EUROPEANISED OR SOVEREIGNIST APPROACH TO TACKLE IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

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After the migration crisis of 2015 and the closure of the Western Balkan route, migratory pressure shifted towards the Central and Western areas of the Mediterranean. This article examines and compares the measures taken by the governments of Spain and Italy to tackle migration, especially irregular. First the theoretical framework is drawn for the analysis, together with the economic, social, cultural and political context. Then Spanish and Italian government policies on migration control mechanisms are classified, with a particular attention to externalization, and thus to the relationship of Spain with Morocco and Italy with Libya. Finally, the approaches behind the abovementioned policies are investigated between 2015 and 2019, in the dichotomy of Europeanism and Sovereignism. The article is based on content and comparative analyses, and principally relies on the study of statistical data, opinion polls, political discourses and news items.

Key words: Spain, Italy, immigration, Europeanism, Sovereignism

INTRODUCTION

After the migration crisis of 2015, the number of irregular migrants arriving in Europe has decreased significantly and their itineraries changed. Following the deal between Turkey and the

European Union, leading to the closure of the Western Balkan route, migratory pressure shifted towards the Central and Western areas of the Mediterranean, affecting the frontline EU member states: Spain and Italy. This article examines and compares the measures taken by the governments of these two countries to tackle migration, especially irregular. First the theoretical framework is drawn for the analysis, together with the economic, social, cultural and political context. Then Spanish and Italian government policies on migration control mechanisms are classified, with particular attention given to externalization, and thus to the relationship of Spain with Morocco and Italy with Libya. Finally, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding, the approaches behind the above-mentioned policies and measures are investigated between 2015 and 2019 in the dichotomy of Europeanism and Sovereignism.

The article is based on content and comparative analyses. When available, the same sort statistics were used for both countries, such as the ones disclosed in Eurobarometer, in order to ensure that they were prepared using the same methodology and thus allowing comparability. If pertinent, data from national statistical offices and local organizations specialized in public opinion surveys were added. The research principally relies on the study of statistical data, opinion polls, political discourses and news items.

THEORETHICAL BACKGROUND: GOVERNMENT POLICY APPROACHES

Governmental migration policies will be categorized not so much upon the concrete measures carried out to control, but more on the governmental stance behind them and other migration-related issues. This allows for a more comprehensive view, yet it must be emphasized that approaches can change very quickly. A basic distinction will be made between Europeanised and Sovereignist attitudes.

According to Featherstone and Radaelli (2003, 3) Europeanization at its widest meaning is a process of structural change that is closely linked to 'Europe', whereas in a minimal

sense it refers to a response to the policies of the European Union. By "Europeanized" approaches we understand the governmental attitude to Europeanization of migration or refugee policy, which is a bottom-up approach accepting top-down initiatives. Europeanization has widely been discussed and debated by researchers, and being a multifaceted process, it focuses on the impact of the EU membership and integration processes on different domestic policies and politics (Radaelli 1997; Cowles et al. 2001; Börzel and Risse 2003; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Radaelli 2004; Graziano and Vink 2007; Exadaktylos and Radaelli 2009; Bretherton and Mannin 2013; Ondřej 2017; Fricke 2020).

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Immense literature has been produced on the topic of the Europeanization of migration and refugee policy as well. Migration and refugee policy had originally been dealt with on national level. After the Maastricht Treaty (1992) the Europeanization of these policies began with the creation of the third pillar of Justice and Home Affairs. The creation of the Schengen Area raised the need for stricter immigration policies. A turning point was the Amsterdam Treaty when the effective harmonization of these policies started. The Lisbon Treaty broadened the competences of the EU in the framework of European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (Faist and Ette 2007; Hadj-Abdou 2016; Vatta 2017). According to Lahav (2004, 1) despite - and because of - the increasing integration on EU level, there are still differences among the member-states. The 2015 migration crisis has shown how difficult it is to create fast and effective answers at supranational levels (Basile and Mazzoleni 2019). Disappointment strengthened populist voices arguing that the transfer of power from the national to the supranational level not only needs to be stopped but the process should be reversed. This leads us to the sovereignist approach.

