

BordEUR: New European Borderlands

**Fences, Refugee Boats,
and the New Borderlands:
Making Sense of the European Union's
Emerging Internal and External Borders**

September 2022

Edited by
Andras Szalai, Owen Parker, Sonia Lucarelli,
and Alexandra Prodromidou.

A publication within the EU/financed project 'BordEUR: New European Borderlands'

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Democracy
Institute

bord[EU]r
Jean Monnet New European Borderlands Network

Acknowledgements

This publication is the culmination of a three-year long (2019–2022) research project entitled “BordEUr: New European Borderlands.” BordEUr is a collaborative research project of nine universities that documents and assesses the proliferation of new borders in the aftermath of the EU’s recent crises, with a special emphasis on the so-called migration crisis. The project analyzes the symbolic role of borders in ontological narratives (those of both the EU and its member states), as well as the bordering policies that these narratives enable. You can read more about the project on the project website at www.bordeur-project.com.

Project partners: Central European University, Goce Delchev University in Shtip, Middle East Technical University, the South-East European Research Centre, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, the Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna, the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, the University of Sheffield, and Universität Wien.

This research was co-funded through the Erasmus+ Program—Jean Monnet Network scheme (Project Reference Number: 611891-EPP-1-2019-1-HU-EPPJMO-NETWORK).

The European Commission’s support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Democracy
Institute

bord[EU]r
Jean Monnet New European Borderlands Network

Table of Contents

Notes on Contributors	4
Introduction: Borders and Crises in the European Union <i>Andras Szalai, Owen Parker, Sonia Lucarelli, and Alexandra Prodromidou</i>	8
1. Italy and EU's Co-constitutive Bordering Effort <i>Michela Ceccorulli</i>	20
2. Policies and Politics of De- and Re-bordering: The Case of Austria from 1995 to 2021 <i>Ivan Josipovic, Sieglinde Rosenberger, Helena Segarra, and Magdalena Übleis-Lang</i>	30
3. United in bordering, divided in solidarity: (re)bordering practices in and à la carte/flexible solidarity towards Greece in the post-2014 migration management <i>Alexandra Prodromidou and Petros Golitsis</i>	45
4. Readmission or Desecuritization? The Recent Migration Crisis and Bordering Narratives and Practices in Turkey <i>Başak Alpan</i>	54
5. The Border as a Symbolic Resource: Lessons from Hungary <i>András Szalai</i>	68
6. In the EU and Out of the Schengen Area: Bulgaria's Experience and Challenges in Securing the EU's External Border <i>Plamen Ralchev</i>	83
7. In-Securitization through Externalization? The EU and the Western Balkans "Borderlands" <i>Stefano Bianchini, Silvia Cittadini, and Marco Zoppi</i>	97
8. EU Citizens, Free Movement, and Ontological (In)Security in the UK: Beyond National Citizens and Post-National Entrepreneurs? <i>Owen Parker</i>	109
9. Urban resilience and ontological security: analyzing de-bordering processes in Barcelona <i>Ricard Zapata-Barrero</i>	126

Chapter 1

Italy and EU's Co-constitutive Bordering Effort

Michela Ceccorulli

Introduction

Italy plays a performative role in the construction of the (southern) border of the European Union. Her actions are simultaneously affected and affect the European border and its meaning. In fact, a frontier state is inevitably called to implement a series of rules and procedures agreed at the European level for the sake of the entire Union: the implementation since 2015 of the hotspot approach as a new bordering tool is a case in point and has been widely covered by the literature (see for example Campesi, 2018). In turn, Italy shapes the border of the Union whenever its narrative and practices transform borders in cognitive, ideational, and material terms. The iteration of this mutually constitutive relation provides extraordinarily variegated images of European borders as contemporarily fluid and incredibly impenetrable, as stretchable yet rigid, as inclusive yet widely discriminatory.

As explained below, (re)bordering practices seems to be inescapable for states and more so in times of crisis when uncertainty crumbles core belief systems and tests institutional capacity and preparedness ('resilience' even, to use a recurrent jargon). They are key to actors' aim to discover, uncover, or even reproduce ontological security. Italy is no exception, having been shaken hard by multiple and concurrent crises over the last years. The economic crisis first, the 'refugee crisis' then and lastly the COVID pandemic have repeatedly questioned the country's ontological security, its priorities, its alignments, and resoluteness along with main values. This chapter specifically looks at the fallout of the 'refugee crisis' on Italy's bordering process, though the effects of all three crises and their main features are hardly understandable on their own.

As seen, if insecurity looms large, the provision of security is what is expected and required: bordering exercises in this sense largely depend on securitizing moves enacted and their legitimizing arguments. Italy is hence analyzed in this chapter by looking at its main securitizing narratives and matching bordering practices. Considering three political constellations running the country from 2016 to 2020, this chapter has a twofold objective: first, to consider bordering practices according to their legitimizing arguments; and second, to evaluate their implications on migrants' treatment and on EU practices and overall ontology.

