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Somalia Between Colonialism and
Trusteeship:
The Italian Experience and its Legacy

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Alla mia famiglia, che mi ha sempre supportato e senza la quale non sarei certamente arrivato a questo punto.

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Introduction

Somalia is widely known as a failed country. Since the fall of the regime of Siad Barre in 1991, followed by a never-ending civil war, all central authority is missing scene; warring clans and well-organized sea pirate gangs run large parts of the territory and are putting international commercial shipping around the strategically important Horn of Africa in extreme danger. The country is a perfect base for all kind of terrorist and criminal activities.

For almost 30 years no international intervention or internal process has been able to solve this situation and give back to the country a stable rule. Barely any country in Africa, despite the enormous economic and political problems the continent had to face in the last decades since decolonization, has known such a decline in governmental authority and disintegration of its territorial homogeneity like Somalia.

Why is Italy so important to Somalia? Besides being the former colonial power that used to administer most of the territory of the country, Italy was entrusted to take care for the its mandatory administration until its path towards independence would have been decided. This particular kind of post-colonial rule, namely the *Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia* (AFIS) represented an exception in the framework of the United Nations, being the only Trusteeship mandate given to a defeated country after the events of WWII (after which Italy lost all its former colonies).

This thesis focuses on the contributions and legacy of both the very colonial rule and the Trusteeship administration; In particular, we want to draw a comparison between this mandatory regime and the previous Italian colonial one between the beginning of the XXth Century and World War II. The aim is to compare the effects on Somalia of Italian rule as a colonial power first, with the one as a mandatory power later. searching for the political, economic and socio-cultural reasons for the country's decline.

To what extent is the Italian rule responsible for the current situation of Somalia?

How much did Italy contribute to the shaping of a new society in the country and how much did it contribute to its civilization and economic valorization?

Was the formula of Trusteeship a way to establish a neo-colonial regime or was it a totally new experiment that aimed at building a better society for an underdeveloped independent-to-be nation?

In order to answer these questions, we will proceed as follows: the first chapter will analyze the very colonial rule between the end of the XIXth century until 1941, focusing on the path towards the establishment of the colony and the successive works and policies carried out *in loco*.

The second chapter inquiries into the processes that provided for the assignment of the Trusteeship administration and the Italian contribution to the development of a state-building process.

The conclusive chapter aims at drawing conclusions on the overall Italian experience in Somalia; the content of the last chapter will be purely analytical, and will also present the critical assessment of prominent scholars that have worked on the topic.

Literature Review

The problem of Somalia has occupied a lot of room in Italian and international literature, from a political and from a historical point of view.

For what concerns Italian literature, this thesis has employed academic research papers and reports as well as monographies and other publications.

Regarding Italian literature, the work of Remo Roncati and Renato Maccanti on the Italian colonialism in Somalia has very recently contributed in the research of many important aspects related to the issue, mostly for what concerns the Italian contribution to Somali economy, and the agrarian sector in particular.

That is because both academics personally witnessed and experienced the experiment of the *Amministrazione Fiduciaria della Somalia* (AFIS) working in the field of agricultural development.

Another very influential scholar whose works have helped to shape this thesis is Professor Antonio Maria Morone, author of several books, academic papers and researches focused mainly on colonial studies, in particular the Italian decolonization in Somalia.

In the English language and in academic reviews the amount of relevant literature has remained rather limited for what concerns the very Italian experience (very little is to be found regarding Italian-related events in Somalia, such as the “Massacre of Mogadishu” or the *Conferenza della Somalia*).

Although, there are some exceptions such as the works of Paolo Tripodi, who wrote and edited a series of papers in English that focus on the Somali question and on the Italian experience in particular.

Other acknowledgments should go to Somali scholars such as Professors Afyare Abdi Elmi or Ahmed Ismail Samatar, who contributed a lot in shaping my knowledge of the current Somali situation and its origins.

Chapter I: Somalia Under the Italian Colonization

1.1 The first moves towards colonialism

Italian colonialism took its first step in 1869, with the acquisition by the *Rubattino Shipping Company* of a strip of land at Aseb (Assab) on the Red Sea. However modest, this was a bold move in light of the fact that the Italian state had only been formed in 1861 and was still on its way to seizing its future capital, Rome, from the Papal States in 1870.¹

The post-*Risorgimento* period was characterized by the government of the Right, mainly composed of liberal-moderate figures; they indeed had had fairly good results in terms of internal policies, but did very few in terms of foreign policy.²

Indeed, the Italian government was starting to follow the path of Imperialism, even though it was too late, since the other European powers were already established in Africa and, mostly, were already in a phase of institutional rationalization.

