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Glossary

Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo = Notes for a poem on the Third World

Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione = Association for legal studies on migration

Autostrada della Pace = Motorway of Peace

Camera dei deputati = The Chamber of Deputies, or Italy's equivalent of the House of Representatives

Cassa per il Mezzogiorno = The Southern Italy Fund

Colonia = Colony

Conferenza ministeriale Italia-Africa = Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference

Fondo Africa = Africa Fund

Homo sacer = The Sacred Man

Il Partenariato con l'Africa = The Partnership with Africa

Immigrazione clandestine = Illegal immigration

Iniziativa terzomondiste = Third World initiatives

Italiani, brava gente = Italians, good people

La Questione Meridionale = The Southern Question

Mediterraneo allargato = Wider Mediterranean

Meridione = Southern Italy

Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale = The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti = The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

Oltremare = Overseas, or across the sea

Oltreoceano = Overseas, or across the ocean

Panmeridione = The Pan-South

Regno delle due Sicilie = Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, an area comprising most of Southern Italy today

Risorgimento = Italian Unification in 1961

Settentrione = Northern Italy

Terzo Mondo = The Third World

Abbreviations

ASGI = *Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione*

EU = European Union

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

GERD = Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

IFRI = *Institut français des relations internationales*

ISPI = *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*

ISTAT = *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*

MENA = Middle East and North Africa

ODA = Official Development Assistance

OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SAR = Search and Rescue

SM = Single Market

UK = United Kingdom

UN = United Nations

UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNSMIL = United Nations Support Mission in Libya

US = United States

Chapter 1. Introduction: An atypical power in Africa and the “sick man of Europe”

Italy's foreign policy in Africa since the Second World War has long oscillated between two principal strategies: one of increased investment and geopolitical presence in regions, such as the Maghreb and the Sahel, and one of reduced involvement, in some cases total political and economic disengagement, as is the case, for instance, in the Horn of Africa with its former colonies, Eritrea and Somalia (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2020: 19). This two-fold, seemingly contradictory, policy sets Italy apart from other former colonial powers operating on a large scale in Africa, such as France and the United Kingdom (UK), whose neo-colonial exploits on the continent are more commonly documented (Bouamama, 2018; Haag, 2011; Curtis, 2016). At the same time, Italy's standing within the “core-periphery” structure of the European Union (EU) sets it apart from typically peripheral member states as the peninsula can assume both a dominant and a subaltern role within the bloc depending on the political and economic circumstances (Wallerstein, 1974: 401). For instance, Italy has in the past gravitated more towards the periphery whenever the bloc has faced an existential threat, such as the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2018: 100). Ultimately, Italy's atypical role in both Africa and in Europe can be traced back to its atypical history as both a colonial power and a subaltern nation, from its relations with its former colonies to its peripheral role within the EU and the contradictory stereotypes of both grandeur and profligacy which define it.

The debate over colonial legacies is one that has resurfaced several times in the public, and particularly academic, spheres of former colonial powers (Mohdin and Storer, 2021). Nevertheless, this debate has largely been kept in the shadows in Italy, as was the case, for instance, in the face of the Black Lives Matter movement with the Italian government and civil society largely ignoring this postcolonial reckoning (Ghiglione, 2020). The ability of the Italian people to turn a blind eye on empirical historical facts, in this case Italy's history of colonialism in Libya and the Horn of Africa, is the corollary of the post-war Italian government's systematic occlusion of its colonial exploits. Stoler refers to this phenomenon, which is highly common in other former colonial powers, though certainly not to the same extent as in Italy, as “colonial aphasia”, a process whereby colonial histories are “made unavailable, unusable, safely removed from the domain of current conceivable human relations, with their moorings cut from specific persons, time and place” (Stoler, 2016: 122). This has led to a decolonising debate in Italy that, seventy years after the loss of its colonies in 1947, is still fledgling (United Nations, 1950).

What is particularly unique about the Italian case is that this process of aphasia is not only limited to Italy's colonial past but to its history of subalternity as well. Indeed, with the exception of Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci's *La Questione Meridionale* (The Southern Question), Italy's inner colonialism, or the *settecentrione's* (Northern Italy) political and economic exploitation of the *meridione* (Southern Italy), is a subject that only began to receive the attention it deserved in recent years (see Chapter 2). Indeed, the causes of *La Questione Meridionale* were largely ignored in Italian public debates and academia, with policies implemented to resolve the cavernous schism between the *settecentrione* and the

meridione, such as the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (the Southern Italy fund) of 1950, ignoring any form of a decolonising debate by merely attributing this widening political and economic gap to “complex structural reasons” (Camera dei deputati, 1950: 2). Therefore, notwithstanding the subaltern history of the Italian peninsula, and particularly the inhabitants of the *meridione*, the subject of subalternity has seldom been addressed in contemporary Italy.

Drawing on postcolonial literature from a wide spectrum of academics is crucial in order to “endow[...] the colonial past with a politically active and progressive voice in the present” and, of course, to exhume the legacies of Italian colonialism that continue to shape Italy’s status and interactions in the international realm (Stoler, 2016: 129). In the words of Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, “[even] if the postcolonial seems dead for countries such as Great Britain and India, where this critical paradigm was born, it is certainly not dead for a country such as Italy” (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 2014: 425–426). This is both because, as mentioned, Italy never truly experienced a process of decolonisation neither at home nor in its former colonies and because Italy, as the Southern frontier of the EU and the bridge between Europe and Africa, finds itself at the frontline of the EU’s war on immigration, a war that was engendered in the first place by “the ghastly consequences of the global readjustments brought about by the decolonization of the former European empires in the 1950s and 1960s” (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 2014: 426). Consequently, a postcolonial lens is perfect for analysing this newly postcolonial state, as it steadily comes face to face with the legacies of its colonial exploits, notably the thousands of migrants attempting to reach its shores every year and the political, economic, social and racial inequalities that have been festering in Italy since the *Risorgimento* (the Unification of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861) (Welch, 2016: 241).

This paper attempts to bridge the wide gap between postcolonial theory and International Relations (IR) in Italian academia by exploring Italy’s relations with the EU, its former colonies and, more broadly, the African continent with the objective of corroborating the underlying presence of what it refers to as *Italy’s paradoxical condition*, or the *Italian paradox*, in every facet of Italian foreign policy. This paradox, which the paper initially poses as a hypothesis, is crucial to understanding Italy’s role as the bridge between Europe and Africa, as the site of core-periphery struggle between the *Settentrione* and the *Meridione*, Northern and Southern Europe and more broadly between the global North and the global South.

This paper first explores the political, economic, social, cultural and even racial “in-betweenness” of Italy, its inhabitants and its global diaspora in Chapter 3, by uncovering the origins of this in-between status in anthropological, sociological and psychological studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Orsi, 1992: 335). It then goes on to elucidate how these studies perpetuated stereotypes that have gone on to reinforce North-South asymmetries within the EU, by influencing policies during the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic and enabling Northern member states to ignore power imbalances within the bloc.

Chapter 4 explores the colonial legacies that continue to influence relations between Italy and its former colony, Libya, thereby propounding the argument that Italy’s history as a coloniser has enabled it to secure a neo-colonial hold on Libya through reparations and migration. The chapter argues that Italy’s outsourcing of border control to Libya, its police force and its coast guard, represents a form of indirect rule, a legacy of the colonial period. Furthermore, the chapter claims that Italy’s foreign policy with Libya, or rather its

Mediterranean policy, is in fact bigger than Italy, as it involves three North-South divides (between the global North and the global South, within Europe and within Italy) and multiple exploitative relationships with the EU becoming the puppet master, thereby truly encapsulating the multifaceted Italian paradox.

The final chapter focuses on the Italian government's sustained strategy of colonial aphasia in the Horn of Africa, which has enabled it to disengage almost entirely from its former colonies in the region until recently and re-construct its image as a new player in Africa and an ally to the global South, through a false Pan-South solidarity (*Panmeridione*). In doing so, the Italian government has effectively established itself as a staunch critic of European imperialism in Africa, a Southern ally with a long history of friendship with the continent, thereby enabling it to expand its commercial and geopolitical interests and to establish neo-colonial partnerships in the Horn, the Maghreb and the Sahel by partaking in this new "Scramble for Africa" (Adam, 2018). This chapter argues that this strategy of colonial aphasia, Pan-South solidarity and implicit political and economic imperialism is achieved through the exploitation of Italy's subaltern and colonial pasts, in other words, the Italian paradox.