Sovereignism is closely connected to nationalism and promotes self-determination of the nation. This concept can be described as a certain 'grievance', a reaction with the goal of re-establishing the state's sovereignty within a specific policy field (Basile and Mazzoleni 2019). The taking back of power can be interpreted as a zero-sum game (Kallis 2018, 294), in which

sovereignists win and supporters of the Europeanized views lose, therefore sovereignism is strongly divisionist. It is 'us' and 'them', 'own' and 'foreign', simplifying the world into two opposing sides instead of allowing for pluralism. According to Fabbrini (2019, 62) sovereignism is the "synthesis of the holy alliance between nationalism and populism, and Europeanism is the alternative position of promoting the project of an 'ever closer union'". A sovereignist approach to migration prefers national, unilateral solutions and / or bilateral options, including the externalisation of migratory policies. Europeanized stances on the other hand favour supranational answers, not renouncing national interest but not putting it in the forefront either, and trying to find a common solution that might be a win-win for all actors.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND RELATED TO MIGRATION

Located on peninsulas, Italy and Spain have traditionally been places of emigration. Millions of Italians and Spaniards left, for example, for the United States and Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries. The direction of the migratory flows only changed in the last quarter of the 20th century. The transformation from an emigration country into a target and transit area took place during the last decades. Between 1971 and 2001, the number of legal immigrants increased more than ten-fold in Italy, from 120,000 to 1.4 million, and then in the following almost two decades multiplied by roughly four times, exceeding 5 million in January 2018 (Eurostat 2019; ISTAT 2018a). Their proportion in the overall population is 8.3%. The change in Spain started with the death of Franco in 1975, followed by the democratization of the country, accession to the European Community in 1986, economic growth from the second half of the 1980s, all of which played a part in turning it into an immigration destination. The several legalization campaigns for irregular migrants could have further increased attractiveness (Rodríguez-Planas 2012, 4; Finotelli and Arango 2011, 510). Registered foreigners numbered around 750,000 in 1999 in a population of 40.2

million, accounting for less than 2%. By 2018, approximately 4.6 million immigrants lived in Spain, comprising 10.1% of the population (Eurostat 2019; INE 2019).

Although both countries have had experience of migrations of the distant and not so distant past, the latter including emigration after the Spanish Civil War (Jancsó 2017, 121-124; Pethő 2009), South European guest workers in Western Europe after WW2, and even ongoing processes such as internal migration in Italy from the South to the North (Albahari 2008), which contributed to making these societies more open, the rapid growth of newcomers put this tolerance to test. According to the Eurobarometer survey during the refugee and migration crisis in 2015, the majority of the Italians interviewed (56%) stated that they had a negative feeling about immigration of people from outside the EU whereas positive answers formed only 34%. Spanish answers were quite different: 61% positive and only 27% negative (European Commission, EC, 2020a). The latter results are connected to the fact that Spain was not affected by the migration crisis of 2015. The number of irregular border crossings registered by Frontex on the Western Mediterranean Route was in fact smaller in 2015 (7,004) than in 2014 (7,243). Whereas in the 2015 Eurobarometer many EU citizens - including Italians - tended to consider immigration as the most important challenge, Spaniards indicated health and social security as the most pressing one (EC 2015, 31-32). In the national public opinion survey (CIS 2015), immigration figured only in the 10th place, after unemployment, corruption, economic problems, political elite and parties, etc.

The social and economic aspects of the immigration issue reflect a dichotomy that is difficult to resolve: immigrants both fulfil the need for labour and provide a challenge for social integration (Carli 2017; Fondazione Leone Moressa 2018, Taskuzina et al. 2017). Legal immigrants are important, and indispensable for the labour market; they also make significant contributions to the economies overall. According to a recent report on the immigration economy in Italy, 2.4 million employed immigrants (10% of total employment) produced €131 billion in added value (8.7% of GDP) and paid €11.5 billion

in social security contributions in Italy in 2017 (Fondazione Leone Moressa 2018). Large numbers of immigrants can be found in the construction industry, tourism, agriculture and in domestic work; typically labour-intensive sectors where informal employment is not uncommon (González-Enríquez and Triandafyllidou 2009, 111; Molnár 2012, 113). The presence of immigrant domestic labourers also made it possible for more Italian and Spanish women to work. Female employment grew most in regions with considerable immigration. (Éltető 2011, 70). The most attractive areas for immigration in Spain have been Madrid, Catalonia, Valencia and Andalusia. The reason for the latter is not its level of development but its proximity to Africa and the availability of agricultural activities, which are not so attractive for the locals. In fact, foreigners fill a lot of vacancies in the job market that Spaniards (and Italians) would not. Therefore, they do not replace locals but are employed in a complementary way, raising the number of actively working people. This led to increased revenues (tax and social security). In 2005 a surplus of around €5 billion was created in Spain by payments of immigrants (Éltető 2011, 73). Yet if economic recession sets in, immigrants are increasingly seen as unwanted rivals, "blamed for unemployment rates, increased crime rates, and even disease" (Boulby and Kenneth 2018, 14).