According to the historian Henk Wesseling «In the Italian Imperialism there was not anything wrong, except that it was Italian. It was more than logical that Italy had a role in the division of the African continent [...] Sicily is on the verge of the African coast, and there is no need to be great historians to remind that centuries ago the rise of Rome as a world power started against Carthage».³

The Congress of Berlin of 1878 represented a huge opportunity for Italy to start its colonial adventure. Eventually, from the 1880's onwards, the dynamics of the international politics defined the narrow, circumscribed area where Italy could effectively operate on.⁴

Francesco Crispi, after the death of Agostino Depretis, held the office of President of the Council of Ministers from 1887 to 1896, except for short intervals.

He is considered to be the greatest promoter of the Italian presence in Africa.

His foreign policy vision was similar to the one of former Minister of Foreign Affairs Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, who supported his foreign policy initiatives with a combination of ideological and economic arguments: Italy's international duty was to contribute, along with the other European powers, to the moral and social development of the African peoples. The Foreign Minister therefore emphasized Rome's commitment against slavery, but also to protecting trade routes, public order and European businessmen, and

¹ Fuller M. *Italian Colonial Rule*, Oxford Bibliographies in African Studies. Ed. Thomas Spear. New York: Oxford University Press, 30 September 2014

² Roncati R. – Maccanti R. *Somalia: passione italiana nel Corno d'Africa*, Edizioni Solfanelli, Chieti 2019, p.23

³ Wesseling H. *Divide and Rule. The Partition of Africa, 1880-1914*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1996, p. 424

⁴ Pandolfo M. *La Somalia coloniale: una storia ai margini della memoria italiana*, in *Diacronie* N° 14, 2, 2013, p. 4

to improving economic relations with the populations in the interior as well as raising the overall level of education.⁵

Their focal point, according to historian Wolfgang Schieder, was initially the Mediterranean, which, at that time, was subject to a duopoly of France and the United Kingdom.⁶

Crispi's attention was later attracted by the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, thus starting a broad political-diplomatic action in order to penetrate in Africa, particularly in Eritrea and Somalia.⁷

Crispi desired that the Nation that discovered America (but that did not have the strength to impose its own empire) would eventually rebuild its position next to the other peoples; therefore, Italy would extend its own boundaries so that the other powers would not occupy every part of the unexplored world by themselves.

Indeed, Francesco Crispi conceived the colonial project on a long-term analysis, aimed at maximizing the benefits of the future generations.⁸

In 1885, Massawa⁹ was annexed and in 1890 the Colony of Eritrea was established.

1.2 The initial stages of the colonization of Somalia

At that point, Somalia was starting to become the new objective of the Italian colonial expansion, given by its strategical position on the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

The first Italian moves in Somalia were finalized at defining its coastline, rivers, and, generally, its geographical features.¹⁰

The very first opportunity for Italy to impose itself on the race for Somalia could be considered the moment in which the German Empire showed interest in it too. In fact, the Germans started to negotiate with the Sultan of Zanzibar, who formally detained and controlled some southern cities such as Mogadishu, Barawa, Berca and Kismayo.¹¹

The British, wanting to hinder the German negotiations, facilitated the dialogues between Italy and Zanzibar, in order for the Italians to arrive before the Germans.¹²

A key date for the Italian experience in Somalia is 1885, when an economic agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar (at that time an important local lord) was signed.

⁵ Romano S. *L'ideologia del colonialismo italiano*, in *Fonti e problemi della politica coloniale italiana*, p. 22.

