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IMMIGRATION POLICIES, GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND “WELFARE POPULISM”: THE ITALIAN CASE STUDY

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. The 1990s: Community needs and early nationalist thrusts. – 3. The 2000s: welfare crisis and social conflicts. – 4. Migration policies between “welfare chauvinism” and global governance

1. *Introduction*

Inside the wide panorama of social sciences there have been several reflections and researches that have connected the globalization processes to the qualitative and quantitative changes related to the migratory processes¹.

Except for a change in the perception of travel — due to the cut in costs and duration of the travelling — and excluding the large number of people who are induced to flee from ongoing conflicts and/or because of their *status*, it is undeniable that in the last twenty years of the 21st century the new economic and political scenarios have produced substantial effects on migration: sometimes *in peius* — for example the exclusion of an increasing number of people from services, work, wealth² — sometimes *in melius*, such as the hybridisation and contamination phenomena³.

Although it is impossible to report the different levels of reciprocity existing between the mobility processes and the birth of the global world, in part linked to the very definition of globalization⁴, it is however possible to refer to one of the most complicated issue of this connection, that is the progressive inadequa-

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¹ Already in 1997, historians question the increase in migrations and their impact in economic, political, and social terms; Ginsborg, Paul (eds.) “Immigrazione e razzismo nel Mediterraneo”, *Passato e Presente*, 43, 1998: 14-34.

² On the so-called “expulsion” mechanisms, or rather the exclusion of some people and social groups from working, economic, cultural contexts, please refer to Cristofori Roberta, Sassen Saskia, “Cinque domande a Saskia Sassen sui costi della globalizzazione”, *Rivista Il Mulino*, 4, July/August 2019: 659-664; Sassen, Saskia, *Espulsioni. Brutalità e complessità nell'economia globale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2015.

³ On this specific theme, please refer to the interpretation proposed by Ambrosini, Maurizio, *Un'altra globalizzazione. La sfida delle migrazioni internazionali*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2008.

⁴ On the definition of globalization and its several declinations, Osterhammel Jürgen, Peterson Neil P., *Storia della globalizzazione*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2005; Steger, Manfred B., *La glo-*

cy of the nation-states to manage autonomously the phenomenon of migration⁵, and the sliding of governments towards closer forms of international cooperation in this area. A trend more and more problematic due to the strengthening of the consensus gathered meanwhile by populist and radical right-wing movements, that began to push for a closing of borders and retrenchment of the reception policies⁶.

Italy represents a case study because of its particular exposure to the migratory phenomenon over the last thirty years — that resulted in a difficult management of incoming flows, as well for the recent orientations of its migratory policies — emergency measures intended to safeguard security but not supported by evidence concerning the increase in crimes in relation to the foreign presence. A progressive change that can be partly attributed to the widespread intolerance and to a feeling of insecurity fostered by the “anti-system” parties born on the ashes of the First Republic, who used the immigration theme as a strategy to gain consensus and to contest the legitimacy and effectiveness of the European governance. The *Lega Nord* party, *Fratelli d'Italia*, and in some ways the younger *Movimento 5 Stelle*, are joined under the same banner by a strong *euroscpticism*⁷, declined as an open attack against the work of the main supranational financial institutions and the austerity policies. They identify in the progressive erosion of the sovereign power of the State one of the reasons for the substantial inability of governments to provide adequate welfare and economic support policies. According to the storytelling proposed by these groups, the

balizzazione, Il Mulino, Bologna 2016; Gozzini, Giovanni, “La parola globalizzazione”, *Passato e Presente*, 58, 2003: 1-11.

⁵ On the crisis of the traditional spheres of state sovereignty, Chiara, Luigi, “Stato-nazione e globalizzazione”, in Chiara Luigi, Forte Francesco, Gambino Saverio, Moschella Giovanni, Navarra Pietro, Nocito Walter, Ruggeri Antonio, *Crisi dello Stato, governo dell'economia e tutela dei diritti fondamentali*, Giuffrè, Milano 2013: 1-27.

⁶ There is a vast literature on the meaning and characteristics of the new populism, here the reference is to Müller, Jan-Werner, *Cos'è il populismo*, Università Bocconi editore, Milano 2017; Revelli, Marco, *Populismo 2.0*, Einaudi editore, Torino 2017; Bartolini, Stefano, “Populismo: il nuovo spettro che si aggira per il mondo”, *Historia Magistra*, 26, 2018: 51-72; Anselmi Manuel, Urbinati Nadia, Blokker Paul (ed.), *La sfida populista*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2018.

