

# Immigration and Foreign Policy: Italy's Domestic-International Linkage in the Management of Mass Human Movements

Antonio Zotti

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DI MILANO

Enrico Fassi

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DI MILANO

## Abstract

Especially since the outbreak of the 2014-2015 so-called 'migration crisis', immigration policy has come to be frequently regarded as part of Italy's foreign policy. Although the management of inbound population movements clearly comprises a relevant external dimension, the relations between immigration and foreign policy are less plain than might appear at first sight. Based on this assumption, the paper examines the domestic-international nexus in Italy's immigration policy, the association of the latter with foreign policy, and how this process is connected to Italy's participation in the migration and asylum policy system of the European Union (EU). In particular, the article examines the role played by Interior Ministers in bridging the domestic-international divide typical of this policy area, as well as how the country's participation in the EU migration policy system has backed up this process.

## 1. The politicising issue of migration in Italy's political and public discourse

At least since 2013, international mass immigration has become a major issue in Italy's political and public debate (Carvalho 2014). Although it is not the first time that the entry and stay of foreigners in the country has ranked so high among national concerns, the breakout of the so-called 'refugee' or 'migration crisis' has certainly contributed to putting the issue in the spotlight of Italian policy and politics (Geddes and Petracchin 2020). Underlying this heightened attention are not only crude facts, such as the unprecedented number of arrivals during the most critical months of the crisis,<sup>1</sup> the steady increase in size of the foreign component of the country's population, (slightly more than one every ten residents), and the estimated number of irregular immigrants (i.e. with no valid permit) – roughly 9 percent of the 6.222 million foreigners living in Italy

---

<sup>1</sup> Around 170,000 and 150,000 in 2014 and 2015 respectively, according to the figures provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior and the International Organisation for Migration (2018).

(Blangiardo and Ortensi 2020).<sup>2</sup> The impact of perceptions and social discursive construction on this trend is evidenced by the social alarm generated by the presence of immigrants, groundlessly associated with an increase in crime rates (Bove et al. 2019) and grossly overestimated, with the number of immigrants residing in the country being perceived as amounting to as much as 25 percent of the population (Eurobarometer 2018).

In fact, social discourses have construed migration in several different ways. Foreigners who (try to) move to and stay in Italy have been represented as the target of compassion and pity or rejection and fear, the subject of integration policies or users of public resources and, to a significantly lesser degree, as active partners of their own inclusion in Italian society (Cava et al. 2018; Musarò and Parmiggiani 2017). To a significant extent, the inflow of migrants into Italy has been represented as a threat to national security, e.g., linking foreigners moving to the country with the risk of terrorist attacks (Galantino 2020), and/or a menace for Italian identity and national values, e.g., criticising the commitment to save migrants with an ‘Islamic pedigree’, especially while disregarding Christians persecuted in remote countries, as an act against Italy and Western civilisation as a whole (Ceccorulli 2019). Alternatively, the media, politicians, and an array of social actors have also discursively construed migration as a way to cope with the ‘demographic gap’ generated by Italy’s distinctive low population growth (Saraceno 2020), the only source of manpower for jobs largely shunned by Italian workers (Cordini and Ranci 2017) or as a ‘historical phenomenon’ in which vulnerable people actively push themselves to manage their own lives against the strongly oppressive conditions of global and local injustice structures, and successfully settle in Italy’s socio-economic texture (Musarò and Parmiggiani 2017).

In Italy, as in most European countries, the outbreak of the ‘migration crisis’ not only heightened public attention to the phenomenon, but also sparked a flare of negative outlooks on – if not flat-out scaremongering about – international human movement (Berry et al. 2015). In fact, migration has remained a priority even in periods when other issues ranked higher among the population’s and policy-makers’ concerns (Biassoni and Pasini 2014). Reportedly, over the last five years or so, the Italian media and (party) politics have presented migrations for the most part through a ‘permanent crisis’ narrative framework (Osservatorio di Pavia 2017). This trend has been fuelling sentiments of insecurity, suspect and social fragmentation among Italian citizens, aggravated by an increasingly weak correlation between the actual number of arrivals and the diffusion of these gloomy views, but also accompanied by a distinctive process of ‘accustomisation’ to the emergency climate (Diamanti 2019). This worried-*cum*-jaded attitude is in fact ambivalent, as it changes depending on the degree to which immigrants are regarded as a structural component of Italian society. Accordingly, Italians have proved relatively benevolent with regard to the already settled migrated population, but very apprehensive towards new migratory waves, feared to trigger again the welfare and domestic security problems experienced during previous dramatic increases in the inflow of foreign nationals (Cesareo 2020).

Yet, compared to previous experiences, the latest immigration wave hitting the Italian borders stands out not only for its sheer magnitude and its prominence in the public

---

<sup>2</sup> Migration Data Portal. *Italy*, Data available at [https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock\\_abs\\_&t=2019&cm49=380](https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock_abs_&t=2019&cm49=380).

and political debate. A unique feature of the 2015 crisis is that the issue has been widely framed as a component of the country's *foreign* policy, even though its domestic reverberation was the predominant concern in the eyes of the public and the policy makers, and the (political and administrative) responsibility of the issue remained largely with the Ministry of the Interior. Between the end of World War II and the seventies, (im)migration policy had already been a foreign policy matter in Europe, as reconstruction and economic expansion led to a mutually beneficial interdependence between most of Western Europe and the rest of the world (especially North Africa and the Middle East), regulated through more or less formal international arrangements. Notably, Italy participated in this economic complementarity mostly within the framework of the 'guestworker model' (Castels 2006), an exclusionist immigration policy that functioned mostly as a labour-provider, based on bilateral recruitment agreements, designed to fill in low-qualification vacancies for a prearranged time-span. Clearly, the vanishing of the economic circumstances did not put an end to international human movement as such, as forced and unforced migrants continued to move within and across Europe's boundaries, and the Single Market's advancements allowed for increased mobility. Yet, by and by, the issue of international migration became largely confined within the realm of domestic policy, attended to as a matter of internal order (and European Community/Union policy) rather than an instance of international affairs. As a mostly low-politics issue throughout Europe, the issue of migration underwent a process of de-politicisation: that is, the ebbing of public debates signalling demands for policy change with regards to a certain question (Birkland 1997). If polarisation assumes that parties react to these public debates by emphasising existing divergences on the topic, and/or coming up with new migration-related political cleavages, with some of them challenging the status quo and further polarising the debate, de-polarisation postulates a process which is the exact opposite (Downs 1972). Until the nineties, de-politicisation was particularly evident in Italy, as the country was only relatively affected by economic immigration, and positioned at the margins of the politically charged question of asylum seekers from socialist countries (*see below*). The immigration waves generated by the collapse of socialist regimes and later the Eastern enlargement of the EU, as well as the growing inflow of refugees and asylum seekers from politically unstable and economically less developed regions in Africa and Asia, periodically increased public attention and political conflict in Italy, similarly to the rest of Europe. That being so, the politicisation triggered by the 2015 'crisis' may be regarded as the latest instance of a well-established trend. Yet, besides the unprecedented magnitude of the human flows and of their salience in public and political discourses, the degree to which the issue has been framed in foreign policy terms stands out as a distinguishing feature worth further investigation.

