on the migration issue. According to the program of the Italian presidency, the "Mediterranean is a vital space for Europe. The migration emergency forces Europe to adopt instruments and common policies to tackle this major phenomenon of our time" (Italia2014.eu 2014a). As the situation worsened, the Italian Government called for the replacement of *Mare Nostrum* by an EU mission.

Ironically though, the EU started externalising migration policy at this time. In December 2013, the European Council noted that the "increased engagement with third countries to avoid migrants embarking on hazardous journeys towards the European Union should be

a priority” (European Commission 2017). Cecilia Malmström, the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, nonetheless emphasised that the EU could not replace the Italian operation, the decision to launch a joint mission, Operation Triton (Euractiv 2014). From this point of view, one of the main achievements of the Italian presidency was the launching of the Operation Triton (Italia2014.eu 2014b). Italian influence grew further when Federica Mogherini, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, was appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR). She emphasised the external dimension of the EU migration policy, and the management of refugee and migration flows at the EU level.

Mare Nostrum, which saved more than 140,000 people, ended in October 2014 and Operation Triton began. According to Malmström: “With the launch of the Triton operation, tailored to the needs and requests defined by the Italian authorities, the EU can show concrete solidarity with Italy.” She also argued, however, that: “It is clear that the Triton operation cannot and will not replace Mare Nostrum” (Europa.eu 2014; Repubblica.it 2014). In fact, Triton, with less than a third of the budget and equipment of Mare Nostrum, did not come close to matching the record of Mare Nostrum. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), more than 3,400 people died in the Mediterranean in 2014 while trying to reach Europe (Papavero 2015, 2).

In April 2015, another 700 people died in the Mediterranean close to Lampedusa; four days later, the European Council launched an EU military operation, EUNAVFOR MED, to resolve the situation. The process was extremely rapid compared to previous decision-making and practice. The CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) operation was deployed in May. According to critics, however, this search and rescue activity acted “as a magnet” for irregular immigrants (House of Lords 2016, 18). The Italian Government, therefore, has asked repeatedly for a review of EU regulations on asylum policy and for the creation of a common asylum system (Rainews.it 2015).

Italy’s ability to influence EU policy was strengthened by support from other major EU member states, mainly Germany and France. In a joint letter to Federica Mogherini of September 2015, the foreign ministers of Italy, France, and Germany called for a common, more efficient EU asylum system and a fairer distribution of asylum seekers among EU member states. They also expressed support for the activities of the European External Action Service in this field (Statewatch.org 2015). Italy supported refugee quotas at the European level, and in return the establishment of adequate reception facilities (hotspots). In November 2015, after the terrorist attacks in Paris, the Italian and German foreign ministers highlighted the need to prepare and implement EU reforms, including the allocation and distribution of refugees, and the creation of registration and reception facilities (Partitodemocratico.it 2015a). Italian politicians were disappointed with the slow distribution of refugee applicants across the EU member states though, and by the rejection of the quota system by some member states, including Hungary. Still, they knew that without effective agreements with the countries of origin, and without tackling the root causes of migration, neither the establishment of quota system nor the creation of EU reception facilities would provide an adequate solution.

In March 2016, the Italian and German Ministers of the Interior, in a letter to European Commissioners, proposed an ambitious reform of the Dublin regulations, an adjustment of the Common European Asylum System, and the establishment of a European Asylum Agency. They wanted to see effective repatriation activities, the extension of the tasks of FRONTEX, and the creation of an EU Border and Coast Guard Agency to strengthen the EU’s external

borders. Other *desiderata* included mandatory and annually set refugee quotas, registering refugees outside the EU, and distributing the costs of managing migration more equitably. All in all, they wanted to strengthen the external dimension of EU migration policy (Repubblica.it 2016a; Europa.eu 2016a). The Italian Senate approved a law that same month making 3 October a national day of remembrance for victims of immigration (Partitodemocratico.it 2016a). In April 2016, however, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi proposed a comprehensive approach that, again, amounted to the externalisation of migration policy. The first step of this strategy (Migration Compact) would be identifying partner countries to cooperate with on migratory issues (Governo.it 2016a, 2016b). The EU–Turkey agreement of March 2016 was the model for the Italian proposal (Partitodemocratico.it 2016b). In May, the Italian, French, German, and Dutch foreign ministers expressed their support for efforts of the EU to address the root causes of migration in Africa (Repubblica.it 2016b).

In 2016, another increase in migration across the Mediterranean (181,126 people) made it clear that, in the absence of comprehensive European policy tools and without the cooperation with the Libyan partner, EUNAVFOR MED Sophia could not counteract the activities of smugglers and reduce the pressure on Italy. The operation functioned only on the high seas, for this reason, both the EU and several member states called for training and equipping the Libyan Coast Guard, as well (The Guardian 2016; Statewatch.org 2017). In June 2016, it was reinforced with the supporting tasks of training and the implementation of the UN arms embargo (European External Action Service 2016; Europa.eu 2016b; Council Decision 2016).

Although for Italy and the EU an agreement similar to the one signed between Turkey and the EU in 2016 would offer the most satisfactory solution for the management of migration flows, so far, the fragile and fragmented state of Libya has rendered this impossible. The European Commission has recognised the central role of Libyan authorities, stating that: *“To effectively cope with this current situation, part of the answer must lie in the Libyan authorities preventing smugglers from operating, and for the Libyan Coast Guard to have the capacity to better manage maritime border and ensure safe disembarkation on the Libyan coast”* (European Commission 2017). The increasing effectiveness of the Libyan Coast Guard, in fact, and the introduction of a code of conduct for NGOs that rescue migrants in the Mediterranean led to a decrease in the number of arrivals during the summer of 2017. This externalisation of migration policy was again criticised by several stakeholders though (The Maritime Executive.com 2017). The Council of the EU nevertheless extended the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia until 31 December 2018 (European External Action Service 2017). The Italian Government is still willing to support the EUNAVFOR MED operation and even open new registration facilities, but the number of people who fear and reject irregular migrants and refugees is growing in the Italian society. (See Figure 2.) The support for the Northern League, which rejects immigration, reached 13.8% on 1 July 2017. When combined with the support for other parties which strongly criticised the immigration policy of the Italian Government, such as Forza Italia (13.8%) and the Five Star Movement (27.6%), a majority of Italians appeared to be against the immigration policy of the Italian Government. Parallel with the growing dissatisfaction in the Italian society, the Italian Government is almost hopelessly trying to find a solution to prevent illegal migration. As the country cannot solve alone the problem of Libya’s instability, it is looking forward to other EU MSs to show real solidarity.