⁷ According to Paul Taggart (“A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 3, 1998) Euroscepticism is commonly defined as «the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration», in this context recalled by Bertoincini Yves, Koenig Nicole, “Euroscepticism or Europhobia: voice vs exit?”, *Policy Paper*, 121, 2014: 1-20. The attitude of the parties towards Europe and in Europe has received increasing attention from scientific literature, on this point please refer to Conti Nicolò, De Giorgi Elisabetta, “L'euroscetticismo a parole. Lega Nord e Rifondazione Comunista tra retorica e comportamento istituzionale”, *Rivista italiana di scienza politica*, 2, 2011: 265-289.

stranger is a dangerous *competitor* in the access to services and employment inside a society with an increasing gap between rich and poor. The latest literature has defined this ideological setting as *welfare populism* or *welfare chauvinism*, it means that type of opposition against European institutions and globalization processes «which carries a more utilitarian than xenophobic connotation [...] observed in more prosperous Northern European states where fears are fueled that immigrants will abuse and hollow out national social systems»⁸.

In the political perspective adopted by the neo-populist movements, the fight against immigration becomes part of a broader strategy intended to defend national sovereignty against the globalization processes. A strategy that, on one side, challenges the enjoyment of essential human and social rights to people who, on the contrary, enjoy ample freedoms and protections assured by international legislation, on the other, it is never translated into concrete governance proposals.

2. *The 1990s: Community needs and early nationalist thrusts*

As pointed out, «in Italy the political debate on immigration, political asylum, migration policies, the relationship with Europe and other Mediterranean countries [...] still represents one of the most controversial issues of public opinion»⁹. Without going too far back in time with the historical analysis, it is moreover possible to state that in our country the immigration theme has produced a high level of *engagement* in public opinion¹⁰.

However, from the early nineties, there has been a tightening of tone and a progressive twisting of policies in a restrictive sense, partially due to the influence exercised by the new actors appeared in the Second Republic political arena, in particular *Lega Nord* and *Alleanza Nazionale*. If *Alleanza Nazionale* had its roots in the Italian Social Movement (neo-fascist area) but intended to

⁸ Bertoncini Yves, Koenig Nicole, “Euroskepticism or Europhobia...”: 6.

⁹ Colucci, Michele, “Immigrazione come storia: un percorso a tappe dentro l’Italia repubblicana”, *Passato e Presente*, 108, 2019: 5-17, 5; Chiara Luigi, Frisone Francesca, “Immigrazione ed emigrazione in Italia. Profili storici”, in Moschella Giovanni, Buscema Luca (ed.) *Immigrazioni e condizione giuridica dello straniero*, Aracne, Roma 2016: 41-66.

¹⁰ Until the second half of the 1980s, the terms of the debate were not charged with negative meanings; on this point, Sciortino Giuseppe, Colombo Asher, “The flows and the flood: the public discourse on immigration in Italy, 1969-2001”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 9, 2004: 94-113; Palomba, Rossella Righi Alessandra, *Quel giorno che gli albanesi invasero l’Italia...: gli atteggiamenti dell’opinione pubblica e della stampa italiana sulla questione delle migrazioni dall’Albania*, Istituto di Ricerche sulla Popolazione, Working Paper 8, 1992.

archive the most extremist ideological connotations by referring to the values of nation, state centralism and Italian identity; *Lega Nord*, instead, qualified itself as a group of regionalist orientation¹¹. Its agenda was particularly appreciated by the productive class interested in the secessionist proposal of the northern regions: they developed a deep intolerance towards the southerners settled since years in the richest districts of Northern Italy¹², also affected by a stereotyped and discriminatory storytelling. Since its appearance, *Lega Nord* was not an anti-European party, on the contrary it was positive to an intensification of the integration process and a greater attribution of powers to supranational institutions¹³.

During those years, the country was going through a deep phase of political destabilization, due both to the deep identity crisis of the Italian *Partito Comunista* after the end of the communism, both to the several judicial inquiries that invalidated the leadership and credibility of the “historical” parties of the post-war era, the *Partito socialista* and *Democrazia Cristiana*¹⁴. This instability affected quite a lot the public opinion, who was deeply impressed by the sequence of different mafia massacres, in addition to the growing concern about the immigration phenomenon: the increase in illegal arrivals on the Italian coasts from the Balkans area and the potential consequences of the fall of the “iron curtain”¹⁵. These concerns were quickly assimilated as political arguments by *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord*, which linked its initial anti-southern positions to the fight against immigrants.

