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Exclusionary Rhetoric Expansionist Policies? Right-wing Parties and Immigration Policy-making in Italy

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Abstract:

Immigration has become an issue often framed with reference to the protection of external borders, welfare state, cultural and ethnic identity, increased risk of terrorism in most of the major receiving countries in Europe. Yet, despite restrictive immigration controls and exclusionary rhetoric in these countries, population inflows continue. Building on the literature which points out that migration policies often 'fail' to achieve restrictive objectives due to various institutional constraints preventing governments to realise their electoral promises (Boswell 2003; Calavita 2004; Castles 2004a, 2004b; Freeman 1995; Geddes 2008), this paper analyses the relation between policy debates and policy-making in migration domain. The processes through which immigration debates and policies evolved in Italy are analysed by drawing on qualitative data for the period covering 1996 to 2010. The paper elaborates on how, faced with the so-called immigration pressures, different discursive categories of immigrants and immigration are created by the right-wing political parties in Italy, the extent to which nodal points of the right-wing immigration debates were reflected in the design of immigration control tools and what the link between rhetoric and practice reveals about the processes shaping politics of immigration control.

Key words:

Immigration, Italy, political Right, rhetoric, politics of immigration control

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Introduction

Italy was one of the so-called new countries of immigration that was caught unprepared by the increased migratory inflows during the 1990s. Even though it became an immigrant-receiving country during the mid-1970s (Martiniello 1992; Papademetriou and Hamilton 1996; Zincone and Caponio 2005), its lax border controls and under-developed asylum system remained untouched in the absence of any political initiative. The migration challenge created by new immigrant and asylum-seeker arrivals in the aftermath of the Cold War era, pushed Italy to dramatically re-define its immigration control system. The appearance of the migration challenge also overlapped with the rise of the right-wing politics in Italy. Some of the rising parties of the Right did not hesitate to play upon the immigration card to dilute public attention from the political turmoil of the 1990s. In the face of increased pressures to guarantee citizens' security, scape-goating immigrants and promising tougher immigration control measures became an electoral strategy, more prominently deployed by right-wing parties than left-wing ones. Yet, pressing demographic issues and labour market shortages together with the potential economic benefits of migration to national economies (Balch 2010; Geddes 2005) led to policy outcomes which did not match the restrictive anti-immigration rhetoric employed by populist politicians.

This paper elaborates on the gap between immigration 'talk' and 'action' in Italy with particular emphasis on the contributions to debates and policies developed by the right-wing coalitions led by Silvio Berlusconi. The focus is on immigration rhetoric adopted during the general election campaigns and immigration policies generated at the central government level during the periods 2001-2006 and 2008-2011. The right-wing political parties that emerged as new forces in the Italian political landscape in the early 1990s, namely the *Forza Italia* (FI, Go Italy!), the *Lega Nord* (LN, Northern League) and the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN, National Alliance) played an important role in terms of defining the general frame of immigration approaches in Italy. In particular, the illiberal and the exclusionary immigration rhetoric of the LN and the AN has been influential in establishing anti-immigrant positions as a profitable electoral strategy. Despite the rhetoric, the period 2001-2006 witnessed the largest wave of regularisation in Italy up until then (Einaudi 2007: 375), while the period 2008-2011 was marked by the *Popolo della Liberta'* (PdL, People of Freedom)- *Lega Nord* (LN) coalition government's unexpected move of granting temporary residence permits for humanitarian reasons to citizens of North African countries who arrived in Italy between 1 January 2011 and 5 April 2011, following the revolution and political turmoil in the southern Mediterranean. Under the impact of international sources of pressure, the right-wing PdL-LN government moved away from what they had advocated for during their 2008 campaign, namely being tougher against undocumented entries.

The hypothesis of the article is that despite adopting harsh immigration rhetoric and restrictive legislation, the populist right-wing parties usually end up practicing policies that openly contradict with the discourse and the legislation they develop. The existence of various international constraints and the involvement of other actors with different immigration interests put populist right-wing parties dramatically at odds with their electoral promises and legislative proposals. As argued by Howlett and Ramesh (1995) in their 'policy cycle' hypothesis, in general terms, right-wing parties issue a piece of key immigration legislation during the initial stages of their governing period as they have higher concerns to appeal to their constituencies by showing that they fulfil their electoral promises. Nonetheless, as the time spent in the ruling position proceeds such concerns take a back step and the decision-makers feel confident about their political position. After 'proving' themselves in the eyes of the electorate by passing restrictive immigration legislation, they become more prone to integrating pressures exerted by other actors with different immigration preferences. The exclusionary rhetoric and the initial strict legislation are employed like the layers of a protective shield against any potential criticism of the right-wing governments' back-stepping from their original position under such pressures.

Such contrasts between discourse and practice are not peculiar to Italy. As Boswell (2003: 23) notes, they have been experienced by some other west European states as well, such as France and the UK, and result from various national and international forms of interests and constraints limiting 'the effectiveness of border and internal control measures and of attempts to reduce the welfare and rights of immigrants and asylum-seekers'. Immigration scholars point out that migration policies often 'fail' to achieve restrictive objectives due to both the existence of 'different logics' guiding 'talk', 'decision' and 'action' (Geddes 2008) and various institutional limitations preventing governments to realise their electoral promises (Boswell 2003). Whilst these works provide an account of policy failings on the basis of policy outcomes (Calavita 2004; Castles 2004a, 2004b) and the processes that lead to paradoxical outcomes (Geddes 2008), the existing literature does not give enough empirical information on the immigration rhetoric adopted by the key political actors during electoral processes and how these key actors' interaction and the roles they claim define the course of policy processes that lead to contradictions while moving from 'talk' to 'action'. Whilst the rhetoric-action gap is not peculiar to the Italian political context, immigration issues tend to generate remarkably high public concerns in the country, and it is viewed as a critical case in immigration studies to test whether the new immigration countries in southern Europe would also adopt an 'expansive' and 'inclusive' immigration policy strategy (Freeman 1995).

The paper, first of all, provides an account of recent immigration to Italy, then presents the developments in the Italian Right from 1994 onwards, which is followed by an elaboration of the

main features of the right-wing asylum and immigration rhetoric during the 2001 and 2008 campaigns through a qualitative content analyses of election manifestos used by the main right-wing parties and electoral coalitions. It then examines the contents of the key pieces of immigration legislation introduced by the right-wing governments in the aftermath of elections, namely the so-called Bossi-Fini Law (2002), issued by the *Casa delle Liberta'* (CdL, House of Freedoms) government, and the (First) Security Package (2008) issued by the *Popolo della Liberta'* (PdL, People of Freedom)- *Lega* government and explores the developments following the Parliamentary approval of these legislative packages.

