

THE FORMATION OF IMMIGRATION LAW IN ITALY:
Between Policy, Parties, Press and Public Opinion in 2007

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Abstract

THE FORMATION OF IMMIGRATION LAW IN ITALY: Between Policy, Parties, Press and Public Opinion in 2007 (Under the direction of John D. Stephens)

The current center-left government of Italy, under Romano Prodi, has adopted a long-term, integrationalist approach on immigration into Italy. Most apparent in the proposed citizenship bill of August 2006 and the Amato-Ferrero immigration bill of April 2007, the Prodi government has broken ties with the philosophy of the previous center-right government, epitomized in the Bossi-Fini law. Despite these intentions, however, the situation remains volatile, with the future of these legislative measures still undetermined, alongside many other institutional and social questions. Press reports and public opinion surveys highlight the emergent social complexities, recounting racist and revengeful attacks taking place against immigrant communities and increasing sentiments of insecurity, amongst demands for more integration of immigrants. Immigration is a reality in modern Italy, yet uncertainty characterizes both the pending legislation and the community responses, as the Italian government, under Prodi, finally attempts to acknowledge Italy's transition into a modern immigration country.

For Tito and the others,
For bringing us here and inspiring me to go back...

...and for the *pizzaiolo* from Morocco,
who told me he never once felt fear, only hope.

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Casa Italiana on 12th Street with Pasolini on the screen. It is from you that my inspiration to be both a scholar and professor truly comes.

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Preface

Lest we forget.

-Ralph Fasanella, *Family Supper*
Painting in the Great Hall of the
Ellis Island Immigration Museum, New York

Viaggi per rivivere il tuo passato?
Viaggi per ritrovare il tuo futuro?

Il viaggiatore riconosce il poco che è suo,
scoprendo il molto che non ha avuto e non avrà.
-Italo Calvino, cited in *L'Emigrato* March 2007

Things that happen before you are born still affect you.
And people who come before your time affect you as well.
We move through places everyday that would never have been
if not for those who came before us.
-Ruby in Mitchell Albom's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

I recognize that it was by the movements of my ancestors that I could live in freedom and equality, with access to education while pursuing my personal happiness, here in the United States. I myself have done nothing to deserve all of this. I benefit from their sacrifices and struggles. Should I have been born into a poor family, under an unstable government, with disease or violence threatening my survival, I am unsure whether I would have the strength to endure in my native land or manifest the courage to seek out a new home for my relatives, both living and unborn. This leads me to consider if we, as humans, have a natural right to free movement? If so, does this right exist within certain boundaries or beyond them? In my attempts to understand the reality of immigration in Italy and greater Europe, and even the United States, I often ponder such theoretical questions and encourage others to reflect on them as well. For those who fight

immigration, I cannot help but remind them that it is by no choice of their own that they were born into a situation that pleases them and allows them to live freely and in safety.

It is for this that I write of immigration not as a phenomenon to be fought, but rather, as a reality that must be understood. In my view, understanding is the key, which may someday even lead us to live together peacefully on one planet and within individual nation-states, despite our many supposed differences.

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Introduction

Immigration is a reality in modern Italy. The current Prodi government has recognized this fact in their long-term, integrationalist approach to the migrant presence, visible through the Amato-Ferrero immigration bill of April 2007 and the citizenship bill of August 2006, both pending parliamentary approval. The philosophy of this government, apparent in these legislative measures and the commentary of its leading politicians, is a clear break with that of the Berlusconi government and its immigration policy, the much criticized Bossi-Fini law. In the debate on these measures alone, the obstacles present themselves, most obvious being the loud, racist, extreme-right, vowing to fight these pending reforms. Beyond this however, many questions remain, both institutionally and socially, regarding immigration to Italy, leaving a volatile, uncertain situation despite the acknowledged truth of the migrant presence. Media events and public opinion polls highlight the complexity of the situation as insecurity rises and discrimination occurs, all amongst calls for increased integration through rights allocation. Despite the intentions of the current government in proposing an integrationalist immigration law, with extended residency periods, and quicker access to citizenship and universal rights, a long, arduous period of adjustment remains, as immigrants become established members of Italian communities. Immigration is a reality, yet uncertainty characterizes both the pending legislation and the community responses, as the Prodi government attempts to guide Italy in the direction of Europe, as a modern, advanced immigration country.

An examination of the prominent characteristics of Italian immigration, including economic and demographic demands for migrants, comprises chapter one. Chapter two traces the legislative history of Italian immigration, closing with an analysis of the current Amato-Ferrero bill and the political dialog debating its features. The final chapter presents the public forum, considering the role of political parties and the media, substantiated by press reports of April and May 2007, as well as public opinion surveys published during Spring and Summer 2007. Together these sections present a clear picture of the immigration reality in Italy, in order to fully consider all of the variables affecting the formation of immigration policy at present.

Chapter I

Italy's Immigration Reality

Quick Growth and Great Diversity

Italy has only recently begun experiencing a fast growing inward migration, marking a sharp change from a century as an emigrant nation. In 1975 Italy became an immigration country, as the net migration balance turned positive for the first time in its history and, in 1981, the migrant influx registered an overall increase in the total resident population (Petrillo, 1999: 233). However, this transition would take decades to set in, both publically and legislatively. This growth continued “constant and rather elevated” from then onwards, with the total foreign resident population growing from 400,000 to 1,400,000 during the 90s alone (ISMU, 2007: 8).¹ Today Italy has “one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in Europe,” having experienced a five-fold increase since 1981 (Calavita, citing Maciotti and Pugliese, 2004: 345, 347; ISMU, 2007: 8). This regular presence continues to grow at a rate of 300,000 new residency permits (“permessi di soggiorno”) a year, with roughly 200,000 (62.6%) for the purposes of working and 100,000 (29.3%) for family reunions (Caritas, 2006: 3). At the end of 2005 there were 3,035,000 immigrants in Italy, as estimated by Ministry of the Interior data, with the 2005 annual increase due to 187,000 new arrivals and 52,000 births to foreign citizens (Caritas, 2006: 2). This figure accounts for 5.2% of the population in 2005, up from over 4% in

¹This and all other subsequent translations from original Italian quotations were done by the author. A complete list of the original Italian quotations is available from the author at the request of any interested party.

2004 and is nearly equal to the percentage of immigrants across the entire European Union, also just over 5% (Caritas, 2006: 2). ISMU (Fondazione Sulle Iniziative E Studi Sulla Multietnicità) estimates that, in addition to over 3 million regular immigrants, Italy is home to 760,000 irregular migrants, as of 1 July 2006, rendering the overall total closer to 4 million, bringing the migrant presence to 7% of the entire population (2007: 7). These numbers will certainly increase in the coming years, with ISMU estimating between 5.5 to 7 million by 2016 (2007: 8).

The migration reality comprises a large variety of ethnic, national, racial and religious groups. They come not from one origin country and are not linked to any former colonies, as is the case with older European immigration countries. The continental breakdown of the countries of origin can be divided as Caritas sums up, “For every ten foreigners, five are European, two African, two Asian and one American,” with only one of the Europeans coming from inside the community (“comunitario”), even following the expansion to EU-25 (2006: 2). Romanians have the highest presence in Italy, which is expected to increase given their recent accession into the European Union. Coming from outside of the community (“extracomunitari”), Albanians and Ukrainians lead for Europeans, with Moroccans as the highest African presence, as well as Chinese and Filipinos as the largest Asian groups. Latin America, Uruguay and Argentina rank as the highest American origin countries for Italy-bound emigrants, many of whom are descendents of earlier Italian migrants (Caritas, 2006: 2). The occupations of the migrant groups in Italy can be broken down along national lines as well. Filippina and South American women make up the majority of the domestic service sector and North African men form the majority of the construction industry (Schierup et al. 2006: 180). These are

the largest immigrant occupations, along with agriculture. The construction industry incorporates the highest percentage of ‘illegal’ immigrants in the underground economy, whereas about 38% of migrants in Italy, of those originating from outside of the EU, are employed in agriculture, which itself is estimated to be more than 73% ‘irregular’ in some form (up to 85% in the South), including both legal and ‘illegal’ immigrants (Calavita, 2004: 357-8). Immigrants in regular jobs can be found in domestic work and manufacturing, which are also two of the growing fields for migrant work (Schierup et al. 2006: 184).

The Economic Role of Immigrants in Italy: Between Formal and Informal

Immigrants make their way in the “heavily unbalanced regional political economy of Italy,” by way of their corresponding statuses, with more legal residents in the North and more irregular migrants in the South, (Schierup et al. 2006: 168). The “bifurcated and segmented” Italian economy has formed within Italy’s historical divides and can be broken into three parts: strong, industrialized North-West, the weaker agricultural Southern economy, and lastly, the so-called “third Italy” which incorporates small and medium industries throughout the North-East and Centre (Calavita, 2004: 354). Informal work across various sectors characterizes the Southern economy, much more so than the North. Rome and Milan are the cities with the highest numbers of immigrants, with 11.4 and 10.9 percent, as centers of industry and services respectively (Schierup et al. 2006: 182). Lombardy, the region around Milan, retains almost one-fourth of the total migrant population, the highest of any region. The highest concentrations of immigrants to Italians are found in the small towns of the Veneto, Italy’s North-East, also referred to as

the “third Italy.” Here small firms, centered around family and artisan shops, cluster to form common “industrial districts,” to borrow Marshall’s term, like those in Brescia, Sassuolo, Prato, and Bologna. They produce quality products while maintaining market edge through subcontracting, flexibility and “incremental innovations.” (Ginsborg, 2001: 18; Putnam, 1993: 160). Immigrants are drawn by the offerings of these small firms: Flexible labor, less legislation, and close ties between employers and employees (Schierup et al. 2006: 182). As Schierup et al. writes, the Italian ‘economic miracle’ has “taken the character of a labour-intensive small business revolution, to a large degree premised on filling exactly the kind of jobs that only immigrants will take on.” (2006: 175). Several scholars agree that this sector of the Italian economy “needs immigrant workers” as they have “become an indispensable precondition for the recruitment of labour and a structural requirement for their further viability” (Calavita, citing Pugliese, 2004: 354; Schierup et al. 2006: 184). The high migrant presence in the “third Italy” is also proof of their movement into the regular labor force, employing 70% of all regular migrants and only 50% of natives (Gavosto, Venturini and Villosio, 1999: 608).