⁶ Schieder W. *Fattori dell'imperialismo italiano prima del 1914-15*, in Gentile E. (a cura di) *L'Italia Giolittiana. La storia e la critica*, Roma-Bari 1977, p. 238

⁷ Ibid. p. 24

⁸ Alpozzi A. *Il Faro di Mussolini; il colonialismo italiano in Somalia oltre il sogno imperiale*, Eclética Edizioni, Massa 2017, p. 39

⁹ Massaua in Italian; now part of the independent State of Eritrea

¹⁰ Even though the territory of Somalia was rather unexplored and poorly discovered, the Italians were not the only ones interested in it. In fact, the French were already present in Djibouti, from which they established their *Côte française des somali*. The British were also important players in the area, having conquered the northern part of the country known as Somaliland (Pandolfo p. 6)

¹¹ Ibid p. 7

¹² Italian colonialism was, in its initial stage, a sort of British sub-imperialism (Romano p. 22)

That arrangement provided the *Società Geografica Italiana* the right to explore the southern portion of the Somali coast, including the delta of the Juba river. This expedition was conducted by captain Antonio Cecchi.¹³

In January 1889, another agreement was signed, this time with the Sultanate of Hobyo; the negotiations were carried out by Vincenzo Filonardi, the Italian consul in Zanzibar, who reached the city of Hobyo aboard the Regia Marina's *Staffetta* advice ship. The agreement provided new Italian protectorates in some territories of Somalia south of the Horn.¹⁴

The *Staffetta* was charged with doing a reconnaissance trip along the southern coasts of Somalia. The objective of this expedition was limited to establish friendly relationships with the local villages chiefs and the Sultan of the Majeerteen people, without directly establishing a protectorate (for the moment).¹⁵

As a consequence, the 8th of February, 1889, the *Dogali* reached Hobyo, where a new arrangement was signed; now, all the territories of the Sultanate of Hobyo were to be considered Italian protectorates (with an annual fee of 1.200 rupees, eventually brought up to 1.800).¹⁶

The administration was initially conferred to a commercial society, namely, the *Società per il Benadir*, which was based on the model of the English and German *chartered*.

The same April, the entire Sultanate of Majeerteen¹⁷ will be annexed to the protectorate.

In the words of Crispi, in a speech he delivered to the *Camera dei Deputati* on May 12, 1890: «the position of Italy in the Indian Ocean is such as to be envied by the other powers».

Between March and April 1891, Italy and the United Kingdom concluded two treaties, with the intent of dividing the spheres of influence in Africa between the two powers; Italy would focus on the Horn, as long as it stayed away from the Nile region, while the Juba river would constitute the natural border between Italian Somalia and British East Africa. Kismayo would move under British control.¹⁸

Later on, through some intermediate steps, Italy and Zanzibar concluded another convention the 12th of August, 1892; this agreement stated that «the Italian Government obtained the right to administer politically and juridically, in the name of the Sultan, the cities of Benadir and to collect taxes, levies, custom duties, in the exchange of a 160.000 yearly rupees canon». Furthermore, the Sultan authorized the Italian Government to cede its duties to a private firm, with the assignment of managing those cities, ports and territories; All of those powers would have been left to officials of such a firm.¹⁹

¹³ Antonio Cecchi (1849-1896) was an Italian explorer and captain of the Regia Marina (Roncati, Maccanti p. 41).

¹⁴ More specifically, according to Fernando Marino in *Crispi e la Somalia italiana* (1930), on December 1888, the Sultan of Hobyo called for an Italian protection, in order to subtract himself from the British domination.

According to Udlarigo Ceci in *Cronistoria del naviglio da guerra italiano* (1940), a meeting was arranged between the Sultan, consul Filonardi and the captains of the advice ships *Dogali*, *Rapido* and *Staffetta*.

¹⁵ Alpozzi p. 41

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 42

¹⁷ today part of the northeastern autonomous region of Puntland

¹⁸ Roncati, Maccanti p. 45

¹⁹ Corada G.C. *Lafolè: un dramma dell'Italia coloniale*, Roma, Ediesse, 1996, p. 51

This aforementioned private firm would be the *Compagnia Filonardi*, that obtained the concession for three years.

According to Gian Carlo Corada, the reasons that brought Italy to employ the system of commercial sub-concession were evident: first of all, it was a less compromising tool in the international scenario; it was more reassuring to those parts of the public opinion with anti-colonial tendencies; and it was also, apparently, more suitable for a pacific penetration.²⁰

On the other hand, not only the responsibilities, but also the costs of a direct management of the Italian State would have had much higher costs.²¹

Eventually, after the three years of concession to the *Compagnia Filonardi*, the right to administer those territories was given to the *Società Anonima Commerciale italiana del Benadir*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Pandolfo p. 8

1.3 The failure of private ownership

Over the course of the years, the colonial community continued to grow and a new social fabric came to be; where the cohabitation between the colonizers and the colonized started to become a complex reality.