Besides economy, another crucial aspect is demography. According to the Italian statistical office, ISTAT, it was in 2016 that the number of people in the country decreased for the first time since 1990. As of 1 January 2018, it is estimated that the population amounted to 60,483,973 residents, which is approximately 95,000 less than the previous year (ISTAT 2018b).The medium age is growing constantly: in January 2017 it was 44.9 and in 2019, 45.5 years (ISTAT 2019). Spanish tendencies are similar: the medium age was 42.5 in 2015, 43 in 2019 and is expected to be 44.9 in 2020 (Wordometer 2020). Immigration is necessary to slow down ageing. Yet the 2008 economic crisis, coupled with soaring unemployment in the first half of the 2010s, in particular among the youth, trimmed down pull factors connected to Spain. Entries, both legal and irregular, stayed low. In fact, people started to leave. 2012 was the first year when the

number of registered foreigners was lower than the previous one. By 2018 approximately 4.7 million foreigners resided in Spain; one million less than in 2010/11. The total population was of course affected and that of 2018 (46.7 million) actually equalled to the number of people living in the country in 2009. Whereas emigration dominated the 2010s, the recovery of the Spanish economy could reverse these trends and contribute to yet another change in the direction of the migratory routes in the future.

Altogether, Spain and Italy present similar backgrounds with rich past experience on emigration as well as similar challenges: immigration being relatively new, taken as a demographic and economic necessity yet also considered - especially in times of economic and migratory crisis - as a threat by the population. Based on these common features, we can expect converging trends in how Spanish and Italian governments tackle migration.

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Political conditions

Political parties and governments depend on votes, and the opinion of the public has an impact on them and their behaviour. There is usually a correlation between the rise of the political right and times of crisis. The bigger the pressure - let it be financial, migratory, etcetera, depending on the nature of the crisis -, the stronger the population will react, and the more powerful forces of the political right together with nationalist and sovereignist voices might get.

All this is strongly connected to Euroscepticism, blaming the European project for the lack of success. Yet Italian and Spanish population traditionally have had confidence in the EU. In 2007, Eurobarometer survey showed that 58% of Italians trusted the European Union, against 28% who were expressing the opposite opinion. However, this began to change, and the original positive trends got basically reversed after the European debt crisis. Since then more Italians tend not to trust the EU. The difference between the two groups has been oscillating between 41% and 8%. According to the survey, in 2019 55% of Italian citizens - the majority - did not trust the European Union, and only 37% trusted it.

Table 1: *Trust in the EU*

Year	2007		2019	
	Italy	Spain	Italy	Spain
Tend to trust the EU	58%	65%	37%	47%
Tend not to trust the EU	28%	23%	55%	46%

Source: EC 2020b

With respect to Spain, the 2007 data, similarly to Italy, show the support of the majority of the population for the EU (65%). Those against it made up only 23%. The turning point was 2010. Since the debt crisis the latter group gained strength, reaching a historically high 79% in 2014. However, Spanish domestic problems, such as a complete disenchantment with the traditional parties; a rearrangement of the political sphere without being able to have an effective government, and four general elections in four years, made the people revalue the European project and find it more attractive. In 2019, for the first time after a decade of scepticism, more Spaniards trust the EU (47%) than who did not (46%), though the difference is very slight (EC 2020b).

One might think that the changing trust in the EU, especially in times of dwindling confidence might affect the support for a common European policy on migration. Yet Italian and Spanish statistics show tendencies opposed to this supposition. The vast majority of the people of these two countries have always backed a European solution to migration and their proportion has not substantially changed between 2014 and 2019, a period for which Eurostat data are available and which includes the 2015 migration and refugee crisis.

Table 2: *Public opinion on a common European policy on migration*

Year	Spain		Italy	
	2014	2019	2014	2019
For	80%	84%	73%	67%
Against	9%	10%	19%	24%

Source: EC 2020c

73% of Italians and 80% of Spaniards were for a common European policy on migration in 2014. Results showed 67% and 84% respectively in 2019, a slight decrease in Italy and a slight rise in Spain (EC 2020c). Similar proportions figure in the statistics measuring support for the common European Asylum system: 69% of Italians and 76% of Spaniards were in favour (EC 2019a, 27-28).

In both countries the political right has gained strength in the 2010s. Immigration, especially irregular migration flows, the fears they generated and the securitization of the migratory issue all added to this support, but were not the only factors, and the firming up of populist, nationalist and sovereignist ideas was as much related to international political trends as well as to domestic conditions, like the disillusionment with the traditional political parties.