In the South, although regular jobs are less available, migrants do not see this as a problem, since the underground economy and socio-political traditions of the Southern regions sustain them. With weaker police surveillance and government intervention, as Schierup et al. reports “Migrants regarded being irregular or clandestine in a less regulated socio-economic context as less problematic,” like many natives (2006: 181). The underground economy represents 24.9% of the Italian GDP, on average from 1990-2003, employing a commensurate percentage of the workforce (Bovi, 2007; Calavita,

2004: 353).² More importantly, the underground economy has created another attraction for migrants, both legal and ‘illegal.’ As Reyneri argues “far from being an effect of the irregular immigration, the existence of an underground economy in the receiving countries would appear to be its cause” attracting migrants even despite law changes (Schierup et al. 2006: 183). Here Reyneri suggests, like many of those advising on Amato-Ferrero at present, that the way to quell illegal immigration and evasion by regular migrants as well, would be to cut off this resource.

The Demographic Role of Immigrants in Italy: A Resource or Not?

The current demographic situation in Italy necessitates immigration, however the future sustainability of the migrant presence remains uncertain. In *Replacement Migration: Is It a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?* the UN found that Italy “has the most rapidly ageing (and declining) population in the world and would have to admit 2.2 million immigrants annually for the next thirty years in order to fill labor demand and stave off crisis in its pension system” (Calavita, 2004: 352). Therefore, immigrants have the potential to ameliorate the impending demographic crisis by not only filling jobs, but also by paying into the pension system for Italy's natives, as population replacement capability in Italy declines. The above 65-year old group will be one third of the population by 2050, with the working age group making up the remainder (Caritas, 2006: 3). Seventy percent of the immigrants to Italy are of working age (15-44), whereas only half of Italians are (Caritas, 2006: 3). Therefore, migrants have a heavy

² This estimate of the underground economy utilizes data from Schneider’s currency demand approach, just one of many methods of estimating the size of the underground economy.

influence on the labour market, with 10% of those employed coming from outside the European Union (Caritas, 2006: 3).

Secondly, Italy ranks amongst Spain and Japan for the world's lowest birthrate (Schierup et al. 2006: 174). As Caritas reports, "In Italy, immigration will become, evermore, the one factor of demographic growth able to remedy the prevalent decline of births" (2006: 3). The birthrate amongst Italian women is 1.25, yet amongst foreign women it averages to 2.4, going as high as 4 for Moroccan women and as low as 1.7 for Polish and Romanian women, making "foreign births" almost 10 percent of all total births in Italy (Caritas, 2006: 3; ISMU, 2007: 9). The 1991 census recorded 50,000 minors among the immigrant population, which by 2005 grew to 585,000, a more than ten-fold increase, due to family reunions and a higher birthrate (ISMU, 2007: 9). Furthermore, such a high and increasing presence of immigrant minors on Italian territory justifies the current reconsideration of Italian citizenship law, which has refused to acknowledge them until now.

However, scholars still debate the benefits and sustainability of the welfare state in reference to the immigration reality. In the literature, the argument takes two dominant views: migrants either take more from the welfare state or they help to make the current system more sustainable. The first view holds based on the images of irregularity and illegality associated with the migrant presence, where they do not pay taxes and fall amongst the neediest population of the state, with lower incomes and more health concerns. However, migrants do pay indirect taxes and many studies show that they do not take more from the state than do natives (Boeri, 2006; Del Boca and Venturini, 2003; Moscarola, 2001). As a resource to the welfare state, migrants respond to the drastic

demographic changes taking place in Italy at present, supporting the pension system as working-age migrants, with higher birthrates at arrival, thus, supporting future pensioners as well. Furthermore, their role as domestic service workers is essential in remedying the severe lack of care resources in the Italian welfare model. However, the idea that they will continue to support the pension system ignores the fact that they will one day pull from it also, as their age and time in the country increases. Secondly, their higher birth rates at arrival are likely to adjust to those of the native population, as is custom after one or two generations. Tito Boeri, a renowned immigration scholar and economist, considers and tests each of these features and, in the end, concludes:

neither the pessimistic view that migrants abuse the welfare systems, nor the opposite, optimistic, view that migrants can increase the sustainability of European social security survive to empirical (in the former case) and theoretical (in the second) screening. Yet, Europeans seem to believe in the pessimistic view (2006a: 11).

Despite their work, natives fear that the migrants will be a drain on the welfare state. Boeri makes this important distinction between reality and perception, as shown in Eurobarometer surveys. In Italy 41.5% of the population agreed with the statement “Minority groups exploit the system of social welfare,” compared to more than 50 percent of the EU population at large (Boeri, 2006a: 3). With such a sentiment, there is the reaction to both deny entrance and rights to migrants. Pastore notes that the main point of “political and ideological opposition” to immigration often falls on the terrain of rights (2007: 8). Amongst demands and expectations for integration however, the denial of such rights appears contradictory. This is the current policy debate in Italy, as the government looks to reform immigration law and, which, if successful, would grant resident foreigners more rights than ever before.

Chapter II

The Shifty Legislative History of Immigration in Italy

The repetitious failures and equivocal nature seen in Italian immigration legislation reveal that the Italian government has long refused to acknowledge the long-term immigration reality, addressed instead by emergency measures, as a phenomenon or invasion. This has been most apparent in the 1992 citizenship law and the 2002 Bossi-Fini law. Neglecting to recognize immigration as a truth that would continue into the future has limited the effectiveness of these measures. Furthermore, improper implementation has, time and time again, diminished the potential of even the laudable provisions of these laws. Although Amato-Ferrero looks to reform the situation today, these failures remain to haunt the political dialog, as shown below.

Italy's migrant population began to grow more rapidly into the 1980s, as Northern European countries began to tighten their controls on immigration. Southern European countries, with a "legislation gap," without "administrative barriers" on immigration, thus attracted migrants (Bonifazi, 2000: 240; Schierup et al. 2006: 186). By the late 70s, potential migrants knew of Italy as "easy to enter without permits of residence and with lax border control... with fair opportunities for an undocumented migrant to find a job" (Schierup et al. 2006: 186). Until the creation of the first law in 1986, impromptu ministerial decrees governed incoming migration.

The 1986 Foreign Workers and the Control of Illegal Immigration Law (Legge No. 946/86) was motivated 1) by a desire to prevent abuses of illegal immigration, 2) by

international treaties to grant immigrants workers rights, and 3) by pressures from Europe to tighten the weak southern borders of the now incorporated European Community. It included the first legalization program, which served to legalize 119,000 migrants, a small percentage since estimates of the undocumented immigrant population then ranged between 600,000 and 1.2 million (Bonifazi, 2000: 240). Several scholars determine that this lower outcome was due to the requirement that migrants request to be regularized by their employers (Calavita, citing Onorato, 2004: 368). It also included sanctions on employers who hired 'illegal' migrants. Most importantly, it introduced a foreign worker's rights policy, which set migrants as equal with Italian citizens. Such a policy, especially with an "early and straightforward introduction" in legislation is one of the brightest features to ever appear from Italian immigration policy; despite ever increasing attempts at control, these rights have remained a central feature of Italian policy (Sciortino, 2004: 123). Amato-Ferrero now hopes to grant political participative rights as well. Although the 1986 law set the bar in terms of immigrant's rights, unfortunately it also established the tradition of flawed implementation of Italian immigration policy, as Onorato notes, "the chronic vice of Italian politics is an excess of legislation and a deficit of implementation," which began early on (Calavita, 2004: 367).

In 1990 came the Martelli Law (Legge No. 39/90) which included a second legalization and attempted to devise a quota system. The quota system, not implemented in a timely fashion in the following years, diminished the success of this law. This legalization reached 235,000 undocumented migrants and appeared more effective than that of 1986, since immigrants themselves could independently seek regularization without divulging the name of their employer in most cases (Bonifazi, 2000: 241). Also,

employers were not responsible to pay for social security contributions or taxes for the years prior to the legalization, for their now regularized employees (Calavita, 2004: 369).

In 1992, in spite of the diminishing numbers of Italian emigrants, Italian migrants abroad, and the State alike, viewed a new nationality law to be a necessity, changed for the first time since 1912. As the introduction to the new law (Legge No. 91/92) on Italian nationality reads:

in an era when migratory movement is substantially reduced and the communities abroad are now stabilizing and integrating themselves into their respective local societies... it appears... [to be] in the interests of the national community – besides responding to an explicit expectation by the Italian communities abroad – to enable those who wish to do so to maintain the legal, but also cultural, sentimental bond represented by nationality (Pastore, 2004: 33).

In a seemingly contradictory response to the assimilation of generations of Italians into new national environments, the Italian government took action to reinforce ties with these individuals. The changes in this law reinforce the *jus sanguinis* values at the core of Italian citizenship, which give preference to bloodline, rather than residency, in imparting citizenship. This has a distinct bias against immigrant communities in Italy proper. Following this law, second and third generation descendents abroad could assume Italian nationality if they had spent two years in Italy upon turning 18. Foreign nationals born in Italy could seek Italian nationality only if they had lived in Italy continuously since their birth until the age of majority. Otherwise, foreign nationals could apply for citizenship only after residing in Italy for ten years. The minor incorporation of *jus soli* citizenship principles for migrants (where nationality rests on place of birth), is nonetheless seen as comprising unrealistic expectations, holding back an emerging new reality, as Bonifazi criticizes:

It is significant that this law, on which all the political parties agreed, came into force less than two years after the National Conference on Immigration, in which many speakers highlighted the birth of a new, multicultural Italy. While the political debate seemed to take into account the new trends in migration flows... little was actually done in practice for the concrete management of immigration in the field of naturalization. Indeed the law showed how, in the 1990s, Italy still wanted to consider itself as a country of emigrants rather than immigrants; this reflects an idea deeply rooted in Italian culture (2000: 248-9).