Ultimately, through its exploration of the asymmetrical relations between Italy, the EU, its former colonies and other African regions, this paper is able to confirm that the Italian paradox not only exists but is crucial to understanding contemporary Italy, its foreign policy and status within the international realm. Furthermore, the paper concludes that the Italian paradox has largely been overlooked in both postcolonial theory and IR literature about Italy, and that failure to acknowledge this elusive, yet highly consequential, theme has led to incomplete, borderline inaccurate, assumptions about Italy and its foreign policy.

Chapter 2. A fledgling Italian postcolonial literature

Italy's paradoxical condition can be traced in part back to the years following the *Risorgimento*, when Italy first began its colonial expansion while millions of Southern Italians emigrated abroad (Welch, 2016: 39). Yet, the two main pillars of the paradox, colonialism and subalternity, have largely been occluded from both public and academic debates in Italy, with an engagement with them occurring only as recently as the 1990s with what Ponzanesi refers to as the "postcolonial turn", a highly consequential shift in Italian academia whereby scholars at last were able to disentangle the "postcolonial subconscious" [existing] in Italy for more than half a century" and spark debates that were long overdue (Ponzanesi, 2012: 51; Ponzanesi, 2004, cited in Triulzi, 2006: 431). This chapter argues that a plethora of themes have emerged from this "postcolonial turn" in Italian academia, however, an appraisal of the literature covered in this literature review also unearths a clear schism within Italian scholarship, one which focuses on Italy's colonial past and one which focuses on its subalternity, with both sides seldom overlapping. Indeed, notwithstanding the abundance of literature covering the issues of Italy's colonial and subaltern pasts, there appears to be a rather significant gap in Italian postcolonial literature dealing with the Italian paradox. This elusive and seldom explored paradox, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is crucial to bridging the gap between postcolonial theory and IR, by applying a postcolonial lens to Italy's relations with the EU, its former colonies and other regions in Africa.

2.1 Italy, the coloniser

Despite the period of postcolonial reckoning in the 1990s, the legacies of Italian colonialism and, in particular, the legacies of post-war Italy, have left an indelible mark on the Italian subconscious, instilling narratives which either legitimise the colonial period by virtue of the fictitious benevolent Italian coloniser (*Italiani, brava gente*) and the primitive, hyper sexualised colonised subject (colonial discourse) or absolve Italy entirely of its colonial exploits ("colonial aphasia") (Stoler, 2016: 128). Postcolonial literature on Italy has largely focused on this area of study with scholars of the likes of Favero (2010), Siddi (2020), Ponzanesi (2016), Young (2016), Triulzi (2006) and Andall (2003), just to name a few, finding the questions surrounding historical revisionism, grand narratives and colonial aphasia and discourse particularly fecund ground.

Notwithstanding the significant contributions of these scholars, the scope is often too circumscribed to adequately analyse Italy's paradoxical position within the international realm, either because they focus too heavily on domestic Italian politics, as is the case with Favero's contribution which explores the impact of the *Italiani, brava gente* narrative on the construction of national identity, or because they simply ignore Italy's subaltern past and how it comes into play today, as is the case with Siddi's contribution, who focuses mostly on the Italian government's systematic obfuscation of the colonial years and its implications for the refugee crisis without adding another layer of complexity by considering to what extent Italy's inner colonialism and the subordination of Italian immigrants are also highly consequential in the crisis.

Just like Siddi, Ponzanesi (2016) and Young (2016), both of whom apply Said's concept of Orientalism, "the idea that colonialism operated not only as a form of military rule but also simultaneously as a discourse of domination", to Italian cultural representations of Eritrea, Somalia and Libya during Italy's colonial rule and the decades following the loss of its colonies,

also overlook Italy's subaltern past by neglecting to apply their findings to the Southern Italian (Young, 2016: 383). Nevertheless, while both authors fail to explore the concept of Orientalism in relation to the Italian subject, their contributions still act as a springboard for an analysis of cultural representations of Italy and how the Northern European and Northern Italian gazes have throughout history perpetuated deleterious misconceptions about the peninsula that continue to affect Italy's status in Europe.

2.2 Italy, the subaltern

On the other side of the paradox, there are a number of scholars whose works delve primarily into the country's history of subalternity through an exploration of *La Questione Meridionale* (Pescosolido, 2019) and Italy's cultural and racial "in-betweenness" (Orsi, 1992) and how these are intertwined. Pescosolido draws on Gramsci's seminal essay *La Questione Meridionale*, taking the issue of North-South division within Italy a step further by uncovering the contemporary legacies of this unique case of inner colonialism, from literacy to infrastructure to employment. Nevertheless, much like Favero, he limits his research purely to the domestic, ignoring the potential legacies this inner colonialism will have had for Italy's role within the EU and with its former colonies. Orsi gives a convincing account of Italy's subalternity throughout history by exploring the racial subordination of Italian immigrants in the United States and briefly touching on racial and cultural divisions between Northern and Southern Italian immigrants. However, his work on the subject is both one-sided, with its emphasis on the subaltern past of Italians, and purely historical with no parallels drawn with contemporary Italians.

This gap, however, is not only limited to postcolonial literature on the subject of Italy, but also IR literature which explores the asymmetrical structure of the EU and Italy's role within it. Literature on the subject of Italo-European relations is plentiful with scholars such as Sacchi (2015), Blanchet et al (2019) and Karolewski and Benedikter (2018) focusing mostly on the power imbalances between Northern and Southern Europe in the face of the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, despite the prolific research on the core-periphery division between Northern and Southern Europe, and more specifically the issue of Italian subalternity within the EU, none of these scholars explore the roots of these asymmetries. In other words, they neglect to apply a postcolonial lens to the North-South division within the EU.

2.3 Italy's paradoxical condition

It appears that the peninsula's uniqueness can be boiled down to a series of contradictions: Italy as both European and African, as an economic powerhouse and a peripheral member of the EU and as an emigrant nation and Fortress Europe's wall of defence against migrants. The premise of this paper is that not only does the Italian paradox exist, but it is also at the heart of all the aforementioned contradictions and that, consequently, it is extremely significant in order to understand Italy's political, economic, cultural and social standing in the world. Yet, literature which directly alludes to there being an Italian paradox is severely lacking with few scholars, notably Welch (2016) and Fiore (2012) briefly touching on the notion by exploring the interrelation of Italian colonialism and emigration, albeit very superficially as both Welch and Fiore's explorations of the colonisation/emigration binary focus almost exclusively on the historical, thus neglecting to explore Italy's "atypical postcoloniality" in a more contemporary international context and how this binary plays out today with, for instance, Italy's unique condition as both an emigrant nation and the Southern frontier of Europe in the face of the refugee crisis (Fiore, 2012: 73).

The only scholar who is able to directly pinpoint the elusive Italian paradox is Gabaccia who argues in her book *Italy's Many Diasporas* that for “a nation accustomed to thinking of its migrants as subject to racist and capitalist oppression abroad [Italy] suddenly looked into the mirror to see itself as the oppressor” (Gabaccia 2000, cited in Pozanesi and Polizzi, 2016: 153). Gabaccia in merely one sentence is able to distil the essence of the paradox, yet does not delve any deeper into the subject.

Overall, international postcolonial and IR literature could benefit enormously from studying the Italian paradox, as the peninsula's unique history of colonialism and subalternity, a condition which other former colonial powers have not experienced, calls into question basic assumptions of postcolonial theory and consequently uncovers incomplete conclusions about Italy and its foreign policy.

2.4 Methodology

This paper is a historically-based, theoretical exploration of Italy's paradoxical condition, drawing from the aforementioned postcolonial and IR literature on Italy, which it argues alludes to there being an Italian paradox and thus explores the themes that emerge in the literature covered in the context of Italy's international politics. The prime method adopted is that of a historical interpretative analysis of primary sources, applying a postcolonial lens in order to analyse primary documents with the objective.

Treaties, policies, debate transcripts, government reports and press releases were found primarily on governmental and inter-governmental websites, notably in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy, the Italian House of Representatives, the US Congress, the European Parliament and European Commission and the United Nations.

For up-to-date data on migrants (number of deaths, countries of origin, number of detained migrants, etc.), as well as information on detention and asylum-processing centres, this paper consulted several databases, most notably the Global Detention Project, the International Organization for Migration and ActionAid. For human rights violations, it consulted mostly reports by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

Statistics on per capita income and unemployment in Europe were found primarily in reports by the OECD, the *Fondazione Migrantes* and the *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (ISTAT).

For information on contemporary Italian foreign policy in Europe and in Africa, this paper consulted articles and reports by think tanks, such as the European Council on Foreign Relations, the *Insitut français des relations internationales* (IFRI) and the *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale* (ISPI).