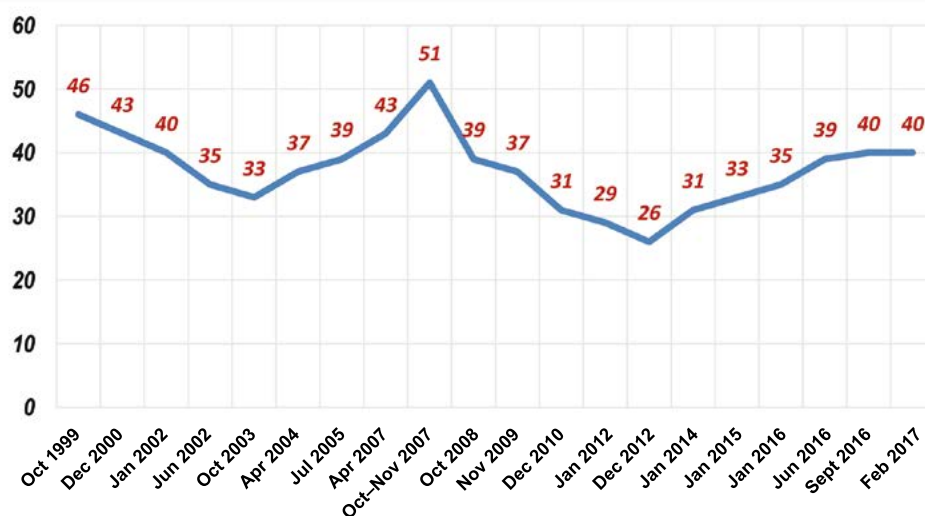


Figure 2.

Does immigration endanger security? (Percentage of the “yes” answers.)

Source: termometropolitico.it

6. Conclusions

The Italian governments of Renzi and Gentiloni on the one hand highlighted the importance of the elaboration of a genuine European asylum policy (Partitodemocratico.it 2015b) and the signing of readmission agreements with partner countries, on the other hand, emphasised the need to save lives first and foremost. The migration policy of Italy resembles the EU’s “global strategy”, which features the “principled pragmatism” of trying to find a solid balance between normative and moral duties, and the pragmatic management of migration. Italy has supported the strengthening of the internationally recognised Libyan unity government through all possible means (e.g. the Hippocrates mission, deployment of two military ships to Libya and the decision to send 100 *Carabinieri* to Libya’s southern border) (Difesa.it 2016). Moreover, in February 2017, Italy and the National Reconciliation Government of Libya signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation to combat illegal immigration, human trafficking and on reinforcing border security. The Italian governments have implemented a Europeanised-realist approach towards the crisis management. However, the externalisation of migration policy on EU and Italian level is highly criticised by NGOs, they argue that it leads to “violations of fundamental human rights” (Curzi 2016).

The policy tools introduced by the EU and Italy did decrease the number of arrivals via the Central Mediterranean Route from 44,846 between 1 July and 25 August 2016 to 14,391 over the same period in 2017. In the long run, however, these efforts can only be successful if the security environment is stabilised. Even then, it will be extremely difficult

to handle migration flows effectively without a common European solution. Rome has used both bilateral and European multilateral tools, but the various Italian governments have all expressed disappointment and resentment that Italy has been left to deal with the crisis virtually alone. In 2017, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) announced it would return to Libya, the Italian Government expressed strong support, and some relief (Partitodemocratico.it 2017).

Despite the often pessimistic analysis, it is important to emphasise that due to the policy tools introduced by the EU and Italy, the number of arrivals to Italy on this route decreased by 68%, from 44,846 to 14,391 between 1 July and 25 August 2017 compared to the same period of last year. It has now become clear that the Italian efforts alone cannot be effective, Italy needs the cooperation of other actors: the EU and its member states; the governments of the countries of origin; and other international organisations.

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Fanni Tanács-Mandák

Italian Immigration Policies – Legal Frameworks between 1980 and 2017

1. Introduction

The main objective of the research is to describe the development of the Italian legal framework on immigration policies and measures to combat irregular migration and to present the evolution of public opinion on immigration. The first part of the article examines and assesses the efficiency of the political and legislative framework of the measures implemented by Italy in a chronological order from the 1980s till 2017, while the second part presents official statistical data on arrivals, expulsions and repatriations and describes the evolution of public opinion about legal and illegal immigrants. The second part of the article aims to answer the question whether there is a correlation between the growing number of arrivals and the negative public opinion.

According to the official statistics of the United Nations, 258 million people lived in a country different from their homeland in 2017, which means that 3.4% of the world population consisted of migrants. The trend for changing countries is increasing; between 1990 and 2017 the number of persons who left their homelands increased by 69%. Nearly one third of all international immigrants lived in Europe, which is in total 78 million immigrants, while in North America their number was only 54 million. If we look at their division, on a country basis and not a continental one, we can see that in the world rank Italy was the 11th country with the highest number of immigrants, while in the European rank it was the 5th country in 2015 (United Nations 2017).

In 2017 there were 5,144,440 legal migrants (having a residence permit) in Italy, presenting 198 nationalities. According to the estimations of the Italian National Institute of Statistics for 2064, the number of legal migrants will reach 14.1 million, so there will be a significant growing tendency (Istat 2017).