Other scholars echo that criticism, citing the 1992 law “as a proof of a strong, though not outwardly very visible, exclusionary view in the Italian polity,” which has kept naturalizations down, as shown in the work of immigration scholar Feruccio Pastore (Sciortino, 2004: 125). Furthermore, scholars also accredit the influx of Albanian migrants in the early 90s and the media attention it generated with having radicalized and politicized the dialogue on immigration and tarnishing public opinion on the issue (Sciortino and Colombo, 2004). The 1992 law appears to be the critical reaction to that discourse. As of August 2006, there were plans to create a new citizenship law, as part of the complete immigration package being presented by the Prodi government, which will be discussed in the following pages.

In 1996, Prime Minister Dini’s Law sought to address both the illegal presence of migrants as well as their employers who were breaking the law. This amounted to a third legalization with 236,000 undocumented migrants legalized, while a more adequate and complete response came two years later (Bonifazi, 2000: 243).

The Turco-Napolitano Law (Legge No. 40/98), created and supported by the Center-Left *L’Ulivo* coalition, was to be the first attempt to address the migration reality with complete, advance policy planning. Bonifazi writes, as the law was still working out application, “The change from emergency decrees to more ordinary parliamentary

procedures is undoubtedly a positive step” (2000: 244). It has been hailed as the first “systematic and comprehensive treatment” of migration, with detailed regulations on entry, expulsion, family reunion, integration and discrimination (Calavita, citing McBritton and Galofaro, 2004: 369). This was necessary since the economic need for migrants was becoming more structural and long-term, requiring an elongated presence of migrants in the Italian labour market and society at large.

Turco-Napolitano attempted to address these changes in various ways. Workers who lost their jobs did not immediately lose their residency permits; rather they had a year to seek a new job. Undocumented migrants were granted access to public schools and emergency medical care. Turco-Napolitano introduced the permanent residence card (“carta di soggiorno”), particularly for those with extensive legal residency in Italy, which guaranteed access to welfare amongst other benefits and, after its five-year duration, was continuously renewable. However, very few took advantage of this program, which Sciortino attributes to the measure receiving low administrative priority as well as differences of application across the territory (2004: 125). Article 12 of Turco-Napolitano established the CPTA (Centri di Permanenza Temporanea e Assistenza, translated as Centers of Temporary Stay and Assistance) or “reception centers,” described by critical scholars at the time as “administrative detention camps, where immigrants awaiting expulsion are interned and deprived of their personal freedom for no other crime than that of not possessing a residence permit” (Petrillo, 1999: 251). To reduce the pressure towards seeking illegal entrance, a sponsorship program was introduced, which attempted to coordinate needed economic sectors with migrant workers through migrant associations. This was paired alongside an annual quota system, which was not executed

properly, prompting scholars to describe it as “defacto ‘legalization rather than a foreign worker program’” since the totals for 1998 were announced in October of that year (Calavita, 2004: 371). The following year this improved slightly, with agreement on figures taking place in August. Subsequently, migrants already in Italy were considered to have filled those spaces. Sanctions against employers of undocumented workers, with up to \$3000 fines and a year in prison, completed this web of policies which were intended to minimize the facility of maintaining an illegal presence in Italy, now part of the Schengen Area (Calavita, 2004: 371).

Taken altogether, the Turco-Napolitano law was in parts at odds with itself, looking to help migrants, as they became a long-term fixture in Italian society, especially important in the economy, while at the same time, working to keep out or detain ‘illegals,’ where “the logic of expulsion and rejection prevails over that of acceptance” (Petrillo, 1999: 250). Although Calavita cited the law as “ambitious” at its beginning, in the end, none of the law’s principal features succeeded as planned (2004: 371). Even without the problems of application, Petrillo criticized the law, which held out on genuine citizenship through the residency card, leaving spaces where migrants could still become irregular. Instead of recognizing the long-term reality of the migrant presence “the climate of suspicion and the panacea of expulsion as a remedy for all ‘immigration evils’ are continually re-emerging in public discourse” (1999: 251). In 2002, these sentiments had the greatest sway and redirected Italian immigration law several steps backwards in fact, right where Petrillo predicted they were going.

In 2002 the Bossi-Fini Law (Legge No. 189/02) passed, bearing the names of two extreme-right party leaders, which in itself should explain the direction this law was to

take. It served to legalize 600,000 undocumented immigrants, hailed as the largest legalization in European migration history, surpassing the 1998 legalization which had previously held that title (Schuster, 2005: 761; Reyneri, 1999: 91). Despite this, Schierup et al. describes Bossi-Fini as “a discriminatory policy exacerbating most of the exclusionary features of the 1998 law while, in the same fell swoop, jeopardizing still further some of its potentials” (2006: 190-1).

Bossi-Fini completely did away with the sponsor program, the initially praised invention of Turco-Napolitano. Police and local administrations were given more power in the control of expulsion, allowing for more abuse and discretion. The novelty of the 1998 Law, the permanent residence card, instead of being renewed every five years, went to two, allowing for more bureaucratic layover and chances for migrants to fall into illegality, which Schierup et al. describes as taking “a major step towards again shutting the window on the formulation of a long-term policy of integration and social inclusion that was opened by the Turco-Napolitano Law in 1998” (2006: 190-1). It also has “further criminalized undocumented migrants” by linking residency permits to work permits, and therefore, made their status’ much more precarious (Schierup et al. 2006, 191). Bossi-Fini also made the migrant relationship with the CPTA more strict and severe. Migrants could now remain in the centers for up to 60 days, an increase from the 30 days stipulated under Turco-Napolitano. Now every undocumented migrant had to pass through, whereas before only in particular cases were migrants sent to these centers (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007a: 8 table).

Several scholars note the regression of Italian immigration policy from the fallout of Bossi-Fini, especially in rejecting the permanence that was then beginning to

characterize migration to Italy. Joppke, renowned citizenship scholar, highlights what Bossi-Fini did for migrants' status in European terms, making Italy:

a bit less like its European neighbors (where the permanence of most labor migrants is now a statutorily provided and constitutionally protected option) and a bit more like the new immigrant-receiving states in the Middle East or Asia, in which the migrant worker's temporariness is heavily enforced (Schierup et al. 2006: 194).

Italian immigration policy has had the effect of making it difficult to stay legal, since even before Bossi-Fini, as shown in the work of Schuster, Sciortino and here Mingione and Quassoli, who highlight the impracticality, brevity and insecurity of migrants' shifting statuses:

A comparison between Italy and other European countries shows how precarious the rights relating to residence for migrants are and how easy it is to lose them. The second and third amnesties highlighted how large was the number of applicants who had previously been given a permit and then had it withdrawn after a short period of time. Thirdly, the combined effect of opportunities for finding jobs in the informal sector, the low level of legal enforcement... and the provision of basic services (health care, soup kitchen, etc.) by many Catholic and lay associations has allowed migrants without papers to settle in Italian society (2000: 51).

The increasingly restricted access to legal entrance, as part of the control approach to migration, has continually caused the illegal presence to grow, especially since the Bossi-Fini Law went into effect. Amato-Ferrero now proposes to rectify this, as the Prodi government attempts to overturn all previous thinking on immigration into Italy.

Policy Formation Five Years Later: The Amato-Ferrero and Citizenship Bills

The current Prodi government looks to first, reverse the negative direction of migratory policy taken by the Bossi-Fini law of 2002 and secondly, go beyond the

comprehensiveness of even the 1998 Turco-Napolitano law, bringing together, for the first time in Italy's history, policies regarding immigration, integration and political participation (Patore, 2007: 3). Scholars have hailed this bill, together with the proposed changes to citizenship law, as "modernizing Italian migratory politics" in the direction of universal rights allocation (Pastore, 2007: 2). Therefore the Amato-Ferrero bill is a clear break with the Bossi-Fini law, inspired by a completely different philosophy towards immigration, as an undeniable, long-term process. On the Ministry of the Interior website, they have published an explanation of the bill, which also outlines the mission and efforts of the Prodi government towards immigration. Since being sworn in on 17 May 2006, this government has taken action to ameliorate the situation of immigrants in Italy and "to bring Italy into the European context" by both designing and passing eight policies ranging from easier family reunions to regulations against worker exploitation (Ministero dell'Interno, 2007c: 5). A government publication fleshing out the Amato-Ferrero reform on immigration law highlights the guiding principles of the Prodi government: "governing regular immigration in a rational way, favoring integration and discouraging irregular immigration" (Ministero dell'Interno, 2007c: 4). Running alongside the Amato-Ferrero bill are the proposed changes to Italian citizenship law, which emerge as the brightest sign of the intended transformation, with this government proposing a reform that would revolutionize Italy's migratory image of itself, from *jus sanguinis* emigrant nation to *jus soli* immigrant nation. These policy changes, along with the new approach to immigration, have gained a positive evaluation from scholars and international organizations. For example, the United Nations, in its report on racism in Italy, has already expressed approval with the direction of Prodi's government:

The Special Rapporteur noted the emergence of factors and positive trends to combat the dynamics of racism, discrimination and xenophobia within the Italian society reflected in a clear political will on the part of the Government, particularly at the central level.... This political will is illustrated by legislative initiatives such as the draft citizenship law, the announced reforms of the immigration legislation and the strengthening of the repressive measures to combat racism and abuse towards migrants... the strengthening of a rights-based approach to immigration and asylum within the Government and its institutions; as well as the steps taken for the improvement of the living conditions and quality of the legal protection granted in the various centres where immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are detained (Diène, 2007: 26).

Despite the government's intentions and such positive evaluations, the situation continues to remain volatile, with the future of the bill still uncertain.