It concludes that while the right-wing electoral coalition expanded to incorporate far-right during the campaigning period with an expectation to increase votes and seats by incorporating part of its anti-immigrant discourse, the cracks among the centrist and the extreme elements showed themselves in the post-election era. Immigration surfaced as a position issue over which certain elements of the mainstream-right and the ultra-right favoured different guiding principles leading to a re-definition of the contents of immigration legislation. In addition, the involvement of other domestic non-political actors and international players in the field also led to the policies which contrasted with the immigration rhetoric adopted during campaigning periods and also with the initial design of immigration legislation. Yet, electoral and government coalitions between the centre- and the far-right lead to the incorporation of certain elements of the far-right anti-immigrant rhetoric by the mainstream. This process enables the gradual legitimisation of the far-right agenda within the context of an expanded right-wing bloc.

Methodology

The qualitative content analysis is applied during the elaboration of the relevant general election manifestos. Even though election manifestos constitute only a limited sample of political rhetoric, due to the fact that they are 'presented to the public only after a great deal of internal debate from within party ranks…' (Cole 2005: 209) as the 'authoritative statements of party policies…' (Hofferbert, Klingemann, and Volkens 1995: 235; Volkens, Alonso, and Gomez 2010: 1), they are relevant research materials for studying political discourse by identifying each political party's position on immigration and the issues regarded as electorally relevant within that domain. The election programmes analysed include those used by the *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (CCD) and the *Casa delle Liberta'* (CdL) (the main right-wing coalition) during the 2001 general elections, and the ones used by the *Lega Nord* (LN) and the *Popolo della Liberta'* (PdL) during the 2008 general elections.

There are three main reasons for using the qualitative version of content analysis. First of all, one of the main concerns in this research is to identify how the costs and the benefits of immigration are

presented in the elite political discourse, by examining the characteristics of the discourse content on the basis of certain categories. Therefore, the presence or absence of particular framings of immigration matter more for the purposes of this research rather than how 'frequently' they appear in discourse. For instance, even a single statement putting immigration and/or immigrants forward as a threat against the indigenous communities' way of life is taken into account as part of relevant data.

Secondly, qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to take into account the role of the context within which a particular discourse is produced and this is valued for this project. Therefore, while analysing data, it is part of the research concern to identify the 'objective which the specific communication is designed to achieve' *(behavioural context of words)*, together with 'who is speaking, to whom, and under what circumstances' *(situational context of the communication)* (George 1959: 238).

Thirdly, the systemic conduct of content analysis is carried out on the basis of a small research sample (i.e. election manifestos), which is 'only a small piece of the universe of content to which the generalization refers' (Berelson 1952: 122) and makes it difficult to work within a statistical framework as used by the quantitative content analysis.

The recording units are sentences which contain references to immigration and asylum whereas paragraphs within which these relevant sentences are located are the context units (I). After an examination of four political programmes used by individual parties (CCD; LN; PdL) and election coalitions (CdL) for the years 2001 and 2008, twelve content categories are identified on the basis of the repeated forms of references made by these political actors in their framing of immigration and asylum related issues, which are: (I) Rights and liberties to which immigrants are entitled/should be entitled; (II) Economic effects of immigration/immigrants; (III) Immigration as a tool for attacking the political opponent/praising the party position; (IV) Protection of national borders/homeland security in the face of immigration; (V) Promising stricter/liberal immigration measures; (VI) The effect of immigration on national culture and identity; (VII) Immigration and illegality-crime-terrorist threat; (VIII) Size/volume of immigrant entries; (IX) Immigrant integration; (X) Immigration as an issue to be tackled within the EU framework/through multi-level governance approach; (XI) Other (immigration and health risks, environmental degradation, foreign aid).

In addition to these main categories, certain sub-categories are also identified. These follow as: (IIa) Economic costs of immigration; (IIb) Economic benefits of immigration; (IIIa) Immigration as a tool for attacking the political opponent; (IIIb) Immigration as a tool for praising the party position; (Va) Promising liberal immigration measures; (Vb) Promising stricter immigration measures; (Vc) Not

promising either liberal or stricter immigration (this category covers proposals for speeding up the processing of asylum applications and realisable forms of assisted repatriation; proposals which are not offering clear prospects for moving immigration policies either in more liberal or restrictive directions); (VIa) Immigration's positive effects on domestic culture, identity, and racial composition; (VIb) Immigration's negative effects on domestic culture, identity, and racial composition or conditionally positive effects that come after strict controls; (VIc) Immigrants' presence in Italian society acknowledged only as a fact without attaching any positive or negative values on it; (VIIIa) Number of immigrant entries having positive effects for Italy; (VIIIb) Number of immigrant entries having negative effects for Italy; (IXa) Integration as immigrants' duty; (IXb) Integration as a two-way project involving active participation of both immigrants and Italian society; (Xa) Immigration management at the EU-level/through multi-level governance as a preferable option; (Xb) Immigration management at the EU-level/through multi-level governance not as a preferable option.

The top three categories that dominantly come out in the election manifestos are discussed in further detail after an examination of the rise of right-wing politics and immigration as the two new phenomena in Italy during the 1990s.

The Right and the Changing Political Context of Immigration Policy-Making in Italy

During Italy's first republican period, no political party claimed to represent an explicitly right-wing position. The Cold War conditions led to the development of a 'taken-for-granted understanding', the so-called *conventio ad excludendum*, between the Christian Democrats (*Democrazia Cristiana*/ DC) and the smaller parties of the centre (i.e. Liberals, Republicans, Social Democrats and (from 1963) the Socialists) to permanently exclude the Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*/PCI) and the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement-National Right (MSI-DS) from government (Newell 2010: 26) as the anti-system opposition parties (Sartori 1976).

Following the disintegration of the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties, an electoral reform was introduced in 1993 which moved the political landscape in Italy from a 'polarised multi-party system' (Sartori 1976) to a 'polarised bi-polarism' (Ieraci 2008: 87).

The changes in the Italian electoral system led to 'new phases of party development' which involved 'less emphasis on social roots and more on media presence and the replacement of ideology with loyalty' and laid the suitable ground for the rise of political parties such as the *Forza Italia* (FI), the *Alleanza Nazionale* and the *Lega Nord* (LN) (Diamanti 2003: 16, quoted in Geddes 2008: 352).