Hence, the paper examines this re-activation of the domestic-international nexus, in order to see whether and how the mentioned process of politicisation of the migration issue fuelled by the 2015 'crisis' has affected its association with Italy's foreign policy. The following section of the article looks into the reasons why and the extent to which the 'external' or 'international' dimension of Italian immigration policy has been the object of analytical conceptualisation and policy practices. Section three deals with the general terms of the conceptualisation and practice of immigration as a genuine foreign policy problem, and the changes undergone by some crucial distinctions underlying them

(Oltman and Renson 2017). In the fourth section, the recent transformation of Italy's immigration policy into an instance of foreign policy is examined. We point out the role played by Interior Ministers in bridging the domestic-international divide typical of this policy area through the externalisation and securitisation of the issue, implemented via political discourses and practices, at a national level and within the migration and asylum policy system of the European Union (EU) (IAI 2018; Cetin 2015). A few concluding remarks will sum up the article's argument and results, with a few mentions of the present situation.

## **2. The external dimension of Italy's immigration policy**

Remarking that the immigration policy of a country such as Italy has a potentially relevant external dimension may sound like a platitude at a time when the former has come to be commonly regarded by policy-makers, public opinion and (foreign) policy analysts as a crucial part of the country's foreign policy, especially through the conceptual bridge offered by the notion of 'global issues' (Camera dei Deputati 2018; DIPSOC/LAPS and IAI 2017; Di Filippo and Palm 2017).

In fact, the Italian political elite paid little-to-no attention to migration until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Before this, the international human movement was only opposed by radical right-wing forces and the issue was virtually absent from the electoral contest. It was only in the 1990s that Italian governments intensified their foreign policy initiatives in order to facilitate the regular entry and stay of foreign workers from selected categories of countries, and to reverse the traditional trend of low-skilled immigration directed towards Italy (Dottori and Poletti 2014). The wave of Albanians who, in 1991, turned up on Apulia's coastline triggered a response by the Italian authorities which included the dispatch of a thousand unarmed soldiers in the country. This event not only ushered in a steady intensification of irregular immigration and sparked off public and political debates, but also served as a case where international human movement triggered a complex foreign policy action (Perlmutter 1998). The 1990s also marked the start of Italy's commitment to strengthen collaboration on migration with third countries – as evidenced by an almost continuous, albeit frequently troubled, diplomatic relationship with Libya. After the 9/11 attacks, discourses about immigration focused on questions about identity and religion, albeit with a strong security connotation that had a bearing on the foreign policy conduct of the country, such as Italy's participation in the international military campaign launched by the United States government to tackle Sunni Islamist fundamentalist armed groups (Zotti and Parsi, *forthcoming*).

However, it was the so-called 'migration crisis' of 2014-15 – which, as regards Italy, peaked in 2016, when about 180,000 people sailing from North Africa reached the country's coast – and the sudden increase in the salience of the issue that put back in the spotlight the supposedly crucial nexus between Italy's migration and foreign policies. The centre-left coalition governments in office at the height of the crisis – Matteo Renzi's (2014–2016) and Paolo Gentiloni's (2016–2018) – had to manage an unprecedented humanitarian crisis triggered by a dramatic rise in the number of ship wreckages and deaths at sea along the Sicily-bound central Mediterranean route. In fact, in terms of security policy, already in 2013 Italy had increased the resources made available for coastal patrols by launching the search-and-rescue Operation Mare Nostrum. The year-long operation

brought to safety at least 150,000 migrants, but was ended on 31 October 2014 owing to Italian frustrations with the inadequate commitment of EU institutions and the other member states to share the burden of crisis management (Cusumano 2019). Italy's irritation was justified *ex post* by the much more limited scope of the Frontex-conducted Operation Triton that replaced Mare Nostrum, as the former was only designed to control the Union's external borders. This was in line with the duties of the EU agency and the Schengen countries' unwillingness to share the responsibility of a mission operating in proximity of North Africa's coastline. Moreover, throughout the crisis, and even after the number of arrivals dropped in 2017, the Italian government engaged in an increasingly contentious relationship with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) participating in the management of the emergency through their search-and-rescue operations. Despite the crucial contribution provided by organisations such as Migrant Offshore Aid Station, Médecins Sans Frontières and Sea Watch in preventing more tragedies at sea, the Italian governments acquiesced to the notion that NGOs served as a (more or less conscious) pull factor in migration and as enablers of smuggling and trafficking. Accordingly, Italian authorities put their efforts into imposing limitations on non-governmental migrant rescuing, most notably through a code of conduct to be signed by maritime NGOs engaged in search-and-rescue missions. The Gentiloni cabinet – especially through the action of interior minister Marco Minniti – also launched negotiations with President Fayed al-Sarraj of Libya in a new agreement on the repatriation of irregular immigrants leaving for Europe from the country's shores. This foreign policy action was complementary to the reopening of Italy's Identification and Expulsion Centres, which resulted in a significant increase in the repatriation of irregulars. The Minniti-led 'foreign immigration policy' of the Gentiloni cabinet also included the 2017 meetings with the Interior Ministers of Niger, Chad and Libya in order to build migration centres in North Africa to cut off the migration flow along the Central Mediterranean route.