The Amato-Ferrero law design was first unveiled in Mid-March 2007, receiving government approval on 24 April 2007 and the approval of the Council of Ministers on 28 June 2007, where it was nearly unchanged. However, it must now go to both chambers of Parliament for debate and approval. Should it pass here, the government then has a year to draft the particular regulations and procedures for its application throughout the institutions of the State. The citizenship law received approval in the Council of Ministers as of 4 August 2006 and no further action has yet been taken on this measure, although it similarly would still require parliamentary debate and implementation procedures. Besides these unfolding legislative processes, other institutional areas in need of reform still complicate the future of immigration policies in Italy, as largely apparent in the political debate on the bill thus far.

The current discussion of Amato-Ferrero largely follows left and right lines, not surprising since a center-left government is reforming a law created by two extreme-right politicians, instituted under Berlusconi's center-right government. The analysis of the

bill which follows, unfolds within this left-right political discussion. Several features which create significant changes or have stirred particular debate will receive attention here.

The need for these reforms is itself embattled in a left-right tug-of-war, with the left arguing that the failure of Bossi-Fini has warranted the great changes which compose Amato-Ferrero. Both Amato and Ferrero, as well as others within the center-left government note the failure of Bossi-Fini, most particularly in having created more “clandestinità,” or irregular, clandestine migration. The Minister of the Environment, Scanio, agrees that Amato-Ferrero “is a civil and balanced provision which remedies the disasters of the Bossi-Fini” and “serves to bring into legality a situation that has seen a boom in clandestinitny, due to... the inefficiencies of the Bossi-Fini law” (*Tgcom*, 2007c). On the right, the evaluation is quite different and rather disconcerting, following the analysis of scholars cited above. The changes proposed in Amato-Ferrero are based “on the false presupposition that the Bossi-Fini law has failed” says Maroni, one of the *Lega Nord*’s advisors to the Chambers which is echoed, with almost the same wordchoice, by Mantovano of the *Alleanza Nazionale* (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007d; *Notizie ANSA* 2007c). Fini, leader of the *Alleanza Nazionale* and father of the law in effect, defends himself and fights the criticisms of the left, “it departs from the presupposition that in Italy there are many clandestine migrants, a true thing but not certainly from the failure of our law, but because in many cases the magistrates do not carry out expulsions” (*La Repubblica*, 2007e). Maroni takes this blame further, in order to decry both the current proposal and the former, center-left law of 1998, as well as defend some of the results of Bossi-Fini which have been criticized by the left:

Thanks to the reintroduction of the ignoble institution of the sponsor, responsible for the clandestine immigration that the Berlusconi government had to check with the mega-regularization of 800,000 extra-communitarians in 2003, once again the doors are open wide to rampant immigration (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007d).

Although Fini blamed the current high presence of clandestine migrants on the inefficiency of expulsions, the question remains as to how all of these immigrants entered in the first place. This is where scholars, countering Maroni's argument, reveal the failure of Bossi-Fini in similar terms, as Bonifazio and Bacci write:

The experience of Bossi-Fini demonstrates the inefficacy of actual procedures, formally very severe. If in fact, the beyond 650,000 regularized by law n. 189/2002 [Bossi-Fini], and given connected procedures, could be attributed to the 'laxism' of the previous governments, you certainly cannot say the same for the as many as 540,000 irregular migrants present in the country as of July 2005, three years after the application of Bossi-Fini (2007).

This is just the beginning of the shifting of blame, highlighting the difficulty to move beyond a mere critique of Italian immigration policy, since it is ever-present and all too often a central feature of the political dialogue itself. The features which are highlighted most of all on the left, as noted above, are the high numbers of irregular, clandestine migrants created by Bossi-Fini. Security and protection are the focus on the right, these being the principal demands of the Italian citizens, which Prodi's center-left government ignores, as the right contends.

The most important part of the bill, and much of the subsequent debate, covers entrance policies. As Amato-Ferrero proposes, migrants are to be granted entrance on the basis of triennial quotas, which permit annual changes as necessary, which both many center-right politicians and some liberal civil society groups state is very similar to the

Bossi-Fini entrance policy. The real “novelty,” in respect to entrance policies, is the return of the sponsor and auto-sponsor programs, which were completely done away with under Bossi-Fini. Although Amato-Ferrero allows for an online database to help create the link between “application and offer” for work, between the country of origin and Italy, the new legislation also grants entrance to migrants who do not have set positions, yet are looking for work. In an effort to ensure that they do not become a state burden, they can be sponsored by regional and local institutions or entrepreneurial, professional and union groups. Should potential migrants themselves possess adequate funds to do so, they may be their own “autosponsors” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007c: 10). The Prodi government cites the denial of these opportunities as the primary reason for the failure of Bossi-Fini, “because the way in which it regulates hiring abroad was not realistic for non-qualified personnel: no family would hire a baby-sitter without at least first having met her” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007c: 4). Several scholars and liberal organizations echo this critique of Bossi-Fini, noting the difficulty in finding work based from the origin country:

Experience teaches that in large part for employers, - families, but also shopkeepers, artisans, small businesses – the personal meeting with the worker is essential to decide their employment. It is then that a large number of foreigners, for most arrived regularly with a tourist visa, have searched for and found work, going to join the ranks of irregulars (Bonifazi and Bacci, 2007).

Entrance policies in turn have a significant effect on life in the destination country as well. Bossi-Fini leaves migrants, who may often change or lose jobs, in a more precarious situation by strictly tying entrance to work, as Boeri describes, cited in the government’s description of the reform:

The method followed by Bossi-Fini is a source of useless vexation for the immigrant and his employer and pushes towards irregularity. Every time the immigrant changes work (occurring on average, twice a year) they become constrained to live in a limbo, without rights and duties, or they must return to the country of origin with higher costs also for our economy (Ministero dell'Interno, 2007c: 4).

Making these entrance policies more flexible would therefore be an improvement.

However, questions remain as to how flexible they should be.

The parties on the right, active in doing away with sponsorship in 2002, still do not want to budge on this measure. For Fini, sponsorship “erases the distinction between clandestine and regular immigrants” (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007l). He emphasizes the ties to work, apparent in his law, still in effect, “Come those who have work, not those looking for it” (*La Repubblica*, 2007e). *Alleanza Nazionale* politician Carla De Albertis echoes her party leader, arguing on her website:

And now the Prodi government, with the Amato-Ferrero bill on immigration, puts our security in danger... At a time in which European countries, knowing the incumbent danger [of islamic terrorism which threatens us], look to protect their borders and citizens even more, they adopt more rigorous measures on the subject of immigration, the left opens the doors of Italy to all and erases the concept of ‘clandestinity.’ Everyone can enter to look for work (DeAlbertis, 2007).

Despite the analysis of scholars that Italy will be moving towards Europe with Amato-Ferrero, the European Union, in the form of an Italian himself, Franco Frattini, current European Commissioner of Freedom, Security and Justice, thus in charge of immigration affairs for Europe, has voiced criticism of the law on several points. The autosponsor provision is one of his main concerns. Following the 28 June 2007 approval by the Council of Ministers, Frattini noted: “The immigration politics of the Prodi Government are rousing a growing level of attention and worry in Brussels” to which he adds, “the

reaffirmed modality of the autosponsor for foreign citizens” serves “to open the national, and therefore European territory, to those engaged in organized crime” (ADUC, 2007a). He criticized the pending law generally,, using a phrase which many on the Italian right have used in their attacks on this bill: “The idealism (buonismo) of the Government will favor the invasion of clandestine migrants” (ADUC, 2007a). Boeri, agrees that the autosponsor could be problematic, while the sponsor program should stay:

The sponsor can be, above all, a channel to facilitate the entrance of average or unskilled workers, that have more difficulty integrating and which confronts the employer who would be, in this way, greatly responsible.... The idea of the autosponsor, instead, seems largely able to be manipulated by those organizing the flows of clandestine migrants and, therefore, risks to impede any control of flows. In sum, the sponsor is good, but not the autosponsor (2006b).

Perhaps here then both the right-wing politicians and European leaders have a warranted concern regarding the autosponsor, but the policies of legal inaccessibility of Bossi-Fini are now established as a failure, therefore still leaving questions as to how to create more flexibility without illegality at arrival.

The guiding principle of Amato-Ferrero is the acknowledgment of immigration to Italy as a long-term reality, as shown in proposals for longer residency permits and for equality and integration on the basis of rights. Both measures would serve to bring Italy up to modern, European standards. The Amato-Ferrero bill includes an extension of the period for residency permits, with the period of original issue doubling upon their renewal and more time allowed between jobs. Some have judged this to be the greatest change in the law, allowing less bureaucracy and lower costs, while allowing migrants more of a chance to stay legal once they assume that status for the first time (Paggi, 2007). This provision becomes important since the Prodi government has vowed to fight

against illegality and depicted itself as overturning the philosophy of Bossi-Fini, which sought the temporariness and control of migrants' statuses. Neither the left-wing nor right-wing politicians have had much to say on this transformative measure.

In envisioning long-term integration, parity of rights takes on great importance in this bill. Although Bossi-Fini emphasized control and reduced access for migrants, Amato-Ferrero seeks to place migrants from outside of the European Union on par with those from within, giving the right to vote, as well as access to positions within the public administration to foreigners with five years legal residency. Some more extreme politicians on the right, like Calderoli, have hailed this as a violation of the Italian Constitution, which grants voting rights only to citizens. His criticism is perhaps emblematic of the right's philosophies, at odds with Amato-Ferrero, as Bonifazi and Bacci note:

The center-right... through the Bossi-Fini law, has sought to reinforce the temporal character of the migration phenomenon, strictly tying arrivals and presence to the exigencies of the labor market. Different is the orientation of the center-left that aims to develop the conditions for the full integration of immigrants and their families, to make them become active and constituent in our society (2007).

Prodi's government is thus proposing a social security approach to migration, highlighting equality and integration. Changing citizenship law in order to allow migrants to become citizens sooner, as proposed in August 2006 would join Amato-Ferrero in legislating a long-term migrant presence.

