IMMIGRATION OR INTEGRATION?
EXAMINING POLITICAL EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2000

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Introduction

The year 2000 may have marked the modernization of integration politics in Italy, but immigration has been central to Italian politics while integration, a secondary component of general immigration politics, has received significantly less political and academic attention. Scholars of racial and ethnic integration in Europe have documented Italy’s fragmented integration model, as being characterized by: social programs designed to help people; the separation of public and voluntary sectors; a paternalistic voluntary sector allowing little space for immigrant self-representation; a lack of continuity; and difficulties in obtaining citizenship. Until 2000, immigration politics focused not on qualitative issues regarding the transformation of Italian society, but on quantitative questions concerning Italy’s social and economic capacity to absorb migrants.

This chapter examines the major events in Italian immigration politics that occurred during the year 2000. These varied events include: a public discussion of the dependence of the Italian economy on migrant workers, protests (at times violent) against detention centers for clandestine immigrants, social movements by illegal immigrants attempting to regularize their legal status, governmental measures against racism in Italian soccer stadiums,
protests by the *Lega Nord* and public statements from Giacomo Biffi, Cardinal of Bologna, against Islam. While all of these events are significant, the pattern they indicate when viewed together may demonstrate an important shift in Italian immigration politics. Analysis of these events may indicate that even though border controls remain prominent in Italian immigration politics, integration has emerged as a separate but related issue on the political agenda.

This chapter is divided into four sections and a conclusion. Part two provides a brief history of Italian immigration politics in the 1990s, discussing characteristics of the political system, which influenced the formation of the immigration agenda. Part three describes the major aspects of Law 40/1998, Italy’s latest legislation regarding immigration, illustrating how it differs from its predecessors, and examining the revisions made in December 2000. Finally, part four looks at the above-stated events and provides a framework in which their significance can be viewed.

Even though discussions of integration are still hindered by many of the defects of the Italian political system, the level of these discussions may have been raised allowing integration to emerge from the shadows of general immigration politics. Italy’s new legislation governing immigration (Law of 6 March 1998, No. 40) could have been partially responsible for this shift. It provides the most comprehensive legal treatment to date of both racism and the rights of foreigners. This indicates that the government has the legislative tools to implement stronger pro-integration policies, signifying a change between Italy’s recent past as a « new » immigration country, and its future as a mature, ethnically diverse democracy.

**Immigration and Integration in the 1990s**

Since the 1970s, Italy has been transformed from an emigrant country into an immigrant society. Statistics on the presence of immigrants in Italy are inexact and disputed, yet most scholars agree that clandestine immigration increases official figures by roughly one third. Despite these measurement problems, studies show a steady increase in immigration over the last twenty years, as illustrated in Table 1. Official figures for the year 2000 indicate 1,270,000 immigrants present in Italy, indicating that the composition of immigration has changed significantly. ¹ In 1994, the largest non-European Union populations were: Morocco (92,617), ex-Yugoslavia (89,444), the United States (56,714), Tunisia (41,105) and the Philippines (40,714). ² In 2000, the largest ethnic groups represent: Morocco...
Throughout this period, Italy has enjoyed an international reputation for openness and anti-racism. However, as Italian political parties have not offered a legislative response to guide the transition towards racial and ethnic pluralism, increased conflict and xenophobia have followed the doubling of immigration in the 1990s (from 1.1 percent of the population in 1993 to 2.2 percent in 2000). The political institutions addressed these issues only when perceived emergencies pushed immigration to the forefront of the political agenda.

Of course, it is impossible to examine any issue, including immigration, without discussing the general characteristics of national political systems. Dwayne Woods accurately states:

> Italian society is confronted with a phenomenon that requires the creation of a new set of values and attitudes about Italy itself and the place of ethnically and racially different groups within it. This process will be extremely difficult and painful because it will inevitably involve Italians facing up to the problems of Italian society that have little to do with immigration: Mafia violence, bureaucratic malfunctioning, and the persistent gap between the South and the North. At an ideological level, Italy does not have a tradition of racism; but nor does it have a tradition of assimilation.