Due to the subject of the paper, almost half of the primary sources analysed were in Italian with translations in English provided by the author.

Chapter 3. Italy and the EU

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Italian postcolonial scholarship has neglected to pin down the elusive Italian paradox and, more importantly, neglected to adopt it in the field of International Relations. This chapter explores the racialisation of Italians in pseudoscientific research of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the influence of these cultural and racial stereotypes on Italo-European relations, particularly during the refugee crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, it argues that the hitherto hypothesised Italian paradox not only exists but enables a more nuanced reading of the asymmetrical relations between Northern European states and Southern European states, such as Italy, as well as a critical appraisal of Italy and the EU's border control policies in the Mediterranean.

3.1 The origins of Italy's subalternity: geographical and racial "in-betweenness" in the nineteenth century

So far, literature specialising in the relations between Italy and the EU has largely overlooked the history of Italian subalternity much to the detriment of both Italian and European studies, as uncovering the origins of this subalternity enables a more nuanced appraisal of the asymmetrical dynamics between Northern European countries and Italy. Furthermore, it enables us to ascertain to what extent narratives that are informed by Italy's subaltern past are weaponised today by other EU member states in order to legitimise policies which disproportionately affect Italy. Santoro perfectly encapsulates the paradoxical condition and how within the EU it often oscillates more towards Italy's subalternity, by attributing Italy's failed foreign policy in the Mediterranean, in other words its inability to assert its dominance, to its geographical "in-betweenness" (Orsi, 1992: 314). Indeed, he argues that, on the one hand, Italy is in a privileged geopolitical position as it "theoretically controls half the Mediterranean basin from East to West, thus fulfilling a potential role as regional leader in its geographic area", yet, on the other hand, this privileged position has so far proven to be a curse for the nation, failing to translate itself into true geopolitical dominance with, if anything, Italy occupying a "completely residual and peripheral" geopolitical role... perceived only 'as a peninsula, which is in turn attached to another peninsula' (Santoro, 1991, cited in Coralluzzo, 2008: 115). This is because the Italian peninsula is both attached and detached from the EU core, meaning that it remains predominantly under the sphere of influence of the EU, whilst concomitantly being distant enough from Brussels to be a peripheral state.

The same occurs within the Italian state itself with the Northern areas of Italy benefitting from their proximity to the core, while the Southern areas are relegated to the periphery of the bloc. This can be seen, for instance, in the veritable chasm between youth unemployment in 2019 in areas of Northern Italy, such as Trentino, where the rate in some provinces ranged from 9.2% to 15.3%, and regions in Southern Italy, such as Sicily and Campania, where the rate was 53.6% (Volpe, 2020). Another factor which contributes to Italy's in-between status is its proximity to the African continent, which, for instance, in the case of Lampedusa, one of the prime destinations for migrants and refugees, is "south even of Monastir and Tangiers", thus imbuing the island with a "cultural in-betweenness", a factor which becomes particularly consequential when analysing Italo-European relations during the refugee crisis (see section 3.3) (Wright, 2014: 777). Consequently, Italy's southernmost outposts, the *final* frontiers of Europe, have imbued the rest of the peninsula with a cultural ambiguity, ascribing Italy the status of not quite African but not quite European either and reinforcing core-periphery dynamics between the two.

This cultural ambiguity is not only engendered by Italy's geographical in-betweenness, but also by a racial in-betweenness. The roots of Italy's racial ambiguity can be traced once again back to the *Risorgimento*, the most consequential event in the formation of Italian national identity. With the annexation of the *Regno delle due Sicilie*, Southern regions were not only politically and economically subsumed under the *settecentrione*, so too was their culture, their language and, more importantly, their race, thereby forming a homogenous Italian national identity, regardless of the heterogeneity that had previously existed within the peninsula (Pescosolido, 2019: 442). The annexation of the *meridione* emerged in conjunction with the highly ethnocentric and pseudoscientific practice of biological racism, whereby Northern European intellectuals, through the supposedly scientifically objective disciplines of anthropology, craniometry, psychology and sociology, attempted to establish a correlation between social and economic backwardness and racial inferiority (Welch, 2016: 67). This enabled Northern Europeans to mobilise science "to lend 'objective' weight to the deeply held convictions about race prevalent throughout Europe" (Gillette, 2002: 19). Yet, the most comprehensive racial classifications were to be found in the works of American anthropologists and sociologists, most notably *The Dictionary of Races or Peoples* by The Dillingham Commission in 1911 (Gillette, 2002: 19). The report commissioned by the US government distinguished between the "broad-headed", industrious, Teutonic, Alpine Northern Italian, "capable of great progress in the political and social organization of modern civilization" and the "long-headed, dark Mediterranean [Southern Italian]" of Saracenic and Berber ancestry "having little adaptability to highly organized society" (Folkmar, 1911: 82; Orsi, 1992: 315).

The practice of biological racism, as well as the notion of there being an interrelationship between race and modernity, became commonplace in Italian academic circles towards the turn of the nineteenth century in response to *La Questione Meridionale*, as a means of identifying the causes of political and economic decline in Southern Italy. At the same time, "so pervasive were racial explanations for national cultural traits" in the academic circles of their European counterparts that Italian intellectuals increasingly adopted biological racism in order to understand Italy's "apparent inability to rival its northern neighbors" (Gillette, 2002: 22-23). In doing so, the quest to find "a racial foundation for Italian culture" was officially catalysed with some Italian intellectuals establishing a direct correlation between Northern Italians and the Aryan race, deemed the superior race, whilst Southern Italians were relegated to an inferior category of race, based on the assumption that they had "suffer[ed] from racial 'pollution' of some type", while other intellectuals posited the existence of a "Mediterranean race", one which in the words of anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi "derived neither from the black nor white peoples, but constitut[ed] an autonomous stock in the human family" (Gillette, 2002: 23; Sergi, 1895, cited in Gillette, 2002: 26). The separate racial classification of Northern and Southern Italians reinforces the notion of Italy as culturally and racially in-between, as home to both a superior and an inferior race, thereby corroborating once again the existence of the Italian paradox.

3.2 North-South asymmetries during the COVID-19 pandemic

At this stage, it is crucial to assess the effects of the deleterious misconceptions the racial classification of Italians has had in cementing a core-periphery distribution of power between the North and the South of Europe, specifically between leading members of the bloc, such as France, Germany and the so-called "frugal four" (Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark), on the one hand, and Southern peripheral states, like Italy, on the other (Sorensensen, 2020).

A recent front cover of popular Dutch weekly magazine *Elsevier Weekblad* published at the height of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 sums up Northern European perceptions of Southern European countries: an illustration of two Dutch people working diligently in the top half of the cover while two darker Mediterranean-looking people lounge in the sun in the bottom half (Bialasiewicz, 2020). This narrative of Northern Europeans as hard-working and frugal and Southern Europeans as lazy and financially reckless was also echoed by Dutch Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra in his argument against using Euro bonds as a means of alleviating the financial hardships of the South in the face of the pandemic (Walker and Schaart, 2020). Indeed, he went as far as to argue that the Southern countries, in other words those that were worst hit by the pandemic, “deserved little solidarity as they had failed to build up the financial position to combat the crisis over the past years” (Schneider and Syrovatka, 2020). It is clear based on the striking similarities that this narrative is a legacy of the aforementioned narratives surrounding Italians and other Southern Europeans that were perpetuated during the nineteenth century. Yet, despite the perpetuation of these innumerable claims of economic incompetence and extravagance, which only solidify a North-South division within the EU, thereby relegating Italy further and further away from the core, there is little evidence to corroborate these claims. Indeed, contrary to the narratives *Elsevier Weekblad* and Hoekstra promote about the peninsula, data collated by AMECO in 2020 shows that “Italy has consistently recorded export surpluses” since 2012 and has not only “consistently recorded primary budget surpluses” since 1992 but implemented “more fiscal consolidation than Germany and the ‘frugal four’” (Heimberger and Krowall, 2020). Furthermore, according to data collated by the World Bank Group in 2020, Italy ranked third in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amongst EU member states, vastly surpassing the combined GDP of three of the frugal four’s Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands (The World Bank Group, 2020). As for the image of the lazy and profligate Southern European, sunbathing on the cover of *Elsevier Weekblad*, the narrative is purely informed by age-old misconceptions, which are certainly far from the truth today; indeed, immigrants from the more peripheral countries of the EU contribute enormously to Northern European economies. The Portuguese re-working of the front cover which shows Mediterranean-looking people working laboriously, whilst Northern European tourists relax in the Southern sun, perfectly encapsulates this new dynamic. Such is the case with Italians living abroad in Northern European countries with research performed by the Fondazione Migrantes showing that as of January, 2020, 5,486,081 Italians were officially residents abroad, an increase of 76.6% when compared with data from 2006 (Fondazione Migrantes, 2020: 6). Furthermore, the report shows that Italian immigration has greatly benefitted high-skilled sectors in the North with the percentage of Italians living abroad with a higher education (Bachelor of Arts, Masters, PhD) dramatically increas[ing] by 193.3% (Fondazione Migrantes, 2020: 4).