It was during that decade that the traditional bi-party system made up by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the People's Party (PP) came to an end. New parties started to attract Spanish voters, such as Podemos and Ciudadanos, as well as the far-right Vox, the latter founded in 2013. Although it participated in all four Spanish general elections between 2015 and 2019 - December 2015, June 2016, April 2019 and November 2019 -, it could get no seats on the first two occasions. The 2019 elections, however, brought about a substantial change: Vox obtained more than 10%, and for the first time after the death of Franco in 1975, the far right got its share from the national political scene. The principal reason was the complete disappointment with the Spanish domestic political establishment. Yet it must not be forgotten that 2017-2018 brought about increased migratory pressure on the country, turning out to be a migratory crisis. In 2018 almost 40% of detections of irregular migrants at EU borders were made along the Western Mediterranean route leading to Spain, which then became the most frequented one by people heading towards Europe (Frontex 2019a, 16-17). The growth of irregular migration caused anxiety and fears, contributing to the increasing

appeal of Vox,[1] which, as a first step, managed to get 12 seats at the Andalusian parliament at the regional elections in Southern Spain. Although by 2019 the migratory situation changed, as arrivals dropped drastically, Vox could not only retain but increase its support: it obtained 10.26% in the April 2019 snap general elections (Elecciones Generales 2019a) and 8 months later, at the November 2019 general elections became the third most powerful party, getting approximately 1 million votes more.

Immigration seems to worry the Spanish less these days: numbers are smaller and Spaniards have severe domestic problems to face. According to the 2019 November questionnaire results, the most important challenges of the country were 1) unemployment 2) politicians in general, political parties and politics; 2) economic problems and the 3) independence of Catalonia. Immigration got 11.3% overall and figured in 9th place (CIS 2019, 3). This, combined with a strong support for the EU in Spain, reaffirms the statement at the beginning of the paragraph: the support of the far-right stems more from negative voting. Yet the migratory question is not negligible, and can exert influence when the pressure is on. A stronger Vox, as well as the voters behind it, can influence government decisions on migration and contribute to the politicization of the migratory issue.

In Italy the financial-economic and migration crises contributed to the political crisis of the so called second republic. The social support for sovereignist and anti-immigration political parties has also been on the rise. Although the portion of foreign citizens living in Italy has not increased in recent years, the

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1   The 100-pont program of Vox contains several references to immigration. For example, "Point 17. Doing away with the call effect: any immigrant who enters illegally Spain, will be incapacitated for life, to legalize his or her situation and receive any kind of support from the administration. [...] Point 26. Fortify our borders. Construct an impassable wall in Ceuta and Melilla. [...] Point 96. Boost a new European treaty in Brussels, in accordance with the concepts that the Visegrad Group defends related to borders, national sovereignty, respect for the values of European culture..." (Vox 2019).

social attitude towards immigration has changed significantly during the last decade as a result of the irregular migration and refugee crisis and the securitization of the phenomenon (Colombo 2018, 161-178; Castelli 2017, 318-331). The number of people who fear and reject irregular migrants and refugees started to grow in Italian society, and in 2017, immigration became a security problem for 40% of Italians (Termometro Político 2017a). Support for the sovereignist Northern League, which rejects immigration, reached 13.8% on 1 July 2017. When combined with the support for other parties, such as Forza Italia (13.8%) and the Five Star Movement (27.6%), the majority of Italians appeared to be against the immigration policy of the Italian government in 2017 (Termometro Político 2017b). At the 2018 general elections approximately one third of Italians voted for the right-wing coalition and another third, for the Five Star Movement, which thus could form the government with the League.

TYPOLOGY OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES BASED ON MIGRATION CONTROL

Government responses to migration could be divided into migratory policies and integration policies. In case of Spain they form two sub-systems, as integration is more of the competence of the autonomous governments, thus integration policies could differ within the country, whereas the migratory policy is more united, as it is "dominated by a single actor – namely, the central state" (Bruquetas-Callejo 2011, 315). Yet with the shifts in the political power relations and changes in government, migratory policies do undergo changes. Instead of integration policies, this paper focuses on migratory ones.

A common and general feature of the migratory policies of Italian and Spanish governments is that they are re-active, that is, they respond to challenges that already exist. According to Aparicio Gómez and Ruiz de Huidobro (2008, 164), this approach has caused improvisation or haste. The control mechanisms used were grouped by Acosta (2010, 81) as taking place at the territorial border, inside it (internal controls) and outside

(remote controls). Brochmann (1999, 12-14) distinguished between external and internal control mechanisms, to which another category - the externalized - was added by Doomernik and Jandl (2010, 204). The latter means "exporting the control agenda", turning the countries of origin and transit into buffer zones (Pérez 2010, 101). Doomernik and Jandl (2010, 209) wrote about an expansion of state control into various dimensions: inward (more requirements from migrants, a kind of 'personalized control'), backward (more controls within the country) and forward (control outside the borders).