It is also important to note, that the phenomenon of migration dates back to more than five decades and at first, it dominantly appeared in emigration tendencies. Between 1952 and 1962 more than 1.23 million Italians emigrated especially to the United States of America, Canada, Argentina and Brazil, Australia and Europe (France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland) (Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni 2011).

The balance between emigration and immigration started to change from the 1970s when on the one hand, the Italian birth rate decreased firmly, and it contributed to the phenomenon of ageing. On the other hand, the classical Italian family model changed

continuously increasing the demand for private social workers (*badanti*) who cared for the older members of the Italian families. At the end of the 1970s, 75% of the private social workers were foreigners (Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni 2011).

In the following two decades we can observe both the growth of the number of foreigners arrived to Italy (see Figure 1) and the increasing of the non EU-citizens. From the 2000s, Italy became the most popular destination for foreigners arriving from the Mediterranean Sea to Europe as we can see in Figure 2 below.

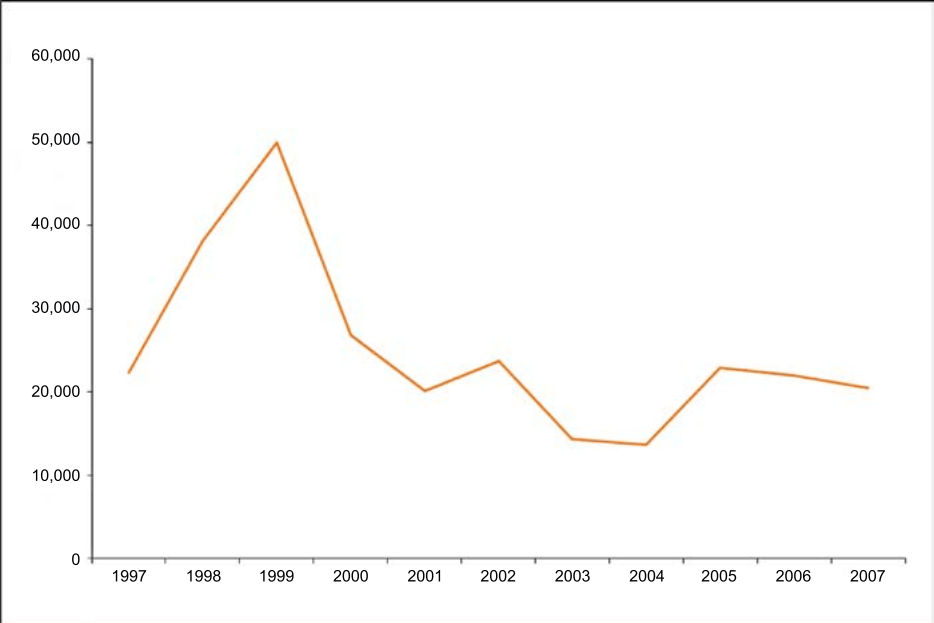


Figure 1.
Mediterranean Sea arrivals to Italy between 1997 and 2007
Source: Compiled by the author based on UNHCR data and the Ministry of the Interior data

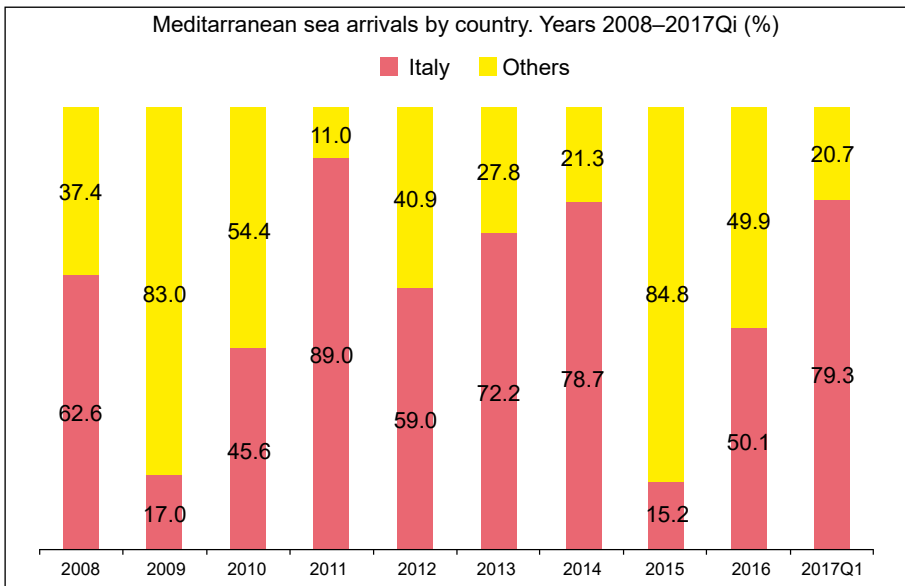


Figure 2.

Mediterranean Sea arrivals by country between 2008 and 2017

Source: Compiled by the author based on UNHCR data and the Ministry of the Interior data

2. Main Periods for the Political and Legal Frameworks of Measures on Immigration Policies in Italy

In order to fully understand the current law system on migration, it is necessary to recall, albeit briefly, the evolution of the regulatory framework from 1948.

2.1. Post World War II period

The new Constitution which was approved by the Constitutional Assembly elected in 1946 after World War II and entered into force in 1948 replacing the 100-year-old *Statuto Albertino* determined several principles regarding migration policy such as the protection of human rights (Italian Constitution, Article 2), the necessary control of foreigners (Italian Constitution, Article 10), and the principle of non-discrimination (Italian Constitution, Article 3).

In the 1970s, immigration flows started towards Italy because of the following three factors and events: the closure of the labour markets of Britain, Germany and France when they were hit by the oil shock, the economic boom in Italy and the increasing demand of private social workers. These socio-economic improvements, the lack of immigration policy and the long porous frontiers rendered Italy a sort of “second choice country” and increased significantly the number of immigrants (Scotto 2017).