These false narratives enable Northern European states to not only deny financial assistance to Southern European states when the bloc faces existential crises, as is the case during the COVID-19 pandemic with the aforementioned Euro bonds, but to further their own political and economic interests by hiding behind an image of frugality. Indeed, according to a report published by the Tax Justice Network back in 2020, while the Dutch government is one of the staunchest critics of financial assistance to countries that were initially more heavily impacted by the pandemic, notably Italy and Spain, due to their supposed profligacy, its innumerable tax havens are depriving these Southern economies of much-needed revenue from corporate taxes (Tax Justice Network, 2020). According to the report, the Netherlands’ tax havens and lax corporate taxation is costing other EU members roughly 10 billion dollars a year, with the EU losing 4 dollars in corporate tax “for every 1 dollar the Netherlands collected from the shifted profits of US corporations”, yet Southern member states are suffering the most from this deleterious tax avoidance with Italy, for instance, losing 1.5 billion dollars in corporate tax

to the Netherlands in 2020 alone (Tax Justice Network, 2020). Furthermore, the narrative of the frugal Northern European and the profligate Southern European enables core members of the EU to ignore the systemic asymmetrical dynamics at the heart of the bloc, asymmetries that are particularly prevalent in the European Single Market (SM), a market which is supposedly premised on the equality of member states. Reports published by the Bertelsmann Foundation and the European Parliament in 2019 conduct a nuanced analysis of socioeconomic inequalities between European states which are compounded by the SM; by determining the average per-person income of European states, the first report shows a clear North-South/core-periphery fracture within the SM with Northern European regions “show[ing] the highest per capita gains”, a finding which is backed up by the second report’s study of regional GDP per capita (Mion and Ponattu, 2019: 14; Agnieszka, 2019: 3).

The reports published by the OECD and the Bertelsmann Foundation point towards a vastly unequal Europe built on false cultural stereotypes about Southern European states, particularly Italy, which have cemented a North-South fracture and engendered an anti-South sentiment, with Brussels and its core allies ignoring the systemic inequalities that are ingrained in the EU and the SM and instead tightening the purse strings and imposing increasingly stringent conditions on the peripheral states which are most vulnerable to systemic shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 Italy as the Southern frontier of Europe and the EU’s joint strategy of centralisation and devolution

The Mediterranean island of Sicily and its multitudinous satellite islets, notably Pantelleria, Linosa and the better-known Lampedusa, have since the 1990s been key stop-offs in the migratory routes of migrants and refugees coming into Italy from Tunisia and Libya (Severoni, 2011: 1). The arrival of migrants in these Sicilian islets has only escalated since 2011 with 2014 (170,100), 2015 (153,842) and 2016 (181,436) registering record numbers of migrant arrivals and still shows no signs of abating with 34,121 migrants arriving as of 2021 (UNHCR, 2021). The popularity of these islets as stop-offs en route to mainland Italy and, subsequently Northern Europe, is due to their geographic proximity to Northern Africa which, along with their sheer remoteness as the Southernmost outposts of Italy, has both imbued them with a cultural and geographic ambiguity and isolated them from the European core, consequently transforming these islets and “the Mediterranean that surrounds [them into] ... symbols, metaphors of a condition of deterritorialization” (Wright, 2014: 776). In other words, Pantelleria, Linosa and Lampedusa are Italy’s and by extension the EU’s furthest recesses, “lost at sea, marginal and inaccessible, [and] territorially negligible” (Wright, 2014: 777).

The marginality of these deterritorialised islets is crucial to understanding the policies of centralisation and devolution implemented by the EU in the face of the refugee crisis. By centralisation, this paper intends the direct involvement of the EU in matters that would normally fall within the remit of individual member states, in this case border control and surveillance, and by devolution, the delegation of responsibility to member states. The remoteness of these outermost peripheries has been exploited by the bloc’s core through this joint strategy, which forcefully devolves responsibility to the Italian government and Southern regions which are both structurally and financially incapable of handling such a crisis. The Dublin Regulation is one such policy. Originally established by the Dublin Convention in 1990, it “[stipulates] that the first EU country of refugee arrival is responsible for the processing of the asylum application on its territory” (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2018: 100). One of the main criticisms of the regulation is that it disproportionately benefits Northern Europe as the vast majority of migrants attempting to reach Europe have to go through Southern and Eastern European countries first. A motion put forth at a Parliamentary Assembly in 2011 perfectly

elucidates this pitfall by arguing that the regulation “places an excessive burden on the countries at the borders of the European Union, with the risk that they are unable to offer an equitable, effective system for processing asylum-seekers” (Council of Europe, 2011: 1). This unfair distribution of burden is particularly clear-cut with the Dublin Regulation’s take-back and take-charge requests, whereby member states are able to transfer responsibility for the processing of asylum claims to the member states where asylum seekers first arrived, typically Italy and other border states. Indeed, according to data collated by Eurostat on outgoing requests made by EU member states to take charge or take back migrants, Germany and Switzerland submitted more than 40% of requests in 2012 and Germany alone submitted 43% in 2013, while, on the other hand, Italy received by far the highest number of requests in that same year with a total of 18,827 requests (Fratzke, 2015: 8–9). Therefore, it is clear that this supposedly decentralised approach to a common asylum system has, in the words of Karolewski and Benedikter, imposed “asymmetrical burden sharing” with, once again, Italy and other peripheral states in the South most adversely affected (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2018: 100). Italy’s flawed asylum system is the by-product of the EU’s policy of devolution, as the Italian government is, on the one hand, incapable of processing asylum claims effectively due to a lack of infrastructure, personnel and funding and, on the other hand, guilty of the same strategy of devolution, whereby it devolves state responsibility over the reception of migrants to “a whole galaxy of governmental centres” in remote parts of southern Italy (Council of Europe, 2011: 1; Global Detention Project, 2019; D’Angelo, 2019: 2218). This decentralised structure has, firstly, led to the conflation of these processes with “the boundaries between reception and ‘accoglienza’ (hospitality) on the one hand and detention and policing on the other... problematically blurred” and, secondly, fostered a culture of opacity and unaccountability (D’Angelo, 2019: 2218).

Both the EU and the Italian government are guilty of exploiting the marginality of Southern Italy’s furthest outposts and the lack of transparency their remoteness inevitably engenders by transforming them into “immigration warehouse[s] away from public attention” and this has, ultimately, led to gross human rights violations and, even worse, to the outsourcing of border control to third-party countries with poor human rights records, such as Libya (see Chapter 4) (Wright, 2014: 777). Yet, despite Brussels and core EU member states being fully aware of the dangerously underfunded and substandard asylum system in Italy, they continue to outsource more asylum processes and border control prerogatives to the Italian government, whilst concomitantly urging the government to enforce stricter measures to curtail migration and effectively identify migrants. Such is the case, for instance, with the implementation of the “hotspot approach” in 2015, a policy introduced by the European Agenda on Migration, “based on the development of designated areas for the rapid identification and ‘channelling’ of migrants and refugees” (D’Angelo, 2019: 2214).

Ultimately, the Dublin Regulation, the “hotspot approach” and the relocation and resettlement scheme are all policies that are premised on “asymmetrical burden sharing”, further cementing Italy’s status as a peripheral member within the EU by exploiting the marginality of its southernmost outposts and the “legal blind-spots” created by the devolution of border control duties to local government agencies and private companies (Karolewski and Benedikter, 2018: 100; D’Angelo, 2019: 2224). Yet, at the same time, the Italian government has adopted an increasingly intolerant stance towards migrants, outsourcing its border control prerogatives to Libya, its coastguard and police force, and implementing unethical, bordering on illegal, policies, thereby rendering the Italian government complicit in the EU’s war on migration and the postcolonial migrant the subaltern subject (see Chapter 4).