Alleanza Nazionale (AN) was the heir of *Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale* (MSI-DN; Italian Social Movement-National Right), which had been founded in the aftermath of World War II by Giorgio Almirante, who had been a Minister in the Mussolini Government (Mura, in Baumgartl and Favell 1995: 214). The MSI-DA did not hesitate to emphasise its ideological roots in fascism. In the post-*Tangentopoli* period, the MSI-DN tried to capture the opportunities that emerged for the creation of a new set of 'values' and 'culture' (Fremeaux and Albertazzi 2002: 149). The first concrete move in that direction came with a proposal by the MSI-DN leader Gianfranco Fini in 1994 to create an electoral formation labelled *Alleanza Nazionale* which included some members of the Italian Liberal Party, Christian democrats and conservatives along with the MSI-DN. When the AN won the 1994 general elections as part of the *Polo delle Liberta'* coalition, it was a turning point as after decades-long exclusion from office by the so-called anti-fascist pact, the MSI-DN re-gained its 'legitimacy' within the new political context under the AN label (Tarchi 2003). In January 1995, Fini dissolved the MSI-DN which was followed by the transformation of the AN from an electoral group into an officially established political party. Whilst the AN was initially under the strong pressure of the 'autonomous' ultra-right wing groups that were still attached to the traditional fascist ideals and favoured anti-immigrant approaches, under Fini's leadership the party gradually re-defined its position by moving towards the centre of the political spectrum as a 'respectable' right-wing party (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005). Nonetheless, some political incidents raised doubts that the transformation of the AN happened very much within the limited circle of the party leadership and there was still active support for Fascist ideology 'amongst both the grassroots of the party and among other AN deputies' (Bernabei 2005, quoted in Spruce 2007: 100; Ignazi 1996: 704–8; Newell 2000b: 479). To give an example, following Fini's condemnation of Mussolini's racial laws as 'infamous' and fascism 'as part of an era of absolute evil' during his visit to Israel in November 2003, '34 AN clubs out of 43 signed a document expressing their discontent' with the party leader's statements (Stephen Roth Institute 2004).

Forza Italia (FI), since its creation in January 1994 by the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, has positioned itself as a centre-right political party and adopted a neo-conservative posture on many issues, such as 'the creation of jobs, the reduction of taxation, the restructuring of the school and health systems through the provision of bonuses, or the reshaping of the pension system through private pension schemes' (Pasquino 2003: 211). Due to its close position to business owners, it had a favourable approach towards labour immigration. Thus, it was not a party with a dominantly anti-immigrant rhetoric. Actually the FI did not take any clear ideological positioning in any respect (Hopkin 2005) and the backbone of its establishment was formed by the 'personality and qualities of its leader' (Newell 2010: 220).

Lega Nord (LN) was established in 1989 through the merger of *Lega Lombardo* (founded in 1984) with some other smaller political groups and organizations in Northern Italy. The LN differed both from the AN and the FI in the way it put ethno-regional politics at the core of its propaganda and built its appeal by playing upon 'the diverse sentiments of mistrust of, anxiety about, and anger towards the central Italian state that were widespread in Northern Italy' (Giordano 2003: 220). In addition to its anti-system and anti-Southern stance, reference to anti-immigration sentiments was another characteristic of the LN. Starting from the 1980s, immigrants coming from Africa and Eastern Europe (particularly from Albania) were the *Lega*'s 'new enemies' and the party established a xenophobic discourse by verbally attacking these groups (Fremeaux and Albertazzi 2002; Einaudi 2007). The party continued to its rise during the 1980s and 1990s and, just like the AN, it managed to increase its electoral support base further in the new political environment after the *Mani Pulite* investigations. In the 1993 local elections, the party achieved remarkable electoral victory together with the AN (which was still called as MSI-DN by then), with part of their electoral support coming through the growing anti-immigrant sentiments and the way these parties manipulated the feelings of insecurity among public (Papademetriou and Hamilton 1996; Zincone 1995, 1998).

Yet, unlike the AN, during the early 1990s, *Lega*'s primary focus of attack was still on the 'corruptness' of the existing political party system and the state rather than the presence of foreigners (Perlmutter 2002: 286). Part of this position to restrain its anti-immigrant rhetoric to a certain extent resulted from the *Lega*'s desire to place itself towards the centre of the political spectrum during the early 1990s, instead of playing the role of a radical right-wing party. Therefore, at least at the legislative level, the party did not carve a serious anti-immigrant niche for itself to tilt policy outcomes in more restrictive directions (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Perlmutter 2002). Nonetheless, from the late-1990s, the emphasis in the *Lega*'s rhetoric shifted from the criticism of the central authority to immigration and the party gained an increasingly anti-immigrant, xenophobic outlook. In addition, in return for approval of a reform plan to make the Constitution more federal, the LN turned into a faithful supporter of Berlusconi (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005). Hence, over time, the FI and the LN moved closer to each other.

These new representatives of the right-wing politics turned immigration into a political asset to capitalise on electoral support. The election of the FI, the AN, and the LN to government in 1994 (the so-called Berslusconi I government) as coalition partners marked the beginning of an era during which the general climate of response towards immigration and immigrants in Italy was re-defined with the introduction of a new restrictive rhetorical style.

This trio entered both the 2001 and the 2008 general elections together as coalition partners. During the 2001 elections the CdL also had a fourth component; the *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (CCD)-*Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU) (Democratic Christian Centre-United Christian Democrats), which entered the elections under the name *Biancofiore* (Whiteflowers) and later formed the *Unione dei Democratici Cristiani* (UDC; Union of Christian Democracts) (Geddes 2008: 351). The CCD-CDU/UDC came after the split of the Christian Democrats (DC), and was, thus, the only CdL component with an organic link with one of the old-system parties. Whilst the LN and the AN played a greater role in defining the CdL's rhetorical position on immigration both during and after the 2001 campaign, the CCD-CDU/UDC's strong ties with civil society organisations such as *Caritas/Fondazione Migrantes* and the Catholic church later played a prominent role in tilting certain aspects of the immigration legislation in a relatively liberal direction. When compared with the other three coalition partners, the CCD-CDU/UDC had a different immigration position and its main source of motivation for joining the CdL emanated rather from the need for a 'protector' which would help this small party to increase its chances of winning seats (Newell 2000a: 31).