The economic growth of the colony was almost nonexistent; the levels of school education and healthcare were totally insufficient; the transportation system barely functional and the Somali population was employed in agricultural works, such as plantation and grunt works.²²

Moreover, The slave trade was still practiced; communications were poor and unsafe; the conflicts between the local tribes were continuous and violent.²³

Even the activities of the missionaries had several problems, being obstructed by the liberal and anti-clerical tendencies of the Italian state, which, after the taking of Rome, did not tolerate the interferences of the Church in colonial matters.

The few existent missions became shelters for the Somalis, in the name of that civilizer mission of Mazinian memory; a mission so beloved by the Europeans and the Italians that it was used as the main moral justification of the colonization process.²⁴

If the social and integration issues were not working well, the economic ones were no better.

Both the *Compagnia Filonardi* and the *Società del Benadir*, even though receiving a noteworthy economic contribution by the Italian State, did not care about equipping the ports adequately; thus, commerce suffered, initially, a negative impact.²⁵

The failures of those companies were mainly attributed to the difficulties related to administering the local reality, which was in the middle of a political chaos, lacking any kind of base of regular administration.

One of the very few limited accomplishments during the administration of these two firms was the struggle against slavery²⁶ and coercive work; although, such an effort was not enough, and, adding all the other failures, the Italian State withdrew its concession and took possession of the Somali protectorates in 1905.²⁷

²² Pandolfo p. 9

²³ Roncati, Maccanti p. 46

²⁴ Pandolfo p. 9

²⁵ Landing and discharging operations were difficult, and so were the maritime communications and, in 1901, there were only thirteen Italians in Benadir (Roncati, Maccanti p. 47).

²⁶ When the Italians arrived in southern Somalia, the commerce of slaves was a popular habit; eventually, it was formally banned with a law in 1903. The abolition of slavery initially represented a shock to the local economy; the main antagonists to this action were, obviously, the landlords and the owners of slaves.

The Italian state faced the threat of uprisings with the payment of large amounts of money to the landlords.

It is important to state that the abolition of slavery actually made the life of the slaves harder at first; in fact, the slaves who were owned by a landlord were entitled to a small plot of land that could be cultivated. Becoming free would mean, for them, to lose this right and to find employment by themselves (Ibid. p. 52).

On the other hand, even though Italy had declared the total end of slavery in Somalia, it was only a formal abolition; in fact, many people continued to be treated as slaves within several local tribes (Ibid.).

²⁷ Pandolfo p. 9

1.4 The Colony of Italian Somalia

After the transition of power to the direct rule of the Italian State in 1905, the territories of southern Somalia became, full-fledged, a colony, formally *Somalia Meridionale Italiana*.

The Italians arrived in Somalia in the framework of a colonialist policy undertaken through poor means and poor conviction; even though, over time, it actually managed to commit itself in investing noteworthy amounts of capital; in carrying out a remarkable political-administrative activity; in influencing, beneficially, the economic sectors and in allowing for a civil, social and economic development of local populations.²⁸

The law of April 5 1908, unified, within one single administration, the colony of southern Somalia with the protectorates of northern Somalia.

The same law defined the organization of the Italian Somalia, favoring a devolution of power from the national Parliament and Government to the local Government.

It also asserted the applicability of the Italian laws before Italian citizens and western foreigners, while traditional law, codified or not, would have been applied to Somalis, according to local religious prescriptions and customs in force.²⁹

The issue of defense was faced with the creation of the *Regio Corpo Truppe Coloniali della Somalia*, which was commissioned to carry out the safeguard of the colony.³⁰

Right after the establishment of the colony, the Italian State started to make several attempts in order to attract capital, personnel and investments to eventually carry out practical projects in the various productive activities.