Chapter 4. Italy and Libya

This paper has heretofore focused on Italy's history of subalternity within Europe and its indelible legacies in Italo-European relations today; however, it has mostly ignored Italy's history of colonialism and how this brief, albeit extremely consequential, chapter not only continues to influence this former colonial power's relations with its former colonies but also its standing on the international stage as a major European power. This chapter argues that migration is the biggest area of convergence in policy between the Italian and Libyan governments and that it perfectly encapsulates the asymmetrical dynamics at the heart of Italo-Libyan relations, as the distinction between neo-coloniser and neo-colonised, between core and periphery, is not so clear-cut. Indeed, this chapter argues that while it is certainly true that outsourcing border control to Libya, its police force and its coast guard, represents a form of indirect rule, a legacy of the colonial period, the Libyan government is also a complicit actor in this war on migration and the postcolonial migrant attempting to reach Italian shores is now the oppressed subject. Furthermore, Italy's foreign policy with Libya, or rather its Mediterranean policy, is in fact bigger than Italy, as it involves multiple actors and exploitative relationships. This chapter, ultimately, argues that the Mediterranean has become the site of core-periphery struggle and the intersection of three North-South divides (between the Italian government and Southern Italian regions, between the EU and Italy and between Italy and Libya), thereby empirically proving the existence of the Italian paradox and its impact on Italy's international relations.

4.1 The 2008 Treaty: the question of reparations and the lack of a decolonising debate

The treaty signed in Benghazi in 2008 between the Italian government under Silvio Berlusconi and the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi (the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), commonly referred to as the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, is perhaps the most consequential legislative agreement ever signed between the two nations, as it is the most conspicuous example of the imbalance of power between the former colonial power and its colony, a contemporary manifestation of the neo-colonial machinations at the heart of Italian foreign policy in Libya (Governo italiano, 2009: 2).

Despite the legal ambiguity of this nine-page document, it acts as a springboard for a more nuanced analysis of Italo-Libyan relations, at the crux of which lies the fundamental issue of reparations. Indeed, the purpose of the treaty, according to Berlusconi, was to bury the hatchet between the two nations, by “definitively fix[ing] the colonial past”, through an investment of 5 billion US dollars in infrastructure projects to be split into an annual sum of 250 million US dollars over the course of twenty years, as well as an increased political and economic partnership between the two nations, almost exclusively revolving around the issues of border control and energy (Berlusconi, 2008, cited in Powell, 2015: 463; Governo italiano, 2009: 4). However, as the following sections will corroborate, the treaty, ultimately, paved the way for more exploitative relations between the Italian government and Libya.

Starting with the staggering, yet contentious, 5 billion US dollar pledge in the form of reparations, it is clear that, upon closer inspection, there are a number of unfair conditions concealed under the guise of reparations that served to ultimately benefit the Italian government and to some extent Gaddafi's regime to the detriment of Libyan citizens. Indeed, under Chapter II, Article 8, the treaty stipulates that “Italian companies will be solely responsible for carrying out... [infrastructure] projects” and, furthermore, that the funds will be

controlled solely by the Italian government, thereby ensuring Italian companies are given privileged access to the Libyan market and that the funds are not controlled by the Libyan regime, establishing an economic dependence on the Italian government and, ultimately, tightening Italy's neo-colonial grip over Libya (Governo italiano, 2009: 4). One company that is undoubtedly benefitting from the privileged conditions conferred on it by the treaty is Salini Impregilo, otherwise known as Webuild, a construction company which has a contract with the Libyan government of over 1 billion US dollars to rebuild vital Libyan infrastructure, most notably the *Autostrada della Pace* (Motorway of Peace) (Michelin, 2021). This enormous 1,750 kilometres-long infrastructural undertaking, one of the main exculpatory projects of the 2008 treaty, serves a double purpose: to exonerate Italy of its past crimes and to "regain the geopolitical positions that were lost [by Italy] in the Libyan chessboard" (Euronews, 2020). Indeed, since its conception, the project has been used by the Italian government to curry favour with competing factions, especially during the Second Libyan Civil War in 2014 as part of Italy's joint strategy of formally supporting Al-Sarraj's government whilst also recognising General Haftar as a legitimate actor (Nigro, 2018). In addition to the geopolitical purpose of the *autostrada*, the project once constructed will also enable Italian oil company Eni to access oil and gas reserves in the Fezzan region, thereby expanding the commercial interests of the company and by extension the Italian government, one of its main shareholders with 4.37 percent of shares (Varvelli, 2019; Eni, 2021).

This raises the question of reparations, their efficacy and sincerity and how they can become an avenue to further neo-colonial rule through the preclusion of a process of decolonisation. The treaty expressly mentions how its promulgation marks the closure of Italy's colonial chapter in Libya, that the legacies of colonialism are officially over, thereby making the assumption that Italian colonial rule was but a chapter, that it lived in a vacuum and that its legacies were merely ephemeral (Governo italiano, 2009: 2; De Cesari, 2012: 318). However, leaving this history of colonialism largely unexhumed and emphasising "the deep ties of friendship" between Italy and Libya has enabled the Italian government to establish neo-colonial ties in its former colony whilst concomitantly covering its tracks, thereby acting as a means "to facilitate realpolitik" (Governo italiano, 2009: 2; De Cesari, 2012: 318). The 2008 treaty is a clear example of realpolitik masked behind an apology and the promise of reparations. In burying Italy's history of colonial rule in Libya and deliberately ignoring its present-day corollaries, the Italian government has successfully precluded any semblance of a decolonising debate, thus playing a part in what Danewid argues is a broader European strategy of creating a sense of identity that is far-removed from Europe's history of colonialism and its present-day neo-colonial exploits (Danewid, 2017). The 2008 treaty is a significant milestone in the development of this strategy. However, despite the asymmetrical elements that clearly favour Italy, the treaty was still signed by Colonel Gaddafi. This is because the treaty, according to Gazzini, is "a nexus of interlocking interests: on the Libyan side, Qadhafi's historical commitment to reparation politics and his quest for moral victory over the country's former colonizers, and on the Italian side, strategic and economic gains", thus proving Powell's argument that reparations can in some cases be part of "a political strategy of using past colonial subjugation" as a means of furthering the interests of former colonies (Gazzini, 2009, cited in De Cesari, 2012: 319; Powell, 2015: 463).

Overall, it is clear that the 2008 treaty is merely a continuation of the Italian government's systematic process of colonial aphasia (see Chapter 2) and the promotion of the myth of the benevolent anti-colonialist Italian with the objective, ultimately, of expanding Italy's commercial and geopolitical interests. Therefore, yet another light has been cast upon Italy; despite its subalternity within Europe as explored in chapter 3, it appears that Italy, through its asymmetrical relations with its former colony and its deliberate strategy of colonial aphasia,

has more in common with other former colonial powers, such as Britain and France, than it does with Libya and the rest of the global South. In other words, Italy's relations with Libya are still heavily influenced by its history as a coloniser, calling into question the notion of Italian subalternity and lending further credence to the hypothesis of the Italian paradox proposed by this paper.

4.2 Italy's outsourcing of border control to Libya: another form of indirect rule

The issue of *immigrazione clandestina* (illegal migration) can be found in Article 19 of the Treaty of 2008 and has continued to feature very prominently in subsequent treaties, such as the 2017 and 2021 treaties (Governo italiano, 2009: 9; Gentili, 2020; Oldani, 2021). Nevertheless, despite migration being the common area that has united Italian and Libyan governments for decades, upon closer inspection of treaties and policies, it is evident that the Italian government exercises a great degree of control over its former colony, that in reality Italy's externalisation of its borders and outsourcing of border control to Libya represents a form of indirect rule, whereby the Italian government benefits from a lack of accountability and the exploitation of Libya's poor human rights record.

In the same way that the EU has externalised its borders to encompass Italy's southernmost islands and outsourced its border control duties to remote parts of the South with little to no government oversight through its policies of devolution (see Chapter 3), the Italian government has also externalised its own borders and those of the EU by outsourcing its border control prerogatives to the Libyan government, enabling human rights violations against migrants to continue unabated. Given that 90% of migrants attempting to reach European shores travel through Libya, it comes as no surprise that this former Italian colony, nestled in the Maghreb, has become central to Italy and the EU's war on migration, with the former investing a grand total of over 210 million euros in forty-four different projects from 2015 to 2020, projects which have enabled the Italian government to establish a veritable form of unaccountable indirect rule (UNHCR, 2017; ActionAid, 2020).