There was also, and above all, the new institutional and economic framework of the Europe born in Maastricht that significantly influenced the political approach to the migration issue and the *Lega* agenda. The freedom of move-

¹¹ On the peculiarity of the case of Lega Nord Giordano, Benito, “Italian Regionalism or ‘Padanian’ nationalism: the political project of the Lega Nord in Italian politics”, *Political Geography*, 19, 2000: 445-471.

¹² On the evolution of the “leagues”, Passalacqua, Guido, *Il vento della Padania. Storia della Lega Nord 1984-2009*, Milano, Mondadori 2010; Barcella, Paolo, “Percorsi leghisti. Dall’anti-meridionalismo alla xenofobia”, *Meridiana*, 91, 2018: 95-119 and the bibliography referred to therein.

¹³ The change of the position towards the EU was illustrated through the analysis of the official Party document from the research of Conti Nicolò, De Giorgi Elisabetta, “L’euroscetticismo a parole...”: 271.

¹⁴ Colarizi Simona, Gervasoni Marco, *La tela di Penelope. Storia della Seconda Repubblica*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2012, in particular: 3-47; Ginsborg, Paul, *L’Italia del tempo presente. Famiglia, società civile, stato (1980-1996)*, Einaudi, Torino 1996.

¹⁵ In March 1991 about 25.700 Albanians arrived on the Italian coasts, and again, in August, over 12.000; Mai, Nicola, “The Albanian Diaspora-in-the-making: Media, Migration and Social Exclusion”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 3, 2005: 543-561.

ment within the EU area was not followed, inside the member states, by control and identification paths for people arriving from non-EU countries; harmonisation of asylum policies, and action against illegal immigration, in simple words, a “safer” management of the European Union’s external borders¹⁶.

Furthermore, the achievement of eurozone, at least for the less virtuous countries like Italy, involved a substantial consolidation of the public finances, a deep revision of the welfare system and the implementation of economy measures which would have affected the quality of life, national income and growth. The impact of the European Union on the main programmatic objective of *Lega Nord* — Northern Italy federalism — resulted in a failure. The disappointment of the party, which initially aimed for the autonomous adhesion of the northern regions to the single currency in such way that small and medium-sized enterprises could increase their competitiveness in the eurozone after the release from the «huge public debt and the continuing flows of wealth towards Rome»¹⁷, triggered the new *eurosceptic* turn: *Lega* now aspired to defend the national political autonomy, especially in tax matters, in the attempt to keep its electoral base.

The LN leader, Umberto Bossi, remarked: «with globalization we end up assuming a globalist ideology, with a network of economic interconnections and interdependencies that cancel any possibility of economic autonomy and independence. And therefore, political and cultural, both of individual states and people»¹⁸. Considering that *Alleanza Nazionale* shifted towards more moderate positions, the *Lega* now occupied the radical right-wing position, but it did not become a party «in defence of the cultural identity and prerogatives of the nation», juxtaposing it with the regionalist model, «but who embraces nationalist rhetoric to oppose supranational and, in particular, European Union institution»¹⁹. Nationalism, racism, which reemerged in the anti-immigration propaganda, intended to mobilize the electorate on the priority of access to work and welfare state for Italian citizens, in a historical moment when these

¹⁶ The *Schengen Convention* provided for the obligation for the member states to «bring their visa policies closer, as quickly as possible, in order to avoid the negative consequences that can result from a relaxation of the control at the common borders in the field of immigration and safety»; on the point https://www.camera.it/_bicamerali/schengen/fonti/ACCSCHEN/inf-dx.htm. Brouwer Evelien, *Digital Borders and Real Rights. Effective Remedies for Third-Country nationals in the Schengen Information System*, M. Nijhoff Publisher, Leiden-Boston 2008.

¹⁷ Conti Nicolò, De Giorgi Elisabetta, “L’euroscetticismo a parole...”: 272.

¹⁸ 30th December 1998, Umberto Bossi on newspaper «la Padania», here by Biorcio Rober-to, “La Lega Nord e la transizione italiana”, *Rivista italiana di Scienza Politica*, 1, 1999: 55-87.

¹⁹ Conti Nicolò, De Giorgi Elisabetta, “L’euroscetticismo a parole...”: 268.

protections seemed in jeopardy due to the restrictions imposed by Community policies.