The proposed law on citizenship, forming the second piece of the Prodi Government's reform of immigration policies, has been cited as "epochal" by leading immigration scholars (Pastore, 2007: 2). It has proposed three main areas of change: 1)

halving the number of years necessary to become a citizen (from ten to five), 2) granting citizenship to babies born on Italian territory (*jus soli*), should at least one of their parents be legally resident for at least five years, and 3) lastly, permitting minors to apply for residency after five years and on other grounds. These last two provisions would drastically change the present legal requirement that minors (and even those born in Italy) reside in Italy, without interruption, until the age of majority in order to qualify for Italian citizenship. In this way, the new law makes much room for the attribution of citizenship on the grounds of *jus soli* principles, which until this point, have only made little headway in Italian citizenship policy. In facilitating a long-term migrant presence with changes to the citizenship law, this is another move by the Prodi government to place Italy in line with European thinking. Ambrosini writes on this, invalidating many of the criticisms of the right:

Citizenship after five years is not an idealistic, hyper-generous, or excessive opening in respect to international standards. The same criteria is in force in France, in the United Kingdom, the United States, not to speak of the three years in Canada and of the two in Australia. The ten years, if ever, of the precedent norm were anomalies, to which a preliminary investigation, that lasted on average three years, and a discretionary response (negative in half of the cases), were made to follow on the part of the Italian authorities (2006).

Also in terms of minors living within and children born on Italian territory, Ambrosini argues the righteousness behind the 2006 bill, compared to the injustices done to them in the 1992 law:

the norm consents to heal the anomaly, on the part of the children of immigrants, who are made stateless persons, which has rendered uncertain their right to reside in Italy once reaching majority age and has contrasted with the request for full legal integration in our country. On the contrary of what some have written, *jus soli* (and *jus domicili*) is being imposed as

criteria for the concession of citizenship in most advanced countries (2006).

Jus soli is a move in the right direction, towards modernity. Furthermore, as Ambrosini alludes to above, granting migrants citizenship reveals an earnest “public offer of integration,” since it is “contradictory” to ask migrants and their children to integrate “in a socio-political system that programmatically excludes them” (2006). These changes to citizenship law then appear to be the only direction to go.

Outside of long-term integration policies, the Prodi government looks to also transform the procedures on detention. The Amato-Ferrero bill also addresses the issue of the CPTA, predicting their “emptying” over the coming years. The insight which has led to these proposals was realized in an investigation of the weaknesses and failures of the CPTA system, conducted during the Fall of 2006 and revealed in the DeMistura Commission Report of 31 January 2007, another large effort under the current Ministry of the Interior. From this the necessity of the centers is established, as is their inefficient and often inhumane tendencies. Government, civil society and media groups will be allowed access as a control on conditions and treatment. The centers are not to be the points of arrival for all who enter Italian territory and stays will be shortened. Expulsions will be the main service of these centers and will no longer take place with border escorts (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007: 15-6). The Amato-Ferrero bill pledges cooperation between the migrants and the Italian government in coordinating expulsions (with added benefits for the migrant), as well as funds for repatriation. Extreme politicians on the right, like Carla De Albertis have protested this last point in particular,

The repatriation of irregulars will happen through negotiation that will ‘convince’ them to return to their country and, listen! listen!, a national

fund will be instituted for repatriations: we will be left speechless, with our money to pay for their return trip! (2007).

Frattini interprets “svuotamento,” literally “emptying,” as symbolizing closure, asserting that Italy would then be in violation of the Schengen Treaty (which led to the creation of CPTA in the first place). However, Pastore argues, “it does not seem that the line of reform of (and not the closure of) the CPT proposed in the law design would be in conflict with the minimum requirements of the Schengen norm” (2007: 6). At the same time, there are liberal civil society groups still arguing for their complete closure, some even holding protests in Bologna in July 2007 (Pace e Diritti Umani, 2007). Despite these proposed advances, questions remain regarding the legislative future of both the immigration and citizenship bills, which still must pass through parliament. Already comments from center-right coalition members prove that these will not be easy victories. Extreme-right politicians, like Calderoli, have announced this as “a declaration of war, with others pledging a “hard battle” as the bill reaches parliament (*La Repubblica*, 2007m; *Notizie ANSA*, 2007c). Both Calderoli and Fini have hailed the willingness of the right-wing coalition, *Casa delle Libertà* (House of Freedoms), to bring about an abrogative referendum “on a law that puts at risk our homes, work, identity and even our own lives” (*La Repubblica*, 2007d). On the left, coming from parties and civil society groups, and scholars even, the concern regards more institutional obstructions, expressing the fear that this law will not be properly implemented. These organizations note the “immobilism” of the government, which remains powerful enough to off-set any changes proposed in the current bill, despite their validity (Pace e Diritti Umani, 2007). More

importantly, they cite this elongated law process, the inherent emptiness in the “disegno di legge” as only a “law design,” without legal text and specific provisions (Paggi, 2007).

Other weaknesses remain beyond the reach of Amato-Ferrero. Italy is known to be “late” on an organic law on asylum and a criminal law on racism, without legislative proposals in these areas as of yet. Another huge variable remains: the 760,000 ‘illegals’ currently living in Italy, as of July 2006 (ISMU, 2007: 7). Frattini himself has made an issue of this, reprimanding Italy for a supposedly announced legalization. However, Amato has denied that claim and has highlighted its absence from both the bill and other official announcements (ADUC, 2007c). However, for a government fighting “clandestinità,” the path still remains unclear regarding these ‘illegals.’ A mass expulsion? Posing the question alone reveals that more needs to be done to coordinate legal entrance, since illegal arrivals become an even greater problem into the future. Another concern, which relates strongly to the illegal presence, is the *economia sommersa*, or underground economy. The future shape of migration to Italy significantly hinges on the fate of this resource. Should immigrants become irregular or find legality too much of a burden, either in time, patience or finances, they have the underground economy as an easy exit option. Scholars and international organizations alike point out that this feature deserves more attention in the discourse, with the UN noting:

in the view of the Special Rapporteur, the discourse of the authorities supporting a model of legal migration within quotas established on the basis of needs of the labour market is challenged by the reality of an important number of migrants working in the illegal sector. Fundamental questions need to be raised in this context (Diène, 2007: 25).

Bonifazi and Bacci, in the final lines of their analysis of the law design, note that “much depends... above all, on the capacity to drain the underground economy,” pinning the

success of Amato-Ferrero to this feature so ingrained and substantial within the Italian socio-economic context (2007).

Many political factors also play a role, in the remaining insecurity of these reforms. With a slim majority in both houses of parliament sustaining the entire coalition itself, the left not only will have a tough time passing this legislation, but in retaining power it seems, having already had to re-create its coalition in February 2007 amid foreign policy pressures which withdrew support away from Prodi's government. In April 2007, the current government sustained an added blow when they lost several seats to the right-wing in administrative elections, including the victory of a deputy mayor running for the *Lega Nord* on the Island of Lampedusa, Italy's southernmost point, 70 miles off the coast of Africa. This landmark success was largely due to an anti-immigration consensus between the groups (Alliosi, 2007). Beyond this year's events remains the impossibility of predicting the composition of future governments. Should the center-right regain the majority and assume premiership there is no guarantee that these sweeping changes would remain. The move from Turco-Napolitano to Bossi-Fini presents an all-too worrisome precedent.

Chapter III

The Public Forum: Parties, Press and Public Opinion

Although some of the voices and opinions in the immigration dialogue have already been made apparent in the analysis of Amato-Ferrero, they warrant more inspection as forces unto themselves. Here the role of political parties and the media are examined, alongside news reports and public opinion polls, to assess more profoundly the degree to which Italy, as a whole, has affirmed the new immigration reality and current government's package on the issue.

In any country, one can expect that politics and the media would play a large role in the discourse on immigration. In Italy however, this is made complex by the addition of other actors, the extremity of the views depicted by these players, and the tight relationship between them (Saint-Blancat and Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005: 1083-4). Allievi outlines the three factors which have influenced the 'perception of islam' in Italy, such as the "alarmist declarations" of some leaders affiliated with the Catholic Church, like Cardinal Biffi of Bologna and the publications of intellectuals like Giovanni Sartori and Oriana Fallaci. The third and most important is the "crusade" of the *Lega Nord* which also strongly impacts the public perception of immigration, beyond that of Islam (Allievi, 2003: 150-1). *Lega Nord* and other extreme-right parties, like *Alleanza Nazionale*, are to blame for the bulk of the extreme views in Italy's migration dialogue, then amplified across media outlets. Beyond these, Schmidt di Friedberg notes the particular importance of the local political dimension, which becomes inflated, to assume

symbolism on a national scale, as local incidents involving immigrants become national press events, as seen in the four examples discussed in the upcoming pages. Therefore, across these outlets, Italy's immigration question has not been addressed through an open or level-headed dialogue.

These extreme tendencies started appearing, in the press particularly, in 1989-1991. In their overview of three of Italy's leading publications for 1969-2001, Sciortino and Colombo discover three "discontinuities" in the press dialogue on migration, marking the period 1989-91 as distinct from the two decades prior: "the development and institutionalization of an undifferentiated and totalizing notion of 'immigration'; the politicization of the topic; and the thematization of immigration as an area of social conflict" (2004: 106). These changes reflected the pressures and fears of the period itself, both founded and unfounded, and furthermore, established the basis for the dialogue at present.

In this same period, from 1989-1991, migrants were generalized at the center of a single phenomenon, grouped together generally as "extracomunitari." This in turn, as Sciortino and Colombo assess, provided for "the launching of immigration as a major national problem and its politicization, as politicians become a legitimized source of information on the issue" (2004: 103). As politicians took the spotlight as speakers on immigration, increasingly into the nineties, they served to "legitimize the far-right's view of foreigners as unbearable burdens. Thus, respected leaders convert the new minorities into problems, despite whether they may actually be or not" (Pettigrew, citing Koopmans, 1998: 97). Pettigrew notes how this affected the way the issue was promoted and

received before the public, showing that the negative attitude towards foreigners grew most drastically in Italy between 1988 and 1991 (citing Melich, 1998: 87 table).