The issue of immigration became a part of the political agenda under the pressure of trade unions and the Church. The first draft bill which aimed to regulate the entry, stay and employment of immigrants and the conditions of family reunion, provisional guidelines on the regularisation of immigrants who entered Italy illegally before 1981 was presented in the Italian Parliament in the same year (Law no. 763, 26 December 1981). In 1982, due to the economic crisis, the government blocked totally the further recruitments of foreigners. The decision's negative consequence was a significant increase of illegal/irregular immigration while its positive consequence was that the topic received greater attention by political debates and public opinion and doing so further draft bills were elaborated on the issue. One of the most determinant drafts was the one presented to the Parliament in 1984, the objectives of which were to outlaw and penalise illegal entry, reinforce controls and penalties against employers of irregular status migrants, and call for the reintroduction of visas from certain countries, particularly Africa. But Italy had to wait two more years to have the first integrated law in force on immigration.

2.2. From the Law Foschi to the Law Turco-Napolitano (1980s – 1998)

In 1986 the Italian Parliament approved the first law on immigration,¹ the Law Foschi (Law no. 943 of December 30, 1986) which contains explicit rules against irregular immigration.² The main purpose was to regulate the decade-long unsettled situation. It regularised the previous employer and employee positions, offering the possibility of obtaining work authorisation or registration on the employment lists. Unfortunately, this purpose was very difficult to execute which resulted in an increase of immigration, the appearance of resistance and xenophobia in the society.

Furthermore, the law determined total parity treatment both for Italian and foreign workers who resided legally in Italy such as rights to social and health services, access to housing and maintaining cultural identity in schools. While the new law favoured the legal foreign workers both with social services and permissions for family reunifications, it introduced sanctions for employers of undocumented immigrants.

The political atmosphere at the end of the 1980s – the growing confidence deficit, the disappointment and disillusionment towards politics and the entire political elite caused first the P2 scandal and then the Tangentopoli case (Tanács-Mandák and Nuber 2017, 55–64) – aggravated the circumstances, the debate on immigration became more and more polarised and several attacks were registered against immigrants mainly in the Southern part of the country, in Calabria.

¹ From the 1980s up to the recent years, Italian governments have undertaken seven big regularisation programmes (1986, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2009 and 2012) granting legal status to over 1,400,000 foreign citizens between 1986 and 2002 (a number surpassed only by the United States of America). However, this type of regulation only grants a temporary legal status or document (residence permit) to migrants. This status or document is subject to annual renewal that is reappraised on the basis of specific requirements, such as employment and accommodation.

² The Italian Government had the intention to implement the 143/1975 ILO convention on immigrant workers by this law.

The Andreotti Government recognised the demand of the Italian labour market for foreign workforce and developed a new regulation, the Law Martelli (Law no. 39, 28 February 1990) which set up a yearly “Planned Contingent” of legal entries of foreign workers and it made possible for non-Europeans to seek asylum in the country. For the first time, Italy adopted measures to discipline immigration flows. The Law Martelli significantly modified the previous immigration regulations, it sought to reduce the area of irregularity and to introduce regulations to prevent the formation of these types of pockets in the future and introduced sanctions for those who facilitate the entry of irregular immigrants. It enforced the expulsion of illegal immigrants by increasing the number of people assigned to the task and in general it structured more efficiently the financing of the migration policy by establishing the Financial Fund for Immigration. Moreover it rendered obligatory for citizens of the principal countries of origin (Algeria, Gambia, Mauretania, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Turkey) to apply for a visa.

In 1991 due to the collapse of the Albanian communist regime around 50,000 Albanian refugees landed on the coasts of Italy. The Italian Government had to react to this emergency situation and approved special repatriation schemes for the Albanian arrivals which was an exception in the history of regulations on immigration (King and Mai 2008).

The Andreotti Government as one of its last actions approved the New Italian Nationality Act (Law no. 91, 5 February 1992) in 1992. The law enforced the existing principle of *ius sanguinis*, raised the residency requirement for non-EU nationals from five to ten years before being eligible to apply for citizenship. It granted second generation immigrants, born in Italy of parents with foreign citizenship, the possibility to apply for Italian citizenship during a period of 12 months following their 18th birthday if they can prove their uninterrupted legal residence in the country. It also granted citizenship through marriage to Italian citizens’ foreign spouses having at least 6 months residence in Italy after the marriage (previously, the citizenship was immediately granted).³

In the mid-1990s, the rapidly growing migration phenomenon and the increasing need to consider the role of immigrants in the social – and therefore demographic, cultural and economic – processes, as well as public order and security needs contributed to the development of the Law Martelli. The Dini Government tried to enter into force stricter rules on expulsion and integration policies, re-proposed several times the Law Decree Dini (Law Decree no. 489, 18 November 1995) but due to political conflicts especially between the Lega Nord and the centre-left powers it was never converted into law.

Only the first Prodi Government was able to approve an integrated law on immigration in 1998, the Turco-Napolitano Law (Law no. 40, 6 March 1998). The Turco-Napolitano Law refined the quota system for foreign labour force, which is divided by nationality, category, length, and occasionally by sector. The Turco-Napolitano Law paid great attention to the planning of immigration flows and to the integration of immigrants, in addition to a series of measures of prevention concerning irregular immigration (such as the introduction of the “removal by order of the police commissioner” and the creation of Temporary Detention Centres [*Centri di permanenza temporanea*, CPT] which are considered an essential element of Italy’s migration policy).

³ The first law on citizenship was approved in 1912 and it introduced the principle of *ius sanguinis*.

The law determined that the provisions on entry would be regulated on the basis of a programme reviewed every three years by a number of bodies – the government would adopt annually a decree on the number of foreigners who might be permitted to enter Italy for work, seasonal work or self-employment reasons. Furthermore, it ensured preferential treatment to workers of countries with which Italy has concluded agreements on entry flow regulation and readmission. It also expanded the possibilities for immigrants by introducing a one-year job seeker's residence permit and increased the penalties for those who facilitate illegal entry of foreigners and for employers using foreign workers who are in an irregular situation.