The composition of the Berlusconi-led right-wing coalition in 2008 was different as the CCD-CDU/UDC was no longer part of it. The experience of the 2001-2006 CdL government had already revealed that the CCD-CDU/UDC position was not compatible with the other coalition partners and it was quite often acting as the opposition within the coalition. Thus, following an uneasy merger between the FI and the AN in 2007 which led to the establishment of *the Popolo delle Liberta'*, Berlusconi approached and gained the LN as its sole electoral coalition partner. Before too long though, the cracks between the coalition components started to appear, initially between Fini and the LN leader Bossi on issues concerning immigrants' voting and citizenship rights, as Fini took a favourable stance towards immigrants, and later on between Fini and Berlusconi, which led the Fini faction to split from the PdL. This brought the government at the brink of crises and made the Berlusconi-led PdL more dependent on the LN support in order to not risk the Parliamentary majority.

Immigration in Italy

The post-World War II population inflows to Italy leading it to experience positive immigration balance during the mid-1970s were partially motivated by the ending of the migrant labour recruitment programmes in some European countries such as France, Belgium and Germany (Pastore 2004a; Zanfrini 2007; Zincone 1995, 1998).

Nonetheless, as Colombo and Sciortino (2004) and Einaudi (2007) point out, Italy's economic boom during the 1950s and the 1960s was the crucial pull factor for the gradual increases in immigration

rates which eventually gained an accelerated pace in the 1970s. The initial migrant arrivals were rather sporadic and took place in the absence of any government-initiated labour recruitment programme. Comparable to the situation in other Mediterranean countries, undocumented entries turned into common practices, especially with the introduction of tougher border control measures, and in most of the cases these immigrants were sheltered by Italy's grey economy (Reyneri 1998). Increasing numbers of foreign workers replaced traditional patterns of internal Italian migration from the agricultural south to the industrial north to a certain extent (Geddes 2008: 357).

Undocumented entries which result due to the lack of an active migrant labour recruitment channel, poor internal controls and the existence of an extended shadow economy have turned into a major source of anxiety among public and political circles (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009: 127). Various regularisations initiated during the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. 1982, 1986, 1990, 1995, 1998), which granted legal residence to 1,423,970 immigrants in Italy (Pastore 2004b) revealed that many migrants living in Italy without legal residence permits were already part of the Italian labour market and economy, especially in the case of the house-hold workers, the so-called *colf* and *badanti*, playing a crucial role by providing private welfare to families and substituting welfare state services (Einaudi 2007: 371).

With the rapid politicisation of migration during the first half of the 1990s, under the impact of increasing immigration pressures and feelings of insecurity, blaming immigrants became an easy way of attracting electoral support (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Perlmutter 2002; Zincone 1995). The undocumented entries through the sea routes, usually from Africa were at the centre of public and political debates due to their dramatic visibility, even though they constitute only a very limited share of undocumented entries in Italy as many take land routes.

Most of the foreigners in Italy live in the industrially developed northern part of the country. As indicated in Table 1, the resident foreign population is concentrated in the north-western and the north-eastern Italy where the demand for foreign labour is high. Yet, the support for the anti-immigrant *Lega* has been strong in the region revealing that labour market needs do not lead the society to adopt welcoming approaches towards immigrants. Following the waves of EU enlargement towards the Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 and 2007, the share of intra-EU migration to the country increased, especially from Romania. Currently Romanians constitute the largest group of foreigners in Italy followed by communities originating from Albania, Morocco, China (PRC) and Ukraine- see Table 2.

Table 1 Spatial Distribution of the Resident Foreign Population in Italy (31 Dec 2010)

Area	**Number of Resident Foreigners**
North-west	1.597.389
North-east	1.200.881
Centre	1.153.057
South	439.233
Islands	179.757
Total	**4.570.317**

Source: ISTAT 2011

Table 2 Major Groups of Foreigners in Italy and Their Countries of Origin (1 January 2011)

Country	**Number of Residents**
Romania	968.576
Albania	482.627
Morocco	452.424
China (PRC)	209.934
Ukraine	200.730

Source: ISTAT 2011

The Right's Immigration Rhetoric during the 2001 Election Campaign

I shall now move on to discuss how asylum and immigration issues were addressed by the right-wing coalition parties during the 2001 general elections by looking at the *Casa delle Liberta'* (CdL) manifesto. The parties of the CdL coalition (i.e. the FI, the AN, the LN and the CCD-CDU/UDC) fought on the basis of a single manifesto: *Piano di Governo per una Intera Legislatura* (Government Plan for the Entire Legislature). The CCD, in addition to adhering to the CdL manifesto, also issued a separate document which put forward its position on a variety of issues but this was not explicitly presented as an election manifesto. (*Il Manifesto Del CCD* 2001; The CCD Manifesto).

In these documents, the Right makes a total number of 24 references to asylum and immigration; 23 appears in the CdL manifesto whereas the document used by the CCD does not reflect any

particular focus on immigration, with only one reference to the security dimension of migratory inflows where ending 'clandestine immigration' is seen to contribute achieving security within the national borders (CCD 2001: 1).

In the CdL coalition's manifesto, promising stricter immigration measures and pointing out the alleged connections between immigration and increased rates of illegality, crime and public security risks rank as the two most frequently used rhetorical categorisations of asylum and immigration (each category referred 5 times). Due to the fact that the 2001 general elections took place in May 2001, clearly the September 11 attacks had no impact on the general design of the manifestos used that year. The so-called links between immigration and public security are established by referring 'clandestine migration' as a factor paving the way for increased crime rates. Notwithstanding such references, labour migration is approached relatively positively by pointing out the necessity 'to welcome those who come to Italy to work legally and to contribute to the welfare of the country' (*Piano di Governo per Una Intera Legislatura* 2001: 7).

The second most common theme is the framing of immigration as a phenomenon that can be controlled with the help of financial and economic aid to be given to source countries of migration (with 3 references). The coalition proposed that economic development of origin countries should be supported through the establishment of new forms of co-operation and non-taxation of the aid money. Foreign aid is deemed to act as a 'stick' as well as a 'carrot' and it is argued in the CdL manifesto that the provision of foreign aid should be stopped if the origin country does not co-operate within a bilateral migration management framework (ibid.: 26).

There are again two equally significant categories in the third place which are immigrants and their human rights/liberties, and immigration's negative/conditionally positive effects on domestic culture, identity, and racial composition. Whilst the right to travel is recognised as one of the basic human rights and it is stated that immigrants should be shown respect, it is also argued that co-habitation of different cultures could be difficult and could lead to new forms of social marginalisation, implying that entries must be controlled before the positive contributions of immigrants to their receiving societies could be realised (each category having 2 references).

The *Casa delle Liberta'* coalition came out as the winner of the 2001 general elections. The next section discusses the CdL government's actions in the field of immigration and asylum by focusing on the inter-coalitional dynamics and how these dynamics were involved both in the design of the key piece of immigration legislation and the developments following it.