The necessity to invest in the new soil of the colony was promoted by several political figures of the time; as an example, the minister of Foreign Affairs Tommaso Tittoni, before the *Camera dei Deputati* in a sitting of February 13, 1908, announced governmental measures in the field of emigration to the Benadir region, with the objective of establishing favorable conditions for an agricultural colonization.³¹

The region of Benadir and southern Somalia in general were little known territories, about which there were contrasting opinions;

On one hand, some considered them as very fertile lands, actually some of the most fertile in all of Africa; others thought of them as primitive regions, with limited resources, of poor economic interest and filled with continuous tribal conflicts.³²

²⁸ Roncati, Maccanti p.53

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ this corps was formed by a military and a police force; the military corps was led by Italian officials, while the police one was led by officers of the *Arma dei Carabinieri*. As of 1911, the RCTCS deployed 4000 officers and a mobile militia composed of 500 askaris (Ibid. p. 54)

³¹ Tornata di giovedì 13 febbraio 1908, in *Atti Parlamentari della Camera dei Deputati*, 13 February 1908

³² Roncati, Maccanti p.55

The truth was that the territories of southern Somalia were hardly exploitable, being the lands along the rivers the only resources that could be valorized.

Such a task was made harder by the fact that those territories were barely explored inland, thus a long (and expensive) series of reconnaissance trips were made through the years.

As we said before, the hardest task for the Italian settlers was to renovate the social and political order and to try to build it upon the Italian institutions.

Differently from Ethiopia, where there existed a complex state-system, Somalia was completely stateless; those territories had never been unified before, and the only “state” institutions were local lords guiding small tribes and sultanates.

Such a context would require the building from the very basis: it was necessary to build some essential goods, services, and infrastructures such as commissariats, customs authorities, postal and telegraphic services; to build roads, bridges, buildings for offices and personnel; moreover, it was necessary to pacify local tribes.

The issues of security and defense were also crucial: the newly settled territories were barely guarded, and raids from antagonist tribes were frequent.

On the 16th of May 1908, Italy and Ethiopia signed a crucial agreement that stated the liberty for Somali shepherds to exploit those bordering regions were their rights to pasture descended from ancient customs and habits.³³

The real objective of this treaty was to facilitate commerce between the peoples of the same ethnic group, while also providing protection for the inhabitants of inner Italian Somalia from foreign raids and plundering.³⁴

In January of 1910, Giacomo de Martino was named the new Governor of Italian Somalia; he immediately informed the Italian Government about the dramatic situation of the Colony, highlighting the social problems between the tribes and the general context of internal anarchy.

He, therefore, set three main goals to be achieved in the upcoming future:

- 1) To integrally occupy southern Somalia
- 2) To pacify the country through a patient political penetration
- 3) To eventually valorize the Colony

³³ Atto C.1076 del 28 giugno 1908

³⁴ Roncati, Maccanti p.57

De Martino firmly believed in the agricultural valorization of the Colony, especially in the concept of agrarian emigration from Italy; as a consequence, small experimental agrarian firms were opened in the southern territories.

In 1912, De Martino managed to obtain funds from the Italian Parliament in order to build the *Azienda Sperimentale di Stato di Genale*, which had limited success in attracting new Italian emigrant farmers.

Even though De Martino did not successfully fulfill its plans of efficient agrarian exploitation, he realized remarkable accomplishments in upgrading the infrastructures.

Moreover, he re-organized the Royal Colonial Regiment, adding 3500 more men³⁵ and finally starting to include native Somalis in it.

In 1913, a huge territorial expansion took place, where almost 25.000 square kilometers of land were occupied by Italian troops; it was witnessed a dramatic repopulation of several abandoned villages, which were previously left destroyed or looted by foreign raiders.³⁶

1.5 The new economic initiatives: the agricultural sector

The work of the Italians would be trying to fulfill these main goals:

To develop a broad pacification of the territory; to prevent upsets and revolts of the local population; to respect native traditions and cults; to open and to prepare the country to development and progress; to intervene in order to assure a considerable degree of recognition of the Italian Government by the native people.

These tasks were far from easy, and would require considerable amounts of capital to be invested in the course of the years; most of the times, these were blind investments, since there were almost no guarantees.

As we said before, several small firms were established, including the *Società Italiana per Imprese Coloniali sul Giuba* or the *Società Sisalana*, which were active in the cultivation of cotton. The first pioneering companies did not manage to overcome the notable existent difficulties that we have already mentioned, as shown by their experience on the territory.

Eventually, a huge work of agricultural corroboration was carried out by the initiative of Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, Duke of the Abruzzi.³⁷

After the experience in the Regia Marina, he eventually ended up in Somalia, attracted by stories and rumors around the new Italian Colony.

He was especially interested in the Shebelle river, convinced that it could be exploited for good.