In discussing episodes of racial violence, which become the subject of press reports also, Liguori notes that “most of these episodes feature public figures or Government representatives as protagonists,” mainly those of *Lega Nord* (2006: 316). Therefore, the action of politicians assumes discriminatory and racist degrees, which is made worse by popularization in press reports. Together these parties, *Lega Nord* joined by the *Alleanza Nazionale*, have “promoted a radicalization of the issue of immigration and legitimized, at least to a certain extent, the practice of social exclusion of immigrants in everyday life” (Triandafyllidou, 1999: 74). In the analysis of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, as of February 2007, most disturbing is how these expressions have become institutionalized, as evident in Bossi-Fini:

These dynamics of racism and xenophobia are nourished by the legacy and strong impact on government policies and on public perceptions of the extreme right parties’ racist political platforms... Italy is still harvesting the consequences of the policies of the former Government coalition which allowed the extreme right-wing parties to implement their agendas and to adopt an anti-immigration discourse and a security approach towards immigration and asylum that is reflected in the Bossi-Fini Law. Nevertheless, the political instrumentalization of racism is not a phenomenon of the past. Extreme right-wing parties continue to promote at the national level and implement at the regional and local levels their xenophobic and racist platforms (Diène, 2007: 24).

Unfortunately, this is today’s reality of multiculturalism in Italy. Although it was acknowledged that Italy has “a wide range of criminal, civil and administrative law provisions to combat racism,” they lack a criminal law on racism specifically and officials in the current government themselves acknowledge the need to improve enforcement and implementation of already existent legislation (Diène, 2007: 8). The

Mancino Decree of February 2006, endorsed by the *Legge Nord*, as a modification to the already existent criminal law framework, made punishment less severe for inciting discrimination on racial, religious, ethnic and national origins, lowering the 3 year maximum jail sentence to 18 months or a 6000 euro fine (Diène, 2007: 9). The current Prodi government informed the Rapporteur of their intention to reinstate the more severe penalties. Furthermore, on the media which amplifies these sentiments, the Special Rapporteur recommended “the adoption of a code of conduct” to fight all forms of discrimination in print and visual media (Diène, 2007: 28). In the end, the view of the United Nations on racism in Italy is that:

while Italian society is not marked by a serious phenomenon of racism, it is facing a disturbing trend of xenophobia and the development of manifestations of racism, primarily affecting the Sinti and Roma community, immigrants and asylum-seekers primarily of African origin but also from Eastern Europe, and the Muslim community (Diène, 2007: 24).

These sentiments are existent today, with proof in media reports that indicate the feelings of both politicians and local communities. This also serves to fill in the details of the immigration reality, unfolding in the streets and towns of Italy, well beyond the *Palazzo del Viminale* or *Palazzo Montecitorio* where politicians decide these policies.

Local and Media Events

History has shown how sporadic events involving migrants can radicalize the political dialogue, which then amplified by the media, shift the workings of law and alter the reception by the national community. In the early 90s mass arrivals of Albanians forever changed the political dialogue on migration. In 2002, 928 Kurds arrived by boat to Sicily, which became a blessing for the Berlusconi government, “manna from heaven”

as Calavita writes (2004: 362). As a result the government declared a “state of emergency” which “allowed the Berlusconi coalition to continue ‘riding the politics of fear’” (Calavita, citing D’Avanzo, 2004: 362). Politicians even utilized this opportunity, with Umberto Bossi, leader of *Lega Nord*, unabashedly expressing his views, “If I had my way, we would sink these smugglers’ ships, blow them out of the water” (Calavita, 2004: 362). It cannot be doubted that this event and these sentiments influenced the immigration policy implemented later that year.

The same can be said of several incidents which have captivated the media and the nation, particularly in April and May, around the time of the approval of Amato-Ferrero.³ The caricature has not so much been one of invasion, as in the past, but of criminal threats jeopardizing security and public order. These events are admittedly either alarming or heartbreaking in their respective scenarios and, in these ways, have made their effect on the debate and populace all the more influential. Four events in particular will be discussed here, as well as the political commentary and local reactions which have followed.

The first event is what amounts to a riot or “revolt” by the Chinese community through the streets of Milan on 11 April 2007 (*La Repubblica*, 2007b). A Chinese

³ These events warranted analysis due to the great attention they received and the short time period in which they all occurred, surrounding that of the Amato-Ferrero approval. Other incidents and reports from Summer 2007 may also be added to this analysis, but had to be left out due to space and time considerations. Amongst the most notable perhaps would be the 21 July 2007 discovery of chemicals and a “terror school” inside a mosque in Perugia (New York Times, 23 July 2007). This event also warrants exclusion from this case study on the grounds that it relates to outside pressures, beyond those of migration exclusively explored here, including international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. The imam and two aides are to be charged. Since this event, it has come to my attention that two other mosques or prayer centers have been denied approval, in Modena and Rome. In September, Roberto Calderoli planned controversial protests, against the building of another Mosque, in Bologna, which included a “pig day” where locals could bring their pigs to desecrate the proposed construction site (Notizie ANSA, 2007n). During the upcoming parliamentary debate, it can be assumed that the discoveries made inside the mosque in Perugia will nonetheless be used as an arm of the anti-immigration side, strengthened perhaps by recent raids in Germany and Denmark as well.

woman was to be given a 40 euro fine for being double parked, but protested, with the officers then threatening to arrest her. Three-hundred members of the Chinese community then came to her aid and surrounded the nearby police car. As the *Tgcom Mediaset* report stated:

A patrol of traffic officers in Milan was attacked by a group of Chinese merchants.... Quickly the streets of the neighborhood were filled with more immigrants who had begun to rage and scream against the police forces that rapidly arrived in place (2007a).

Five Chinese were injured and 14 traffic cops received bruises, with some cars being overturned in the action (*La Repubblica*, 2007b). Into the afternoon and evening tension remained high, especially amongst the young, who staged manifestations “with a banner and different flags of the People’s Republic” (*La Repubblica*, 2007b). This was the first event of its kind in Italy and since, other towns have reported their fear of having the same type of protests. These actions appear to be the response of a community that feels targeted, as Ling Xiu was quoted as saying:

We are here to work. We are not part of the Mafia, we do not kill anyone, we work and paying taxes is enough. Explain to me why every day the cops give me a fine. I will tell you why, why because the police want the misfortune of the Chinese community. In fact, the Italians can work but [the police] prevent us from doing so (*La Repubblica*, 2007b).

In the weeks following it was reported that Milan was essentially divided, between two groups that “do not speak” to one another (Berizzi, 2007). In this context some of the difficulties of integration have appeared, with residents asking for more integration of the members of this community (Berizzi, 2007).

Although fewer individuals were involved, the second incident is perhaps all the more upsetting. Four young Italians from Ascoli Piceno in the Marche region of Central

Italy, ranging in age from 16 to 19, were killed on the 23 April 2007, at the hands of a drunk driver, 22-year old Marco Ahmetovic, decried in the press as “a drunk Rom” (*La Repubblica*, 2007c). This event highlights the inability of small localities to deal with the arrival of newcomers, as the nearby Roma camp had long been “at the center of controversy... considered incompatible with the local community” (*La Repubblica*, 2007c). Following the incident, the Roma community left the camp fearing reprisals, and during the funeral for the four teens, while police who had been guarding the camp took part in the services, revenge-seekers set fire to the camp. *Corriere della Sera* reported the opinion locals had on this community: “There were those who railed against the nomads for their customs and the difficulty at integrating them with the local community. According to some inhabitants, it was not unusual to see the Roma going around drunk” (2007b).

The most publicized of these events was that in Rome, where 23-year old Vanessa Russo was fatally injured by an umbrella, at the hands of 21-year old Romanian prostitute Doina Matei in the Termini train station, a major transportation hub in the center the capital. The comments of politicians following the event appear also to have launched it into the spotlight, as the entire Romanian community was stigmatized, referred to as “extracomunitari,” symbolizing the consideration that they are still not “European,” and characterized by a *Lega Nord* politician as “violent drunks, assassins, exploiters of minors and babies, pirates on the street... in our country to commit crime” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007d). The contemporaneously approved immigration bill received part of the attention, as did Amato and Ferrero for giving these migrants rights:

Maybe in this case Ministers Amato and Ferrero will give them calm, who give respect to their people, who give faith and security to their folk. We

as the *Lega Nord*, will see to it that these assassins have a hard life, fighting in parliament and in the public squares against provisions, like the pardon, the citizenship bill and the immobilization of the Bossi law (Festa, 2007).

Minister Ferrero responded to Stiffoni's comments along these lines:

at the moment, the Bossi-Fini law is still in effect. If there is a problem therefore it is to be attributed to the law and the inefficacy of its rules. There is not any immigrant emergency in this incident in as much as Romanians, the nationality of the two women arrested, are European citizens (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007d).

He continued trying to undo the connection of this event to both immigration and to his bill, stating "Romanians are not extracommunitarians. It is therefore an idiotic thing to accuse the new law for that which happened to the girl from Rome" (Festa, 2007). Ferrero similarly used this opportunity to highlight the tactics used on this and other occasions: "From the right come only fascist accusations on immigration. Those of the *Casa delle Libertà* are the construction of an enemy, as happened during the times of fascist and nazi ideology" (Festa, 2007). Although Ferrero, as well as the Prodi government generally, has attempted to take the alarm off the immigration problem, even through references such as these, they appear continually counteracted by more events and more commentary on the right. Also important, security became a main feature of the event, since video surveillance systems had recorded the flight of Matei and a friend, later leading to their successful arrest, after having been circulated in the print and televised media. Amato thanked the work of police and investigators who helped find the women involved, while the Mayor of the city, Veltroni, now leader of the Democratic Party (*Partito Democratico*) of the center-left, hailed these monitoring systems, thus noting how the current protection system did prove effective. More right-leaning

politicians of course, like Giro of *Forza Italia*, decried the increasing insecurity of Rome (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007d). Russo's neighbors made their feelings known at her funeral, as reported in *La Repubblica*, screaming at public officials for their failures "these are the services that you give us," and speaking against immigrants as well "They do not pay, they become bosses [of prostitutes] and the state defends them" (2007g).