These ethically questionable and legally opaque projects include the extension of the Libyan coastguard's Search and Rescue (SAR) Area, the opening of migrant detention centres and the funding and training of the Libyan border police and coastguard. The first project, which was spearheaded by the *Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti* in 2018, sought to extend the Libyan coastguard's area of control in order to shift responsibility over the capture and detention of migrants to the Libyan government, thereby reducing, for instance, the Italian coastguard's direct involvement in illegal pushbacks (Vascello and Tassara, 2018: 18). A move which, according to a Human Rights Watch report, will undoubtedly cause further loss of life as migrants who are caught at sea by the Libyan coastguard are often forcefully taken back to Libya, "where they are subjected to enforced disappearances, indefinite and arbitrary detention, torture and extortion" (Amnesty International, 2020). The second project, that of outsourcing the detention of migrants to Libya, has seen an escalation since the 2008 treaty (Siddi, 2020: 1038). Indeed, as of 2018 there are over 60 detention centres in Libya and roughly 8,672 migrants being forcefully detained in them, with conditions found to be "generally inhumane", according to a report released by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (Global Detention Project, 2018; UNSMIL, 2016: 1). The mistreatment of migrants in Libyan detention centres is so extreme and ubiquitous that Lombardi-Diop and Romeo argue these centres are reminiscent of the concentration camps that were constructed in Libya under Italian fascist rule and that, consequently, they reinstate old "relationships of power created by colonialism" (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 2015: 367). And finally, the third project, that of increased funding and training of the Libyan border police and coastguard, as well as the sale of arms and equipment, has also become a major area of Italian foreign policy in Libya with

the creation of the *Fondo Africa* (Africa Fund), a fund for “extraordinary interventions dedicated to relaunching a dialogue and cooperation with African countries of strategic importance in migratory routes” (ASGI, 2019). However, according to the *Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione* (Association for legal studies on migration, or ASGI), the fund is in clear violation of the Council of the European Union’s Regulation 2016/44, which stipulates in Article 2 that it is prohibited “to sell, supply, transfer or export... equipment which might be used for internal repression... to any person, entity or body in Libya or for use in Libya” (ASGI, 2019; Council of the European Union, 2016: 3).

These projects and policies, whereby the Italian government devolves responsibility over the interception and detainment of migrants to the Libyan government, represent a form of indirect rule, as they enable the Italian government to curtail migratory flows through increasingly unethical means, whilst simultaneously denying its involvement. By outsourcing its border control prerogatives to a country with as poor a human rights record as Libya, which “is not a State party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, nor to its 1967 protocol”, Italy is effectively exploiting the political and social turmoil of its former colony, thereby “involving [this] migrant-sending countr[y] in the ‘struggle against migration,’... [and] moving the complex task of managing migration outside the rule of law” (UNHCR, 2014: 1; Paoletti, 2010).

4.3 The EU as puppet-master, Italy as the puppet, Libya as the comprador government and the migrant as the subaltern subject

According to Distretti, the Mediterranean Sea has long been a “crossing place and privileged site for exercising control over and policing the bodies of colonial subjects”; however, the subjects crossing the sea today are not Libyans, they are migrants and refugees fleeing other former colonies and war-torn countries (Distretti, 2018: 132). Therefore, it is more accurate to refer to Italy as the coloniser, Libya as the comprador actor and the migrant as the colonised subject. The legacy of Italy’s history as a colonial power exercising control over the colonial subject can be seen in the Italian government’s strategy of anonymisation, an issue which Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben touches on in his seminal work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). The process of anonymising the other is achieved, according to Distretti, through “the illegal pushbacks or direct physical violence by border guards... and ‘the criminalisation of [humanitarian] assistance’” and through the illegalisation of migration (Distretti, 2018: 135). In denying entry to migrants and refugees seeking asylum, forcing them to return to Libya and detaining them without first properly identifying them, they are effectively rendered anonymous, their deaths forgotten and the sites where they are buried turned into “non-sites of memory” (Cesari, 2012: 317). The government strategy of rendering subaltern bodies anonymous through a process of dehumanisation is certainly not a new development. Indeed, Aimé Césaire argued back in 1972 that colonialism was not “a mere form of exploitation but... a real practice aiming at the dehumanisation and objectification of the colonial subject... [in other words] ‘colonisation = thingification’” (Césaire, 1972, cited in Distretti, 2018: 137). Several key scholars have argued that the Mediterranean Sea has long constituted a space for the “dehumanisation and objectification of the colonial subject” and that it continues to act as a location where the postcolonial migrant body is anonymised and controlled today (Distretti, 2018; Wright, 2014). Indeed, it has since European colonialism become the embodiment of Agamben’s “state of exception”, whereby the state creates a realm outside of the border “where sovereign power can be exercised by a handful of individuals that are allowed to impart a ‘decision without recourse, without appeal, and without debate’” (Salter, 2008, cited in Marino, 2016: 4). In conjunction with this state of exception is the aforementioned *homo sacer*, or, in other words, the sacred man who is “both inside and outside of the law... [and] can [therefore] be killed by anybody with impunity as his killing cannot be considered

homicide” (Davitti, 2018: 1181). In other words, the “mare nostrum” (our sea), as the Romans once called the Mediterranean, belongs to Italy, to the EU and to its border control allies, such as Libya, yet it excludes “black bodies” (Einashe, 2018).

The Italian government is a major force behind the anonymisation of migrants and the creation of a state of exception in the Mediterranean Sea, yet it still remains for the most part a mediator between the EU and Libya with the former in reality pulling the strings by exploiting Italy’s peripheral role within the bloc and its cultural and geographical in-betweenness to curry favour with the Libyan government. Indeed, since the 1990s, Italy has played a crucial role in negotiating immigration and border agreements between Libya and the EU (Brambilla, 2014: 231). Italy’s status as intermediary between the EU and Libya on matters related to migration, as opposed to being a former colonial power with neo-colonial aspirations, is further complicated by the peninsula’s lack of autonomy due to the bloc’s subsidiarity principle, which “essentially asks for the adoption of collective measures at a coordinated, if not central, level” (Balboni, 2021). This principle is exemplified by Article 67, clause 2, of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which stipulates that the EU “shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between Member States”, yet this presupposes the existence of solidarity between Northern and Southern European states (European Union, 2012: 73). Instead, much like the EU’s joint strategy of centralisation and devolution in border states (see Chapter 3), Italy is once again governed by the EU in matters related to migration and border control under a supposedly common framework, yet concomitantly left to its own devices with other EU members, such as Austria and France, refusing to accept more migrants and refugees, thereby forcing the Italian government to implement increasingly unethical measures to stem the flow of migrants disembarking on its shores (Lowen, 2020; Willsher, 2019).

It is clear, therefore, that Italy, despite its history of colonialism in Libya and its erstwhile hegemony in the Mediterranean Sea, is mostly a pawn in the EU’s war on migration, that the Italian and Libyan governments are not the only players involved in this war. Applying a postcolonial lens to Italo-Libyan relations over migration through the works of Agamben blurs the distinction between oppressor and subaltern, between victim and comprador and enables a more complex understanding of the Italian paradox.

Chapter 5. Italy and the Horn of Africa

So far, an exploration of Italo-European and Italo-Libyan relations in chapters 3 and 4 respectively has corroborated the existence of the Italian paradox, initially posed as a hypothesis in chapters 1 and 2. Furthermore, the research undertaken in these chapters has proven that Italy's unique condition, as both a former colonial power and a subaltern nation, explains the peninsula's foreign policy with the EU and Libya, its Mediterranean policy and its central role in the refugee crisis and its status internationally as both a major political and economic power and "the sick man of Europe" (Vicentini and Galanti, 2021: 1). This chapter brings together a plethora of themes that have been propounded throughout the paper, notably colonial aphasia, the *Italiani, brava gente* narrative and *Panmeridionale* solidarity and explores these themes in the context of Italy's foreign policy in the Horn of Africa and, more broadly, the African continent. In doing so, this chapter aims to explore another facet of the Italian paradox: the exploitation of Italy's subaltern past and present at the hands of the Italian government as a means of expanding its commercial and geopolitical interests and, ultimately, establishing neo-colonial partnerships in the Horn, the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa by partaking in the new "Scramble for Africa" (Adam, 2018). Ultimately, this chapter argues that Italy's paradoxical condition is not only crucial to understanding the Italian government's period of political and economic disengagement from the Horn and its renewed interest in more recent years as it attempts to present itself as a more reliable ally in Africa than its European counterparts but is a conduit for a more nuanced understanding of the Italian government's foreign policy in Africa and the direction in which it is heading.