The Turco-Napolitano Law established a clear institutional architecture for the design and implementation of integration policies and created a Fund for Migration Policies in order to finance initiatives supporting the immigrants' integration into the Italian majority society. It granted access to education and the national health system for all immigrants regardless of their legal status, including irregular migrants, but in this case limited to urgent and/or essential treatment. It introduced permanent residence permits (*Carta di soggiorno*) for which foreigners can apply after legally residing in Italy for a period of at least five years.

The law proclaimed that foreigners to whom a deportation order has been issued would be sent to the special CPTs and might be held there for up to maximum 30 days. It also introduced a system of official deportation and immediate escort to the border in cases of illegal entry, ineligibility for a residence permit, or threat to public order.

2.3. From the Bossi-Fini Law till the Minniti Package (2002–2017)

The second Berlusconi Government aimed to make the provisions on immigration stricter and in 2002 approved the Bossi-Fini Law (Law no. 189, 30 July 2002) which introduced more restrictive measures and limits both on entry and on legal stay. It reintroduced as an absolute requirement the need for third country nationals to have a job contract prior to immigration otherwise they could not get a visa. It also added a residence contract (*contratto di soggiorno*) to the residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*). This contract should be signed by an employer and the immigrant worker. The contract must provide also accommodation and the payment of travel expenses for the worker to be able to return to his/her home country. Furthermore, it reduced the time allowed to search for a new job from 12 to 6 months in case of dismissal and it cancelled the possibility to get a temporary visa to search for work.

The new stricter regulations on visas proposed to contribute to select new entrants basically in relation to the needs of the Italian productive system.

The Bossi-Fini Law increased patrols of Italy's coastlines. The law determined that suspected illegal immigrants were to be taken to specific centres under police control. The law limited to 60 days the period to identify the suspected immigrants; if the authorities reveal their illegal status, they are deported and accompanied to Italy's borders. Deportations became immediate and not suspendable even if the immigrant appeals to the court. If illegal immigrants return to Italy, they will be arrested and tried by court.

The Bossi-Fini Law also limited the family reunifications to spouses and children under 18. It required non-EU citizens to be fingerprinted in order to remain in Italy and

created a “one-stop shop” or *sportello* for immigration which handled applications for family reunifications.

According to the new measure, the long-term residence cards were issued after 6 years instead of the previously applied 5-year term. It created local commissions to evaluate asylum applications rapidly, it established holding centres for asylum seekers, and it formalised the assisted voluntary returns.

And finally, it established the National Office for the Promotion of Equal Treatment and Removal of Racial and Ethnic Discriminations.⁴

In the next years, Italy had to face not only the growing number of sea arrivals but the increasing number of EU citizens who arrived to the country after the EU-enlargement of 2004 and 2007, which created a further pressure both on the society and on politics. For these reasons, the second Prodi Government approved urgent measures in 2007 for the expulsion and removal of immigrants for terrorism and public security reasons (Decree Law no. 249, 29 December 2007) and proposed a significant immigration reform in Parliament. The draft bill would have changed the existing quota system introducing three year term forecasts and ensuring greater involvement of social partners, it would have established candidate lists at foreign consulates, created sponsored job-search visas, given longer permit durations and easier renewal procedures. Summarising the draft bill measures, it would have rendered easier both the entry and the stay in Italy for foreign workers. Due to the government crisis in early 2008, there was no real chance to approve the draft bill.

In these years the number of foreigners living legally in Italy increased significantly due to the EU-enlargements, the number of Romanians was 95,000 in 2002 while in 2009 it was already 950,000. The same tendency might be observed in case of Polish people, their number was only 30,000 in 2002, while in 2009 there were more than 107,000 Polish citizens in the country.

Due to the growing social tensions, conflicts and increasing number of criminal acts, the second Berlusconi Government approved the so-called Maroni Package (*Pacchetto Sicurezza*). This very rigid security package had two parts, the first was approved in 2008, the second in 2009.

The first part introduced a sanction of imprisonment from six months to three years and confiscation of the apartment of those who rent it to clandestine immigrants. It aggravated the consequences for employers who employ irregular foreigners (imprisonment from six months to three years and a fine of 5,000 Euros for each employed worker). Furthermore, in 2008 a legislative decree (Legislative Decree no. 160, 3 October 2008) restricted the right to family reunification.

The second part of the Maroni Package declared illegal entry and stay a crime punished with a fine reaching from 5,000 to 10,000 Euros. It made possible to keep illegal immigrants up to 180 days (previously 60 days) in the so-called Identification and Expulsion Centres (*Centri di identificazione ed espulsione*, CIE) in order to discover their identity and prepare subsequent repatriation. It extended from six months to two years the necessary period before applying for citizenship due to marriage and restricted further the conditions for family reunification as it introduced the obligatory verification that housing conditions

⁴ The establishment of this Office was in compliance with the requirement for harmonisation of community legislation. See Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000.

meet sanitary requirements. And it increased the list of the necessary requirements to get a long-term residence permit introducing a language test to obtain the permit.

In the following years, the third and the fourth Berlusconi governments continued the restrictions on immigration measures approving several decrees and laws on the issue. In 2011, the government issued six-month residence permits for humanitarian reasons to migrants landed since the beginning of the year, granting them free circulation within the European Union countries. It ensured temporary permits for migration due to the Arab Spring (Prime Minister Decree, 5 April 2011). The government also extended the maximum duration of detention of undocumented foreigners awaiting deportation from six months to 18 months in the CIEs (Law no. 129, 2 August 2011).

Another measure stipulated that non-EU foreigners who intend to request permission to stay longer than one year must sign an Integration Agreement with the Italian State (Presidential Decree no. 179, 10 March 2012).

In 2012 they simplified the seasonal work programme introducing a default acceptance of employers' requests for those seasonal workers who met certain conditions and who had returned home at the expiration of their permit previously (Law no. 35, 4 April 2012).