Contentious public discourse and the activity of social movements have often characterized interest articulation in Italian politics; immigration politics have been no exception. The first immigration law in Italy that focused specifically on immigrants’ rights (1990) was passed after thousands publicly protested the murder of a migrant worker. Since then, protests attracting thousands of people have been held at both the local and national levels, calling for a halt of immigration followed by anti-racist marches. Most scholars have noted that Italian integration politics have been reactive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Estimate</th>
<th>Minimum Estimate</th>
<th>Maximum Estimate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>280,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>480,000</td>
<td>715,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>849,000</td>
<td>1,201,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1,062,000</td>
<td>1,420,000</td>
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rather than pro-active, as government responses have often been influenced by pressure from the European Union and the domestic political agenda. This situation was, in part, caused by the decentralized structure of Italian strategies regarding immigration. According to the 1999 immigration dossier published by Caritas, because local governments are generally more affected by citizen participation and grassroots movements in the formation of the political agenda, « In the past, it was mostly local governments that dealt with immigrants, without even benefiting from specific financing, while the central government predominantly worried about security. This situation led to a coherent approach to the question of public security and border controls, but inconsistent discussions of integration.

The public nature of Italian politics has significant consequences for immigration, which by nature usually provokes public debates. This is one of the biggest reasons that immigration was often tied to crime. When sensational events occurred, the media, political parties, and nongovernmental organizations, publicized these incidents creating a fragmented climate surrounding immigration politics in which perception played a far stronger role than reality. For example, when an immigrant killed a priest in October 1999, the government promised to strengthen entry internal controls. Conversely, after his boss critically burned a Romanian worker in March 2000, political leaders shifted their attention to protecting exploited clandestine migrant workers in the black market economy. Throughout this period, political agendas have reflected oscillating public attitudes regarding immigration rather than providing leadership in the construction of a concrete integration agenda. Even though Italian law had addressed the question of integration, the public agenda clearly pushed the integration issue out of immigration discussions, which remained focused on the question of clandestine migration, security, and economic need. Thus, these aspects of past laws usually were poorly implemented or not implemented at all.

In addition to the generally public nature of Italian politics, which severely limits the autonomy of politicians’ decisionmaking, immigration reflected many of the historically specific consequences of political events, which occurred during the 1990s. First, unlike France, Germany, or even Spain, Italy coped with the issue during a period of political transition. Following the Tangentopoli corruption scandals, the government lost much legitimacy. The resulting separation between the polity and society naturally weakened the government’s ability to influence public opinion regarding the social changes caused by immigration. In addition, bureau-
cratic inefficiency hardened attitudes against foreigners, because many opposed immigration on the ground that it puts added strain on the overburdened welfare state.

Second, the interministerial character of the immigration issue has hindered state leadership in integration politics. Because integration encompasses numerous fields, programs fall under the authority of different ministries, including Health, Social Solidarity, Education, Employment, and the Interior. As officials from these ministries worked without coordination from any dominant minister (as in Sweden) or any interministerial institutions (as in France), integration policies, even those protecting human rights or providing basic social services, were poorly implemented. This led to the fragmented integration model discussed above.

Finally, the structure of Italy’s party system has often impeded focus on integration politics. Despite the fact that immigration and integration are issues which generally cross traditional Left-Right party cleavages, parties of the Left tend to put more emphasis on integration while parties of the Center and Right usually focus more on immigration control. During the 1990s, even though parties of the Center-Left have been in power, they have not managed to institute progressive integration programs due to a combination of the complex and public nature of integration politics and the coalition problems created by the multi-party system. Varying positions and structural changes within Center-Left coalitions have hindered agreement over innovative positions, and focus has remained on the simple condemnation of xenophobic acts. Conversely, the Center-Right coalitions have dominated the immigration debate by successfully linking the question to that of criminal activity. Because party interdependence favored the Center-Right due to the relative simplicity of its position, immigration debates throughout the 1990s remained focused on two least common denominators: clandestine immigration and criminal activity. It must also be noted that during the year 2000, as public discussions shifted towards integration issues, even the Center-Right coalition was divided (see below).