5.1 The Italian government's strategy of colonial aphasia and *Panmeridionale* solidarity

In his speech to the Constitutive Congress of the International African Socialists in Tunis, Bettino Craxi, Italy's Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987, stated that "in every field, when it comes to Africa, we Italians are seriously behind others. Greeted everywhere with affection and respect, we have been late to organize a more effective policy, a more active and widespread presence" (Amdetsion, 2016). However, the *Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale*'s (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) report *Il Partenariato con l'Africa* (Partnership with Africa), published in 2020, calls into question these statements. Indeed, the report argues that Africa has always been "an absolute priority of Italian foreign policy" and that Italy is one of the global leaders in humanitarian intervention on the continent through its countless "missionaries, volunteers, experts, doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs" and one of its prime investors (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2020: 6, 19). This contradictory outlook on Italian foreign policy is not accidental. Indeed, it is the result of a sustained effort on behalf of the Italian government to promote a dual narrative of Italy, on the one hand, as a new player in Africa and, on the other hand, as the bridge between Europe and Africa and a nation with a long history of friendship and cooperation with the continent. Both narratives occlude Italy's history of colonialism in Africa through a process of colonial aphasia (see Chapter 2) and both exploit the Italian paradox by belabouring Italy's subaltern status through a Third World solidarity, the ultimate purpose of which is to portray Italy as a trustworthy political and economic partner with a completely sanitised history in Africa.

Both Craxi's speech and the government report touch on a number of themes previously mentioned, most notably the construction and weaponization, often by Italian politicians when discussing Italy's foreign policy, of the *Italiani, brava gente* narrative, in which Italians are

defined as benevolent and innocuous allies, not only to the global North, but also to the global South. This notion of Italian solidarity with the global South was in part propounded by Italian writing on *La Questione Meridionale*, a topic which was first explored by Antonio Gramsci but which Pier Paolo Pasolini re-adapted in *Appunti per un poema sul Terzo Mondo* (Notes for a poem on the Third World) to create what he refers to as the *Panmeridione*, an all-encompassing term, inspired by Pan-Africanism, and which “delineate[s] political continuities between India, sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab countries, and black America, [as well as]... Mediterranean and southern Italian workers and migrants” (see Chapter 3) (Trento, 2012: 141). This Pan-meridional thinking, though initially conceived by Pasolini as a form of Third World solidarity and, therefore, a counter-hegemonic force against North-South power asymmetries, both within Italy, within Europe and between the global North and South, has, in some cases even inadvertently, been adopted by Italian politicians since the post-war period to reinforce this notion of Italians as allies of the *Terzo Mondo* (Third World), to such an extent as to occlude Italy’s colonial past and conceal its neo-colonial aspirations today. Indeed, it is clear when analysing a number of speeches by Italian politicians, particularly in recent years, that the Italian paradox, or in other words Italy’s colonial and subaltern past, has placed it in a privileged position with respect to Africa. Such was the case, for instance, back in 2019 when Di Maio accused both France and the rest of Europe of halting development in the African continent through their neo-colonial exploits and not having the courage to approach the topic of decolonisation whilst rather explicitly leaving Italy out (Anonymous, 2019). This hypocritical attack ignores Italy’s colonial past in the Horn and implies a history of longstanding friendship between Italy and its former colonies. A clear example of the government’s demagoguery of the narrative of the benevolent *panmeridionale* Italian and the neo-colonial Northern European can be found in Prime Minister (from 2014 to 2016) Matteo Renzi’s speech at the 2016 *Conferenza ministeriale Italia-Africa* (Italy-Africa Ministerial Conference) where he effectively overlooked the history of Italian involvement in Africa by stating at the time “Italy is not nostalgic about the past, but about the future” (Zanfagna, 2016).

The *panmeridione* strategy can be traced all the way back to the various decolonising struggles of the 1950s and 1960s in France and Britain. For instance, in a parliamentary session held in 1882 on the question of Assab, a port city in Eritrea which had been occupied a decade earlier by the Italians, Member of Parliament Alberto Cavalletto openly condemned the violent means adopted by the French colonial administration in conquering Algeria, whilst concomitantly legitimising the occupation of Eritrea, as long as Italy’s intention remained that of civilising Eritreans, not violently conquering them (Camera dei deputati, 1882: 12181). The vociferous condemnation of the French occupation of Algeria and its ulterior purpose of undermining the gravity of Italy’s colonisation of the Horn, not to mention Libya, once again emerged during the Algerian War. Indeed, the 1960s saw Italy become “a site of anticolonial activism... with young progressive Italians sid[ing] actively with the Algerian liberation movement against French colonial occupation” (Srivastava, 2015: 311). This anti-colonialism, in part catalysed by anti-fascist rhetoric in the aftermath of World War II, however, never translated into a national decolonising debate over Italy’s colonial history (Powell, 2015: 455). This strategy of exploiting Italy’s paradoxical condition by virtue of a Pan-South solidarity and condemning other former colonial powers in Europe, whilst simultaneously precluding the resurfacing of Italy’s colonial history, all in order to create this false narrative of Italy as both a relatively new and benevolent player in Africa and a historic ally of the continent, is a strategy that was achieved thanks to Italy’s cessation of activities in the Horn.

5.2 Italian disengagement from its former colonies in the Horn of Africa from 1947 to the early 2000s

Italian disengagement from its former colonies in the Horn of Africa, Eritrea and Somalia, can be traced back to the period following the 1947 Treaty in Paris, in which Italy was forced by the Allies to relinquish its “colonial possessions” (UN, 1950: 387). Consequently, according to an ISPI report for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy ceased to profit from this region with little to no “significant bequests” left behind (Carbone et al, 2013: 25). Nevertheless, while the report argues that Italy no longer profited from the Horn following 1947, this political and economic disengagement from the region ultimately benefited the former colonial power, as “a process of true decolonization, in the sense of a confrontation between colonized and colonizers”, never took place, thus enabling the Italian post-war government to legitimise the narrative of Italians as *brava gente* and eliminating recollections of Italian colonial rule in the region in order to promote a supposedly altruistic foreign policy elsewhere in Africa (Novati, 2008: 41).

More concretely, the Italian government’s elimination of colonial recollections and its political and economic, not to mention humanitarian, disengagement from its former colonies in the Horn can be seen today in its lack of foreign aid to Eritrea and Somalia and in its lack of cooperation with these former colonies in stemming migration. An OECD report published in 2014, for instance, shows that, despite Eritrea being Italy’s first and longest-lasting colony, the Italian government’s priority countries for foreign aid in the region of the Horn included Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya but not Eritrea, regardless of the fact that it is one of the poorest countries on earth and has since 1993 suffered at the hands of dictator Issayas Afewerki who has caused a slew of humanitarian catastrophes (OECD, 2014: 78; Bosco, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2010: 15). This trend is occurring more broadly on a regional level in Africa with the vast majority of bilateral ODA (Official Development Assistance) agreements in 2019 being signed between Italy and states in Sub-Saharan Africa and the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), not the Horn (Donor Tracker, 2019). Therefore, notwithstanding Italy’s ranking as the tenth-largest donor country amongst the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, its ODA contributions to the Horn reflect its disengagement from the region post-1947 (Donor Tracker, 2019). The most conspicuous example of Italy’s disengagement, however, can be seen in its lack of cooperation with Eritrea and Somalia in stemming the flow of migrants arriving in Italy, despite the fact that in 2021 Eritreans and Somalis were among the most common nationalities embarking on the perilous journey (UNHCR, 2021). The aforementioned forty-four projects the Italian government has invested over 210 million euros in from 2015 to 2020 (see Chapter 4) are mostly focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb and countries in the Horn other than Eritrea and Somalia (ActionAid, 2020). For instance, the budget allocated towards the twenty-eight projects in Ethiopia and twenty-one in Sudan is of over 54,344,628 and 57,554,657 euros respectively, while the budgets for the four projects in Eritrea and four in Somalia is of only 5,081,606 and 6,022,509 euros respectively (ibid.). Rather than signing ODA agreements with Eritrea and Somalia, the Italian government has invested heavily in detaining migrants in detention centres, outsourcing its border control prerogatives to other countries in the Horn where abuse of migrants and refugees, according to reports by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, is widespread (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2020a :25; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2020b: 16).

Though the Italian government has for the most part detached itself from Eritrea and Somalia, thus not exploiting the historic ties with its former colonies to the same extent as other neo-colonial powers, this does not mean that Italy is not a neo-colonial power in Africa. On the contrary, the Italian government has rather astutely adopted a more implicit approach that has enabled it to expand its geopolitical role as the bridge between Europe and Africa and a leader in anti-immigration projects in regions, such as the Sahel, the Horn and the Maghreb and to take part in the exploitation of African land, resources and peoples (see following section).