With regard to the migration policies, in this historical phase there are several non-organic and emergency regulatory actions, first of all, the Martelli law (no. 39 of 1990) which introduced a form of organisation of incoming flows based on the needs of the labor market but, above all, it implemented the first repressive instruments, including the procedure for the expulsion of socially dangerous foreigners and illegal immigrants. The Martelli law was followed by the Conso decree (no. 187/93) then converted into law, which made further changes to the expulsion regulations. The widespread feeling of hostility towards immigrants could be interpreted both in the tightening of the conditions established to naturalise foreign citizens (that Law no. 91 of 1992 bound to 10 years of continuous legal residence in the Italian territory) and the necessity to introduce a law (no. 205/93) to punish those who instigated to commit or committed acts of violence or provocation for ethnic, racial or religious reasons, or acts of discrimination. However, in 1995 there has been the first attempt to improve the reception paths, also to cope with the continuous illegal landings on the Adriatic coasts: the Puglia law (no. 563) arranged a better deployment of the armed forces to patrol the coasts and it instituted the “Reception centres”, places to welcome and identify asylum seekers. According to the interpretations of center-right parties (Berlusconi’s *Polo della libertà*, *Lega Nord*) these centres reflected a “soft” approach to the migration issue in contrast to the apparent increase in criminality transmitted more frequently by the media. At last, the so-called Turco-Napolitano law (no. 40/98) was the first real provision on immigration promulgated by the centre-left government in order to balance national and European policies in the field of asylum and protection of external borders, as foreseen in the conditions of access to the Schengen area. On one side this law organised “pathways to citizenship” in the area of integration and rights of immigrants, but on the other side it tightened the repressive instruments for the *refoulement* of illegal immigrants and for the fight against organised criminality, as well as it reintroduced the principle of controlled flow. Aligning with other European countries, this law introduced also the “Temporary Detention Centres”, structures designated to “detain” foreigners for the time strictly necessary to help and/or identify them, and then reject them at the border, or deport them by accompaniment by the police. The detention in these centres, imposed by administrative means, was scheduled for 30 days, and it has been criticised for years for the discretion in the use of it by the police and for the severe restrictions of fundamental rights derived from the prolonged detention at these centres. A few months after its approval, the Law 40/98 merged into Legislative

Decree 286/98, called *Testo Unico* (Consolidated Law) on the provisions concerning immigration and rules on the condition of foreigners²⁰.

It was more problematic the application of the principle of non-refoulement to seekers of humanitarian protection, enshrined in international law, which in practice clashed with the hardline unexpectedly undertaken by the Prodi government, that did not hesitate to prevent the docking of boats loaded with migrants on the Italian coasts by military means²¹. A choice strongly objected at international level²² and by the other parties of the majority coalition but supported by *Lega Nord* and various Italian municipalities and regions unwilling to receive refugees²³. Between 1998 and 1999, *Lega Nord* gathered signatures, marches and various “anti-immigration” demonstration actions, in addition to a proposal for referendum for the abrogation of the *Turco-Napolitano* Law²⁴, with the support of other far-right groups, such as *Fiamma Tricolore* and *Forza Nuova*, and a part of the public opinion.

3. *The 2000s: welfare crisis and social conflict*

In 1999, in Seattle, during the meeting of the World Trade Organisation, were reopened international negotiations for a new liberalisation of the market, the *Millennium Round*. Due to this over 50,000 people of different gender, cultural background, interests, took to the streets, in a peaceful or violent way (*Seattle Battle*), to oppose the step forward in the processes of globalization in economic, environmental, social, political fields, opening the new season of no-global or new global protest²⁵: a transnational network that united the in-

²⁰ Einaudi, Luca, *Le politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità ad oggi*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2007; Chiara Luigi, Frisone Francesca, “Immigration in Italy between First and Second Republic: from the welcoming policies to the “emergency” management (1980-2018)», *Historia Contemporánea*, being published.

²¹ Hein, Christopher (ed.), *Rifugiati, vent'anni di storia del diritto di asilo in Italia*, Donzelli editore, Roma 2010.

²² The UN openly criticised the Italian hardline, underlining that human and political rights of migrants were heavily compromised. The Prodi government replied that no naval block was underway, but an “effective patrol” of international waters; 28th March 1997, *L'ONU all'Italia: via il blocco navale*, *CorrieredellaSera*.it.

²³ Einaudi, Luca, *Le politiche...*:294.

²⁴ To abrogate “any favourable treatment for immigrants and foreigners, contrary to the Italian Constitution and not required by the international commitments of the Italian State”; *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 16th April 1998, n. 88.

²⁵ Andreatta Massimiliano, Della Porta Donatella, Mosca Lorenzo, Reiter Herbert, *Global, Noglobal, New Global. La protesta contro il G8 a Genova*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2002.

stances of the anti-capitalist movements in the attempt to influence the global governance agenda²⁶.