³⁵ Ibid. p.58

³⁶ Ibid. p.59

³⁷ The Duke was the son of Amedeo I of Spain, the only Spanish king from the house of Savoy, and cousin of King Vittorio Emanuele III. He was famous for his adventurous character, being the protagonist of several historical expeditions all over the world (including one of the first ascents of the K2); he also served in the Italian Regia Marina during World War I with the grade of Admiral (Meleca V. *Italiani in Africa Orientale: piccole e grandi storie di pace, di guerra, di lavoro e di avventura*, TraccePerLaMeta edizioni, 2017, p. 69)

In November 1920, the Duke established the *Società Agricola Italo-Somala* with a capital of twenty-four million lire³⁸; therefore, the new society managed to buy twenty-five thousand hectares of land between two banks of the Shebelle river, in the region of Jawhar.³⁹

In 1921 a provisional settlement was established, where technicians and workers would accommodate, on hold before starting to build the hydraulic installations.

Overall, to realize this project would take, more or less, a decade, during which the embankments of the Shebelle river would be lifted up for several kilometers, eventually making room for a dam, a pumping station, a main channel over six kilometers long, various secondary canals and a system of water barriers; All of this in order to guarantee a continuous and regulated watercourse to the surrounding farms.⁴⁰

This new agricultural settlement, now called *Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi* or just *Villabruzzo*, was completed by a furnace for the production of bricks, a cement factory, several routes connecting it to surrounding facilities and outposts, warehouses, workshops, laboratories, offices... and so on, including a railway connecting it directly to Mogadishu.⁴¹

According to Paolo Granzotto⁴² the relations between the Duke and the local residents were fairly good and stable; in his own words: «the Somalis like the Duke very much; he is a kind of myth to them: he was the first industrialist of the region, founder of a sugar refinery, builder of a railway, great organizer of labor who delivered houses, kindergartens, schools, hospitals».⁴³

The *S.A.I.S.* was the very first firm to face the complex problems of organizing a large company, which demands, from the valorization of soil to its cultivation, gradually expanded into the social, civil and human spheres.⁴⁴

Such an R&D work was about introducing new cultivations in the area, such as sugar cane, and cultivating recently discovered crops, such as cotton, peanuts, banana palms and so on.

All this work would be carried out in a region with a scarce population (more or less three inhabitants per square kilometer), most of which was devoted to pastoralism, not inclined to agricultural activities and tormented by foreign Abyssinian raiders, which imposed them tributes and livestock; a population subjected to a dramatically high rate of child mortality caused by undernourishment and to a general mortality caused by malaria and poor hygienic, sanitary and nutritious conditions.⁴⁵

The general framework provided for a system of concessions to Somali families of delimited portions of land where they could farm both food and industrial crops.

³⁸ in 1924, the capital invested reached thirty-five million lire, showing the huge interest that this project attracted (Ibid p. 69).

³⁹ Ibid pp. 69-71

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 71

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 73

⁴² Paolo Granzotto (1940-2016): Italian journalist and writer, known for his works at *Il Giornale*

⁴³ Roncati, Maccanti p. 74

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

This system worked out; the families (which were around 1400 at the beginning) increased over time and the arrangement began more and more stable.⁴⁶

In 1922, the *S.A.I.S.* started to build a modern flood dam in the middle of the Shebelle, with an ambitious system of water distribution through smaller canals (thirty kilometers long); around the river, several infrastructures were built and large portions of land were drained.

Between 1922 and 1927, the system of primary feeder canals and secondary collector ones were finished.

The *S.A.I.S.* also favored the development of agricultural experimentation, including agricultural mechanization and the industrialization of products (through the building of sugar factories, oil mills and so on).⁴⁷

The bleak Somali hinterland, considered inadequate for any agricultural and farming initiative, was now transformed into a large prosperous land, filled with any kind of modern infrastructure and service; the experiment of *Villabruzzi* definitely exceeded the expectations, and, considered the amount of capital and time spent on, the studies that were carried out and the social and economic mobilization that it brought among the local tribes, it is sometimes considered one of the greatest work realized by the Italians during their experience in Somalia, also according to the very own words of the Duke's nephew, Amedeo di Savoia (1943).⁴⁸

The legacy of the *S.A.I.S.* is also crucial since it served as the starting point for new firms and companies to develop in the region.