Setting the context: Italy's unnormal normalcy

When the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 sealed the eastern Mediterranean corridor and rather optimistically and arbitrarily signaled the end of the 'refugee crisis,' Italy was everything but relieved at this apparent solution the Union had pulled out of a hat (Ceccorulli, 2019). Ever since, Italy has started fearing a diversion of flows of the many stranded in the Balkans towards its territory through the Adriatic route, adding to those soaring along the Mediterranean one. Anxiety over becoming 'the parking place of Europe' was transmitted by the media as EU member states fortified internal borders out of concerns over secondary movements. Italy's apprehension at that point was motivated by two elements: first, the requirement (now inescapable) as requested by the Dublin Regulation that Italy fully perform its role as first country of entrance; second, the awareness of acting within a still largely imperfect asylum structure. When inflows towards the country reached a new peak in 2016, apprehension turned into insecurity and imbued, even though with diverse emphasis, the political debate. What followed in terms of both security moves and

implementing practices was an attempt by multiple political majorities to govern the phenomenon through the definition of different sets of borders: some defining the perimeter of the national political community, some defining Italy's imagined position (opportunistic at times) in the European Union, and still others going as far as reframing the borders of the Union.

Indeed, this complex process has mirrored nuances proper to the political majority in power as it is seen below. But some traits have persisted, unchanged and irrespective of the political color, along these days to provide a more solid and decisive contribution to the Union's bordering effort. In particular, Italy has tried to define a perfect matching between its borders and those of the Union: this exercise has been mostly devoted at enticing Union and member states' solidarity in governing migration, with the aim to erase those cognitive borders that still characterize the issue area and that indeed display quite concrete distributional effects. Besides, and somehow relatedly, Italy has constantly tried to stretch the external border southwards, reconfiguring the Union's geographic border—and with those, relations with a new neighborhood.

More undetermined and schizophrenic has been instead the bordering of the national community. Combining wholehearted actions with blunt disrespect of migrants' rights, taking accommodating and inclusive stances while contracting basic liberal rights—Italy has hardly made up its mind about the basic values supporting her being. Ultimately, this has blurred the EU's already fuzzy border on the matter. Ambiguity and frequent reliance on a restrictive definition of borders cripple rather than embolden Italy and the Union's ontological security, perverting their supposed, imagined, and loudly heralded distinctiveness.

The five-year period of consideration together with the alternation of different political majorities offer a perfect occasion to appreciate continuities and discontinuities in Italian political discourse and practice. Between December 2016 and June 2018 Italy was run by a center-left/center-right coalition. Throughout 2016 Italy faced the largest inflow of asylum-seekers ever experienced (Redazione ANSA, 2016), while significant lows were registered along other Mediterranean corridors. Minister for the Interior Marco Minniti, an experienced politician of the left, assertively shaped a Mediterranean policy aimed at governing flows and brought the Union's attention (and pockets) to this geographical region, with a 'model' or 'vision' to be implemented in Libya. After that government, Italy displayed the first full-populist western European government ever, run through a contract between the Five-star movement and the League, a party with traditional antimigration stances. As had occurred in other historical moments when the League (previously Northern League) made it into the leading coalition, the seat of the Interior was occupied by a prominent figure in the party—this time Matteo Salvini. The dubbed 'yellow-green government' experience sunk in August 2019. Italy was then run by a coalition between the Five-star movement and some parties from the center and the left until February 2021, with Luciana Lamorgese, with a long experience as officer in the Ministry of the Interior, covering now the highest seat within. The last phase is the one that saw Italy endure, first among European countries, the impact of SARS-COV-19 (Covid), something which, alongside health, brought immense repercussions in social, economic, and political terms. Indeed, the frequent political turnabouts have not favored comprehensive and more importantly consistent approaches; the issue is not new for Italy, though. In fact, the patchy, reactive, and ever-emergency traits of its approach to migration have been frequently attributed to this peculiar feature.

The period of observation is all the more interesting in that it displays different inflows' intensity. Ultimately, this allows us to gauge both the salience of the issue and its manipulation by political leaders; the relevance attributed to the issue as a defining element for Italy's ontology; and, ultimately, the weight of relations with the Union in bordering attempts and practices.

The next sections elaborate on the bordering attempts mentioned above, trying to combine them with their imbued securitization logic.

Italy as the Union's border

One of the leitmotifs of Italy's political discourse has been the one reminding the public that 'Italy's border is in fact the Union's border.' As Minister Salvini half explained and half admonished, "the plan is that finally the EU takes care of the defense of its borders. That are also ours" (Cremonesi, 2018). At first sight, this type of argument seems to stress a geographical and even territorial definition of a border whereby Italy clearly draws the contours of the Union's 'hard' limes. Clearly there is some truth to this interpretation, as Salvini's words made clear through the use of military parlance. In this sense, hard borders would collimate with cognitive ones: Italy is the doorstep of a regionally-integrated organization where common values, norms, and rules apply that differ from other geographical spaces. That space has hence to be cocooned, 'defended,' protecting the Mediterranean and Italy as well (Cremonesi, 2018). According to Minister Salvini, defending the external border was key to removing internal border controls introduced during the 2015 crisis and kept ever since (Walt, 2018). However, rather than referring to an external audience, this argument is mostly addressed to the Union. Reminding the Union that Italy locates, perceives itself, and demands to be recognized as part of the Union is intended to stimulate 'solidarity' from other member states, recalling such values as constitutive of the Union and hence integral part of its ontology. As explained by Minister Lamorgese, "solidarity principles stand at the basis of the European construction and integration" (Sarzanini, 2019a); without solidarity it is not possible to set in motion a reception policy reflecting the EU's values and to overcome the sterile binary logic of primary and secondary movements (Spagnolo, 2020). Having that in mind provides an image of borders in less rigid terms than anticipated.