After the exceptional year of the Arab Spring, due to the stricter measures introduced by the fourth Berlusconi Government in 2012, the number of the sea arrivals was reduced significantly. From 2013 and 2014, due to the Libyan civil war the number of sea arrivals was appreciably increased; in 2012 only 13,267 sea arrivals were registered while in 2013–2014, the Italian authorities registered in total 213,000 arrivals (ISMU 2016). Not only the total number of the sea arrivals increased in this period but also the number of irregular immigrants, as the ISMU estimated their total number in Italy to 404,000 while in the precedent year their number was only about 350,000 (ISMU 2016.)

In that period of time, the instable Letta Government did not approve any modifications to the existing regulations. In the first year of the Renzi Government, despite the high arrival numbers, the parliament did not approve any reforms. In 2015 and 2016, the always higher and higher pressure on the country was grown as in these two years more than 330,000 immigrants arrived to the Italian coastline (see the table below).

Table 1.
Statistical data regarding immigration between 2014 and 2016

Year	Immigrants	Irregular immigrants	Repatriation
2014	170,100	31,000	16,000
2015	153,842	34,107	3,688
2016	181,283	38,284	5,066

Source: Compiled by the author based on the data of Cruscotto statistico giornaliero of the Ministry of the Interior

As the table shows, the number of irregular immigrants has an increasing tendency while the number of realised repatriations are low. All these confirm the slow and not properly functioning asylum procedures and the slow and inefficient repatriation procedures.

The Renzi Government had two more significant attempts to reform the regulation in force of migration, the first was the new draft bill on citizenship presented to the Chamber of Deputies in 2015 (Draft Bill no. 3264, 2015), but it was not approved by the Senate. The other attempt was the presentation of the Migration Compact in June 2016 at the EU Summit by Matteo Renzi. The proposal identified and mapped the key partner countries, determined all the possible offers of the EU to these countries, such as investment projects, EU–Africa bonds, cooperation on security, legal migration opportunities and resettlement schemes. It also proposed to establish a new financial instrument for the external action in the field of migration and the emission of an EU–Africa bond.

After the little success of the Renzi Government on reforming the regulatory aspects and system of the Italian immigration policies, the new Paolo Gentiloni Government and especially its Minister of the Interior, Marco Minniti started a real and solid reform procedure since the first day of the government, already at the very end of 2016.

The so-called Minniti Package (Law Decree no. 13, 17 February 2017, Law Decree no. 14, 20 February 2017) was approved at the beginning of the year 2017. It was a complex reform regarding the measures on entries, voluntary returns and repatriations, asylum procedures and integration and it followed the principle of zero tolerance.

It introduced tough line on forced returns, it established bilateral agreements also with Sudan, Niger and Nigeria. It extended the administrative detention system as it determined to open a residence and repatriation centre (CPR) in every region, and it decided on the enlargement of the existing ones with an overall capacity of 1,600 per centre. Previously, they were called detention centres and there were 13 in 2011 with a capacity of almost 2,000 places but by January 2016, only four were truly operational with an effective capacity of less than 400 places (ISMU 2017, 33–38).

It speeded up the asylum procedures by simplifying judicial procedures as it cancelled the second instance, and by specialising sections in courts dedicated to asylum claims and deportations, which are made up of judges with a deep knowledge of the phenomenon of migration. It introduced the system of public utility and community service type works for refugees to avoid the “empty wait” phenomenon and its possible negative consequences. It established investments in integrated reception and voluntary returns. It also established several integration programmes and procedures and the government presented the draft bill on citizenship to the Senate (Atto Senato no. 2092 della XVII Legislatura).

Besides the above mentioned law decrees, the Parliament also approved the Zampa Law (Law no. 47, 7 April 2017) concerning unaccompanied foreign minors, which made a series of changes to existing laws with a view to improving protection (D’Odorico and Di Pascale 2017). It ensures that unaccompanied foreign minors enjoy “equal treatment” with Italian minors.

Evaluating the Minniti Package, we can observe that it was the most efficient reform on migration policies till 2017 (see the table below). Its success was caused not only by the complexity of measurements presented by the government and approved by the parliament but also the fact that Marco Minniti dedicated a lot of time and energy to establish bilateral agreements with the concerned African countries, he realised numerous Africa tours and doing so he became the most approved and trustworthy European politician on the African continent.

Table 2.
Statistical data regarding immigration between 2016 and 2017

Year	Immigrants	Irregular immigrants	Repatriation
2016	181,436	38,284	5,066
2017	119,310	20,675 ⁵	21,555

Source: Compiled by the author based on the data of Cruscotto statistico giornaliero of the Ministry of the Interior and the data of the State Police

3. Public Opinion on Immigrants

The Italian society was basically receptive and open to outsiders and immigrants. In the years of the 1970s, when the first increasing tendency appeared in the number of the arrivals, the phenomenon was favourable for the Italian society. The sector where first there was a growing number of foreigners was the social sector where there was a dynamically increasing demand for private social workers as we describe it beforehand.

For this reason, several decades passed when the society connected the phenomenon of immigration with crime. The feeling of fear appeared in the society only in some measures and in a marginal way at the beginning of the 1990s and it strengthened temporarily after a violent crime or case.

The connection between the two phenomena became general and significant only from the second half of the 1990s. The pro-immigrant political powers were the left-wing parties and the trade unions while the right wing nationalists, the radicals and those who were worried for local security belonged to the anti-immigration forces.

It is important to note that the significant increase of the foreigners residing in Italy caused by the European Union enlargements both in 2004 and 2007 did not cause further social conflicts.