2001-06: *Casa delle Liberta'* Government, the Bossi-Fini Law and Its Aftermath

The ministerial positions having key roles over immigration policies were taken by Silvio Berlusconi as the Prime Minister, Gianfranco Fini as the Deputy Prime Minister, Claudio Scajola (FI) as the Ministry of Interior who was replaced by Giuseppe Pisanu (FI) in July 2002, and Roberto Maroni (LN) as the Work and Welfare Minister (Geddes 2008: 359).

As reflected in the CdL's manifesto, one of the key commitments made by the right-wing coalition during the 2001 election campaign was to form tighter immigration policy. Indeed, even before the 2001 elections, some of the *Casa delle Liberta'* (CdL) parties attempted to modify the key immigration legislation adopted in 1998 by the previous centre-left government. From the opposition benches the CdL introduced two bills. The first one of these bills is known as the Bossi-Berlusconi Bill presented following the collection of 50,000 signatures from public on the eve of the 2000 regional elections to challenge the centre-left government and its immigration legislation, and introduced as a *'proposta di legge di iniziativa popolare*' ('citizen initiated bill' [*my translation*]) (Zincone 2006: 360). The other one was sponsored by the two *Alleanza Nazionale* politicians, Gian Paolo Landi di Chiavenna and Gianfranco Fini (ibid.: 361). Whilst the first one approached immigrants solely in terms of their potential contribution to the national economy without considering the possibility that they may eventually become permanent components of the society, the second one proposed the treatment of clandestine immigration as a form of crime (ibid.). These bills formed the basis of the draft new immigration legislation of the CdL government which it presented almost immediately to the Parliament on 2 November 2002. The provisions of the Berlusconi II government were in line with what the CdL campaigned for: tightening of immigration regulations and for immigration to be addressed alongside the increasing crime/illegality/security risks. The legislation was approved as law n. 189/2002, also known as the Bossi-Fini law, due to the leading role played by these two politicians defining its provisions. Thus, even though the CdL coalition was led by the FI, the AN and the LN were more eager to make an appearance as the parties having leading roles in the development of a restrictive immigration law (Geddes 2008: 359).

The Bossi-Fini law aimed at modifying the so-called Turco-Napolitano law (1998) that had been issued during the 1996-2001 centre-left government. As Zincone and Caponio (2005) highlight, the Bossi-Fini law's repressive measures were mainly concentrated in two areas: conditions regulating the granting of residence permits and confronting undocumented migration. In accordance with the changes brought by the Bossi-Fini law, the bar on re-entries following one clandestine entry was increased from five years to ten, the length of imprisonment for traffickers of clandestine immigrants was increased from four years to twelve, the possibility of entering Italy just to seek jobs was

removed, and the rule of verifying the lack of availability of Italian and EU workers before allocating jobs to non-EU immigrants was re-introduced (Einaudi 2007: 315).

Yet, the coalition partners were not in complete harmony in terms of their immigration approaches. The CCD-CDU/UDC leader, Marco Follini, made it clear that his party would stand against any policy proposal which would radically restrict immigration to Italy. Even though the centre-left opposition was furious about the 2002 law and described it as manifesto law which 'had a purely demagogic, propaganda purpose and no operational capacity', due to the large parliamentary majority the right-wing government had, these opposition voices from the left-wing parties were not taken into much consideration (Zincone 2006: 364). The real challenge against the Bossi-Fini came from inside the government instead. The CCD-CDU/UDC referred to its close links with pro-immigrant groups, such as *Caritas*/*Fondazione Migrantes*, and also Church organisations in order to exert pressure on the LN and the AN, and to create a niche for itself in 'negotiating the content of legislation' while gathering some support also from the 'liberal elements' within the FI (Geddes 2008: 351-352). In addition to the Church, the pressure of business and employers' associations also played an important role. Even though associations of entrepreneurs and employers are traditional supporters of the centre-right, they also had worries that tight immigration regulations would jeopardise their business by causing large gaps between the supply and the demand sides of the labour market. Luigi Rossi Luciani, the leader of the Venetian wing of the national employers' confederation, *Confindustria*, stated that 'the lack of a serious open immigration policy that is not based on demagogy puts at risk the very survival of the north-eastern economic system' and he particularly criticised the provision that required immigrant workers to leave Italy after losing their jobs (quoted in Zaslove 2006: 30). Innocenzo Cipolletta, the Director General of *Confindustria*, also voiced similar criticism concerning the same contentious provision (quoted in Einaudi 2007: 310). These pressures coming both within and outside the coalition created the political processes that led many scholars (Einaudi 2007; Zincone 2006) to view the 2001-2006 period as generating contradictory and paradoxical outcomes in the field of immigration management. One the most prominent examples of these so-called paradoxical outcomes was the extension of mass regularisation in 2002, that had initially been intended to cover only domestic workers, towards irregular migrants from all of the economic sectors (Geddes 2008: 361). This resulted under the CCD-CDU/UDC pressures which moved the *Lega* and the hard-line circles inside the AN to 'cede ground to Catholics, under pressure from the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the employers' associations' (Einaudi 2007: 317).

Another example from the same period which revealed that the exclusionary and restrictive political discourse adopted by some of the CdL partners, i.e. the *Lega* and the repressive elements of the AN,

could not be realized in the policy-making arena concerns the gradual expansion of foreign worker quotas issued for seasonal and non-seasonal jobs between 2003 and 2006, from 79,500 in 2003 to 340,000 in 2006 (Einaudi 2007: 385). In addition to the growing acceptance of immigration in Italy and the pressures exerted by the market forces for extra labour and some other social actors, the CdL coalition's position change owed to a certain extent to the 'EU enlargement toward the Central and Eastern European countries and the worker quotas set for the new EU members' (ibid.: 377). Following the 2004 EU enlargement, Italy was one of the EU Member States which put restrictions on the free movement of workers from the new EU countries. Despite setting restrictions on the labour market access of the new EU citizens for a transitory period of time, the CdL government also adopted the view that these restrictions should not be too tight and in any case quotas for the new EU citizens should be defined in more favourable terms than the ones set for the non-EU citizens (ibid.: 378).

Thus, in a clear contrast with the CdL partners' political campaign promises, 2001- 06 became a period during which Italy experienced the highest increase in the number of legal immigrants living in its territories as the numbers raised from 1.3 million (October 2001) to 2.67 million (1 January 2006) (Einaudi 2007: 306-307).