The last event which closed this period of heightened attention on immigrant criminality was the hijacking and burning of a bus in Novara, Piedmont by three Albanians, the two captured aged 27 and 19. The photos of a burnt bus were placed on the covers of the papers on 15 May 2007, the day following the event. In a report on *Lega Nord's* website for the region of Piedmont, came an analysis of the cause of the event stated by Oreste Rossi, leader of the *Lega Nord* to the Regional Council of Piedmont:

It is necessary to stop this escalation of violence that has never before been seen in Piedmont and which is the effect of the devastating messages that this government continues to launch to delinquents, starting with the pardon, arriving at the Amato-Ferrero law on immigration. If this law had already been approved, one of the three Albanians responsible for the hijacking of the bus yesterday would be, for all that matters, one of the new 'Italians' of Prodi, with that much citizenship and the right to vote (Consiglio Regionale del Piemonte, Gruppo Lega Nord, 2007).

Lega Nord blames Amato-Ferrero for these events, causing disastrous results without even being in effect.

Beyond the left and right tug-of-war obvious here, three main points emerge from these reports, regarding the facts of the incidents alone. Young members of these migrant communities (Chinese, Roma, Romanian and Albanian) are at the center of these events, sparking particular concern if one considers them in light of events in Paris in recent

years, as well as the fact that minors are over one-fifth of the migrant presence, and amongst the fastest growing portion (ISTAT, 2007: 351). Should migrant youths not be respected and treated fairly, perhaps through integration into society as part of government initiatives, these acts may continue: mass protest, drinking and driving, harassment and attacking, hijacking and drug-use, all worrisome behaviors involved in these cases. Despite the shape the events have taken in the media, these are facts of the incidents which have given details as to the real-life activities of these immigrant youths. This would serve as support for integration, since perhaps these members of various migrant communities would not be pushed towards such actions through the tension their presence often generates or the occupations they are made to assume. Following the death of Vanessa Russo, Ferrero recommended the necessary solution, present in his bill and arguably necessary when these events are examined together: “The issue is that we must increase the politics of inclusion and integration” (Festa, 2007). What he means to say, is that migrants are not the problem, the current policies are.

Also apparent from the facts of these events is the role of “vendetta” or revenge from the local Italian communities at the center of these incidents. The Roma camp fire is perhaps the most illustrative of these, followed by residents of Fidene, Vanessa Russo’s home town, who have pledged to seek retribution, as noted in the *La Repubblica* article entitled “That desire for revenge in the suburb; Too many prostitutes here is a disgust” (Lodoli, 2007). This feature is unfortunately a stereotype of Italian communities, particularly those enmeshed in the Mafia culture of the South, which here emerges substantiated, even in Italy’s more cosmopolitan cities and supposedly more advanced North and Center. These events occurred where the migrant presence is

amongst the highest, such as Milan and Rome. This local community feature is an ever-present issue in Italy, where identity is often based on local, moreso than national, ties. Coming face to face with migrants in these smaller communities, as seen here in Ascoli Piceno and Fidene, has sparked an outcry. This is particularly important since surveys reveal the sharpest increase of insecurity in the local setting, with 44% sensing “an increase in crime in their area of residence,” a more than ten percent increase since 2005, as the Demos-Coop survey indicated (Diamanti, 2007).

In an article in *La Repubblica* from 13 May 2007, these rising sentiments were also discussed. Giovanna Bellu, an investigative reporter specializing in immigration issues for *La Repubblica*, describes this phenomenon which Italians use to justify their uneasiness with the migration reality: “A ghost is going around Italy, the ghost of the ‘I am not racist, but’” (Bellu, 2007b). The “Noràpperò,” short for “Non sono razzista, però,” as Bellu writes “is a characteristic figure of the Belpaese” which pervades all classes and political parties, having increased its presence since the late eighties, even passing from one migrant group to another as needed (Bellu, 2007b). It represents a “crisis” of sorts, a “personal anguish” in the face of the immigration reality (Bellu, 2007b). Scholars, especially Anna Triandafyllidou, have also commented on this figure, finding in her interviews that often economic reasoning is given as the motivation for racist episodes, which is in turn used to justify the matter. She refers to this as “‘additional’ or ‘subtle’ racism, namely the rational organization of socio-economic motivations that make people intolerant” (Triandafyllidou, 2000a: 383). These examples of “vendetta” also fit into this categorization, expressions of hatred and tension with ‘logical’ reasoning behind them.

Beyond these events, also within this period, the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior (*Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza del Ministero dell'Interno*) released a report on criminality, which appeared to substantiate all of this news. With the release of this report, on 9 May 2007, immigrants received the most attention in the press, with “One in three charged is a foreigner,” as the title of the article in *La Repubblica* (2007h). This represents the true fact that migrants do make up one-third of the incarcerated prison population as noted by ISTAT (2007: 360). The Ministry of the Interior however, took this opportunity to highlight that migrants often become targets, revealing the honest approach of the Prodi government in changing the status and perception of immigrants in Italy. As *La Repubblica* quoted the *Viminale*:

the connection between foreigner-perpetrator of criminal acts represents a stereotype still rather diffused in our country, to which the mass media often contribute with their specific way of presenting the news; so if ten years ago drug-addicts were above all made a concern, now they are above all immigrants and in a special way clandestine migrants (2007h).

This is proof that politicians on the left have been fighting against the right's propaganda every chance they get, even going as far as predicting the possibility of a decline in crime from their proposed immigration law, like Rutelli, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers: “The certainty of rights, a proper reception and a law that works better, like that we have enacted, that combats clandestine migration, can allow a reduction of delinquency” (Custodero, 2007). However, surveys released in this period verify that Italians already have a strong fear of migrants, encompassing over 40% of the Italian population, as will be discussed below.

The Public Sentiment: Insecurity and Integration

The results of several surveys coordinated over Spring and Summer 2007 have largely yielded results more positive than expected. However, these assessments simultaneously highlight the complexity of public opinion on the immigration reality in Italy. Six surveys are examined here: four posted on Postpoll.it, which published data available through PubblicaRes and SWG, two polling services, as well as the civil society group ARCI. Two more comprehensive surveys were also examined. First was the 13th Survey of the Observatory on The Social Capital of Italians (*Osservatorio Sul Capitale Sociale degli italiani*), coordinated under the jurisdiction of the Laboratory of Political and Social Studies (*Laboratorio di Studi Politici e Sociali*) in collaboration with Demos & Pi, with the financing of COOP Italia, commonly abbreviated as the Demos-Coop Survey. The second survey was carried out by Makno & Consulting, as chosen by the Ministry of the Interior to investigate the sentiment of Italians towards migrants and the citizenship law. Here, migrants themselves were also interviewed, giving the current government both sides of the immigration reality. These surveys largely target insecurity and integration, giving them an important role in the immigration dialog, especially since press reports and politicians frequently publicized the results.

The Demos-Coop survey focused largely on the issue of security alone, relaying what has become one of the most quoted statistics of Summer 2007: 43% of Italians “see immigration as a problem for public order” (Birdignon and Ceccarini, 2007a). The SWG poll, with 3600 interviewed, supported this number noting that 46% of Italians responded “yes” when asked if they “had fear of immigrants,” while 54% responded “no” (Postpoll.it, 2007b). Here it was also elaborated that 28% feel this way since migrants

are tied to “episodes of criminality” and 31% “from the fact that many immigrants are without work and this could lead them ‘to fall’ into the organized crime network” (Postpoll.it, 2007b). Right-wing politicians responded to the publication of this data, in order to delegitimize the abilities of the current government and criticize their pending immigration bill, as Bertolini of *Forza Italia* stated:

These are extremely worrisome figures. Italians are terrorized by the invasion of immigrants. The SWG poll raises the issue of the incapability and inadequacy of the Prodi government on the theme of security and legality... The situation is dramatic. Immigrants come perceived as numerous, without work, criminals devoted to the exchange of drugs, to robbery and to rape. Only those irresponsible, in this frame of reference, proceed with a reform of the rules on immigration, the Amato-Ferrero, that consents to greater entrances through the autosponsor, reduced control of the territory caused by the closure of the CPT and the concession of the vote to extra-communitarians... The result of the administrative elections has an unequivocal significance: the Italians want more security, more legality and, knowing well that they cannot obtain that from the current majority, await the return of the *Casa delle Libertà* at the helm of the government. We hope to fulfill this as to the desires of the country, sending home Prodi and his friends (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007e).

Other politicians used the same poll to negatively color Prodi’s coalition across the board. According to Joel Santelli the SWG data “certify that this government is absolutely incapable of governing” (Ramella, 2007). Therefore, Santelli thinks of responding properly, not with “idealism (buonismo) but with real security politics that this government is incapable to put into effect. The immigration politics which they are bringing ahead go against every logic and, above all, against the primary exigencies of the citizens” (Ramella, 2007). However, Minister of Social Solidarity and part designer of the new bill, Ferrero, saw this as an opportunity to comment as well:

One speaks in fact of immigrants only when they commit a crime, while instead the fact that our elderly are attended to, in large part, by migrants, and the foundries, like the Italian country-side, produce thanks to their

work and the many people who come from the rest of the world never makes the news (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007g).

He continues on his critique of the media, “Dominating the information horizon is the industry of fear that constructs the figure of the scapegoat inside every immigrant, on which every alarm and social concern is made to fall” (*Notizie ANSA*, 2007g). This is proof that those in the Prodi government, like the originator of the law himself, Ferrero, are devoted to changing the image of immigrants in Italy.