The Impact of Law No. 40/1998

Law No. 40/1998, the so-called Turco-Napolitano law, represented a shift in Italian immigration legislation. The impact of this law on the political agenda has been positive given the advancements in integration politics. The law’s predecessors, both law 943/1986 and law 39/1990, the so-called Martelli law, even though they had
measures regarding integration, generally framed the immigration question in terms of border controls and the regulation of immigrant participation in the black market economy, thus linking the immigration agenda to public security. In terms of integration, both laws protected the civil rights of migrant workers and legally gave immigrants access to housing and health care, but they also gave incoherent implementation guidelines to regional, provincial, and city officials. As a result, most integration programs were not properly carried out. According to Kitty Calavita: “Italy’s experience with the 1986 and 1990 laws points to a marked gap between the law ‘on the books’ and the law ‘in action.’” This not only reflected the climate surrounding immigration described above, but also perpetuated it.

Law No. 40 was passed with two objectives. First, it directly confronted clandestine immigration by strengthening border controls (Articles 8, 9), specifying entry requirements (Articles 4-7), and streamlining expulsion procedures (Articles 11-14). In addition, Article 10 set harsh penalties for those caught favoring illegal migration; establishes punishment at four to twelve years in prison for each person illegally imported; and most significantly, it recognized the organized importation of women and children destined for illegal labor and prostitution with a penalty of five to fifteen years in prison for each person introduced into Italian territory for these purposes.

Second, the Turco-Napolitano law articulated a coherent approach to integration, which had been poorly addressed in previous legislation. Title five, “Dispositions in health matters and education, housing, participation in public life, and social integration,” defined integration goals and delegated authority regarding integration programs to the regional, provincial, and city governments. In addition to access to health and education, and social assistance, Articles 40-42 confronted the political questions of integration and discrimination.

On 20 December, the House of Deputies passed modifications of Law 40 after heated debate. These modifications better articulate the two general themes already present in the law. On one hand, a stronger stance was taken on illegal migration, setting harsher penalties for both those trafficking women for prostitution, as well as those illegally employing clandestine immigrants, and by taking the fingerprints of clandestine migrants and imprisoning clandestine immigrants who have already been expelled, upon their return to Italy. Conversely, the modifications have also opened citizenship procedures and better articulated the implementation of integration measures.
The Present: The Events of the year 2000

No single event dominated Italian immigration politics, during the year 2000. Only when viewed together are the year’s events significant, because they indicate the emergence of an agenda focusing on integration to parallel the ever-present politics of immigration controls. For this reason, this chapter does not isolate any single event regarding immigration, but attempts to link different, important events into an ordered discussion of the evolution of integration politics during 2000.

Table 2. Classification of 2000 Immigration Events Based on Period and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Winter/Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration as Equality</strong></td>
<td>Protests for rights of illegal immigrants, New norms on the treatment of victims of sex slavery, Xenophobia in soccer stadiums (Bari)</td>
<td>Protests against racism and anti-Semitism in the North,</td>
<td>Xenophobia in soccer stadiums (Lazio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration as Utility</strong></td>
<td>Immigration and crime</td>
<td>Political debate over the economic and demographic consequences of immigration</td>
<td>Immigration and Crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration as Similarity</strong></td>
<td>Protests by Lega Nord against mosques in Veneto region</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comments by Cardinal Biffi and Protests by Lega Nord against Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The multi-faceted definition of integration presented by the commission responsible for overseeing the implementation of Law 40, applied in Table Two, provides a useful framework for carrying out this task. The commission’s 2000 report examines integration in terms of equality, utility, and similarity. In creating a structure in which to analyze events present on the 2000 integration agenda, Table Two shows a symmetrical pattern in the year’s developments.
During the winter/spring and fall periods, integration discussions were held in all three arenas, and the same issues dominated the political agenda. Protests regarding the rights of illegal immigrants (especially in terms of regularization and protests concerning the construction of detention centers) and discussions of racist behavior in Italian soccer stadiums dominated the equality issue. Utility was linked to the traditional question of crime and border controls, and similarity to the presence of Islam. In between these periods, summer political discussions focused solely on the utilitarian sphere, examining the impact of immigration on the Italian economy.