This de-territorialization or outsourcing of migration policies has been under criticism for weakening the protection of human rights and for creating "Fortress Europe". Nonetheless, an externalisation of migration policy can be observed both in the cases of Italy with Libya as well as Spain with Morocco.

Spain – Morocco

Spanish-Moroccan relations have had their ups and downs, tensions stemming from irregular migration, drug trafficking, fishing and territorial disputes over Ceuta and Melilla (Arango and Philip 2005, 262). Nonetheless, bilateral cooperation with Morocco was sought by all Spanish governments independently of their political adherence. A Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in July 1991 and entered into force in 1995. An accord on the circulation of people, the transit and readmission of illegally entered foreigners was signed as early as in 1992. Later it was followed by other agreements in 2003 and 2007, for example related to unaccompanied minors. Relations were for a while strained around 2010 because of territorial disputes but got much better from the end of 2011. The newly elected Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy (PP) travelled to Morocco on his first official visit - just like his predecessors - (BBC 2012). But this time the trip was followed by a reunion of high level in autumn - not held since 2008 - (Prime minister and 7 ministers from the Spanish side) and a state visit by King Juan Carlos in 2013. Recently there has been another hub in the bilateral nexus; in February 2019 King Felipe VI paid an official visit to Morocco, accompanied by several members of the

Spanish government (of Pedro Sánchez, PSOE). Eleven bilateral agreements were signed as well as a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of global strategic association (La Vanguardia 2019b).

The trade relationship is asymmetric: Spain is the most important partner of Morocco (22% of exports and 24% of imports), whereas 3% of Spanish exports went to Morocco and 1.6% of imports originated from the North African country in 2017 (OEC). Yet it is crucial for Spain. "Morocco is increasingly assuming an intermediate position linking African and Mediterranean migration systems" (Berriane 2015, 504). It is the principal transit route for sub-Saharan migrants moving to the other side of the Mediterranean and also a pool of emigrants itself. If Morocco controls the numbers who leave, Spanish authorities need to tackle fewer irregular migrants at their own borders. Due to the stability in Morocco - unlike in Libya - the deployment of migratory control to the North African country has been rather effective.

Italy – Libya

Libya has played an important, but always difficult role in Italy's foreign policy due to colonial heritage and the embargo imposed on Libya during the Ghaddafi regime (Ronzitti 2009, 126). The signing of the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation between Italy and Libya in 2008 was a significant improvement. It also brought about the drop of illegal immigration via the central Mediterranean. The numbers fell from 64,300 in 2009 to 4,500 by 2010 (Ronzitti 2009; Molnár 2011; Molnár 2019).

Libya has traditionally been one of the Mediterranean centres for human trafficking, - and following the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2011 -, the unstable situation allowed human traffickers to act with impunity, resulting in the consolidation and better organization of smuggling groups. The flow of irregular migrants and refugees increased after 2013. More than 170,000 people reached Italian shores via the central Mediterranean route in 2014 (four times more than the previous year), 153,946 did so in 2015, and 181,126 in 2016 (Frontex

2019b). Following the closure of the Western Balkan route after the EU-Turkey deal of March 2016, the numbers have grown further. In the first six months of 2017 more than 90,000 people had chosen this route and thus Italy. Measures to cut down numbers included the enhancement of the effectiveness of the Libyan Coast Guard and the introduction of code of conduct for NGOs that rescue migrants in the Mediterranean. Migratory pressure did decrease on Italy: during the last six months of 2017 only 29,000 more irregular migrants arrived. In 2018 the total number of irregular border crossings dropped by 80% on this route to 23,485. The majority of newcomers actually arrived from Tunisia to the Italian coasts, not from Libya (Frontex 2019b).

Italy has unsuccessfully supported the strengthening of the internationally recognized Libyan unity government through all possible means (e.g. the Hippocrates mission, deployment of two military ships to Libya and the decision to send 100 Carabinieri to Libya's Southern border (Ministerio della Difesa 2016). In February 2017, moreover, Italy and the National Reconciliation Government of Libya signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation to combat illegal immigration and human trafficking, and on reinforcing border security.

Government answers in Italy

After the migration and refugee crisis, Italian governments have dealt with irregular migration using both bilateral (e.g. memorandum of understanding between Italy and Libya) and European crisis management tools (e.g. EUBAM Libya mission), balancing realist (pragmatic, but not sovereignist) and "Europeanized" approaches.