Naturally, there is no univocal consideration of the legacy of *Villabruzzi*; there are also several critics about the system of employment of the Somali personnel.

According to Gian Luca Podestà, in 1929 (during the fascist administration) the government of the colony issued a series of regulations that basically forced the Somali families to remain bound to the agrarian companies where they were employed; as a consequence, the previous contract of waged labor became a contract of co-participation, basically re-introducing coercive work in the colony.⁴⁹

What is undoubted is that such an initiative had dramatic effects on the local economy, while also establishing totally new social and civil relations between the settlers and the colonized.

1.6 Italian Somalia between the two World Wars

Meanwhile, in 1915 Italy joined the Entente's side during the first World War, formerly signing the Treaty of London.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 75

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Letter from Amedeo di Savoia published by *Corriere della Sera* on 25/06/18

⁴⁹ Podestà G.L. *L'emigrazione italiana in Africa orientale*, in *Icornodafrika.it*, p. 12

In 1919, during the works of the peace conference in Paris, the colonial question was brought back to life again.

Since the very beginning, Italy was divided between two parallel tendencies in its foreign policy: an imperialist one, focused on expanding its African colonies, and an irredentist one, focused on reclaiming its historical regions of influence (such as Istria and Dalmatia) and on expanding its dominance over the Mediterranean.⁵⁰

Such tendencies brought Italy to express vague and excessive requests at the negotiating table, which ultimately led to a humiliating result.

The request to France and Britain about ceding their colonies in the Horn (Djibouti and Somaliland) to the Italian Kingdom was denied since they were considered as already-established colonies located in a crucial strategic region for commercial and economic matters.

Moreover, no former German colony in Africa was assigned to Italy, adding more discontent to the large existent one.

The only concession that Italy managed to obtain was the region of Jubaland from the United Kingdom in 1924, eventually annexed to Italian Somalia in 1926.⁵¹

The developments after the events of WWI created a politically and socially tense atmosphere which then became the term *Vittoria mutilata*, emphasizing the discontent and anger after the failure of the Paris peace conference; Most of the Italian public opinion felt betrayed and humiliated, having Italy sacrificed tens of thousands of men to fight and win a war that did not bring what was initially thought.

During the following years, such a tense and unstable climate would be one of the reasons that allowed nationalist and, later, fascist sentiments in Italy to rise, with the establishment of a fascist executive in 1922 led by the former socialist journalist Benito Mussolini.

The Italian fascist foreign policy at the beginning of the twenties was strictly bound to the domestic one, and appeared, also according to foreign observers, prudent and responsible; «the very idea of “Imperialism”, oftentimes evoked by Mussolini both prior and after the March on Rome, was deprived of its militaristic features in favor of its economic significance».⁵²

Fascist foreign policy was characterized by «a relationship between diplomacy and strength; during the 1920s-diplomacy prevailed over strength, while in the following period strength became the instrument adopted in relationships with other powers».⁵³

Italian Fascism was about to redefine the dynamics within the social and cultural spheres in Somalia, mostly concerning the very relations between colonizers and colonized.

⁵⁰ Pandolfo p. 10

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 10-11

⁵² De Felice R. *Breve storia del Fascismo*, Mondadori Milano 2002, p. 65

⁵³ Santoro C.M. *La politica estera di una media potenza*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1991) p. 168

For what concerns Somalia, the new fascist government deemed it necessary to adopt some new directives: it was necessary to stabilize the situation over the region in order to appease the rival tribes and to counter foreign raids; to make the Italian presence permanent; to study deeply the effective properties and opportunities of the territory; to fight the development of epidemic diseases; to enable the integration of a large number of Italians within the productive activities through an organic migratory policy; make Somalia an effective overseas projection of the homeland; and, finally, to valorize the resources of the country.⁵⁴

Therefore in 1923, in order to effectively carry out these tasks, Cesare Maria De Vecchi, known for his membership within the first fascist quadrumvirate, was appointed as the new governor.

When he arrived in Mogadishu (where he will stay until 1928), he realized how several portions of the territory were not under the effective control of the colonial government.

Therefore, he felt the necessity to employ a rigid and rigorous program of government through which he pursued a more determined policy against the antagonist tribes and the northern sultanates; in fact, the northern portions of the territory of the colony were annexed to Italian Somalia only *de iure*, but *de facto* they were governed by local sultans.