Through the Makno survey, the Prodi government attempts to clearly establish the public sentiment on the immigration reality, in order to direct policy formation and debase falsities as seen above. The Makno survey asked respondents to note whether they felt: “comprehension, willingness, indifference, compassion, concern, solidarity, diffidence, inconvenience, faith, fear, unease, insecurity, rage” in the face of the migrant presence (Makno & Consulting, 2007a: 46). The main point that the Ministry of Interior chose to highlight was the positive opinion on the part of the Italian population, as was written on the News portion of their website, on the day the surveys were released to the public: “Amongst Italians sentiments of openness and comprehension prevail towards migrants” which they then give the figures for: “42% of those interviewed express sentiments of openness towards immigrants, against the 33% which manifest sentiments of closure. Twenty-five percent do not preoccupy themselves with the issue and say that they try to demonstrate sentiments of non-involvement” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007e).

Most often, in the literature on public opinion, immigrants are either viewed as a threat for workers or a threat to Italian culture. Both of the larger surveys assessed this sentiment. In the Demos-Coop Survey 34.6% agreed that “immigrants are a danger for

our culture” and 43.3% agreed that they “are a threat for employment” (ADUC, 2007b). In the Makno survey, when asked if migrants were “a threat for Italian workers” they responded similarly, 49% were in the range of complete to slight agreement, gauged on a 1-10 scale overall. When asked if they were “a threat for the social identity and culture of the country” 37% agreed, falling within the 5-10 range. In the ARCI data, 36% of the 1200 surveyed want immigrants to make more of an effort to integrate and 31% “ask for a greater control of immigrants” (Postpoll.it, 2007a).⁴ Another poll of 1000 residents during the last week of May 2007, revealed that 57% feel that “the level of immigrant integration is low,” which was derived from 43% responding that the level “was not very high” and 14% “not high at all” (Postpoll.it, 2007d). Whereas, 43% “judged the level of the insertion of foreigners” to be “good,” translated from 12% saying it is very high and 31% saying it is “high enough” (Postpoll.it, 2007d). Therefore the majority, having higher expectations, want more integration, as a reaction to the potential cultural threats migrants represent. These sentiments of the Italian people are much more calm and moderate than those the right-wing politicians demonstrate and portend to act upon. However, they are also not completely accepting of the immigrants as they come. Nonetheless, it also appears that Italians are willing to give immigrants the tools to make the changes necessary to integrate more successfully, as discussed below.

The greatest hope of all in terms of both policy and public opinion, comes in terms of rights distribution, such as voting and citizenship. In the Demos-Coop Survey, it is shown that 75% of Italians agree to giving immigrants the right to vote in administrative elections and 65% agree to this for political elections (Birdignon &

⁴ Interestingly enough, this report used data from June and July 2006, while speaking of the April 2007 riot involving members of the Chinese community in Milan and published soon after.

Ceccarini, 2007a). There is a difference between political sides here, which Demos-Coop also found, with 85.7% and 70.3% of center-left voters agreeing to administrative and political elections respectively. On the right, the numbers are also remarkably high, at 68.8% and 58.4% respectively (ADUC, 2007b).

The Makno survey focuses on citizenship, with 54.6% of Italians “favorable” to the “reduction of years necessary” for citizenship and when assessing the other criteria required to achieve it 51.8% think they are “just,” 11.5% are favorable with “effective verifications on the knowledge of the Italian language,” which then brings the ratio of those in support to those against the changes to citizenship law to 2:1 (Makno & Consulting, 2007a: 53, 55, 57). Whereas 40% of the population indicated, without hesitation, that they were against a “reduction of the number of years necessary” (Makno & Consulting, 2007a: 51). Nonetheless, a clear majority agrees. The survey also made an assessment on the feelings of giving citizenship directly to those born on Italian territory to parents who had resided in Italy legally for at least five years. Makno found 80% favorable of this measure, which the firm then interpreted as signifying an approval on the pending inclusion of *jus soli* principles into the citizenship law (Makno & Consulting, 2007a: 60). In their survey of immigrants, 55% of them responded “yes” to “potential interest in asking for Italian citizenship after ten years of residence,” allowing for the current law, without proposed changes, with 20.3% responding “no” and 24.5% responding that they “did not know” (Makno & Consulting, 2007b: 71). *La Repubblica* did not publish this report, although they did so for the Demos-Coop Survey, whereas *Corriere della Sera* published the Makno survey under the title: “One in two immigrants is not interested in becoming Italian,” which at a time when integration is at the top of the

list of requirements Italians are asking of immigrants, as other surveys show, this selection of title was meant to stir some anti-immigrant angst (Porqueddu, 2007).

No survey has been geared towards sentiment on the new Amato-Ferrero law design. However, there were several indicators here that pointed to more negative responses. In one SWG survey, which asked what were the “principal weaknesses of the government,” 36% agreed that it was the “excessive permissiveness in the face of immigration,” second only to “unsuccessful adjustment of salaries to the real cost of living” with 44% in agreement (Postpoll.it, 2007c).

A few other points must be made as regards the Makno survey generally. The Makno survey reveals the earnest effort, on the part of the Prodi government, to gauge the public sentiment on the issue of immigration. This survey aimed to take the alarm and emergency tones off of the issue of immigration, with the Ministry of the Interior also stressing in their published online overview, “Immigration only at the 7th place amongst the priority problems of Italians,” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2007e). This approach has also been seen in the Amato-Ferrero bill as well as the comments of politicians, particularly Ferrero himself. The Makno survey is then just one piece of their rational, informed and comprehensive program to change the policy and views on the immigration reality in Italy.

One point that can be taken from these surveys particularly is that Italians are adjusting to the idea of immigrants as long-term members of society, pushing for them to learn the language, integrate themselves and take on citizenship. Of course, there are those who disagree, in large percentage, but the numbers of those who appear to be moving in the same direction as the current Italian government points to future progress.

Conclusion

Not even the strict measures of Bossi-Fini could keep migrants out, as Pastore writes “it is clear that ‘zero immigration:’ is not a practical option in the Italian case” (2007: 8). Now it is time to come to terms with the presence of over 30 years worth of migrants and to better manage the future inward flux, moving beyond denial of the trend altogether. Yet beyond the leading politicians and government institutions, it is time for Italian nationals to successfully deal with this reality. What will this take?

As the Italian government takes responsibility in reforming policy and perception on immigration, Italians do not appear sure of how to make the adjustment themselves. From the surveys examined here, it is apparent that the majority of Italians agree to the integrationalist principles of the Prodi government. They support the idea of giving migrants citizenship and voting rights in the name of integration. However, insecurity is high and discriminatory acts of violence are occurring between Italians and these migrant groups, as press reports substantiate. This points to a more complex definition of integration. Integration exists, first, on the level of social security, as a dispersal of rights, to ensure that migrants can become active members of society, as Amato-Ferrero proposes. Secondly, there exists integration in terms of “convivenza” or living together, as an article on the riot of the Chinese community in Milan put it. This second level of integration entails social acceptance between the communities. The first facilitates the second, but more is needed, even beyond universal rights, to make the latter an actual reality.

The survey data reveal that Italians want migrants to “integrate themselves better” and that they intend to grant them the rights and privileges to do so (Postpoll.it, 2007d). However, it appears here that Italians never consider themselves amongst the actors within this context. Immigrants and the Italian government are responsible for working towards integration. This, I believe, is the problem in itself. The articles on the events of April and May 2007 largely highlight the need for integration, in terms of social acceptance. However, this would take more work on the part of the individual communities that form the Italian nation-state, requiring the consideration of Italians themselves in their daily interactions. Italians may only feel the need to do so upon recognizing that these groups cannot be fought, that they are in Italy to stay, in some form or another, changing their thinking *as well* to realize that immigration is a reality and that integration is not a one-way street. The extreme-right also has much to learn in this regard.

Furthermore, Pastore argues that immigration research and debate constantly lack one critical dimension, that of the future of immigration into Italy (2007: 8). Along these lines, the desires and perceptions of the Italian populace (which, in reality, cannot so simply be grouped as a whole, an issue in itself), concerning the long-term integration of these growing immigrant communities must be thoroughly sought out. Here more research is essential as to what Italians think ‘successful integration’ means. Their expectations on the degrees of ‘acceptable’ adaptation of language skills, visibility and even religion, amongst the main points of social contention, need to be uncovered. Put simply, how much do they expect of and what will they accept as an ‘integrated immigrant?’ Even more importantly, what will Italians, actively concerned with and

pressing for integration, contribute to the process, even in the simplest terms? This discussion on the future integration of migrants and what “will” be done, hopefully, by all interested parties, hinges on the recognition of the immigrant reality at present, now finally being imparted top-down.

The Prodi government, in moving from the policies of the extreme-right and invalidating their often xenophobic claims, has taken great strides to acknowledge the reality of immigration into Italian communities. However, integration is spoken of in terms of rights alone, as social security, which can be legislated and addressed in policy. Maybe integration, in the sense of social acceptance of cultural differences leading to peaceful cohabitation of different groups within common space, at a certain point, goes beyond central government control, falling to the work of local civil society groups and immigrant organizations. Nonetheless, the progress of integration on both of these levels, starting with the at-large understanding of the duties and obligations they entail, will be crucial if immigrants and Italians are to survive this adjustment period, which is only beginning. These local communities now also must begin to recognize and properly “implement” this reality or risk being “late” in addressing the issue, as their government long has in terms of immigration policy.

Today, the Italian government finally appears to be on the right path, with the courage to change policy and thinking on the issue of immigration, as seen in their legislative measures and commentary. They are attempting this transformation by publicizing migration not as an “invasion,” issue or phenomenon even, but rather as a reality. It is a reality of modern nationhood, and in justifying that feature, the Prodi government is attempting to launch Italy into advanced status, in both European and

international terms. Volatile obstacles remain, from parliamentary approval, to implementation, from crime rates, to right-wing reactions, and perhaps most importantly, regarding the expected contributions towards integration from all those involved. However, there is now, more than ever before, the possibility of a trickle down improvement, at least as long as the center-left remains in charge. Hopefully, despite these proposed reforms on migration policy, emigrant voting, an innovation of Berlusconi's center-right in 2001, will remain, since emigrants abroad are those who, in 2006, narrowly brought Prodi and the center-left into power in the first place.

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