This logic has been a constant in Italy's discourse, irrespective of political colors and to the limit of hypocrisy when the same was taken forward by formations with quite sovereigntist stances. The argument has been raised time and again. For example, during the 2015 refugee crisis, the request was to speed up the relocation decisions redistributing asylum-seekers from specific countries among member states; afterwards emphasis was put on updating the Union's ethnic profiles for relocation to reach more nationalities, reflecting the new composition of flows (Ziniti, 2017). But perhaps more vigorously it has resonated in the debate about search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean, particularly relevant in the aftermath of the refugee crisis. All political formations have vigorously asked for a regionalization of search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean: almost the entirety of disembarkations of rescued persons have occurred in Italy, causing at times of intense inflows and particular hardship for the Italian reception system. As reported by Minniti (2017), it is hard to imagine an international rescue mission and at the same time reception by a sole country.

The quest for a European search and rescue system would indeed push the border of the Union outward to the sea, partly reconfiguring this space as the Union's in terms of effective intervention and responsibility. This reconfiguration would not fix new borders, however, for the sea seldom recognizes some, at least in practical terms; it would be closer to what has been called in the literature a 'borderland' (Del Sarto, 2021).

Despite efforts, Italy's call for solidarity has been unmet till these days, with huge consequences. This held true for example when the reiterated call by Minniti to FRONTEX and other member states for a change of Operation Triton rules of engagement during were sunk in summer 2017. Looking at timing, one might for example infer that member states' blind eyes on the matter might have pressured Italy into signing a code of conduct for NGOs operating in the Mediterranean by underlining the operative necessity to govern a 'jungle' (Martini, 2017), and might have decisively deepened and accelerated cooperation with Libya, giving shape to the bordering logic explained below. During the populist government, Italy's unheard voice has accelerated the dismissal of operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, a European presence unique in the Mediterranean and never replaced, ending the likelihood of a European reconfiguration at sea. Hardening the stance against NGOs, in June 2018 Minister Salvini mandated the closing of Italian ports to these organizations, with the explanation that most of these wore the flag of other member states and did not share Italy's efforts on reception. As with Minniti, the end objective was changing the rules of engagement of missions in the Mediterranean, allowing for rotating disembarkations. To force its hand, Salvini was particularly hostile towards the EU, threatening to close ports even to EU missions (e.g., in Themis, Triton, and Sophia) and, according to experts, truly orchestrated 'crises' at sea in an effort to spectacularize his moves by 'hostaging' vessels and questioning the urgency and the necessity of disembarkations 'in a safe

place' (Cerasa, 2020a).¹ These missions were international only 'on paper,' and instead only Italian when it came to economic support (Redazione romana, 2018). As pointed out, "The European Themis mission is composed of 32 vessels, 30 of which Italians': how can you affirm it is a European mission?" (Romano, 2018). Italy's behavior was stirring at times hypocritical reactions from other Member States, accusing Italy of 'cynicism and irresponsibility' (Cremonesi, 2018). If Salvini's move went beyond real objectives, as testified by the skirmish within the Italian Minister of Defense who instead praised Operation Sophia (commanded by Italy) and the significance it held for Italy, the operation was finally discontinued. In fact, no European solutions emerged and after a final phase which saw the paradoxical presence of a naval operation without a naval component (with no anti-smuggling and rescuing activities), the EU seemed to abandon previously alluded-to security interests: anti-smuggling efforts and migrants' lives.

The last of the three governments got closer to a shared system than the others with the 2019 Malta Summit. Minister Lamorgese (2019) explained that, "in coordination with Germany, the idea has been taken forward that who lands in Italy lands in Europe." Lamorgese explained that a new solidarity environment had settled among Member States, necessary for an effective sharing of the problem (Sarzanini, 2019b). A mechanism for the redistribution of migrants called by the Commission (and not by Italy) based on automatic relocation procedures was envisaged and served two objectives: first a more equitable distribution of burdens among member states; second, reduced uncertainty over responsibility on reception (Sarzanini, 2019b). In the words of Lamorgese, the measure equated to the overcoming of the Dublin Regulation (which in itself is a powerful cognitive barrier within the EU both for migrants and among member states as the argument about primary and secondary movements highlights), for, after a first security and sanitary control undertaken by Italy, those arrived would be registered in EURODAC by the receiving country (Cerasa, 2020b). And yet, the system run on a voluntary basis and enclosed a limited number of European states.

Moreover, the outbreak of the pandemic has struck a lethal blow to the feeble voluntary mechanism at play, leaving Italy with increasing inflows from Tunisia to deal with and poor instruments to cope. During summer 2020, in fact, rising and mostly unchecked disembarkations were reported by Minister Lamorgese. The compounded problem of intercepting these inflows (hence also undertaking proper sanitary check) and the fast spreading of the Coronavirus has indeed affected perceptions related to inflows, perceptions largely engrossed by populist formations underlining the health threat posed by irregular migrants. Indeed, Minister Lamorgese explained in an attempt to defuse concern that the problem of sanitary checks was seemingly valid for all persons entering Italy, for work, study or tourism reasons (Sarzanini, 2020). However, this has made it all the more difficult to organize proper reception, for the local levels engaged in reception showed strong resistance. Even in the case of properly tracked inflows (undergoing as they normally do security and sanitary checks) reception in the available structures was rendered difficult because of the exigencies of social distancing.