In April 2015, 700 people died in the Mediterranean close to Lampedusa. Four days later, the European Council launched an EU military operation, EUNAVFOR MED, to help resolving the situation. This Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation, highly supported by Italy, was deployed in May. According to critics, however, its search and rescue activity acted "as a magnet" for irregular immigrants (House of Lords 2016, 18).

The Italian government supported the introduction of the refugee quota system, and asked repeatedly for a review of EU regulations on asylum policy and for the creation of a common asylum system (Rainews 2015). Italy's ability to influence EU policy was enhanced by support from other major EU member states such as France and Germany (Partito Democratico 2015a). Italian governments between 2015 and 2018 worked hard to strengthen European and multilateral cooperation to tackle the crisis. Therefore, Italian politicians were disappointed with the slow distribution of refugee applicants across the EU, and with the rejection of the quota system by some member states, including Hungary. Still, they were aware that without effective agreements with the countries of origin, and without tackling the root causes of migration, neither the establishment of the quota system nor the creation of EU reception facilities would provide an adequate solution.

In March 2016, the Italian and German interior ministers proposed an ambitious reform of the Dublin regulations, an adjustment of the Common European Asylum System, and the establishment of a European Asylum Agency. They wanted to see effective repatriation activities, the extension of Frontex's tasks, and the creation of an EU Border and Coast Guard Agency to strengthen the external borders. This would have meant the reinforcement of the external dimension of EU migration policy (la Repubblica 2016; Council of the European Union 2016, March 4). One month later Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi made his proposal, which, again, amounted to the externalization of migration policy. The first step of his strategy - Migration Compact - was identifying partner countries to cooperate with on migratory issues (Governo Italiano 2016a, 2016b).

In 2016, another increase in migration across the Mediterranean (181,126 people) made it clear that, in the absence of comprehensive European policy tools and without the cooperation with the Libyan partner, EUNAVFOR MED Sophia could not counteract the activities of smugglers and reduce the pressure on Italy. Therefore, in June 2016 the EUNAVFOR MED Sophia operation was reinforced with the supporting tasks of training the Libyan Coast Guard and the implementation of

the UN arms embargo (European External Action Service 2016; European Council 2016, June 20; Council Decision 2016).

The Italian governments of Renzi (2014-16) and Gentiloni (2016-18) on the one hand highlighted the importance of the elaboration of a genuine European asylum policy (Partito Democratico 2015b) and the signing of readmission agreements with partner countries, and on the other hand, emphasized the need to save lives first and foremost. The migration policy of Italy resembled the EU's "global strategy", which featured the "principled pragmatism" of trying to find a solid balance between normative and moral duties (Biscop 2016), and the pragmatic management of migration.

The policy tools introduced by the EU and Italy have contributed to a decrease in the number of arrivals via the central Mediterranean route since 2017. In the long run, however, it is the security environment that needed to be stabilized. Rome used both bilateral and European multilateral tools, but the various Italian governments have all expressed disappointment and resentment that Italy has been left virtually alone in dealing with the crisis (Molnár 2015, 14). According to the Eurobarometer survey the number of Italians who were in favour of a common European policy on migration started to decrease between 2015 and 2019 (EC 2020c).

After the general elections of 2018 La Lega and Movimento 5 Stelle gained power and made irregular migration a national security issue. The immigration and refugee policy of the new Eurosceptic, sovereignist and populist coalition differed considerably from the former governments. The foreign policy priorities of that coalition were "caught between continuity and change, radicalism and pragmatism" (Marrone 2018, 1). As it was emphasized in the so called "Contract for the government of change", one of the main priorities was the reduction of irregular flows, the acceleration of repatriation and the revision of the Dublin Regulation (M5S International 2018, May 18).

When Matteo Salvini became minister of interior of the new government, Italy's migrant and refugee crisis policy turned more radical. Italian ports were shut down in front of the rescue ships of NGOs (e.g. in the case of Aquarius ship in 2018)

and the new government started to criminalise those NGOs and securitize this phenomenon. The number of conflicts multiplied between Rome, the EU and other member states, such as Spain (Strazzari and Grandi 2019, 336-337). Rome refused the EU's proposal on the reform of the Dublin system in June 2018 (Marrone 2018, 1), and thus turned down the Europeanised solution. During the mini-summit of 24 June, Conte proposed the "European Multilevel Strategy for Migration". The Italian strategy called for shared responsibility among MSs (European Multilevel Strategy for Migration 2018). After a heated debate among member states a compromise on migration policy was reached during the meeting of the European Council. The new compromise mentions the "support for the Sahel region, the Libyan Coast Guard, coastal and Southern communities, humane reception conditions, voluntary humanitarian returns, cooperation with other countries of origin and transit, as well as voluntary resettlement". Point 12 of the Conclusions declares that the Dublin Regulation should be reformed upon consensus on the bases of a balance of responsibility and solidarity (European Council 2018).