The Immigration Rhetoric of the Right during the 2008 Election Campaign

As in 2001, the right-wing parties entered the 2008 elections again in coalition but contrary to the 2001 practice of fighting on the basis of a single manifesto, the *Popolo delle Liberta'* (PdL) and the LN issued separate political programmes as the latter wanted to preserve greater autonomy during the 2008 campaign.

Out of a total number of 32 references made to asylum and immigration issues, the three top themes are promises of stricter asylum and immigration regulations (with 16 references), immigration's potentially deteriorating effects on the socio-cultural characteristics of the native population (with 5 references), and immigration-security nexus (with 4 references).

Yet, it should be noted that the overall weight of rhetorical emphasis on asylum and immigration issues in the LN and the PdL manifestos showed variations. First of all, immigration is referred more frequently in the LN manifesto than in the PdL election programme. In the LN manifesto, there are a total number of 24 references made to immigration and its particular aspects whereas the PdL manifesto contains 8 immigration references. Hence, a bigger portion of the right-wing coalition's asylum and immigration references actually originated from the LN's electoral manifesto and the PdL had a minor share. Moreover, the particular categorisations of asylum and immigration adopted by

the PdL and the LN are also different. For the LN, the three most prominent themes are promising tighter immigration controls, especially to halt clandestine entries (13 references), immigration's negative effects on domestic culture, identity, and racial composition/ its conditionally positive effects that come after strict controls, immigration and crime/illegality/public security linkages (two equally significant categories; each with 4 references), and finally connecting immigration to increased health risks, environmental degradation, foreign aid issues (3 references).

Similar to the LN manifesto, in the PdL's political programme, promises of tighter immigration controls, again in relation to fighting undocumented migration, also rank at the first place (3 references). Yet, in contrast to the LN approach , the second mostly addressed aspects of immigration in the PdL manifesto are immigrant integration (mainly presented as a duty of immigrants) and immigration management through multi-level governance (each with 2 references). As a third point, the possible negative impacts of immigration on the socio-cultural composition of 'native' population was underlined (1 reference).

The 2008 general elections marked the victory of the *Popolo della Liberta'- Lega Nord* coalition while also marking a dramatic decline in the number of parties represented in the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 14 to 6. The government was to benefit from this reduced-level of opposition voices while pursuing its immigration agenda. Yet, there were other challenges waiting along the way. The next section discusses the PdL-LN government's immigration stance by elaborating on the design of a new piece of legislative package and the developments following its adoption.

2008-2011: The Security Package (*Pacchetto Sicurezza*) and Its Aftermath

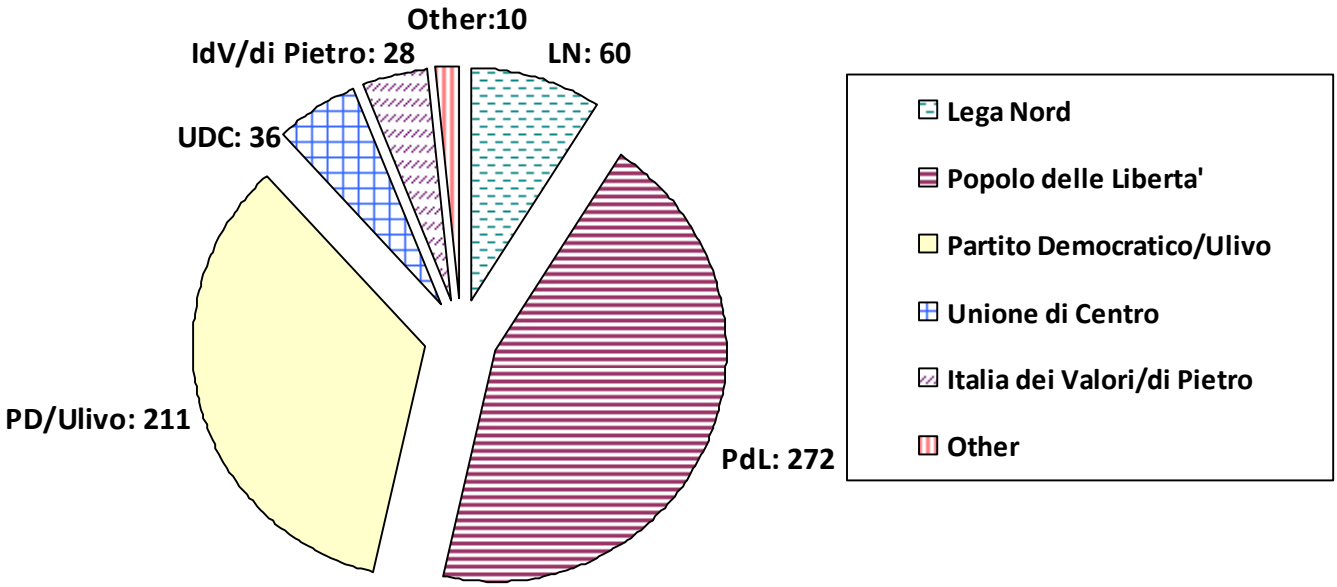
Similar to the 2001-2006 period, the right-wing government presented new immigration legislation shortly after coming to office. The so-called Security Package (P*acchetto Sicurezza*) involved a set of legislative proposals put forward by the Minister of Interior from the *Lega*, Roberto Maroni. Irregular migration was approached as an exceptional public security threat in the legislative package which reflected the concerns existing in certain sectors of the Italian society. The *Pacchetto Sicurezza* was actually the continuation of the restrictive principles and amendments introduced back in 2002 with the so-called Bossi-Fini law, which was the first immigration legislation that the political right put forward by significantly tightening the past migration approaches. One of the most significant and controversial innovations brought by the fourth Berlusconi government through this legislative package was 'the configuration of clandestine immigration as a crime punishable with up to four years' detention and a major increase in the maximum detention period prior to removal' (Pastore 2008: 6). Furthermore, with the subsequent changes it became 'possible to deport a foreigner or remove an EU-citizen in the event of him/her being found guilty of a crime carrying a sentence of

more than two years imprisonment' (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009: 2). Moreover, according to the new decree, those who let any sort of property to irregular citizens, no matter whether they are Italian or foreigner, could face prison sentencing (ibid.).