Against this backdrop, the decision to 'quarantine vessels' off Italy's ports represented indeed a new bordering system (Denaro, 2021). Together with the sanitary threat 'imported to Italy' by migrants alluded by antimigration formations, confining migrants afloat may have deepened the perception among Italian public opinion of asylum-seekers as 'incubators' even if the measure was exactly taken to ward off this eventuality by disposing proper sanitary checks (Cerasa, 2020a) and alleviate pressure on hotspots (Ziniti, 2020). In turn, the distress faced by Italy because of new arrivals and blocked relocations to other member states may have urged close member states (France and Austria) to strengthened physical controls at borders, for fear of 'secondary movements.' In turn, this fed the perception of Italy's solitude vis-à-vis the challenge, as explained by this narrative.

1 Author's online interview with Matteo Villa, ISPI Research Fellow, 25 May 2021.

Italy stretching out the EU's borders

A second argument taking the lead after the refugee crisis is that the EU has to operate in Africa as main decisive context for its own future. As Minniti (2017) made clear, “the governance of migratory flows is to be played outside national borders and does not only involve and interest Italy. It has to do with Africa and Europe.” Also, “the governance of migration cannot be limited to the territory of the Union and in particular to migrants’ arrival on Italian shores. It has first to be faced in Africa, where it has its roots and where economic, environmental, and humanitarian causes guide the phenomenon” (De Maizière & Minniti, 2017). And again “the decisive game for Europe is no longer being played to the East, rather to the South. Our future is strongly linked to Africa’s” (Foschini, 2017), with a specific reference to the challenges posed by terrorism, demography, and strategic resources. Talks about a ‘Marshall Plan for Africa’ were evocative about the scope and the resoluteness of the engagement shown by Italy. When flows towards Italy from Tunisia started to resume in summer 2020, amid the COVID epidemic, Minister Lamorgese admonished the EU to intervene effectively to reduce the effects of the economic hurdles facing the North African country, because a slowdown of the pressure could only be attained in Africa (Sarzanini, 2020). Indeed, this type of argument has visibly connected migration policy with foreign policy more broadly. This has partly contributed, though unintentionally, to the securitization of migration by linking insecurity conditions in Africa with possible massive and chaotic flows, and by associating migration governance with domains mostly using coping security tools, while probably diverting resources on useful development chapters (Ministero degli Esteri, 2020).

Among others, a narrative matching the EU border Libya’s southern border was advanced. This contribution to EU’s re-bordering is peculiarly Italian; in 2016 Minister Minniti inaugurated a new phase of relations with the North African country in an attempt to gain (primarily financial) support from the Union. Every initiative was coordinated with and brought to the EU level, such as a July 2017 meeting in Rome with Libyan mayors, which saw the participation of the Commissioner for Internal Affairs Dimitris Avramopoulos. The idea to be sedimented was that the southern border of Libya was in fact EU’s border, explained the Italian Minister (Cazzullo, 2017). In the words of Minniti, Italy’s assertive role and the assiduous involvement of the EU had the added benefit of balancing the EU’s international projection with a pivot to the south (Cuscito & Caracciolo, 2018). Essentially, the strategy’s pillars involved building up Libyan capacity on anti-smuggling, maritime and terrestrial border controls, information exchange, the development of economic projects, and reception centers’ conditions.

This attempt has visibly and easily crossed the broader international attempt to restore security and statehood in Libya, in complete disarray after the Quaddafi regime was toppled in 2011. In this sense, Italy’s strategy has wisely related the insecurity situation of the country and the lack of sovereignty prerogatives with the growing threat of human smuggling, endangering human lives as testified by the abysmal number of deaths in the Mediterranean particularly in 2016. As Minniti pointed out, human smuggling is a real threat to Europe as a whole: assisting smugglers’ deadly game against desperate migrants could not be a choice (De Maizière & Minniti, 2017). Closing the Saharan smuggling industry and the supporting bases in Libya represented, for Minniti, a ‘democratic duty’ (Ziniti, 2017), for any talk about reception could only happen in the context of the control of illegality—reiterating, hence, the legitimacy of the vision. Moreover, it was explained, a democracy cannot follow and passively react to processes governed by criminals (Foschini, 2017). But the rush to Libya was supported by another securitizing narrative: recalling the June 2017 arrival of more than 25 vessels carrying 12,500 migrants in less than two days, Minniti pointed out that the risk was very high of intense tensions in the country (Ciriaco, 2017). Taking action was hence no choice. Different security moves have been at play, somehow legitimizing the necessity to extend the EU’s intervention southwards. Minister Minniti made clear that “if Africa is well, we are well as well,” alluding to the fact that insecurity in Africa translates into insecurity for the EU (Di Giacomo, 2017). Minniti inferred that smugglers’ exploitation of irregular immigrants’ hopes could not but endanger their lives: hence, the inevitability of action. Throughout 2017 relations with Libya towards ‘political stabilization’ had been intense, covering different policy fields connected by the attempt at curbing irregular immigration (Camilli, 2020; Ceccorulli & Varvelli, 2021).