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte tried to balance between the sovereignist approach of Matteo Salvini and the less radical position of the other fraction of the coalition, the M5S, while still supporting the legislative initiatives of the latter. This approach was expressed when Conte told in the European Parliament in February 2019 that "faced with the massacre of human lives we must all together wage a fight on traffickers without quarter. Let us stop remaining divided, giving in to nationalist or regionalist logic, and let us try to put into practice an authentic solidarity" (ANSA 2019).

Government responses in Spain

Spanish governments have long insisted that an arrival in Spain is an arrival in the European Union, that is, migration is a common issue of the EU which needs to be tackled together, with solidarity among member states and forming a common migration policy. Slow action on behalf of, and disagreements within

the EU, however, coupled with a growth in migratory flows towards Spain as well as protracted domestic political crisis, have made decision makers partially revise their stance.

Migration was not a hotly debated issue in Spain in 2015, as only a small portion of irregular migrants headed towards the Iberian Peninsula. The Spanish migration crisis took place in 2017-18, after the change in migratory routes following the 2015 European migration crisis. Since 2015, the number of detections of irregular border crossings at the EU's external borders has considerably reduced, from 1.8 million in 2015 to a mere 150,000 in 2018 (Frontex 2019c, 16). However, the closing of the Western Balkan route shifted pressure of irregular migration from the East towards the Central and Western part of the Mediterranean. Then with Italy's closed ports policy, the Western Mediterranean Route became the most frequented one (Frontex 2019c, 6-17). This was not the first migration crisis in contemporary Spain, the 2006 Cayuco crisis, when about 40,000 West Africans had crossed to the Canary Islands, can be considered as an antecedent. Nonetheless, the memories and images connected to the Cayuco Crisis as well as to the European Migration Crisis did not calm feelings, on the contrary, in the second half of the 2010s they arose anxiety and fears. These responses appeared in a time of acute political crisis, in the midst of serious doubts over the governability of the country. It is no wonder, that migration and in particular irregular migration became more politicized as before and increasingly securitized.

Pedro Sánchez (PSOE), Prime Minister since June 2018 - with Mariano Rajoy (PP) removed from office due to corruption charges - got international attention because of opening Spanish ports to Aquarius, a ship carrying more than 600 rescued migrants, which had been turned away by Italy and Malta. The Spanish step can be interpreted in several ways, as a message of solidarity; an effort on behalf of Sánchez to gain popularity - the acceptance of the ship was one of his first decisions -; a disposition and call to tackle migration on a European, multilateral level; an effort to shame the Italian leadership and / or to improve the international image of Spain.

Regardless of what we think about it, one thing is sure, this policy of open ports, and in general, immigration-friendly attitude, was not maintained. Those activities that could act as a magnet for irregular migrants were suspended or altered. Rescue ships were no longer welcome; they could not dock, faced obstacles in leaving Spanish ports or fines, for example Proactiva Open Arms and Aita Mari (Julio 2019; La Vanguardia 2019a). The tasks of the Spanish civilian rescue mission, Salvamento Marítimo, were reorganized. It was placed under a central command headed by several ministries, and its operational field has been extended in the Mediterranean Sea with the consequence of being able to pay less attention to the most frequented zones (Fine and Torreblanca 2019, 5-6). The result could be fewer lives saved and the crossing getting more dangerous.

Salvamento Marítimo rescued 6,077 irregular migrants in 2016, 17,666 in 2017 and 49,688 in 2018 (Sasemar 2018, 6). The numbers are a clear indication of the mounting migratory pressure. The latter is also visible in the increase of the pertinent Frontex budget. Frontex deploys the Hera, Indalo and Minerva joint operations (JO) with the Spanish authorities at the country's maritime borders to reduce irregular migration, human, and drug smuggling. The 2017 budget of these JOs was roughly 10,000,000 euros. The sum was more than doubled for 2018, and amounted to 20,439,161 euros altogether (EC 2019b).

As arrivals kept on growing, and having reached no EU-level agreement on migration and asylum policy, Spanish leaders sought the help of Morocco. This bilateral 'containment deal' proved to be very effective: detected irregular arrivals fell by 50%, from 64,298 in 2018 to 24,159 in 2019 (Martin 2019).