Integration as Equality

Italian discussions over moral and legal equality reached a new level during the year 2000. In the past, government reactions to racism had been diluted. Often, the voluntary sector, represented by Catholic and Left wing associations, were the loudest advocates for solidarity. Attention to racism was often tied to the condemnation of specific events, rather than general discourses regarding the nature of Italian society.

The events of 2000 demonstrate a shift in this trend. They indicate that sport has now become a symbol of multicultural Italy. On February 27, during a soccer game between Bari and Torino, fans repeatedly made monkey noises when Torino’s black players touched the ball. More, a violent incident occurred in which an Italian broke an African player’s nose and Bari’s coach made racist comments. Whereas past government practice would have labeled this as hooliganism and ignored it, this time Minister of Sport Giovanna Melandri condemned these acts, while threatening legal action for inciting racial discrimination and invoking Law No. 40 (Articles 41 and 42). In November, this incident was repeated as a player and fans of Roman league champions, Lazio, were fined for racist actions during a match with the English club, Arsenal.

Minister Melandri’s immediate interventions opened a discussion on racism and discrimination, which was much more significant than were those of the past. Unlike past ministers, Melandri was able to threaten legal action, and her condemnation of racism in Italian soccer was legitimized by the new legislation. In December, Sinisa Mihajlovic, the Lazio player involved, was charged for racial discrimination, and legal options against Lazio were examined in order to hold the club accountable for the behavior of its fans. These initiatives, along with the banning of all racist and fas-
cist propaganda from Italian stadiums, represent a starting point from where youth could learn respect for other ethnicities. During 2000, sports became a political symbol of anti-discrimination and racial pluralism, similar to the movement found in France since the mid-1990s. In fact, during the opening ceremony of this year’s Olympics, Carlton Myers, a basketball player of mixed race, was chosen to carry the Italian flag.

Regarding the implementation of Law No. 40 two issues dominated the political agenda. First, in the months of May, June and October, clandestine immigrants protested in major cities, such as Brescia, Rome, Milan, Florence, and Turin, in order to have their legal situations regularized. These protests are significant because they mark the first publicly recognized, autonomous movement of irregular immigrants in Italy. Newspaper accounts described these marches and hunger strikes as the organization of an Italian “sans papiers” movement. The protests in Brescia led to the gradual regularization of 2,000 out of 5,000 immigrants. In addition, on 30 January associations and pressure groups of the Left organized protests against the construction of detention centers for clandestine immigrants awaiting expulsion. In many cities, especially Milan, Rome, Genoa, and Florence, the protesters clashed with police. These incidents shifted discussions of clandestine immigration from criminal activity to human dignity and rights. Now, clandestine immigrants were portrayed not as criminals, but as victims of organized criminal groups.

The second major issue raised in the year 2000 regarding the implementation of law No. 40 testifies to its innovation. Beginning in the spring, the government instituted a new approach to combating organized foreign prostitution in Italy. It has been well-documented that most of the estimated 20,000 foreign girls and young women working as prostitutes in Italy are forced into their situations through different forms of coercion. In the past, most of these prostitutes, when stopped by the police, were arrested and given expulsion orders. In the new legislation, these young ladies were recognized as victims of sexual slavery rather than criminals. Under articles 16 (entry permits based on social protection) and 18 (extraordinary measures for integration based on exceptional events), they may receive temporary political asylum for up to one year and are given access to health and social services. Even though forced prostitution remains a major problem in Italy, as does clandestine immigration and racism among soccer fans, the events of the year 2000 initiated public discussions based on human rights and dignity, and the Italian government has begun to confront these problems.
Integration as Utility