5.3 Italy's re-engagement with the Horn and the Sahel in the new "Scramble for Africa"

Italy's relations with the Horn and with the rest of Africa take on new meaning when seen through the prism of the Italian paradox. Indeed, there appears to be a common thread between Italy's thirst for colonial expansion in order to satisfy its mission of political and economic self-aggrandisement in the nineteenth century and the neo-colonial machinations at the heart of the Italian government's foreign policy in Africa today, fuelled by a desire to partake in the "new Scramble for Africa" to find solutions to Italy's declining influence in the international realm and its economic woes (Adam, 2018). In other words, Italy's foreign policy, as with the EU (see Chapter 3), is once again affected by its position as a Southern peripheral economy and its ambitions as a former colonial power. This perception of Africa as the solution to Italy's political and economic turmoil, a strategy expressed by the 2013 ISPI report, is certainly not new (Carbone et al, 2013: 73). Indeed, according to Novati, the Italian liberal government in the late 19th century viewed the port city of Assab, and by extension the rest of Eritrea and its surrounding waters, as "a means of revitalising the national economy" (Novati, 2011: 250). While the government under Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, viewed the colonisation of the Horn as a means of resolving *La Questione Meridionale*, by redirecting Southern Italian emigrants "from *oltreoceano* (across the ocean) to the promised lands of its *oltremare* (across the sea)", thereby transforming Italy's emigration problem into a process of "bloodletting", rather than "haemorrhage" (Welch, 2016: 39).

This notion of Africa as the solution to political, economic and social turmoil in Italy was, therefore, the main catalyst for Italian involvement in the Scramble for Africa and is, once again, the driving force behind renewed engagement in the continent. The Italian government's twofold strategy of ceasing political and economic activities in the Horn and, concomitantly, promoting a positive and historically distorted narrative of Italians enabled the Italian government post-1947 to partake in the "new Scramble for Africa" by divagating its foreign policy into other African countries. Such was the case, for instance, in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique where the Italian government presented itself as a Pan-Southern ally through a slew of anti-colonialist initiatives, known as *iniziative terzomondiste* (third-world initiatives), "in favour of the liberation struggles" in these countries in the 1970s, whilst furthering its agenda of implicit economic imperialism through the extraction of oil, coal and gas (Carbone et al, 2013: 26). This dual strategy, once again, attests to the unique paradoxical condition of Italy, as it is able, unlike its colonial counterparts, to exploit its subalternity as a member of the global South (*panmeridione*) to curry favour with African states.

However, notwithstanding Italy's Third-world initiatives and economic imperialism in the 1970s, it was the 2010s that marked a true turning point in Italian foreign policy in Africa, as demonstrated by the Italian government's significant increase in foreign direct investment towards countries in Sub-Saharan Africa from 21.2 million US dollars back in 2000 to well over 638.5 million US dollars in 2011, a trend which shows no signs of slowing down (Carbone et al, 2013: 36). In an interview with magazine *Vita Internazionale* in 2015, Renzi laid out the main areas in which the Italian government hoped to invest, "despite the risks", from "oil and natural gas... [to] renewable energies and the agricultural sector" (Massarenti, 2015). These along with infrastructure, arms and military operations have all become avenues for the consolidation of neo-colonial relations between Italy and African host states.

Despite Italy's tardiness in partaking in the "new Scramble for Africa" when compared with other former colonial powers, it has covered an enormous amount of ground since the 2010s. (Adam, 2018). Italy's central role in the purchase of vast swathes of land (often at shockingly low prices), otherwise known as land-grabbing, means that it is third behind only France and

Britain in terms of acres of land owned and, therefore, one of the major neo-colonial powers operating in the continent today (Land Matrix, 2021; Franchi and Manes, 2012: 6). Another area in which the Italian government and Italian companies have invested heavily in Africa is infrastructure. One of the biggest infrastructure projects on the continent to be awarded to an Italian company is the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which is being built by the aforementioned construction company Salini Impregilo, now known as Webuild (see Chapter 4). The company has been accused by the Egyptian and Sudanese governments of ignoring “the environmental and social impacts resulting from the dam’s construction”, thereby exploiting underlying tensions between Ethiopia and its neighbouring countries for its own interests (Mikhail, 2021). Rodi argues that Webuild is “taking part in a dangerous project under the pretext that [it] is working for the benefit of Africa, which is not true” and that “the dam will cause a great deal of damage to [Ethiopia]... violat[ing] the rights of the people who live on the banks of the river (Rodi, 2010). The increased investment by Italian companies in infrastructure projects in the Horn and other African regions, such as the Sahel and the Maghreb, enables the Italian government to expand its influence in geopolitically and commercially significant areas. Such is the case with *Operazione Atalanta*, a major counter-piracy mission in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which is a clear example of the Italian government’s military involvement as a means of securing its interests in Africa. Indeed, Del Monte argues that while the Atalanta mission has received little media attention, it is “of vital strategic importance to... [the Italian government’s] interests in the Red Sea, which are inevitably linked to freedom of navigation and the expansion of trade” (Del Monte, 2019). In other words, the Italian government’s objective behind counter-piracy missions off the coast of the Horn of Africa is to protect and, subsequently, expand its trade routes, thus enabling it to become a major power in the region.

Overall, the Italian government’s new foreign policy of exploiting elements of Italy’s subalternity, *panmeridionale* solidarity and the *Italiani, brava gente* narrative through a systematic process of colonial aphasia and a near total political, economic and humanitarian disengagement from Eritrea and Somalia, has enabled it to promote a sanitised history of its presence on the continent, one of friendship, devoid of colonial and neo-colonial machinations. The 2010s marked a turning point in this twofold strategy of colonial aphasia/disengagement and re-engagement with Italy finally partaking in the new European scramble for African land and resources. In doing so, the Italian government has tightened its neo-colonial grip on Africa, securing its commercial interests through companies, such as Webuild, as well as expanding its geopolitical role in the “international chessboard” through infrastructure projects and military operations (Renzi, 2021, cited in Gentili, 2021).

Chapter 6. Conclusion: Italy's *Mediterraneo allargato* and political and economic turmoil in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

It is clear through this comprehensive appraisal of Italy's relations both past and present with the EU, Libya, Eritrea and Somalia, as well as other African states in the Sahel, the Maghreb and the Horn, that both the legacies of Italy's colonialism in Africa and its subalternity as an emigrant nation with a unique form of inner colonialism have permeated every facet of the peninsula's foreign policy. Furthermore, this in-depth dive into Italy's colonial and subaltern past, from the *Risorgimento* to post-war to contemporary Italy, shows that no aspect of Italian history is more significant in understanding Italy's national identity and its standing in the international realm than the Italian paradox.

The paper's findings are particularly salient today with the contrast between the Italian government's plans for a *Mediterraneo allargato* (wider Mediterranean) and its political and economic decline in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bufis argues that the Italian government's plans for a *Mediterraneo allargato* could extend far beyond simply the Mediterranean Sea, from the "Gulf of Guinea to the Indian Ocean, including the entire African Maghreb and the Sahel belt, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Arctic" (Bufis, 2021). However, while Italy is looking to expand its commercial interests and geopolitical role as far as the Arctic, the country has rather paradoxically been more adversely affected by the pandemic than its Northern European counterparts, a likely consequence of "the pre-existing weaknesses affecting the institutional and administrative system... [along with] political volatility" left behind by the Eurozone crisis, which Vicentini and Galanti argue created a "perfect storm scenario" (Vicentini and Galanti, 2021: 22). These pre-existing systemic issues in the Italian state system have, according to a report by Odendahl and Springford, led to longer lockdowns in Italy which will undoubtedly engender "longer recessions" and "further long-term economic divergence" between Italy and Northern European economies (Odendahl and Springford, 2020: 2). Furthermore, due to Italy's reliance on manufacturing, particularly its Northern regions, where activity in manufacturing plants was down by almost 80 per cent in 2020 according to some estimates, and its over-reliance on tourism, which is estimated to range between 6 and 13 percent of Italy's GDP, thus causing a severe impact on the Italian economy during the pandemic, it is hard to imagine Italy bouncing back any time soon (Odendahl and Springford, 2020: 6; Agenzia Italia, 2020; Pagella Politica, 2021).

It seems that the future of Italy's foreign policy will continue to see this bifurcation between increased investment in neo-colonial projects in Africa and declining power within the EU in the aftermath of another asymmetrical systemic shock, which will undoubtedly reinforce the North-South fracture that already exists between the core members of the bloc and peripheral border states, such as Italy. Indeed, Italy is set to continue being one of the largest investors in Africa as it sees the continent as a panacea for its geopolitical decline following the Second World War and its economic turmoil in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, with Italy's status

as “the sick man of Europe” once again on the lips of Northern European politicians and political analysts. Consequently, it appears that Italy’s paradoxical condition will continue to be an important factor in understanding Italy’s standing in the world and its foreign policy in Europe and Africa.

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