Border-wise, the strategy carried many implications. First, the definition of Libya as a transit country created implications in terms of practices: ten vessels have been donated to Libya to control departures, personnel have been trained, and peace has been promoted between south Saharan tribes, allowing for

a better control of relevant smuggling corridors there (Ziniti, 2017). This point is not trivial, for Libya has been a destination country for many migrants coming from both neighboring states and Asia (Frowd, 2020). Alongside Libya, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania have been defined as 'transit countries' (Weymouth, 2018), easing the image of their borders as particularly fluid for both entering and exiting. Second, the implicit definition of the country as 'safe' has been legitimized by Italy and the EU's presence. Emphasis was put on the funds provided by the Union to reception centers under the responsibility of the United Nations Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration. In the words of Minister Minniti, Europe and Italy's training of the Libyan Coast Guard had already ensured the saving of 10,000 lives from deadly waters, bringing migrants back to Libya (De Maizière & Minniti, 2017). Indeed, this narrative has always been hugely contradictory, as evidenced for example in Minniti's insistence that migrants could not be trapped in camps, fattening smugglers' trafficking (De Maizière & Minniti, 2017). Ultimately, this concern motivated the first humanitarian corridors to Italy directly from Libya. Seemingly, Minister Lamorgese (2019) inferred that centers in Libya had to be closed and more humanitarian permits had to be granted. For Minister Salvini, the recognition of Libya as a 'safe port' was more a matter of 'labels' that the EU had to be quick to affix, rather than the effective verification of safe and decent conditions (Ministero dell'Interno, 2018).

Third, and faithful to its logic, new relations were founded with third countries bordering Libya, most noticeably Niger, Chad, and Mali. With them cooperation has been attempted and more-or-less achieved in a new extensive EU effort, spanning from the governmental to the local level (De Maizière & Minniti, 2017). Libya's reception camps mentioned before were said to ensure smoother procedure for voluntary repatriation (Ziniti, 2017). Besides, and somehow relatedly, the hard borders between Libya and neighboring countries and the Union itself were redrawn. An objective of the strategy was to prevent migrants from reaching Libya in the first place, while a close second was to make the sea border almost impenetrable to by building the control capacities of North African states (Sarzanini, 2019b). Most desirable would be, according to Minister Salvini, the positioning of identification centers in North African countries (Cremonesi, 2018), a likelihood often alluded to but never achieved that would effectively shift the EU's hard border away from EU territory. In the words of the League Minister, the objective is to avoid migrants' departure from Africa and entry in Europe: hence, efforts are being undertaken in Africa (Weymouth, 2018).

Here again, political colors have somehow differed, at least from a narrative point of view, on the 'fluidity' of borders. Thus, if the strengthening of European repatriation agreements with third states has been strongly emphasized by all formations, non-populist governments have remarked the simultaneous exigence to respect human rights and the nonrefoulement principles and to potentiate humanitarian corridors. This is not to say that the same governments were not accused of denying human rights. Nor does this mean that Salvini has acted in full disregard of the vulnerable, for humanitarian corridors have continued under his term, renewed (with Ethiopia) and even opened anew with Jordan and Niger (Ministero dell'Interno, 2019). However, the rhetoric has been quite different, producing different results in the shaping of the national community's not hard but certainly cognitive borders.

Administrative and cognitive borders

The refugee crisis has also impacted Italy's conceptions of herself and of her defining traits. This has been mostly mirrored by narratives and actions aimed at drawing the contours of rights and inclusion possibilities granted to migrants and asylum-seekers. Here, the differences between political colors have been more visible, but the overall approaches have been hardly consistent. For example, while Minister Minniti passed a law in March 2017 to allow unaccompanied minor migrants to remain in Italy because "our country should never lose track of the primary objective to protect who flees from war and famines" (Di Giacomo, 2017), he simultaneously furthered the elimination of a second-degree appeal for asylum-seekers, motivating the choice with the objective to reduce the amount of time for a decision on the status.

Overall, the populist government has not only been predictably restrictive but has also challenged main values at the basis of Italy's and the EU's ontology. This has been particularly clear in two instances. First, the promulgation of the security decrees overhauling the narrative about the value of integration in Italy (Ponzo, 2018), raising administrative borders against migrants while fencing cognitive ones, a move upgrading support for the party to 30 percent in summer 2018 (Walt, 2018). Touching economic security, a sensitive cord for many Italians, Salvini was paralleling reception and integration to costs: they had to be possibly

cut off (Cremonesi, 2018). Among key provisions was the denial of previously granted social inclusion for asylum-seekers, leaving projects in this direction only for already-ascertained refugees (Ministero dell'Interno, 2018). Faithful to this logic, Salvini openly and matter-of-factly reported to have diverted €42 million from the reception to the repatriation dossier, to “balance the books” (Romano, 2018). Humanitarian protection, an added degree of protection that has distinguished Italy among other member states, was also discursively banalized and practically depowered, because inferred to be ‘abused’: “everybody pretends to be ill or homosexual which cannot clearly be the case” (Romano, 2018). Migrants’ appeals were also portrayed as causing a waste of resources ably exploited to enrich some, as most of them were clearly unfounded, like car accidents (Romano, 2018). Emphasizing the difference between wastes (reception) and values (security), beggars and deserving, Salvini explained that funds saved from reduction in expenditure on reception centers were to be used to pay the police’s arrears, “men and women, servants of the State that have worked and have to be paid” (Siamo & Capitale, 2018). Also, with the branding ‘Decreti sicurezza or Decreto Salvini’ (in an attempt at strong personalization), securitization kept feeding itself, implying that more restrictive measures were to provide more security. Besides, among others, the costs and waiting times to apply for citizenship were increased.