According to a public opinion survey released in July 2000 by the research firm Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (Censis), the greatest fear among Italian citizens was crime (37.1 percent). In fifth place, after unemployment, urban traffic and drugs, came immigration (21 percent). The distribution of the responses, however, indicates a major paradox in Italian immigration politics. In the northeast, xenophobia was measured at 38.4 percent of the population. In the Center and Northwest it reached 23.8 percent and 21.5 percent, respectfully, and it was only 9.5 percent in the South.12 Though they reflect the regional distribution of immigrants in Italy, these results are inverse to the regional distribution of need for foreign labor. This seeming paradox represents a central theme in the 2000 Italian immigration agenda as it displays the tension between integration as utility and integration as similarity.

Utility has traditionally been the most important measure of integration in Italian politics. As noted above, crime, public security, and employment in the official and informal economies dominated this discussion. The closer the immigration issue became tied to criminal elements and the notion of illegality, the less desirable it became on the political agenda. In April, Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia) and Umberto Bossi (Lega Nord) successfully oriented immigration discussions in this direction by proposing strong measures, including the use of arms, against criminal groups that organize illegal immigration. These proposals, even though most analysts dismissed them as political statements rather than serious legislation, focused the early 2000 agenda on the question of border controls. During the summer, discussion over illegal immigration and criminal activity resurfaced in unfortunate circumstances. In late July, two members of the finance police were killed as they attempted to arrest some Albanians, who were delivering a shipment of illegal immigrants along the Adriatic coast. The political agenda and government actions remained focused on the question of border controls, and, in fact, official figures show that the number of immigrants stopped at Italy’s borders decreased by 50 percent over 1999 and the number of expulsions increased by 7 percent.13

Had the immigration agenda been defined solely in these terms, then the year 2000 would have diverged little from the past. However, during July, minister of the Interior Enzo Bianco, minister of Industry, Enrico Letta, and minister of Employment, Cesare Salvi, announced that the year’s immigration quota had already been reached and that there was a need for 40,000 more immigrants to fill jobs, especially in the northeast. The discussion that followed
clearly demonstrated Italy’s need for foreign labor. This political
debate must be considered one of the major events of the year,
because it pushed most other issues, including border controls, off
the agenda during the summer months.

According to functionalist-utilitarian approaches to integration,
immigrants are most welcomed when they become necessary ele-
ments of economies. Italy has depended on foreign labor for years,
due to its aging population, low birth rates, and the reticence of
many young adults to accept employment in certain economic sec-
tors. According to the figures supplied by the Ministry of Interior,
there were roughly 1,250,000 legal immigrants residing in Italy in
1999, 800,000 of whom were regularly employed. In that year, anti-
immigrant discourse was based on the fact that there were
3,400,000 unemployed Italians. During 2000’s political and eco-

During the summer’s discussions, varied groups of actors pub-
licly recognized the immigrants’ contributions to the Italian econ-
omy. Since its advent in the early 1980s, trade unions have
supported immigration. In 2000, a study published by the Confed-
erazione Italiana Sindacati Liberi (CISL) argued that 800,000 jobs
would be created in the next two years and that immigrants would
fill one of every four. In addition, two of Italy’s major economic
institutions, the Bank of Italy and the General Accounting Office of
the State (Ragioneria Generale dello Stato), published a report
arguing that, without immigration, Italy’s pension system would
collapse in the near future; Unioncamere announced that Italy
would need about 200,000 immigrants to fill jobs in the next two
years, excluding the agriculture sector which would demand
100,000 workers itself; Paolo Bedoni, the president of Coldiretti
stated that 65,000 migrant workers would be needed in the agri-
culture sector this year; and a Confesercenti (a national commer-
cial organization) study argued that Italian commerce would need
37,000 foreign employees.