The attempts of centre-left governments to respond 'assertively' to the migration crisis can be held to evidence a sort of contagion effect by part of the centre-right political platform. Yet, although during the crisis both centre-right and centre-left representatives did change their negative views of the effects of immigration – especially as concerns repercussions on the national economy – the literature has identified no evident sign of a general culture-based shift towards the rejection of immigrants (Di Mauro and Verzichelli 2019; Urso 2018). If that is so, the 'continuity of external immigration policy' (Strazzari and Grandi 2019) after the handover to the Conte I cabinet – the 'first populist government of Western Europe' (laboriously) formed after the 2018 general election, supported by League (*Lega*) and the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 stelle* - M5s) (Garzia 2018) – cannot be traced back to a dramatic change in the ideological orientations of Italy's political actors, but to structural aspects which will be examined in section four. For the moment, it is worth pointing out the inconsistency between, on the one hand, the substantial continuity of the Conte I cabinet's international dimension of immigration policy with those of previous governments' – as regards, for instance, restrictions on search-and-rescue activities at sea, and a higher-profile role for the Interior Minister in issues that had once fallen within the remit of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Strazzari and Grandi 2019) – and, on the other hand, the emphasis with which the new executive

presented itself as the ‘government of change’, declaredly aimed at disrupting the entrenched patterns of mainstream Italian politics and policies.

Especially in the domestic sphere, the government did forcefully argue for and, to some extent, actually launch even more severe immigration policy measures, blending together issues of national identity, public order and anti-terrorist measures (Helbling and Meierrieks 2020). This is clearly the case with the so-called ‘Security Decree’ and the ‘Follow-up Security Decree’ (*Decreto Sicurezza* and *Decreto Sicurezza bis*) both represented as aiming to increase Italians’ security through a restrictive reform of Italian policies, in compliance with an emergency approach, embraced despite the drop of arrivals to pre-2014 levels. The adoption processes of the decrees also served as highly effective focal points of the national, and to some extent European, public debate. Among the changes brought about by these secondary legislative measures are the reform of the status-determination process and the reception of asylum-seekers (with the replacement of humanitarian protection with time-limited special permits unconvertible into residence permits). Moreover, the decrees radically redesigned the reception system by granting to beneficiaries of international protection access only to the reception structures directly managed by local councils, formerly known as the much-praised System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers, and Refugees – SPRAR. Tougher sanctions were also levied on NGO ships seeking to bring into Italy migrants rescued in the Mediterranean. The latter measure, in particular, created the conditions for the government – namely in the person of the deputy head of government, Interior Minister, and League leader Matteo Salvini – to put more effectively into practice its antagonistic stance towards NGOs, as evidenced by the June 2019 incident with the Sea Watch 3 vessel.<sup>3</sup> The government would eventually pursue a fully-fledged strategy aimed at denying entry to Italian ports to vessels involved in search-and-rescue operations (including commercial ships and even the Italian coast guard unit Diciotti) (De Vittor 2018).

A string of incidents with NGOs dominated the political and public debate on migration, and were cunningly played out by Matteo Salvini, who used his prominent official position as a platform from which to conduct what seemed like a permanent election campaign around the issue (Newell 2020). On this account, key members of the cabinet and a number of politicians, pundits and parts of the media kept on referring to migrants as ‘clandestine’, which simply refutes and abridges the difference between forced and unforced immigration (*see below*), e.g., ‘the free ride is over (*la pacchia è finita*) for clandestine immigrants’ (Adnkronos 2018). In fact, the League and the M5s respective anti-immigration stances rested on only partially overlapping ideological premises and have been incorporated in different political strategies in different policy arenas (Carlotti and Gianfreda 2020). While the League’s opposition to immigration is based on xenophobic, nativist, welfare-chauvinist or nationalistic arguments, that of the M5s is more

---

<sup>3</sup> On 12 June 2019, Sea-Watch 3 rescued 53 migrants off the Libyan coast. The ship’s captain, Carola Rackete, refused to disembark the rescued migrants in Tripoli, arguing that this could not be considered a ‘safe harbour’, and instead moved towards Lampedusa, considered the closest safe one. Two days later, on the basis of the first version of the Follow-Up Security decree, Interior Minister Matteo Salvini issued an administrative decree that banned Sea-Watch 3 from entering Italian waters. After a two-week standoff with the Italian authorities, on 29 June, Rackete decided to dock in Lampedusa, in defiance of Salvini’s ban, arguing that the rescued migrants were exhausted. After disembarkation, Rackete was arrested for having broken the blockade. She was released a few days later.

instrumental to a general denunciation of the mismanagement of the *res publica* by mainstream parties, and the elite's alleged collusion with organized crime (Bulli and Soare 2018). Moreover, the M5s position on immigration was also characterised, like the League's, by a string of recriminations against the EU's inaction and lack of solidarity. Nonetheless, the League's aggressive rhetoric on the topic also gave voice to sentiments quite widespread among M5s voters and some representatives, despite the latter party's more nuanced official position (Mosca and Tronconi 2019). By more or less explicitly subscribing to simplistic formulas such as 'let's help them at home' (*aiutiamoli a casa loro*), the M5s not only reinforced the numerous clichés on which the Italian public debate on migration was so largely built (Ambrosini 2020), but also undermined its declared support for the international regime of refugee protection, which provides for the assessment of asylum seeker status *after* their arrival in a safe haven. The idea is to limit – if not circumvent – the country's duty to deal with asylum requests as formulated in the Geneva Convention by presenting a foreign policy intervention designed to eliminate humanitarian migration's root causes as a more effective and just policy option. That being so, a closer look into the relations between foreign policy (as a practice and an object of analysis) on the one hand, and the different 'kinds' of migrants on which this policy area is premised, on the other, seems in order.

### 3. Categories of international human movement and the immigration/foreign policy gap

This sketchy overview may appear to be evidence enough to substantiate the currently common assumption that immigration has become, thus and simply, part of Italy's foreign policy. At a closer look, though, one can see that the inclusion of a country's immigration policy within the fold of foreign policy needs at least to be qualified. As argued by Oltman and Renshon (2018), the instruments of foreign policy analysis have rarely been used to examine immigration policy. The point does not merely signal a blind spot in scholarly work; in fact it can be assumed that the theoretical instruments through which the phenomenon is approached may well have been playing an effective role in shaping and perpetuating (and possibly generating) the pressing policy problems posed by international human movements (Scholten 2018; Mayblin 2017; Singleton 2015).

Ordinarily, analytical perspectives place themselves on either side of the domestic-international divide. On the one hand are the approaches focused on domestic politics: that is, those designed, among others, to meet the demands of the national economy for foreign labour and to integrate migrants into society. These research programmes are largely grounded in the methods and assumptions of political economy, and focus on the 'pull' or demand factors that incentivise and regulate migration to a receiving country. This methodological orientation is warranted by the fact that, to this day, immigration remains a matter of individual state policy, and that the sweeping institutionalisation process undergone by international politics over the last seventy years has never included any explicit multilateral mechanisms for cooperation over the labour movement. On the other hand are those theoretical perspectives that concentrate on international relations, especially international norms regarding the treatment of migrants – with an emphasis on asylum seekers and refugees – with an international protection regime of forced migration that is comparatively more formally developed. These approaches focus on 'push' factors

that drive people from their homelands, and concentrate on displaced populace, human rights norms, and institutions and cooperation between states.