The Socialist Party wanted to look firm and capable of handling the situation, trying to take the wind out of the sails of the right and far-right. Nonetheless, the support of the People's Party grew between the April and the November general elections by 4%, and the radical Vox achieved its best electoral result ever in November 2019, reaching 15,09% of total votes (Elecciones Generales 2019b). After this surprising result something unprecedented followed in Spanish political life since the democratic transition: the formation of a coalition, making it

possible to create a minority government of forces on the political left (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and Podemos). The presence of Podemos in the government might bring a change into Spanish migration policy. The party's 2019 electoral program emphasized the re-enforcement of legal and secure ways of getting into Spain, the easing of family reunifications and Spanish naturalization, the necessity of a new asylum law which includes climate migration, and the bolstering of Sea Rescues Service. Zero death in the Mediterranean Sea was indicated as a goal for 2020 (Szente-Varga 2017, 214). "The work of the NGO of rescue in the Central Mediterranean will be protected […]. We will guarantee the absolute respect for human rights in our Southern frontier" (Podemos 2019). The program of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party called for an integrated approach, saying that this complex challenge can only be addressed by multiple means that combine "respect for the human rights of the migrants, cooperation with the places of origin and of transit, control of irregular migration, fight against human trafficking, as well as integration policies" (PSOE 2019, 187) including easier access to Spanish nationality. The outcome for 2020 will probably be a compromise of the two forces within the coordinates of Spanish political realities and international trends, and could bring about the softening of the Spanish position - especially if there is also shift in Italy towards a more open attitude. The dismantling of fences around Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish cities in North Africa, has already begun.

CONCLUSIONS

At no period could we find a government in Italy or Spain with a clear-cut Europeanized or sovereignist migration policy. Politicians tended to employ a number of measures including some supranational and some bilateral / unilateral steps. It is the proportion of these policies that shifted based on changes in the economic, social, political and international environment. More pro-EU governments preferred a more Europeanised and multilateral strategy, whereas more Eurosceptic governments resorted to a more sovereignist or de-Europeanised approach,

usually carried out in a unilateral or bilateral / intergovernmental way, also preferring to externalize migratory policies. Yet it was always a mixture of different measures. We should not be misled by acts of communication. Far-right political actors might use a sovereignist rhetoric but "in reality they face various constraints (such as the interests of business leaders and the obligations arising from international and national human rights laws) in trying to adopt corresponding policy measures" (Reslow 2019, 35).

An additional factor influencing decisions which needs to be added here is the type of borders a country has. When it is a land border, it is more likely that governments try to exert control by fortifying it, building some kind of obstacle to divert migratory routes. The 1990s saw Spain join the Schengen zone and also the construction of border fences around its African possessions, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, the only land border with Morocco, later re-enforced several times. In 2005 in Melilla the barbed wire was topped with razors causing several injuries, thus they were taken down in 2007 but reintroduced on $^1/_3{}^{rd}$ of the fence in 2013, alleging migratory pressure (Cembrero 2013). Whereas land borders have tended to be tackled by unilateral or bilateral means, the search for multilateral tools is fostered by the peninsular geographic conditions of Spain and Italy and the existence of sea borders. In case of sea arrivals, it is not a line but an area which has to be supervised, needing cooperation with other actors.

Migration is a complex issue and can be tackled efficiently only on the international level. Spaniards and Italians living on the Southern flank of Europe, have long been aware of this. Unsurprisingly, support for the EU as well as European migration policy has been rather high both in Italy and Spain. However, the slow and ineffective reaction of the Union with respect to the 2015 migration crisis caused disappointment and strengthened fears related to immigration. It also led to an "EU-initiated collective securitization of the Schengen space" (Ceccorulli 2019, 302) and the elaboration of a Europeanised toolkit, e.g. the so-called quota system, the launching of new CSDP and Frontex missions or operations. The events of 2015

represented an internal crisis for the EU. Not only did the crisis cause difficulties to the host country facilities and create political division within and among the member states, but it also threatened the existence of the Schengen Area (Ceccorulli 2019).

Simultaneously with the deepening of the crisis, first the Hungarian government (since 2015) and later the Italian (since 2018) and to some extent the Spanish one (since 2018-2019) started to rely more on sovereignist crisis management tools with strong securitization of the migration phenomena (Waever 1995; Waever and Buzan 1993; Balzacq 2005, 171-201; Balzacq 2008, 75-100; Balzacq 2011; Balzacq et al. 2015). "The securitization of migration is [...] a transversal political technology, used as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist, so as to affirm their role as providers of protection and security and to mask some of their failures" (Bigo 2002, 65). The issue of migration has become an electoral issue in the analysed countries and has clearly been used for internal political purposes, too.

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