Similar studies have existed for years. The difference between
this year and the past was the legitimacy given to this position by
political leaders. The question of economic integration was not
only directly addressed during the month of July by ministers
Letta, Bianco, Salvi and Turco, but it was also discussed through-
out the year as a general recognition of immigrants’ contributions
to the construction of Italy’s economic future. President Carlo
Azeglio Ciampi, and Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, along with
President of the Bank of Italy Antonio Fazio and President of the
Senate Nicola Mancino, called for improved housing, and social
and cultural integration, given the strong contribution immigrants were making to the Italian economy. By linking the question of social integration to economic measures, these leaders legitimized claims for immigrants’ rights. Moreover, given the economic disparities between the North and the South, on 15 July an agreement was reached in which regional presidents, after originally rebelling against the proposal, were given a voice in the decisionmaking process concerning entry quotas. Because of this initial resistance, the expansion of such quotas was further restricted. This decision attenuated attacks made by the presidents of the Center-Right (especially Roberto Formigoni, President of Lombardy) that national statistics and quotas hurt individual regions. It also guaranteed citizens that controls would be in place at both the national and regional levels.

The year 2000 clearly marked a public recognition of the immigrants’ contributions to Italian society. Opinion polls reflect the public discussions over the rights of clandestine immigrants (see above) as well as the economic discussions. However, immigration, viewed as a social phenomenon, remains linked to the issue of crime. The Censis report cited earlier found that 74.9 percent of Italians believed that there is a correlation between immigrants and crime. Nonetheless, immigrants themselves are no longer viewed as criminals. Seven out of ten Italians qualified their responses by claiming that this is so because either they are « victims of criminal organizations » or they « live in a state of necessity. » In addition, 73.4 percent agreed that immigrants « fill jobs that Italians do not want; » 68.8 percent believed that the state must guarantee the integration of immigrants; and 59.1 percent were even favorable to giving immigrants the right to vote. Util- ity itself cannot be considered a suitable measure for integration, but it an excellent position from which social and cultural integration can be legitimized, and it facilitates the process. In the past, immigrants’ contributions to Italian society had been isolated to the economic sphere. During the year 2000, political leaders began to support social integration as a right, given immigrant economic contributions. Moreover, as the Italian government continues to improve its efforts in combating clandestine migration, immigrants already legally residing in Italy will continue to enjoy more legitimate positions on the Italian political agenda, rather than being herded with illegal immigrants into one identifiable group in public discourse.
Integration as Similarity

The *Censis* study cited above displays the tension between integration as utility and integration as similarity. Xenophobia was lowest in the south, where 56 percent of young people remain unemployed.\(^2^0\) It was highest in the northeast, where the regional economy depends on immigrant labor. This paradox clearly shows that utility itself does not imply integration. It denotes a pragmatic tolerance of immigration rather than an acceptance of its legitimacy. The public discussions of Islam during 2000 illustrate this point.

There are currently 22 million Muslims residing in Europe and the growth of Islam is one of the most important elements of immigration politics across the continent. About 560,000 Muslims reside in Italy.\(^2^1\) During the early spring, discussions over Islam arose when *Lega Nord* mayors attempted to close places of worship. The issue really exploded, during the months of September and October due to the chronological proximity of two events: 1) the September declaration of Giacomo Biffi, Cardinal of Bologna, that immigrants from Catholic countries should be given entry before those from Muslim ones and 2) the protest of the *Lega Nord* against the construction of a mosque in the town of Lodi.

On three separate occasions in late September, Cardinal Biffi declared that immigration quotas should be tied to Catholicism, due to an incompatibility of Islam with Catholic values and democracy. Biffi stated, “One must seriously worry about saving the national identity. Italy is not a desert without history, without traditions that are alive and well, without an unconfoundable spiritual and cultural landscape.”\(^2^2\) Specifically, Biffi contested the following traits of Islam: the treatment of women and the use of the *chador*, the marital practice of polygamy, Muslim education, the lack of equality within the family, and integralist practices in the public sphere given the non-separation between religion and politics.