This conspicuous separation in the body of work on immigration is reflected in the analytical and practical distinction between ‘refugees’ and ‘economic migrants’. While commonly accepted by practitioners as well as scholars, and fixed in international law by documents such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, the difference between forced and unforced migrants is by and large the result of states’ contingent economic and political interests, and is grounded in the structure of the international system that emerged in the aftermath of World War II. At the time, countries found it convenient to differentiate between, on the one hand, foreign workers needed to sustain their post-war reconstruction and industrial development, and on the other, people fleeing from hostile regimes, mostly to re-join their homeland after the dramatic redrawing of national borders and regime-changes experienced by European countries since the 1940s. Throughout the Cold War, each of the contending camps maintained a vested interest in welcoming asylum-seekers claiming to be persecuted by their countries’ political regimes. Depriving them of human capital and undermining their credibility, both with their own public and with the international community, amounted to scoring points in their economic and ideological competition with the opposing party.

However, for all its resilience, each arm of the expedient two-fold notion of migration has been put under pressure by a number of factors. As it turned out, (economic) migration was not simply the same as imported labour – apart from the case of ‘guestworker systems’ – as it came with the costly supplements of family unification and the difficult task of singling out the highly-skilled foreigners sought by increasingly advanced economic systems. At the same time, with the end of the ideological confrontation between liberal-democracies and socialist regimes, the intake of asylum-seekers lost much of its strategic purpose as well as of its economic appeal. The growing humanitarian immigration flows directed towards Western countries were no longer made up prevalently of qualified defectors, but rather destitute people from developing countries.

Since the outbreak of the 2015 migration crisis, Italy, together with most European countries, has been contributing to the gradual erosion of the practical and conceptual backgrounds of the (economic) migrant/refugee distinction. In doing so it has been affecting the conception of immigration policy as a component of its foreign policy. The substitution, via the Security Decree, of humanitarian permits with special permits is a telling case. According to the League, the measure was grounded in the ‘excessively wide margins for extensive interpretation’ left by the old permits. Admittedly the weaker but also more flexible form of legal protection for refugees in Italy was the one most commonly granted to asylum-seekers until 2017, giving recipients the right to work and access to basic services (Geddes and Petracchin 2020; Ambrosini 2019). The change, though, may not only undermine the conditions of forced immigrants, but it also effectively denies a practice that has allowed Italy to comply with the international regime of refugee protection (and the EU’s directions on the issue) despite Italy-specific conditions such as the infamous slowness and backlog cases of the country’s judiciary system. Questioning the basic legal premises and the established practices of the international protection regime ‘pushes’ the protection issue out of the ‘protected’ domain of international law into that of the more contingency-prone one of international politics. The magnitude of these

increasingly overt reservations about the rationale of the regime might become even more consequent depending on the degree to which the League might succeed in creating a consistent enough coordination among Eurosceptic EU Member States, possibly in connections with extra-European forces interested in undermining the integration process (Bulli and Soare 2018; Makarychev and Terry 2020).

Ironically, the ‘artificial’ distinction between forced and unforced immigration has been traditionally questioned, pointing out that humanitarian discourses and policy practices aimed at protecting refugees from harm actually end up preventing them from securing an economic livelihood independent of humanitarian assistance (Long 2013). Conversely, anti-immigration forces in Italy – policy-makers and the media – have been playing on, and at the same time contesting, the distinction, especially by introducing a number of indefinite categories, making headway towards the notion of ‘illegal immigrant’ (Greblo 2017). Typical arguments defying the migrant/refugee differentiation are those based on the image of the illegitimate/false asylum seeker, deriving from the spontaneous and/or deliberate exaggeration of valid information – e.g. by Italian police and judicial authorities – about proven or suspected cases of baseless applications (Benzoni 2019). The aim is to diffuse the notion that all people fleeing from persecution are *by default* potential freeloaders on the international protection system and the receiving country’s resources (Bontempelli 2016). On the other hand, the idea of ‘helping migrants in their own home countries’, a notion prominent in the public debate since the time of the Renzi government, is premised on the idea that immigration is a pathological symptom whose root-causes have to be extirpated (Ambrosini 2020). Accordingly, finding durable solutions for immigrants is out of the question, as the emergency framework for forced migration is also projected on human movement triggered by the explicit desire to move and settle in a different country, with the prospect of starting a family, or reuniting with members thereof who have already emigrated. This is consistent with the emphasis put on the link between migration and development, whose mutual relations have been extensively explored. Admittedly, the resources and the political commitment assigned by the Italian government to development aid – alone and within the framework of the EU international cooperation and development policy – have hardly ever been up to the task of actually ‘helping them at home’. Moreover, the politicisation of this link deliberately overlooks the evidence that, for the most part, the development of poor countries is generally associated with an increase rather than a decrease in emigration, and that international aid is unlikely to have any effect on flows of ‘irregular’ migrants coming from countries that are either at war or oppressed by regimes persecuting their populations, although development and international partnership with countries of emigration can indeed improve the management of the flows generating from them (Caselli 2019). None of these handicaps, however, is particularly significant to the extent that the actual political goal of immigration policy consists in virtually eliminating immigration, drying out the *transnational* dimension of the phenomenon. The more the *inter-national* dimension of immigration policy is emphasised, the more integration policy issues can be made solely dependent on national economic demands and identity politics, and the object of extremely strict regulation, if not of mere political contention.

#### **4. The emerging foreign policy processes of Italy's immigration policy: the role of Interior Ministers**

Determining whether the international-domestic nexus has shifted to the point where immigration policy is now to be examined through the lenses of foreign policy analysis – see Hudson (2005) – is beyond the scope of this article. While the challenging question is better shelved for future inquiry, paying closer attention to the link between micro- and macro-factors, the focus on decision-makers and the interplay between material and ideational factors (as foreign policy analysis does) may offer some interesting insights into our object of study. This is all the truer in light of the strain placed, in recent years, on the material conditions, conceptual distinctions and policy practices that migration policy has been resting on.