Table 3.
The evaluation of the numbers of foreign citizens residing in Italy⁶

	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
North Italy	2,610,007	2,530,225	2,711,887	2,955,515	2,977,553	2,947,276	2,917,258
Central Italy	1,070,386	973,035	1,060,899	1,249,830	1,275,845	1,278,594	1,295,431
South Italy	554,666	390,973	439,915	512,173	541,844	569,666	594,824
Italy (total)	4,235,059	4,052,081	4,387,721	4,922,085	5,014,437	5,026,153	5,047,028

Source: Data of the Italian National Institute of Statistics

⁵ It is important to note that this amount is not the estimated amount by ISMU like for the year of 2016, as that one is not available. It is the number of irregular immigrants tracked down by the police at the coastline or other parts of the country (Polizia Moderna 2018, 25).

⁶ For the period between 1961 and 2001, detailed data (referring to the three geographical parts of Italy) is not available. Totally in 1961 there were 62,780 residing foreign citizens, in 1981 210,937, in 1992 648,935 and in 2001 1,334,889. So, in almost five decades, their number increased by more than eighty times.

Between 2010 and 2013, the number of see arrivals was around 120,000. This period was the serene and untroubled period of the severe Bossi-Fini Law: there were not any remarkable and outstanding violent and aggressive crimes and cases and the most determinant political forces did not pay real attention to immigration, so immigration did not become a prioritised issue on the Italian political agenda.

Nevertheless, the number of see arrivals drastically increased exceeding 624,000 between 2014 and June 2017. In that three-year period of time, more immigrants arrived to Italy than in the previous two decades which caused a significant pressure not only on the reception and integration policies and programmes of the Italian Government but also on the previously very receptive and open Italian society.

In that period, Italy became the principal route in the Mediterranean, as the major part of immigrants who arrived to Europe chose Italy instead of Spain or Greece, as we observed in Figure 2. The significantly increased numbers and the challenges caused by them rendered governmental responses to this problem a primary national strategic goal according to the Italian people. This goal also overtook such vital topics and issues like increasing the export which is a leading economic sector, or ensuring the energy resources. According to the opinion polls conducted in 2013 by the Institute of International Affairs at the University of Siena, only 30% of the Italians assessed as the most important priority the guaranteeing the borders' security and the control of immigration. In 2017, 66% of the respondents considered this issue the most vital priority.

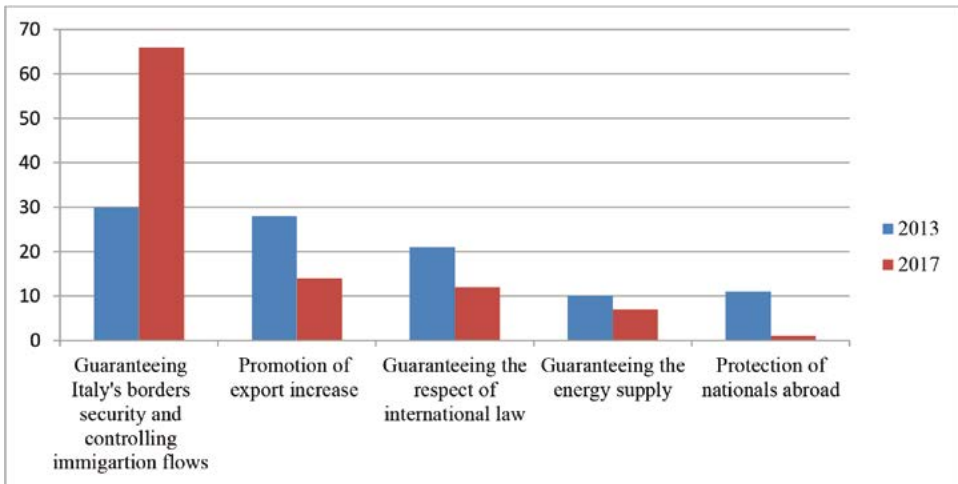


Figure 3.

“What is, in your opinion, the most important national interest of Italy?”

Source: Gli italiani e la politica estera 2017

Not only the topic of immigration became a high priority issue for the Italian society but the level of the previous openness and receptiveness of the Italian society was also decreased. At the end of 2017, 77% of the Italians thought that their country became a non-pleasant

place due to the huge immigration waves (Ipsos 2017) and only 10% of them was satisfied with the Italian governmental responses to the immigration crisis (Ipsos 2017).

From December 2012, the number of those Italians who think that immigration is a security risk and who assess immigration as a danger for the country is also increasing.

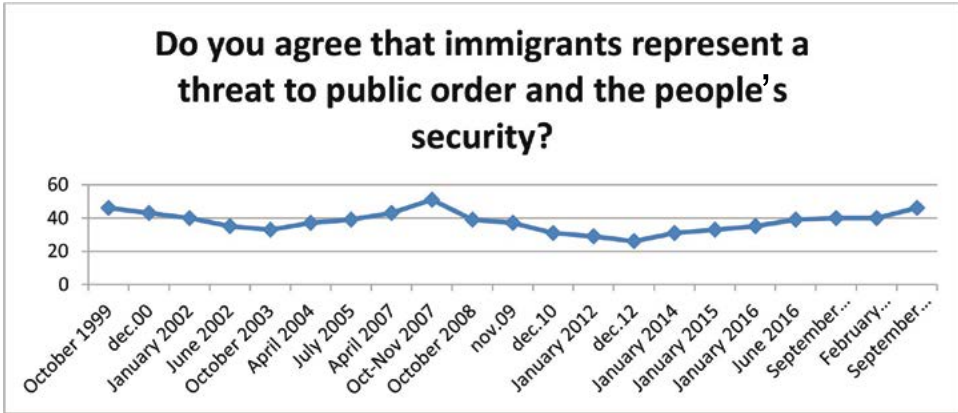


Figure 4. Immigration and public security⁷

Source: Demos 2017

The reinforcement of negative opinions regarding immigration has several reasons. The basic reason was first the pressure on the country by huge immigration flows in the crisis period and afterwards, the challenges created by the increasing demand of care and treatment systems of the immigrants who remained in the country after the crisis.