The contentious principles of treating irregular migration as a form of crime and also foreseeing expulsion of all the foreign nationals who are given more than two years of prison sentencing in Italy, makes Italy, as McNamara (2009) points out, an 'interesting case study as a *[EU]* member state which is pushing the boundaries when it comes to restrictive migration law'. Whilst the European Court of Justice (First Chamber) issued a decision on 28 April 2011 ruling that 'the Italian law which punishes migrants who remain in Italy after being ordered to depart is precluded by the EU Directive 2008/115 which established the procedure by which Member States may return illegally staying third country nationals' (available at http://migrantsatsea.wordpress.com), the expulsion of foreigners (including the EU citizens) sentenced to more than two years of imprisonment has not been challenged in the ECJ, as far as the writing period of this paper is concerned.

Unlike its experiences during the 2001-2006 period, the right-wing government that took office in 2008 proceeded with the tightening of migration measures without facing with much opposition pressure. The political parties associated with the Catholic church, such as the *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (CCD) and the *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU), which exerted pressure over the LN and the AN during the 2001-2006 period as being part of the CdL coalition, did not have the same influence in terms of negotiating the legislation as they were no longer part of the Berlusconi-led coalition. Thus, dynamics similar to those of the 2001-2006 period were not in place in 2008 which might have otherwise gradually moved the initially strict immigration positions to more liberal tones. Furthermore, the composition of the Italian Parliament, as seen in Figure 1, was heavily dominated by right-wing parties having preference for tighter immigration controls. The parliamentary majority's control-oriented immigration approach also offered suitable ground to the PdL-LN government to introduce such controversially restrictive immigration control policies without facing with any considerable political challenge.

Figure 1 Seats in Italy (Lower House [*Camera dei Deputati*]- Results of the main parties and coalitions represented in the Parliament only after the 2008 general elections)



Nevertheless, the waves of immigrant and asylum-seeker inflows generated by the social and political turmoil in some of the Middle Eastern and North African countries put both the effectiveness of Italy's Security Package and the wider framework of the European border regime under a serious test. The revolts led to the collapse of the political structures in North African countries together with 'the net of bilateral agreements and diplomatic relations which allowed for years a strong policing of the migratory routes in the Mediterranean region' in early 2011 (Campesi 2011: 1). Even though Italy has concluded bilateral readmission agreements with the regimes in North Africa after the revolutions, the unstable conditions in these countries led to some 43,000 arrivals from the region between mid-January and late-June 2011 period (UNHCR 2011) (II). Lampedusa, an Italian island closer to Africa than the Italian mainland, was the main port of entry to which at least 31,000 individuals arrived (Parzyszek 2011, quoted in Dikov 2011). The number of arrivals was fairly large taken into account the island had had around 4,500 inhabitants before the influx (Council of Europe 2011).

The so-called Lampedusa crisis was wholly unexpected and the policy to respond to it was not in place. Facing with fierce public reactions and EU criticism concerning the failures in handling the situation (Kington 2011), Italian decision-makers started to seek the help of other major EU countries, such as France, Germany and Britain. There were clear efforts to integrate the EU into the solution even though Italy, according to the Dublin Convention, had the prime responsibility to examine the asylum claims of many of those who arrived irregularly as it was the first point of entry

into the EU for these individuals. Whilst the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi asked the European Council President, Herman van Rompuy, to call for an extra-ordinary meeting of the Heads of the States by stating that 'Europe was facing an emergency' (Berlusconi 2011, quoted in Agneli 2011a), the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Franco Frattini, stated that the 'immigration knot belongs to Europe and it is not national' (Frattini 2011, quoted in *TGCOM24* 2011). The Interior Minister Maroni, in his letter to the European Commission, requested 100 million Euro to be used by Italy in its efforts to cope with the 'emergency', a new and more active role for FRONTEX, the EU agency set up for the 'operational cooperation between Member States in the field of border security' (FRONTEX), and an integrated European asylum system to be in effect from 2012 onwards (Agneli 2011a). Yet, Italy did not receive the support it asked for. Maroni, furiously criticised the EU for 'keeping quiet' and 'just watching' the unforeseen 'biblical exodus' originating from Maghreb and 'once again leaving Italy on its own to handle a dramatic humanitarian emergency' (Maroni 2011, quoted in Agneli 2011b).

In return for what was interpreted as the EU's betrayal on the Italian side, Berlusconi announced in April 2011 Italy's decision to issue 20,000 temporary stay permits for the migrants who arrived during the January-April 2011 period (prior to 5 April 2011) which would be valid for six months and would enable these migrants to move within the Schengen zone (Le Nir 2011). The decision was not quite in parallel with the Italian government's political majority which favoured a securitised approach on immigration and being tough against undocumented entries. The unexpected policy decision aimed at encouraging immigrants to leave Italy and also to bring the management of the North African immigration into an EU-level burden sharing mechanism. The reactions of the other EU member states were not all favourable. For instance, France, a country where many of the Tunisian migrants in Italy hoped to go as their next destination to find jobs and to unite with their relatives or friends, reacted by halting train services from the border regions and instead pushing irregular arrivals over Italy back to Ventimiglia, a town located on the Italian side of the French-Italian border (Vincent 2011). The tensions between France and Italy triggered a bilateral summit in Rome in 26 April 2011 whose conclusions fuelled debates at the EU-level concerning the future of the Schengen regime as the policy-makers from these two countries started calling for variations in the interpretation of the treaty under exceptional circumstances (Hooper and Traynor 2011; Squares 2011). The European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, suggested that 'the re-instatement of European border controls to tackle a wave of immigration from northern Africa is a "possibility", which runs the risk of making the Schengen regime obsolete by putting an end to the dream of creating a borderless Europe (quoted in Willis 2011).

As stated in a comment published in *Corriere della Sera*, the evolving tension between the two states owes much to the pressures of the anti-immigrant parties over the other segments of the political

right (Venturini 2011). On the Italian side, this dynamic developed as a result of Silvio Berlusconi's increased dependence on the support of the *Lega Nord,* to ensure his government's continuation following the split within the PdL. Thus, while the initial reaction towards mass arrivals was to confine them to the small island of Lampedusa thereby avoiding their presence in the broader Italian territory, due to the delays and uncertainties involved in the process that would define whether the migrants would be treated as 'deserving' asylum-seekers or illegal immigrants, the situation reached to unsustainable levels. The improvised 'camps' and 'installations' in Lampedusa lacked the necessary capacity and facilities to keep migrants detained and soon problems in the form of constant unrests inside these facilities and escapes from them turned into common practices by forcing the government to activate the temporary protection rule by 'the art. 20 of Italian Immigration Law' and provide temporary residence permit for humanitarian reasons (Campesi 2011: 5).