Focusing on the process through which the international dimension of Italy's immigration policy has been designed and conducted, one of the most outstanding aspects appears to be the increasingly high-profile role of Interior Ministers who, as far as migration is concerned, have been acting as some of the most prominent 'rivals' of Foreign Affairs Ministers in the country's decision making process (Hill 2016). This trend climaxed during Matteo Salvini's stint at the helm of the government department, and appears to be tightly intertwined with the politicisation process of the issue of immigration. The League leader's pre-eminence in the cabinet may be regarded as an effect of the extraordinary political circumstances that emerged from the 2018 general elections. The Interior Minister's ascendancy can also be seen as just another effect of the 'polycrisis' that had been affecting the EU for the previous ten years, the wave of anti-establishment sentiments that had already arisen in a number of general and local elections across the continent, wreaking havoc on Italy and leading to a relatively unprecedented tri-polar party system, and the impasse of the customary government formation procedures (Garzia 2018; Ceccarini and Bordignon 2018). The 'unnatural' agreement between the M5s and the League – based on a declared aspiration to abandon failed conventional paths in order to improve/transform the country (Giannetti et al. 2018) – was complemented by the inclusion in the cabinet of 'independent' ministers, including Foreign Affairs Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi and, under certain aspects, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte himself (at the time a politically unknown law professor, albeit seen as ideologically close to the M5s). Salvini's politicisation of the immigration issue and its cunning use of the media not only soon made him a figure widely known to the European press and a prominent exponent of the circle of Eurosceptic politicians gearing themselves up in view of the imminent European Parliament election, but also led to his area of activity expanding well beyond the traditional remit of his department, at the expense of a somewhat compliant Foreign Affairs Minister.

Yet, as pointed out by Strazzari and Grandi (2019), the trend of the growing role of the Interior Minister in the external dimension of migration policies had already become apparent with the previous government, as the figure of Marco Minniti had already gathered significant responsibilities in the areas of intelligence and security while in office. The regulation on migrant flows achieved by Minniti proved highly successful in terms of the reduction in migrant landings on Italian shores, although it was his successor who reaped the fruits of these measures, presented as the result of Salvini's repressive actions in government (Fabbrini and Zgaga 2019).

Nevertheless, the high-level profiles gained by Minniti and Salvini in this *sui generis* component of Italy's foreign policy – as mentioned, one made possible by the structural transformation of immigration policy – seem to have distinct reasons. As for Marco Minniti, besides his famous (or infamous, depending on the points of view) connections with intelligence services and police forces, other powerful rivals of traditional foreign policy-makers, according to Hill (2016), one may argue that his contribution to the transformation of the role of the Interior Minister into national foreign policy making hinged primarily on his (successful) intention to act on behalf not only of Italy, but of the entire EU. In line with the Renzi cabinet, though with a less swashbuckling attitude, Gentiloni's government tried to forge alliances with EU member states such as France, Germany and Spain, as well as with Mediterranean countries with problems similar to Italy, rather than with the Eurosceptic countries of Eastern Europe (Fabbrini and Zgaga 2019). The person in charge of pursuing this strategy in the migration and asylum policy domain was Marco Minniti, whose approach was largely praised among allied governments and the EU institutions, and equally criticised by the United Nations, NGOs and left-wing leaders due to the questionable effects of his policies in terms of protecting migrants' human rights (Paravicini 2017). Italy's approach became not only a model for other member states, but the *de facto* solution to the migration problem of the entire Union. This is evidenced by the endorsement received by the Council of the Union on July 2017 after the signature of an anti-smuggling memorandum with the Libyan government, the subsequent peace deal he brokered between tribes of the Fezzan region, and the relaunch of the Libyan coast-guard to prevent migrants' boats from leaving the country. The former Minister's enduring reputation within EU policy-making circles is confirmed by his much talked-about candidacy as EU Special Envoy to Libya. Minniti's 'desert diplomacy' in Libya was perfectly consistent with, and deeply embedded in, the more general externalisation of migration and asylum policy pursued by the EU since the issuing of its Global Approach to Migration in 2005, and its revised version in 2011 – the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility. In this perspective, externalization seems to be rather ingrained within the management of migration by the EU. Resembling concentric circles (Parkes 2017), migration management begins with the Schengen area, in which free movement is counterbalanced by increased border surveillance and deterrence, reaches the EU's external border with frontline member states carrying the responsibility for search and rescue and asylum processing, with countries in the European Neighbourhood being increasingly involved, and extends to third countries – as far as Central Asia and the Horn of Africa – via the policy of externalisation of border control and migration management (Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi 2014).

In a nutshell, the transformation undergone by the relations between migration and foreign policy under the Gentiloni cabinet can be regarded as perfectly in line with Italy's traditional goal of being put on a par with member states such as Germany and France, and in a more central position in the EU decision-making process – and in doing so, trying to manage, and possibly defuse, the increasing politicisation of the issue. On the other hand, Matteo Salvini's role in the inclusion of immigration as a foreign policy component, while not independent from the EU policy framework, seems to rest on yet another traditional feature of Italian foreign policy. Elaborating on Furlong (2014), it may be argued that Salvini's prominence is a remarkable case of the re-emergence of a 'normalisation

trend' of this policy area; that is, the assimilation of foreign policy making with the rest of national public policy. The interaction of foreign and internal politics in Italy before the international and domestic political upheaval triggered by the end of the Cold War was usually understood to be dominated by the so-called *vincolo esterno* ('external constraint'). Owing to the country's geopolitical position, the presence of a sizeable communist party effectively prevented from taking ministerial office and the propensity of potential allies and powerful opposition parties to use foreign policy issues for short-term political advantage, the range of foreign policy choices available to the governing parties was limited, the quality and openness of debate low, and the country's orientation in international affairs directly tied to coalition choices. Before the 1990s, dominant parties and actors played a gate-keeping role in foreign policy, determining the entry and exit of the Foreign Affairs Minister to substantive and partisan policy arenas – i.e., respectively, those aimed at pursuing the interest of the country as a whole, and those of one or more factions and their clients. Hence, due to the figure's lack of 'political dividends' to carry out their own partisan policy, Foreign Affairs Ministers in Italy have almost always been outliers as regards not only the setting and implementation of foreign policy but also the definition of this policy area's effective boundaries. This feature of Italian foreign policy making has in fact never really disappeared, but was restrained by the post-1994 bipolar structure of the party system, which limited political bargaining within the boundaries of each coalition. The exceptional conditions that emerged from the post-2018 general election re-emphasised the gate-keeping role of dominant parties, providing more leeway for political bargaining in cabinet politics, before and after the executive's formation. It comes as no surprise that the unprecedented salience of the migration issue, the changes in the conceptual and material structure of the latter together with the policy practices linked to them – combined with the politicisation of the migratory problem successfully carried out by the League – made the senior position of Interior Minister all the more appealing to Matteo Salvini, as it could be used as a political springboard, unlike the 'hammock post' offered by the Foreign Affairs ministry. What is more singular, though, is that the regained gate-keeping role of an assertive (and experienced) party such as the League and of a personality like Salvini, who had successfully personalised the political process, presenting himself as the 'strongman' able to tackle Italian society's migration-related demands for security, allowed the extension of his ministry's remit to virtually the entire external dimension of immigration policy.