A year earlier, in 1998, Italy joined the European Monetary Union thanks to the implementation of a rigorous financial consolidation policy — which hampered propulsive effects for the economy²⁷. On the contrary, the first inequalities were evident, determined by the privatisation programme of state-owned enterprises and by the impossibility of resorting to the advantages of a monetary devaluation, which made the small manufacturing industries more vulnerable under the threat of competitors from Asia and central-eastern Europe, which instead benefited from the effects of neoliberal deregulation, especially on labor costs²⁸. The world of small specialised enterprises was progressively crushed by the taxes, unemployment and lack of technological innovation²⁹; in this way, the right-wing anti-globalization and anti-European propaganda³⁰ structured its argument also in Italy, linking to it the immigration problem³¹.

Between 2001 and 2011 the number of foreigners residing in Italy increased

²⁶ Held David, McGrew Anthony, *Globalismo e antiglobalismo*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003.

²⁷ Mammarella Giuseppe, Cacace Paolo, *Storia e politica dell'Unione Europea*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2013.

²⁸ For a general framework, Caracciolo Luciano, Roccucci Andrea, *Storia contemporanea. Dal mondo europeo al mondo senza centro*, Le Monnier, Firenze 2017. On this theme, Bossi in his "Speech to the Parliament of Mantua", 4th May 1996: «I think about the difficulty of the North in entering Europe, that is, in the single European currency, being no longer able to resort to currency devaluation. Padania, which is the most competitive production system in Europe, needs devaluation to sell its products due to the weight of the Roman trailer, it would risk collapsing. There are particular trigger moments, in which the knots come to a head, and one of these, certainly the main one, is Europe»; *Cronistoria della Lega Nord dalle origini ad oggi*, Terza Parte, 1996-1998, Segreteria Organizzativa Federale, 5, on:

https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/03_lega_nord_storia96_98.pdf.

²⁹ Craveri, Paolo, *L'arte del non governo. L'inesorabile declino della Repubblica italiana*, Marsilio, Venezia 2016; Gentiloni Silveri Umberto, *Contro scettici e disfattisti. Gli anni di Ciampi 1992-2006*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2013; Amato Giuliano, Graziosi Andrea, *Grandi illusioni. Ragionando sull'Italia*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2013.

³⁰ On the difference in the positions, themes and languages used by the no-global movements of the Right and Left sides, Fraquelli, Marco, *A destra di Porto Alegre. Perché la Destra è più no-global della Sinistra*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino 2005.

³¹ Umberto Bossi conjectured in this way on the eve of Italy's entry into the euro system: «But European recognition could also have taken place in exchange for the decrease in migratory pressure on other European countries, a viable option by opening the doors of Italy to non-EU immigration. In exchange, Italy may have been given a different assessment of the deficit-GDP ratio» Speech by Umberto Bossi at the Federal Congress of Lega Nord, 28th March 1998, on

https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/Presidente_Federale/discorsi_assemblee/1998_28marzomilano.pdf.

from 1,334,889 to 4,029,145 people; the progressive ageing of the population and the increase in the average level of education of young people caused a demand for structural immigration to compensate the need of unskilled workers for less qualified jobs (absorbed by persona service sector, agriculture, tourism, construction industry, manufacturing industry³²) and low birth rates. However, this flow of people was distributed on the national territory in an irregular manner, maturing the reception capacities of single regions and generating more frequent reactions of rejection and hostility³³.

The fatal attack on the Twin Towers of 11 September 2001, opened in Italy and all around the world a new season of the anti-immigration debate, affected by the fear of terrorism (which affected also Europe with the attacks to Beslan and Madrid in 2004, London in 2005, Paris in 2015) and the fear of an upcoming “clash of civilisations”³⁴.

The right-wing parties reinvigorated their consent by proclaiming their aversion to any type of foreign presence, even beyond numerical evidence, which identified the groups from East Europe as the most populous and most integrated communities in Italy (Romanians, Poles, Albanians, Ukrainians).

In those years, as Colucci notes, although the legislative measures concerned «all aspects of the migratory path in various aspects: work, political asylum, entrance, expulsion, integration, social rights, welfare», they moved in the direction of a more progressive «restriction and greater precariousness inflicted to the foreign population»³⁵. The *Bossi-Fini* law in 2002 sanctioned this progressive inclination in a restrictive sense, exacerbating the criminal measures for illegal immigrants and traffickers, introducing the obligation to take fingerprints at the time of the application for the residence permit, reducing the duration of the permits, limiting family reunification, formalising the em-

³² «In some areas of Veneto and Emilia was equal to almost 100% of the employers and entrepreneurs, but also farmers pressed to raise the amount of allowed admissions. In Lombardia, where the percentage of foreign workers was 3.8 compared to 9% in Germany, in 2004 Unioncamere calculated that 10,000 immigrants would be necessary to cover the region's needs: the North-East, which had received 2,200 foreigners, asked for another 16,000 workers, peasants and caregivers»; Colarizi Simona, Gervasoni Marco, op. cit.: 155-156.