Indeed, Salvini’s arguments remarked a significantly different rhetoric from those of other governments, which have instead securitized the lack of integration: “the equation between migration and terrorism is wrong and misleading. However, ever since Charlie Hebdo, it is clear that there exists a relation between terrorism and the lack of integration,” echoed the words of Minister Minniti (Di Giacomo, 2017). According to him, a vital game for the future of the country was being played around the issue of integration, suggesting the profoundly ontological value of the challenge (Di Giacomo, 2017). Also, explained Minister Lamorgese, true integration is a precondition for keeping social cohesion in the country (Sarzanini, 2019b). Efforts have been taken to partly reverse some of the measures of the security decrees, thanks also to the observations advanced by the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella. Attention has been centered around, for example, dampening sanctions for NGO noncompliance (under the radar of the populist government); allowing Prefects to increase funds for the provisions of services for migrants; reintroducing the basics of humanitarian protection (now ‘special protection’); and eliminating the provision prohibiting asylum-seekers’ registration at municipalities, among others.

During the COVID pandemic, migrants endured differentiated treatment: the proposal for a regularization of a significant number of irregular immigrants working in the sanitary and agricultural sector granted foreigners clear recognition of their vital role for the Italian economy and was considered a measure to strengthen health safety through proper tracking of otherwise undetectable profiles (Bianconi, 2020). On the other hand, though, anti-immigration formations used the pandemic to reiterate the priority of national citizens: because of the economic emergency, certain ‘requests’ were dubbed inappropriate and even out of place. As seen, the pandemic gave rise to a new form of border in the shape of quarantine vessels: if these have been invariably demonized, Interior Minister Lamorgese explained that the tools were compatible with the practices of a civil country, which can never counterpose humanity and security, not even in a pandemic season (Cerasa, 2020a). Quarantine vessels were hence conceived as another instrument, but whose bordering effect was unclear.

Another important aspect of this last logic attains to Italy’s unexpected decision in December 2018 not to approve the Global Compact for Migration, departing from traditional alignment with Western European countries and moving closer to sovereignist demeanors. Launched in 2016 with the United Nations New York Declaration, the Global Compact for Migration has represented the very first attempt at true international cooperation in the field of migration for the ordered, safe, and legal regulation of flows. Working for months on consultations and negotiations, Italian diplomats were mandated to abstain only few days before its final approval. An analyst close to the ruling yellow-green government judged the pact as ineffective with respect to Italy’s main concern: curbing immigration and the burden of reception (Sacino, 2018). For the then-Minister Salvini, the Compact did not do enough to differentiate between ‘economic’ immigrants and refugees (Bongiorni, 2018). This move, which created more than an embarrassment within the same government, had two important repercussions in terms of the EU’s bordering: by denying the values enshrined in the document, it undermined the values the Union has founded itself upon and, in so doing, its ontology. It has also intensified an already deep fracture among member states, supporting not only restrictive migration policies, but a confrontational approach with respect to the governance of the phenomenon.

If these moves are undoubtedly remolding administrative and cognitive borders in a restrictive way, another subsequent move has had the same effect: the October 2019 release of a 'safe countries of origin' list at the initiative of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, something that Italy had always refused to do irrespective of other member states' positions (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2019). Indeed, this not only largely blurs borders between issue areas along a now rather consolidated trend in the EU, 'extending' the EU's borders according to the logic described above—it also declassifies international protection by further reducing its applicability, questioning the duties attached therewith, and downscaling the sanctity of the EU's international protection regime, paralleling protection in the EU with conditions and rights obtainable elsewhere.

Conclusion

The analysis of Italian bordering efforts has offered a quite variegated picture. As shown, Italy's and the EU's constant iteration has affected discourses and practices, favoring different and sometimes opposite images of borders and their meaning and functions.

In particular, three main arguments have been made. First, Italy's border overlaps with the Union's border. If many interpretations can be derived from this narrative, the key element has been Italy's quest for solidarity as part of the EU. Second, Europe's border should stretch out to the south: indeed, bordering effects might be different according to whether the effort is aimed at enforcing borders or at defusing them. Overall, this narrative has been decisive in repositioning the EU towards the southern Mediterranean and the African continent more broadly, thus contributing to the (re)drawing of its ontology. Finally, administrative and cognitive borders play a big role in the definition of the main beliefs typifying the national community. Here, some contradictory traits at play have been witnessed especially when practices seemed to run contrary to narratives. In this bordering effort, differences have been noted according to political formation: even though integration was praised more for the sake of societal cohesion and peace than human rights per se, marked securitarian (and hence exclusionary) traits have loomed large with populist formations. Ultimately, this openly challenged a rather ingrained understanding of EU values (and hence of its ontology). The way in which COVID has reshaped the borders of both Italy and the EU in cognitive and material terms, and how this has impacted their ontologies, has been only tentatively explored and needs further investigation. Evidence so far suggests that the challenge posed by the pandemic has been met by a further thickening of physical, administrative, and cognitive borders.