This is not to say that Salvini's 'immigration policy as foreign policy' is independent of the European dimension. The EU has indeed offered a specific context – a fertile ground one might say – in which Salvini's discourses and policies on migration, otherwise likely to be regarded as 'extreme' and 'unacceptable', could be relatively 'normalized'. This phenomenon, rather counterintuitive given the values the EU is usually associated with, seems especially evident in the peculiar area of migration represented by 'migrant smuggling'. In particular, during the migration crisis, migrant smuggling rapidly gained relevance in the EU's agenda (Perkowski and Squire 2018), as laid out in a series of policy documents adopted in fast succession between 2015 and 2016 (Fassi 2020). Overall, the measures elaborated by the EU to contrast migrant smuggling, from EUNavForMed Sophia to the strengthening of Frontex and Europol's mandate, convey the notion of a serious security threat – closely compatible with Matteo Salvini's agenda and rhetoric

against *i trafficanti di uomini* ('people traffickers/smugglers') – and one that demands 'a powerful demonstration of the EU's determination to act' (European Commission 2015: 3). Significantly, observers have used the expressions 'EU's war against smuggling' (Albahari 2018) to describe this policy and narrative stance. In this view, the EU discourse on human smuggling echoes the 'security narrative' that the literature has identified more generally in relation to migration (Ceccorulli and Lucarelli 2017), and seems to bear strong linkages with the 'threat/risk narrative' that has been recognized as one of the main strands in EU external relations (Nitou 2013). Shifting the focus on smuggling, away from the much more sensitive issue of migrant rescue and reception, makes it more likely that the EU and its member states find an agreement around a (normative) lower common denominator (Fassi 2020). In addition, the proposed solution is increasingly based on the recourse to an externalization logic that shifts the material and normative burden towards third countries, reinforcing the already existing dynamics we have observed in the case of Italy.

## 5. Conclusions

The somewhat unexpected termination of the 'unnatural' League-M5s (quasi-)coalition has seemingly put a stop to the high profile of Interior Minister as regards the external dimension of Italy's foreign policy. Nevertheless, the choice of a 'technocrat' such as Maria Lamorgese – a long-standing civil servant, former prefect and member of the Council of State<sup>4</sup> – might also be regarded as confirmation of the significance of the rise of Italy's migration policy to the status of 'high politics', at least to the extent the appointment serves as a break from the increasing politicisation of the policy issue and the prominence lately acquired by the heads of the Ministry of the Interior. As the article has tried to show, the transformation of the external dimension of migration policy into an indeed crucial component of the country's immigration policy is deeply, if problematically, intertwined with the complicated – to the point of incoherent – inner working of the EU migration policy system and the Union as a political system at large.

On the one hand, Marco Minniti, a left-wing minister who tried to snatch the right's monopoly of security issues, succeeded to a significant extent in turning his 'philosophy' – according to which 'security is freedom because it is quite clear that there cannot be an idea of security if individual freedom is not guaranteed just as there is no real freedom if the safety of everyday life is not guaranteed' (Gargiulo 2018) – into that of the EU. In so doing he became the champion, as much praised as contested, of the externalisation of the latter's migration and asylum policy.

On the other hand, much of Matteo Salvini's political fortunes are the outcome of the politicisation not only of migration issues, but of EU political processes. This is evidenced by the position that Eurosceptic stances have gained in the League's political platform and the importance acknowledged to intra-EU alliances with likeminded parties. At the same time, one can see that, although as Interior Minister he remained quite aloof from EU ordinary policy making, he found a significant consonance – albeit somewhat distorted to his own political ends – with some trademark migration policy measures and strategies of the Union. These were based on the criminalisation and

---

<sup>4</sup> A legal-administrative consultative body ensuring the legality of public administration.

securitisation of migration that inform such a big part of EU policy in this domain, and part of an even wider trend (Böhmelet and Bove 2019). It remains, therefore, to be seen if Italy will be able to hold such a prominent position in European and Mediterranean ‘circles’ of its foreign policy (another ‘traditional’ interpretative scheme of Italy’s external action) as was the case for ‘equal and opposite reasons’ with these two ministries, while also contributing to a more solid protection of migrants’ human rights, possibly providing them with the possibility to actively participate in a reasonable process of integration (or failure to do so) in Italian and European society.

## References

- Adnkronos (2018). *Salvini: ‘Per clandestini è finita la pacchia’*, 2 June 2018. Available at [https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2018/06/02/salvini-ora-difesa-confini-rimpatri\\_UvAkmD8q7NlMbvDtKSfdwO.html](https://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2018/06/02/salvini-ora-difesa-confini-rimpatri_UvAkmD8q7NlMbvDtKSfdwO.html).
- Albahari, M. (2018). From Right to Permission. Asylum, Mediterranean Migrations, and Europe’s War on Smuggling. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 6(2), 121-130. Doi: 10.1177/2311502418767088.
- Ambrosini, M. (2019). The Local Governance of Immigration and Asylum: Policies of Exclusion as a Battleground. In: M. Ambrosini, & M. Cinalli, D. Jacobson (Eds.), *Migration, Borders and Citizenship. Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship* (pp. 195-215). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ambrosini, M. (2020). *L’invasione immaginaria. L’immigrazione oltre i luoghi comuni*. Roma, Bari: Laterza.
- Benzoni, M. (2019). La documentazione prodotta dal richiedente asilo come prova delle proprie ragioni non può essere ritenuta apoditticamente falsa. *Progetto Melting Pot Europa*, 19.04.2019. Available at: <https://www.meltingpot.org/La-documentazione-prodotta-dal-richiedente-asilo-come-prova.html#.XsQ5US3W6L9>.
- Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I., & Moore, K. (Eds.), (2015). *Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries. Report prepared for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees*. Cardiff: Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies.
- Biassoni, D., & Pasini, N. (2014). L’immigrazione nel dibattito politico dell’Italia. In *Fondazione Ismu, Diciannovesimo Rapporto sulle migrazioni 2013* (pp.161-172). Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Birkland, T.A. (1997). *After Disaster: Agenda Setting, Public Policy, and Focusing Events*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Blangiardo, G.C., & Ortensi, L.E. (2020). Migration in Italy. In V. Cesareo (Ed.), *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019* (pp. 19-29). Fondazione ISMU. Available at: <https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/XXV-report-on-migrations-2019.pdf#page=22>.
- Böhmelet, T., & Bove, V. (2019) How migration policies moderate the diffusion of terrorism. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(1), 160-181.
- Bove, V., Elia, L., & Ferraresi, M. (2019). Quando l’insicurezza percepita supera quella reale, *Lavoce.info*. Available at: <https://www.lavoce.info/archives/61069/quando-linsicurezza-percepita-supera-quella-reale/>.
- Bontempelli, S. (2016). Da «Clandestini» a «Falsi Profughi». Migrazioni forzate e politiche migratorie italiane dopo le Primavera arabe. *Meridiana*, 86, 167-179.