³³ On this point and for the reconstruction of the statistical data, cf. Chiara Luigi, Frisone Francesca, “Immigration in Italy...”, and Chiara Luigi, “Le comunità straniere in Italia dal 1980 ai giorni nostri. Consistenza, distribuzione e condizione sociale della popolazione residente”, in Chiara Luigi, Moschella Giovanni, *Italia paese d'Immigrazione. Storia e legislazione*, Aracne, Roma 2020: 13-117.

³⁴ Huntigton, Samuel P., *Lo scontro delle civiltà e il nuovo ordine mondiale*, Garzanti, Milano 1996.

³⁵ Colucci, Michele, “Immigrazione come storia...”: 15.

ployment contract as a necessary requisite for staying on the Italian territory³⁶. The increased conflict with foreigners was worsened by the public debate that alternated identity slogans ("Italians first") with concerns about the increase in petty crime connected with the presence of illegal immigrants, due to the tragic succession of landings (the so-called "*carrette del mare*" - carts of the sea) from the North African and Middle Eastern area³⁷.

But the most significant moment of the 2000s (in terms of strengthening nationalist forces and their effects on the tightening of reception policies) is the appearance of "neo-liberal critical juncture"³⁸, the recession phase that began in 2008 and which affected the financial sector as well as the real economy with a fall of the global GDP and a decrease in production and trade.

Although it originated in the USA, the new "Great Depression" spread quickly in Europe due to the reckless financial speculations played by banks on credit³⁹ and, in the Italian case but not only, it resulted in the *sovereign debt crisis*⁴⁰, caused by the rescue operations of the national banking institutions carried out by the governments, and the retention expenditure strategies undertaken in view of the request of the European governance to maintain good practices of public finance (stability and balanced budget).

³⁶ This measure was not supported by the entrepreneurs in the North East, as it introduced considerable rigidity in the labor market, preventing the employment of the foreign workers essential for the sector; Guolo, Renzo, "Immigrazione, etnicismo, crescita zero. La Lega e il Nord Est", *Rivista Il Mulino*, 5, 2002: 886-892.

³⁷ Migrants supposed to increase, in addition to ongoing conflicts, also due to estimates relating to wealth differences and growth rates, between the shores of the Mediterranean. According to the UN predictions regarding the evolution of the working-age population in the period 1995 - 2025, in the northern countries of the Mediterranean there should be an overall decrease of about 12 million people, in the southern countries an increase of more than 63 million people; Grande, Enrico, "Mediterraneo, bacino di migrazioni", *Affari sociali internazionali*, 1, 2003: 67-80.

³⁸ Della Porta Donatella, Fernández Joseba, Kouki Hara, Mosca Lorenzo, *Movement Parties Against Austerity*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2017.

³⁹ In this context we do not go into the details of the complex financial mechanisms behind the 2008 crisis, please see the considerations about the causes and consequences elaborated by some of the leading scholars on this theme (Youssef Cassis, Harold James e Adam Tooze): *La crisi dieci anni dopo. Storici a confronto*, a cura di Luciano Segreto, *Passato e Presente*, 108, 2019: 19-54.

⁴⁰ The contraction in GDP levels was accompanied by an overrun in the public debt/gross domestic product ratio set, for Italy, according to the Maastricht parameters, at 60% and the deficit / GDP ratio set at 3%, with the consequent intervention of the international financial institutions (ECB and European Stability Fund) in order to alleviate the heavy recessive situation that has taken place in countries considered less solid and, for this reason, less attractive - in terms of issuing governments bonds - by other states and / or investment entities; <http://www.consob.it/web/investor-education/crisi-debito-sovrano-2010-2011>.

In this context, the Italian neo-populist⁴¹ and sovereign movements became more protagonists, and they structured new forms of radicalisation of the political discourse taking advantage of the consolidated distrust of the population towards the European institutions, calling the electorate to take a stand against the neoliberal policies that locked the National State in a system of rules (or absence of rules) not approved by representative bodies, but agreed by the global financial elites.