References:

- Bianconi, G. (2020, May 14). *Lamorgese: Emersione per duecentomila migranti, non è un condono*. Ministero dell'Interno. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/comunicati-stampa/lamorgese-emersione-duecentomila-migranti-non-e-condono>
- Bongiorni, R. (2018, December 10). *Migranti, 164 Paesi firmano il Global compact. L'Italia non c'è. Il Sole 24 ORE*. <https://www.ilssole24ore.com/art/migranti-164-paesi-firmano-global-compact-l-italia-non-c-e-AEKU2CxG>
- Camilli, A. (2020, July 27). *Quanti soldi diamo alla Libia per fermare i migranti? Internazionale*. <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2020/07/27/libia-migranti-fondi-guardia-costiera-libica>
- Campesi, G. (2018). *Seeking Asylum in Times of Crisis: Reception, Confinement, and Detention at Europe's Southern Border*. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 37(1), 44–70.
- Cazzullo, A. (2017, October 3). «Una solidarietà nazionale per combaltere terroristi e trafficanti di uomini». *Corriere della Sera*. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/interventi-e-interviste/interventi-e-interviste-raccolta-anni-precedenti/solidarieta-nazionale-combaltere-terroristi-e-trafficienti-uomini>
- Ceccorulli, M. (2019). *Così è (se vi pare): Talking Migration to Italians*. *The International Spectator*, 54(3), 18–36.
- Ceccorulli, M., & Varvelli, A. (2021). *The migration dimension in EU-Libya relations: Fading justice*. In *The EU's External Governance of Migration*. Routledge.

- Cerasa, C. (2020a, February 17). Cancellare il trucismo. *Il Foglio*. <https://www.ilmattino.it/politica/2020/02/17/news/cancellare-il-trucismo-302240/>
- Cerasa, C. (2020b, September 3). Lamorgese: "Cara Europa, niente Recovery ai paesi che non collaborano sui migranti." *Il Foglio*. <https://www.ilmattino.it/politica/2020/09/03/news/lamorgese-cara-europa-niente-recovery-ai-paesi-che-non-collaborano-sui-migranti-332699/>
- Ciriaco, T. (2017, August 9). Minniti: "Evitata un'estate di caos le mie norme non sono di destra." *la Repubblica*. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/08/09/minniti-evitata-unestate-di-caos-le-mie-norme-non-sono-di-destra02.html>
- Cremonesi, M. (2018, June 13). Intervista a Salvini: "Da luglio meno soldi per chi richiede asilo. Ricucire con l'Egitto." *Corriere della Sera*. https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_giugno_12/salvini-da-luglio-meno-soldi-chi-chiede-asilo-ricucire-l-egitto-8057d49a-6e88-11e8-9963-ead0cc069d04.shtml
- Cuscito, G., & Caracciolo, L. (2018, February 5). Il ministro Minniti: "Bloccare i flussi migratori è un'illusione." *Limes*. <https://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/dal-patto-con-il-nostro-islam-alla-riduzione-degli-sbarchi-linee-di-una-strategia-italiana>
- De Maizièrè, T., & Minniti, M. (2017, July 12). La Nostra Sfida da Vincere in Africa. *la Repubblica*. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/07/12/la-nostra-sfida-da-vincere-in-africa33.html>
- Del Sarto, R. A. (2021). *Borderlands: Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East*. Oxford University Press.
- Denaro, C. (2021). Politiche di (ri)confinamento in tempo di pandemia: L'utilizzo di "navi quarantena" in Italia e l'accesso al diritto di asilo. *Diritto, Immigrazione e Cittadinanza Fascicol*, 2, 26.
- Di Giacomo, V. (2017, March 30). Minniti su espulsioni e rimpatri: «Tempi della giustizia troppo lunghi». *Il Mattino*. https://www.ilmattino.it/primopiano/politica/minniti_l_italia_da_l_eseempio_l_ue_ci_segua-2349499.html
- Foschini, G. (2017, November 27). Il piano Marshall per l'Africa Minniti: "Ora si gioca a Sud la sfida decisiva dell'Europa." *la Repubblica*. <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2017/11/27/il-piano-marshall-per-lafrica-minniti-ora-si-gioca-a-sud-delleuropa07.html>
- Frowd, P. M. (2020). Producing the 'transit' migration state: International security intervention in Niger. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(2), 340–358.
- Lamorgese, L. (2019, November 30). *Luciana Lamorgese, ministro dell'Interno, alla festa del Foglio: Come sentirsi al sicuro* (Il Foglio, Interviewer) [Ministero dell'Interno]. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/interventi-e-interviste/luciana-lamorgese-ministro-dellinterno-alla-festa-foglio-come-sentirsi-sicuro>
- Martini, F. (2017, August 3). Minniti: "Se le Ong vogliono operare dovranno firmare il codice." *La Stampa*. <https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2017/08/03/news/minniti-se-le-ong-vogliono-operare-dovranno-firmare-il-codice-1.34430476/>
- Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale. (2019). *Decreto Paesi Sicuri*. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/10/07/19A06239/sg>
- Ministero degli Esteri. (2020). *Cooperazione Internazionale per lo Sviluppo* (p. 59). https://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2020/09/documento_triennale_2019-2021_-_rev.pdf
- Ministero dell'Interno. (2018, July 19). *Incontro Salvini-Dobrindt al Viminale su immigrazione e strategie europee* [Press release]. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/incontro-salvini-dobrindt-viminale-immigrazione-e-strategie-europee>
- Ministero dell'Interno. (2018, October 3). *Ridefinire i modelli di accoglienza migranti e razionalizzare la spesa, direttiva del ministro Salvini | Dipartimento Libertà Civili e Immigrazione* [Press release]. <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/circolari/ridefinire-i-modelli-accoglienza-migranti-e-razionalizzare-spesa-direttiva>
- Ministero dell'Interno. (2019, May 3). Firmato al Viminale protocollo per la realizzazione del progetto "Apertura dei corridoi umanitari" [Press release]. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/comunicati-stampa/comunicati-stampa-raccolta-anni-precedenti/firmato-viminale-protocollo-realizzazione-progetto-apertura-dei-corridoi-umanitari>