- Bulli, G., & Soare, S.C. (2018). Immigration and the Refugee Crisis in a New Immigration Country: The Case of Italy. *HKJU-CCPA*, 18(1), 127–156.
- Camera dei Deputati (2018). *I temi dell'attività parlamentare nella XVII legislatura. Politica estera e questioni globali*. Available at: <https://temi.camera.it/dil/pdf/politica-estera-e-questioni-globali.pdf>.
- Carlotti B., & Gianfreda, S. (2020). Do Populists Talk the Same? A Multilevel Analysis of the Northern League and Five Star Movements' Positions on Immigration and the European Union. In M. Baldassari, & E. Castelli, & M. Truffelli, & G. Vezzani, (Eds.), *Anti-Europeanism* (pp. 163-183). Cham: Springer. Doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-24428-6\_10.
- Carvalho, J. (2014). *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy: Comparing Britain, France and Italy*. London: Routledge.
- Caselli, M. (2019). “Let Us Help Them at Home”: Policies and Misunderstandings on Migrant Flows Across the Mediterranean Border. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 20(4), 983-993. Doi: 10.1007/s12134-018-00645-w.
- Castles, S. (2006). Guestworkers in Europe: A Resurrection?. *The International Migration Review*, 40(4), 741-766.
- Cava, A., Parito, M., & Pira, F. (2018). The aesthetics of pity. Italian media representation of migrants and emotional audience. *ICRS Mediterranean Knowledge Working Papers Series*, 3, 49-81. Doi: 10.26409/2018WPSMKO3.
- Ceccarini, L., & Bordignon, F. (2018). Towards the 5 stars party. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 10(4), 346-362. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2018.1544351.
- Ceccorulli, M. (2019). Back to Schengen: The collective securitisation of the EU free-border area. *West European Politics*, 42(2), 302-322. Doi: 10.1080/01402382.2018.1510196.
- Ceccorulli, M., & Lucarelli, S. (2017). Migration and the EU Global Strategy: Narratives and Dilemmas. *The International Spectator*, 52(3), 83-102. Doi: 10.1080/03932729.2017.1332850.
- Cesareo, V. (2020). 1994-2019: Twenty-five Years of Migrations to Italy. In V. Cesareo (Ed.), *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019* (pp. 5-18). Fondazione ISMU. Available at: <https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/XXV-report-on-migrations-2019.pdf#page=22>.
- Cetin, E. (2015). The Italian Left and Italy's (Evolving) Foreign Policy of Immigration Controls. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20 (3), 377-397. Doi: 10.1080/1354571X.2015.1026149.
- Cordini, M., & Ranci, C. (2017). Legitimising the care market: the social recognition of migrant care workers in Italy. *Journal of Social Policy*, 46(1), 91–108. Doi: 10.1017/S0047279416000398.
- Cusumano, E. (2019). Straightjacketing migrant rescuers? The code of conduct on maritime NGOs. *Mediterranean Politics*, 24(1), 106-114. Doi: 10.1080/13629395.2017.1381400.
- De Vittor, F. (2018). Immigrazione e asilo. Soccorso in mare e favoreggiamento dell'immigrazione irregolare: sequestro e dissequestro della nave Open Arms. *Diritti Umani e Diritto Internazionale*, 12(2), 443–452.
- Diamanti, I. (2019). Il distacco fra rappresentazione e percezione. Lo spettacolo delle migrazioni fa meno paura. Per abitudine..., *Notizie Senza Approdo. Settimo rapporto Carta di Roma*, 3-5. Available at: [https://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CdR-Report-2019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CdR-Report-2019_Final.pdf).

- Di Filippo, M., & Palm, S. (2018). Le sfide della politica migratoria e il nuovo corso di Minniti. In E. Greco (Ed.), *L'Italia al bivio. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana* (pp. 65-80). Roma: Edizioni Cultura.
- Di Mauro, D., & Verzichelli, L. (2019). Political elites and immigration in Italy: party competition, polarization and new cleavages, *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11(4), 401-414. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2019.1679960.
- DISPOC/LAPS, & IAI (2017). *Gli italiani e la politica estera*. Rapporto di ricerca a cura di DISPOC/LAPS (Università di Siena) e IAI. Available at: [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/laps-iai\\_2017.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/laps-iai_2017.pdf).
- Dottori, G., & Poletti, E. (2014). Italy and the Challenge of Mass Migration. In L. Marchi, R. Whitman, & G. Edwards (Eds.), *Italy's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century: A Contested Nature?* (pp. 148-177). London: Routledge.
- Downs, A. (1972). Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue Attention Cycle. *Public interest* 28, 38-50.
- Eurobarometer (2018), *Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, October 2017-April 2018. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2169>.
- European Commission (2015). *European Agenda on Migration*. Brussels: EU. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf).
- Fabbrini, S., & Zgaga, T. (2019). Italy and the European Union: the discontinuity of the Conte government. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11(3), 280-293. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2019.1642657.
- Fassi, E. (2020). The EU, Migration and Global Justice. Policy Narratives of Human Smuggling and their normative implications. *Rivista Trimestrale di Scienza dell'Amministrazione*, 1, 1-30. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.32049/RTSA.2020.1.01>.
- Furlong, P. (2014). Processes of Italian Foreign Policy since 1992. In L. Marchi, & R. Whitman, & G. Edwards (Eds.), *Italy's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century: A Contested Nature?* (pp. 22-40). London: Routledge.
- Galantino, M. G. (2020). The migration-terrorism nexus: An analysis of German and Italian press coverage of the 'refugee crisis', *European Journal of Criminology*, 1-23. Doi: 10.1177/1477370819896213.
- Gargiulo, E. (2018). Una filosofia della sicurezza e dell'ordine. Il governo dell'immigrazione secondo Marco. *Meridiana*, 91, 151-173.
- Garzia, D. (2018). The Italian election of 2018 and the first populist government of Western Europe. *West European Politics*, 42(3), 670-680. Doi: 10.1080/01402382.2018.1535381.
- Geddes, A., & Pettrachin, A. (2020). Italian migration policy and politics: Exacerbating paradoxes, *Contemporary Italian Politics*. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2020.1744918.
- Giannetti, D., Pedrazzani, A., & Pinto, L. (2018). The rising importance of the non-economic policy dimension and the formation of the Conte government in Italy. *Italian Political Science*, 13(2), 27-44.
- Gibney, M. J. (2004). *The ethics and politics of asylum: Liberal democracy and the response to refugees*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Greblo, E. (2017). Extra Statum nulla persona. Umanità in fuga. *Etica & Politica / Ethics and Politics*, 19(3), 329-349.