The developments in Lampedusa were unpredictable because the developments in North Africa could not be foreseen beforehand. Yet, following the collapse of the political regimes in Tunisia and Libya, it was evident that there would be new arrivals of immigrants and asylum-claimants from the area as the authorities that had once signed bi-lateral agreements with Italy for the co-ordinated management of undocumented migration became officially non-existent. The 'crisis' revealed once again that Italy lacked both the political determination and organisational capacity to deal with emergency situations. The right-wing government, despite all its election campaign rhetoric which presented immigration and asylum issues as creating 'public security risks' and 'emergencies', it ended up putting the securitarian frame aside and adopting a humanitarian one instead.

Conclusion

The analyses of immigration debates highlight that the right-wing parties' stance towards asylum and immigration in Italy are dominated by politicised and securitised approaches to a great extent. Immigration is a politicised topic because parties use it to distinguish themselves from the other 'ideological' camp and this process usually involves criticising political opponents for their immigration approaches while presenting itself as the party with the highest competency on immigration matters. Alleged links established between immigration and immigrants on the one hand, and crime/illegality/security on the other is an indication that the Right in Italy has a predominantly securitised immigration position in addition to being politicised.

Furthermore, the pieces of legislation examined provide evidence that the right-wing political parties' immigration rhetoric and policy-making do not quite marry up. First of all, restrictive rhetorical approaches to immigration could not be fully realised. For instance, the root causes of irregularity have not been adequately addressed even though concerns about the presence of irregulars in Italy

are constantly put forward in the electoral programmes. The repressive provisions of the Bossi-Fini law and the Security Package led to further tightening of the opportunities for making regular entries, which acts as the main source of irregularity in Italy that is often dealt by short-sighted policies of regularisation. Such regular amnesties leave the impression among the public that citizens' 'victimhood' is not properly addressed by policy-makers and in return generate the suitable ground for further populist political abuses of immigration.

The contradictory outcomes and mismatches between rhetoric and policy emanate mainly from the involvement of various actors with different interests and priorities in immigration policy-making. The coalitions of political parties are often composed of a variety of individual parties which do not always necessarily have the same vision on immigration. In the case of the right-wing parties, the coalitions they form appear relatively cohesive in the electorate's eye and project rhetoric that strongly resonates with public worries about immigration. Yet, they actually have diverging positions. The 'old' and the 'new' components of the mainstream-right in Italy adopt different position vis-à-vis the more extreme right-wing elements. This creates a situation where parties face with difficulties while putting their 'ideological policy strategies into practice' (Zincone 2006: 362).

Further examination of how different parties of the Right play around the immigration card also reveal a number of points that contradict with the hypothetical predictions concerning the mainstream and far-right interaction in the literature (Mair 2001; Bale 2003). Unlike the experience in some other European countries, where 'the centre- and far-right have recently either formally coalesced' (e.g. Austria and the Netherlands), or 'put together a parliamentary majority capable of supporting a government of the centre-right' (e.g. Denmark and Norway), in Italy, the mainstream Right (i.e. the FI) is not always challenged by the far-right. This was especially the case for the 2001-2006 CdL government during which the moderate right-wing CCD-CDU/UDC adopted independent positions within the coalition on a number of issues including immigration, thus, challenged both the leadership of another centre-right party, the FI, and also the unity of the CdL coalition. In addition to the CCD-CDU/UDC, the *Alleanza Nazionale*, especially its leader Gianfranco Fini also questioned the CdL management which resulted in bringing the coalition leader Berlusconi towards a close alliance with the *Lega*, the coalition component with the most radical positioning on immigration (Biorcio 2008: 112) .

Moreover, the CCD-CDU/UDC, as the party having ties with the old system party of Christian Democrats, contrary to the general rule, did not start exploiting immigration issue just because the *Lega*, and the *Alleanza Nazionale* to a more limited extent, were seeking to build up their electoral support base by favouring tough immigration regulations. The FI positioning also presents another

anomaly as even though it was one of the entrepreneurial political parties that emerged in the post-*Tangentopoli* era, contrary to the general assumption about such parties in the literature, its political positioning was inclined towards being a populist, centre-right party without seeking to gather electoral support by particularly adopting an anti-immigrant rhetoric. At the end, the FI had a claim for representing the interests of business lobbies and these groups have vested interests in ensuring the flow of extra labour force in the form of migrant workers. Thus, while the far-right helps to extend the 'legislative majority' of the right block in Italy by bringing additional votes to the right-wing coalition, it has been the 'new' Right (i.e. Forza Italia) which has helped to legitimise the far-right's agenda on immigration and crime not the 'old' right (i.e. CCD-CDU/UDC), by paving the way for extremist positions to gain a more respectable spot and a higher-level of electoral support in the political arena.

Apart from that, the electoral support base of the Right involves a variety of profiles with different immigration concerns which create pressure over political parties in developing their immigration approaches to address concerns of these different groups of electoral constituencies. The right-wing parties face the challenging task of addressing both its general electorate's preference for stricter immigration rules and the clear preference of their business elite constituencies for liberal labour migration laws. Making everyone happy at the same time usually turns out to be an extremely difficult task and most of the time leads to both stark differences between rhetoric and practice and the conflicting contents of immigration legislation.

In addition to such national-level dynamics, the international setting also influences the domestic-level immigration policy-making context set by the right-wing parties. The role played by a supra-national institution like the EU demands particular attention in this respect. The EU has the potential to act as a source of pressure by constraining the realisation of the initially advocated stringent immigration positions of the right-wing governments and imposing more liberal practices or halting the implementation of such highly restrictive policies. An example of such an EU effect would be the European Court of Justice (ECJ) decision on 28 April 2011 that Italy cannot punish irregular migration by classifying it as a breach under its criminal law. Likewise, the gradual increase in the foreign worker quota limits during 2003-06 also owes to the dynamics generated by the 2004 EU enlargement to a certain extent, in addition to national dynamics. Even though Italy restricted the new EU citizens access to Italian labour market, it was also agreed at the political-level that the intra-EU migration should be treated more favourably than the inflows originating from the EU countries and the quota expansions could be realised without much public or political debate taking place. Nevertheless, both the way immigration rhetoric and policy-making develops in Italy still remains to be under the discretion of national-level political parties to a great extent, leaving their electoral

concerns and the pressures created on them by such concerns as the primary factor determining the nature of immigration approaches and policies.

Notes

(I) The list of words used in the analysis could be obtained from the author.

(II) Italy signed an agreement with Tunisia in April 2011 and with the Libyan Transitional Council on June 2011, available at http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/immigration-tunisia.9ja/ and http://migrantsatsea.wordpress.com/2011/06/17/italy-and-libyan-national-transitional-council-sign-migration-agreement.

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