On this path, the *Movimento 5 Stelle* was born in 2009, a populist “party-movement” intended to represent an alternative to the traditional party system. It was characterised by informality and direct contact with its supporters; the *M5S* highlighted the contrast between social, economic and political rights of people and those of the élites, parties, economic and financial groups⁴². The *Alleanza Nazionale* of Gianfranco Fini was disappearing in the meantime from the political horizon, losing the battle for the leadership of a “new” moderate Right-area still controlled by Silvio Berlusconi⁴³.

The country, bridled in empty political debates and struggles for power, was not prepared to participate in new challenges of global economy, let alone to face the increased inequalities that the welfare state was not able to support. Since the postwar the welfare «maintained an important role in promoting social integration without discrimination and distinctions, in opposition to the social exclusion»⁴⁴, but it was now preparing to live a «new evolutionary phase [...] which imposed more stringent standards in the provision of benefits, a significant reduction in the areas of intervention and the beneficiaries»⁴⁵, it was essentially based more on a criteria of “worthiness” (employment, citizenship, income) than equity⁴⁶. A structural change originating not from a political decision but «from an external constraint imposed to democracy [...] protection of markets, the tightening of the obligations imposed to national governments, the reduction of the redistributive claim of governments»⁴⁷.

⁴¹ The definition is based on the idea that there have been three historical waves of populism, the last of which began in Europe on the 1990s: Bartolini, Stefano, “Populismo...”.

⁴² Biorcio Roberto, Natale Paolo, *Il Movimento 5 Stelle: dalla protesta al governo*, Mimesis edizioni, Milano 2018.

⁴³ Colarizi Simona, Gervasoni Marco, *La Tela di Penelope...*: 211-215.

⁴⁴ Siza, Remo, “Le politiche sociali che dividono. L’impatto sul lavoro sociale”, *Quaderni di sociologia clinica*, 20, 2020: 6.

⁴⁵ Ivi: 9.

⁴⁶ The concept of conditional welfare and chauvinism welfare was introduced in the sociological field, please see Greve, Ben, *Welfare, populism and welfare chauvinism*, Policy Press, Oxford 2019.

⁴⁷ Fitoussi Jean-Paul, “Democrazia e globalizzazione”, *Lettera Internazionale*: 7.

4. *Migration policies between welfare chauvinism and global governance*

In 2009 began the so-called “third phase” in the history of migration policies, with the introduction of the measures strongly promoted by the Minister of the Interior (*Lega Nord* affiliate) the “packages” (decrees), which regulated immigration through the strengthening of security and territorial control measures⁴⁸. Certainly, a change of the collective sentiment and political agendas of the parties with respect to the migratory phenomenon was not helped by the increase in landings (due to the political turmoil in the North African area followed by the Arab Spring⁴⁹, and the instability of Libya after the deposition of Gaddafi), although, between 2016 and 2017, the Italian government entered into new agreements with the Prime Minister Fayed-al Sarraj for the “refoulement management” and rescue operations at sea, much discussed⁵⁰.

Between 2013 and 2014, the permanent shift of the Italian Right-area on radical and sovereign positions was determined by the definitive transition of *Lega Nord* (now led by Matteo Salvini) to the federalist and nationalist line, abandoning the original idea of the Northern regions independence and the anti-southernist propaganda, and the birth of *Fratelli d'Italia* (led by Giorgia Meloni) which, although it was inspired by the experience of *Alleanza Nazionale*, combined Euroscepticism, populism and nationalist conservatism in a 2.0 version; the consensus gathered by these two parties led them to lead, in 2018, a coalition governments with *Movimento 5 Stelle*. Among the first measures undertaken by the first Conte's government — at the initiative of the Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini — were two urgent actions against illegal immigration and public order and security.

The two “*Decreti sicurezza*” (“Security Decrees”), drafted on the basis of an announced increase in the landings of illegal immigrants, abolished humanitar-

⁴⁸ It is the decree law no. 92 of the 23 May 2008, including “urgent provisions on public safety”, converted by the Law no. 125 on 24 July 2009 concerning “provisions on public safety”; of the Law no. 94 of 15 July 2009; of the Law no. 85 of 30 June 2009, which ratified Italy's access to the Prüm Convention; of the Law no 159 on 3 October 2008 on “the free circulation of EU citizens” (later shelved) and no. 160 on “the recognition of refugee status and family reunification”.