- Helbling, M., & Meierrieks, D. (2020). Transnational terrorism and restrictive immigration policies. *Journal of Peace Research*, 1-17. Doi: /10.1177/0022343319897105.
- Heuser, S. (2008). Is There a Right to Have Rights? The Case of the Right of Asylum. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 11(1), 3-13.
- Hill, C. (2016). *Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Palgrave.
- Hudson, V. M. (2005). Foreign policy analysis: Actor-specific theory and the ground of international relations. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 1(1), 1-20.
- IAI (2018). L'Italia al bivio. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana. *Quaderni IAI*, 19. Available at: <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/litalia-al-bivio-rapporto-sulla-politica-estera-italiana-edizione-2018>.
- IOM (2018). Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reached 171,635 in 2017; Deaths Reach 3,116. Press Releases 01/05/18. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reached-171635-2017-deaths-reach-3116>.
- Long, K. (2013). When refugees stopped being migrants: Movement, labour and humanitarian protection. *Migration Studies*, 1(1), 4-26. Doi: 10.1093/migration/mns001.
- Makarychev, A., & Therry, G.S. (2020). An Estranged 'marriage of convenience': Salvini, Putin, and the intricacies of Italian-Russian relations. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 12(1), 23-42. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2019.1706926.
- Mayblin, L. (2017). Imagining asylum, governing asylum seekers: Complexity reduction and policy making in the UK Home Office. *Migration Studies*, 7(1), 1-20. Doi: 10.1093/migration/mnx060.
- Mosca, L., & Tronconi, F. (2019). Beyond left and right: the eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement. *West European Politics*, 42(6), 1258-1283. Doi: 10.1080/01402382.2019.1596691.
- Musarò, P., & Parmiggiani, P. (2017). Beyond black and white: the role of media in portraying and policing migration and asylum in Italy. *International Review of Sociology*, 27(2), 241-260. Doi: 10.1080/03906701.2017.1329034.
- Newell, J.L. (2019). Italy's new government and the migrant crisis. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11(4), 355-357. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2019.1685123.
- Nițoiu, C. (2013). The Narrative Construction of the European Union in External Relations. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 14(2), 240-255. Doi: 10.1080/15705854.2013.785264.
- Oltman, A., & Renson, J. (2017). *Immigration and Foreign Policy*. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Politics (pp. 1-27). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.344.
- Osservatorio di Pavia (2017), *Immigrazione, la costruzione mediatica della realtà*, 18 dicembre 2017. Available at: <https://www.osservatorio.it/immigrazione-la-costruzione-mediata-della-realta/>
- Paravicini, G. (2017). Italy's 'minister of fear'. Interior Minister Marco Minniti credits his 'desert. diplomacy' with stopping the flow of migrants to Italy. Politico.eu, 27.12.2017. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/marco-minniti-italy-minister-of-fear/>.
- Parkes, R. (2017). Nobody move! Myths of the EU migration crisis. *Chaillot Papers*, 143.
- Perlmutter, T. (1998). The Politics of Proximity: The Italian Response to the Albanian Crisis. *International Migration Review*, 32(1), 203-222. Doi: 10.1177/019791839803200109.

- Perkowski, N., & Squire, V. (2019). The anti-policy of European anti-smuggling as a site of contestation in the Mediterranean migration crisis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(12), 2167-2184. Doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2018.1468315.
- Saraceno, C. (2020). Culle vuote: i dati che ne spiegano le cause. *Lavoce.info*, 14.02.20. Available at: <https://www.lavoce.info/archives/63488/culle-vuote-i-dati-che-spiegano-le-cause/>.
- Scholten, P. (2018). Research-Policy Relations and Migration Studies. In R. Zapata-Barrero, & E. Yalaz (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies. IMISCOE Research Series* (pp. 287-302). Cham: Springer.
- Schuster, L. (2003). *The Use and Abuse of Political Asylum in Britain and Germany*. London: Frank Cass.
- Singleton, A. (2015). Speaking Truth to Power? Why Civil Society, Beyond Academia, Remains Marginal in EU Migration Policy. In P. Scholten, & H. Entzinger, & R. Penninx, & S. Verbeek (Eds.), *Integrating Immigrants in Europe. IMISCOE Research Series* (pp. 131-140). Cham: Springer.
- Strazzari, F., & Grandi, M. (2019), Government policy and the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean and African arenas. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11(3), 336-354. Doi: 10.1080/23248823.2019.1644833.
- Triandafyllidou, A., & Dimitriadi, A. (2014). Governing Irregular Migration and Asylum at the Borders of Europe: Between Efficiency and Protection, *Imagining Europe*, 6.
- Urso, O. (2018). The politicization of immigration in Italy. Who frames the issue, when and how. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, 48(3), 365-381. Doi: 10.1017/ipo.2018.16.
- Zotti, A., & Parsi, V.E. (*forthcoming*). Patterns of Uncertainty: Security and Quality of Democracy in Italy. In L. Weinberg, & E. Francis (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Democracy and Security*, London: Routledge.