Biffi’s declarations are certainly significant. What is equally important is the lack of response from the Catholic Church to his comments. Individual priests and local Catholic representatives did condemn Biffi’s outcry. However, the church hierarchy, and other representatives of the Bologna archdiocese chose to remain silent, creating an uproar among many Italians. For years, Pope John Paul II has been one of the leaders, in Italy and internationally, in the fight against xenophobia. He has renewed his commitment to this struggle as a major theme of the Jubilee, declaring that racism is not compatible with Christian values. Biffi’s comments raise important issues concerning human rights and the compatibility of religion in a future multiethnic society. They also exemplify the
same integralism that he, himself, condemns, in Islam, and that the Pope repeatedly renounces.

Two weeks after the declaration made by Cardinal Biffi, the Lega Nord, organized a march and celebrated a public mass to protest the construction of a mosque in the northern town of Lodi. The tone of this event was even more xenophobic than the declarations from Cardinal Biffi. Slogans, such as “Christian Padania, Never Muslim,” and “Neither Moscow nor Mosques, we don’t need insects” (in Italian the word for a fly is mosca, similar to Mosca (Moscow) and moschee (mosques)) accompanied the rally. The organizers of the protest promised to “take apart the mosque brick by brick.” Given the intolerant tone of this protest, it received more criticism than Cardinal Biffi did, especially from within the Catholic Church. Even Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Forza Italia and the Pole coalition, which includes the Lega Nord, criticized the Lega because “this will cause us to lose votes.”

The events of the year 2000 demonstrate the tension, which may arise between integration as utility and integration as similarity. On one hand, industrialists in the northeast express the need for immigrant labor. Conversely, many of these same people support a political party, which attempts to abolish the right to religious freedom in the name of cultural purity. Multiculturalism has become a buzzword in the politics of diversity. However, if integration is to be achieved in Italy, then Italian notions of community and citizenship must become as modernized as the Italian economy.

Conclusion

Following the fall events concerning Islam, two world-renowned political scientists commented on ethnic diversity. Giovanni Sartori, publicly defended Cardinal Biffi in an article in L’Espresso, arguing that “citizenship” and “integration” are two separate concepts, and if Italy offers immigrants, especially Muslims, citizenship rights, they would use these new powers to impose their own customs on Italian society. According to Sartori, Biffi’s declarations were just, even suggesting that Biffi would be a better minister than Livia Turco, a defender of cultural pluralism. In an interview published in La Repubblica, Michael Walzer explicitly states that comments, such as those made by Biffi and Sartori, “are contrary to and completely ignorant of democratic values.” Walzer affirms that any democratic state, once it opens its borders to immigration, has the moral duty to open the citizenship process as well.
The debate between these scholars summarizes the basic tension between immigration and integration politics. The events of the year 2000 demonstrate that Italy has recognized the transition to an ethnically plural society. Immigrants are not only a permanent part of the Italian economy, but also a permanent part of its social fabric and the events discussed demonstrate increased attention to integration and xenophobia on the political agenda. Conversely, the always present issue of border controls still maintained a central place in public discussions.

The year marked a first step towards discussions of integration and citizenship similar to those already found in France and Germany. A microanalysis of the year’s events indicates a continued hardening of attitudes among certain segments of the population towards immigration. However, when studied in comparative perspective, the year 2000 could be seen as a bridge between Italy’s past and its future. In the past, Italian immigration politics reflected the dominant European agenda, concentrating on the question of border controls and public security. Recently, many European Union member states have shifted their political agendas towards questions regarding integration and citizenship. In recognizing these issues, Italian politics seems to have followed the general European trend. The concepts of integration and diversity seem to have finally emerged from the shadows of immigration controls and criminal activity, leading to a new political context for the immigration agenda as Italy enters the new millennium.

Notes

15. Ibid., 44.