⁴⁹ About the effects of the Arab Spring on immigration across the Mediterranean, Bontempelli, Sergio, “Da ‘clandestini’ a ‘falsi profughi’. Migrazioni forzate e politiche migratorie italiane dopo le primavere arabe”, *Meridiana*, 86, 2016: 167-79. In addition, the situation appeared particularly compromised considering the tragic shipwrecks off the coast of Lampedusa (6 April 2001, 250 dead, 3 October 2013, 366 dead). 6 aprile 2011, *Lampedusa, tragedia nella notte. Barcone si inabissa, 250 dispersi*, *LaRepubblica.it*.

⁵⁰ Gargiulo, Enrico “Una filosofia della sicurezza e dell'ordine. Il governo dell'immigrazione secondo Marco Minniti”, *Meridiana*, 91, 2018: 151-173.

ian protection and, above all, they gave to the Minister of the Interior the power to “limit or prohibit entrance, transit, or stop of ships in the territorial sea”. The so-called policy of “closed ports” implemented by the Minister of the Interior, limited the arrivals from 52.194 to 8.848 (although the interpretation of this data is not univocal)⁵¹, but, above all, it started a strong-arm with EU intended to review the provisions of the Dublin Regulation.

The European Parliament was ready to review the Regulation according to a proposal that better balanced the principle of responsibility and solidarity between member states, rejected by the European Council due to the pressure from some countries, as Austria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and surprisingly, Italy. In the same way, in December 2018, Italy decided not to participate at the Marrakesh conference for the ratification of the *Global compact*, the international pact “for a safe, organised and regular migration”⁵², highlighting the precise will of the government not to cooperate; in fact the propaganda of parties such as *Lega Nord* never resulted in an alternative governance proposal, rather in «a procedure more oriented towards pragmatism and even the consensus building with the government partner [...] marking a certain inconsistency between the general opposition to the rules of the European Union system and the acceptance of the practices introduced by that system»⁵³. On 5th October 2020, the second Conte’s government finally amended the two Salvini decrees: the prohibition or limitation to the transit of ships is no longer applied to the rescue operations of migrants and people exposed to the risk of “inhuman or degrading treatment”, but above all, the decree brought again into force the humanitarian protection mechanism.

Beyond the brief reconstruction of the historical-political framework within which matured the legislative measures on immigration, as mentioned in the Introduction, we would like to underline the relationship established between the Italian migration policies and the strengthening of nationalist and populist feelings conveyed by the new political parties. These parties, in fact, have employed the immigration issue as a lever to systematically criticize the European governance and, more generally, the effects of neoliberal policies, both in terms of access to welfare for citizens and, on a smaller extent, of the maintenance of

⁵¹ All data on: <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/dati-e-statistiche/sbarchi-e-accoglienza-dei-migranti-tutti-i-dati>. However, it seems documented that the agreements with Libya more than the security decrees influenced the decrease in landings, Gargiulo, Enrico “Una filosofia della sicurezza...”.

⁵² 10th December 2018, *Marrakesh, approvato il Global Compact for Migrant. Italia assente*, Lapresse.it.

⁵³ Conti Nicolò, De Giorgi Elisabetta, “L’euroscetticismo a parole...”: 284.

the national identity. The call to neo-populist, new global or sovereign labels in reference to the identity, languages, themes developed by these parties which — within and outside Europe — take heterogeneous connotations, seems to keep a series of common features, including the progressive construction of an anti-immigrant propaganda, functional to the establishment of a new *welfare chauvinism*.

This «welfare configuration limits the access to subsidies or reduces the standard of benefits for immigrants, it introduces more selections and measures based on conditionality for ethnic minorities [...] and, at the same time, it intends to reinforce the social protection for those Italian citizens considered worthy»⁵⁴: in other words, an *exclusive* and no longer *inclusive* welfare.

In short: the problematic dimension — and global interdependence — stressed by issues such as climate change or migration, suggests that in the contemporary world, the nation-state can no longer maintain a full and self-managed political space, on the contrary, it is evident that today the power is increasingly «shared and negotiated by numerous forces and institutions at national, regional and international level»⁵⁵. A tendency to cooperation that set the world from Bretton Woods onwards, which facilitated the start of development and modernisation processes, although not always harmonious and egalitarian, but it also managed to pay the necessary attention to social rights and freedoms. The current turning to a sovereign sense of some national governments, undeniable distortions produced by neo-liberal policies, on the contrary, does not seem to be an effective political alternative for the management of processes no longer under the exclusive control of the States, and it appears exclusively as a strategy for maintaining the electoral consensus that is not associated with an adequate planning of social justice and more equitable distribution of resources.

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⁵⁴ Siza, Remo, “Le politiche sociali...”, 17.

⁵⁵ Held David, McGrew Andrew, *Globalismo e antiglobalismo*, 124.

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