Nonetheless the success of the Minniti reform package, the number of the arrivals to Italy decreased significantly from the summer of 2017, the negative public opinion on immigration was not changed. It can be explained by the increasing number of legal immigrants residing in the country (as we see in Table 3) and the growing number of new Italian citizens.

⁷ The cause of the outstanding negative opinion is that between July 2006 and July 2007, the number of foreigners residing in Italy increased by more than 21% due to the Romanian arriving en masse. In addition to the dramatically grown presence of Romanian citizens, the situation worsened by the fact that their presence also increased significantly in the criminal statistics.

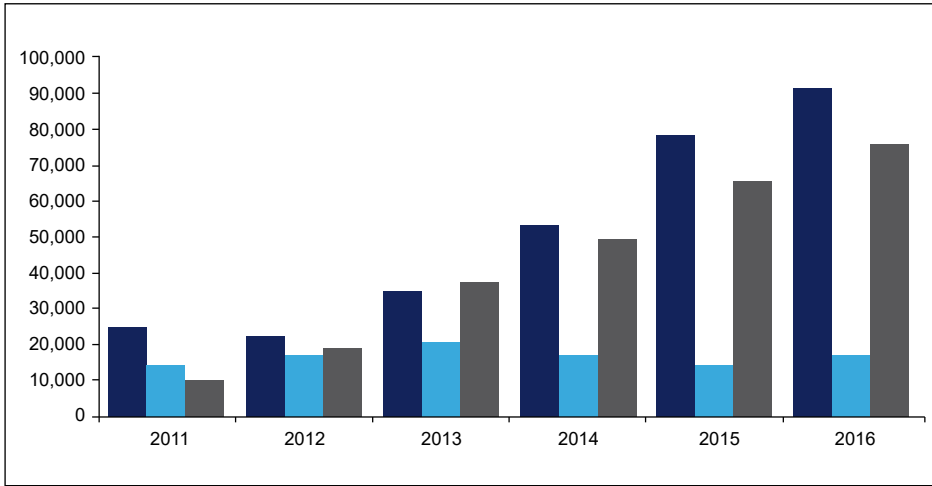


Figure 5.

Non EU-citizens who obtained Italian citizenship

Source: Balduzzi 2017

Although both the number of legal immigrants and the see arrivals increased, the opinion polls show that the Italians' perception on the number of foreigners is higher than the real numbers. The legally residing foreigners are only 8.3% of the Italian society, if we add to this number the illegal foreigners whose number is estimated between 500,000 and 800,000, the proportion of foreigners in Italy is around 10% (Eurispes 2018).

The major part of Italians overestimates the proportion of foreigners: 35% of them claims that foreigners represent 16% of the society and 25.4% of them thinks that they represent 24% of the society. The incorrect perception is also showed by the fact that 27.4% of the Italians thinks that the majority of foreigners arrived from North Africa, while only 12.9% of them is coming from that continent and 51.7% of them is a European citizen (Eurispes 2018).

The prolonged economic and structural crisis also contributes to the decrease of the openness of the Italian society despite the fact that the majority of the Italians (53%) does not think that foreigners would take away the job opportunities from Italians (Ipsos 2017).

Their negative opinion is caused by their conviction that the immigration crisis generated a huge state expenditure, and those financial resources should be spent on helping the always poorer and poorer Italian middle class.

The growing number of terrorist attacks in Europe and the growing number of violent crimes committed by foreigners in Italy also contributed to the increasing level of fear in the Italian society. Between August 2016 and July 2017, 28.8% of the prosecuted and arrested persons (in total 839,496) were foreigners (Ludovico 2017), only 1.07% of the Italians belonged to this group, while 4.78% of the foreigners was involved in crimes. The proportion of foreign perpetrators was very high in cases of theft (55%), prostitution (51.7%), minor pornography (45.7%) and sexual violence (37.5%).

Due to all the events and tendencies described above, from 2014 and onwards, the Italian society assessed not only the illegal immigration as a threat to public order and security but also the legal immigration.

In January 2018, the hostile sentiments of the Italian society towards immigrants also appeared in the manifested assault at the revenge of Macerata. All political forces condemned the case.

4. Conclusions

The political crisis in North Africa, the closure of the Balkan route and the closure of Spain and Malta particularly increased the amount of landings in Italy between 2015 and 2017. The inadequate immigration legislation, together with growing immigration numbers and an expanding informal economy, stirred the increase in illegal immigration. From the chronological analysis we can observe that right wing governments always approved more restrictive measures and provisions than the left wing coalitions. The most serene period was the period after the severe Bossi-Fini Law entered into force. There were not any remarkable and outstanding violent and aggressive crimes and cases and the most determinant political forces did not pay real attention to immigration, immigration therefore did not become a prioritised issue on the Italian political agenda and it did not cause any relevant social conflict.

Unfortunately, during the 2015 crisis, when the pressure was the highest ever on Italy, the Italian society thought that the Renzi Government was not able to approve appropriate rules to handle the challenges and problems generated by the enormous immigration flows.

This lack of proper political and governmental responses, the growing number of arrivals and the huge number of foreigners present in Italy caused and contributed to the very negative development of the Italian public opinion on (both legal and illegal) immigration and the increase of fear and worry about public order and security. Furthermore, it did not decrease the false perception of the Italian society on the numbers of foreigners present in the country.

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Spurred by ongoing conflicts between city-states and the nobility, unification for Italy was a gradual and difficult process. While such divisions shortly subsided to allow the peninsula to become unified, Italy has always been troubled by the difficulties of cultivating a national identity.

Throughout the past and in the present, Italy has been a nation of division. But recently this division has become deeper because of the growing differences between the various parts of the country caused by unresolved political, institutional, economic and security problems. The need for academic discourse on the division encouraged scholars to cooperate and identify the most important causes and elements of the Italian identity crisis such as the political crisis caused by feelings of lack, instability or injustice, the economic and financial crises leading to the erosion of social cohesion and the insecurity linked to immigration. This book presents the result of this dialogue.

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