- Minniti, M. (2017, July 6). *Migranti, l'Europa faccia la sua parte* (Democratica, Interviewer) [Ministero dell'Interno]. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/interventi-e-interviste/interventi-e-interviste-raccolta-anni-precedenti/migranti-leuropa-faccia-sua-parte>
- Ponzo, I. (2018, October 2). Il Decreto Immigrazione e Sicurezza che separa accoglienza e integrazione: Una riforma dai piedi di argilla • Neodemos. *Neodemos*. <https://www.neodemos.info/2018/10/02/il-decreto-immigrazione-e-sicurezza-che-separa-accoglienza-e-integrazione-una-riforma-dai-piedi-di-argilla/>
- Redazione ANSA. (2016, October 24). Migranti: 153mila sbarcati nel 2016, superato anno record - Cronaca. *Agenzia ANSA*. https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2016/10/24/153mila-sbarchi-nel-2016-e-anno-record_52c8db29-24b0-4743-84a1-f2a52577077a.html
- Redazione romana. (2018, August 30). Operazione Sophia. Europa fredda su condivisione porti. Governo minaccia di uscire. *Avvenire*. <https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/viennafall>
- Romano, L. (2018, July 9). Salvini: "Ecco perché chiudo i porti alle navi delle missioni Ue." *ilGiornale.it*. <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/salvini-ecco-perch-chiudo-i-porti-navi-delle-missioni-ue-1550777.html>
- Sacino, C. (2018). *I global compact su migrazioni e rifugiati* (No. 9; Dossier del Machiavelli, p. 7). Machiavelli.
- Sarzanini, F. (2019a, October 12). La ministra Lamorgese: «Sui profughi l'Europa non ci lasci da soli». *Corriere della Sera*. https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/19_ottobre_12/europa-favorisca-stabilizzazione-profughi-non-ci-lasci-soli-eaaf7a12-ed2d-11e9-bed9-563e2f640bca.shtml
- Sarzanini, F. (2019b, October 13). Lamorgese: «L'Europa favorisca la stabilizzazione, sui profughi non ci lasci da soli». *Corriere della Sera*. <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/stampa-e-comunicazione/interventi-e-interviste/leuropa-deve-favorire-stabilizzazione-politica-non-ci-lasci-soli-sui-profughi>
- Sarzanini, F. (2020, August 1). Intervista a Lamorgese: «Rimanderemo a casa chi sbarca, nessuno sarà regolarizzato». *Corriere della Sera*. https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_agosto_01/lamorgese-rimpatri-migranti-aerei-navi-nessuno-sara-regolarizzato-6468963a-d36b-11ea-8623-4e2dec5054a7.shtml
- Siamo, C., & Capitale, R. (2018, July 28). Matteo Salvini: "Ai poliziotti i soldi tagliati ai profughi." *Il Tempo*. <https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2018/07/25/news/matteo-salvini-ai-poliziotti-i-soldi-tagliati-ai-profughi-1080016/>
- Spagnolo, V. R. (2020, June 13). Intervista. Lamorgese sui migranti: «Ora una svolta dell'Ue». *Avvenire*. <https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/lamorgese-migranti-ora-una-svolta>
- Walt, V. (2018, September 13). "We Want to Change Things from Within." Italy's Matteo Salvini on His Goal to Reshape Europe. *Time*. <https://time.com/5394207/matteo-salvini-time-interview-transcript-full/>
- Weymouth, L. (2018, July 19). Perspective | 'Italy has done a lot—Maybe too much.' *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/italy-has-done-a-lot--maybe-too-much/2018/07/19/dc81a292-8acf-11e8-8aea-86e88ae760d8_story.html
- Ziniti, A. (2017, May 10). La sfida della sicurezza. *la Repubblica*. https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/forum_repubblica_minniti.pdf
- Ziniti, A. (2020, August 28). Lamorgese: "Sbarchi e Covid, il mio autunno caldo su una poltrona scomoda." *la Repubblica*. https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/08/28/news/lamorgese_sbarchi_e_covid_il_mio_autunno_caldo_su_una_poltrona_scomoda_-301039487/