De Vecchi started to disarm the nomad populations and to pursue the annexation of the aforementioned sultanates.

He launched this annexation campaign against the sultanate of Hobyo in 1925, eventually conquering it in 1926; in 1927, the sultanate of Majeerteen will be annexed too.⁵⁵

The repressive policies of De Vecchi could be placed in a context of militaristic “pacification” of annexational nature, aimed at making Somalia an anti-Ethiopic outpost.⁵⁶

The figure of Cesare Maria De Vecchi is a very controversial one; he has been described as a ruthless, unscrupulous, and violent leader, who barely knew or comprehended the local reality of the Somali context. He has also been criticized for bringing the terroristic methods of fascist *squadrismo* in Somalia.⁵⁷

On the other hand, Somalia under De Vecchi’s rule sought a complete renovation of its bureaucratic and administrative system, being more centralized and rigid.

He has been a great advocate of the necessity to economically valorize the resources and the territory of the colony, focusing a lot on agricultural valorization.

His rule also focused on education, with the construction of new schools, and on fiscal matters, with the introduction of the *lira* as the new official currency instead of rupees.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Roncati, Maccanti p. 78

⁵⁵ Pandolfo p. 11

⁵⁶ Aruffo A. *Dossier Somalia: breve storia dal mandato italiano all'intervento ONU 1948-1993*, 1994 p. 21

⁵⁷ Pandolfo p. 11

⁵⁸ Roncati, Maccanti p. 83

1.7 The final years of Italian Somalia and the fascist influence

Between the '30s and the '40s Somalia lived a relatively period of peace and political stability.

The Great Depression brought by the 1929 Wall Street crash deeply influenced the economies of western countries, including their colonies. Somalia was no exception, having the international prices of cotton and other crops fallen and the rights of way in Suez increased; the combination of those events had a dramatically negative influence over the exports coming from Somalia.⁵⁹

The war with Ethiopia of 1935 and the subsequent proclamation of the Empire in 1936 put Somalia under the administration of the newborn imperial colony of the Italian Eastern Africa.

For what concerns the social and cultural spheres, the fascist policies and propaganda completely changed the relations between the settlers and the native populations.

The fascist racist policies «were aimed at two main objectives: the struggle against the intermingling of races and the marginalization of the Jews».⁶⁰

For what concerns the very racism towards black African natives, in general, European imperialistic ideas tended to describe the inhabitants of Africa as, basically, underdeveloped and inferior civilizations, which needed the help and the initiative of the western settlers in order to evolve.

In the words of the fascist anthropologist Lidio Cipriani, aiming at the civilization of the Africans was wrong because it was “impossible”; «the very destiny of the African continent was bound to the presence of the Europeans, the only ones capable of building a civilization whose opportunities and advantages would be exploitable by the natives too, in so far as they would accept their subordinate role to which they were naturally destined to».⁶¹

The fascist regime wanted to implement a particular form of colonization in Africa; a social system that would have unified demographic colonization with other forms of exploitation of the new lands.

The concept of demographic colonization was to be fulfilled through a long and continuous stream of immigration of peasant masses from Italy.

The colonies would become the continuation of Italy overseas, and the Italian settlers would create a system of reciprocity with the homeland in a fashion similar to the concept of Empire in ancient Rome.

The authorities would apply rigorous selection criteria in selecting the aspiring colonizers in order to favor the development of a “just” society that would develop according to the classical virtues of the ancient Romans.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 106-107

⁶⁰ Raspanti M. *Noi nobile razza ariana: Giosuè Carducci e il mito ariano*, in *Razzismo e modernità*, 2001, 1, pp. 26-55.

⁶¹ Cipriani L. *Un assurdo etnico: l'impero etiopico*, Firenze, Bemporad, 1935 p. 181

⁶² Podestà G.L. p. 14

In this fashion, any kind of intermingling between different ethnic groups was formally banished (while it was at least tolerated before fascism).

Moreover, the fascist policies were also aimed at conciliating and unifying the territories, disfavoring the devolution to local authorities and promoting a general implementation of fascist corporatism in local businesses.

In fact, according to Mussolini, the new “Roman Empire” was firstly an “Empire of labor”; fascist propaganda encouraged the spread of the idea of “good Italian” or “*Italiani brava gente*” in order to remind the natives that the very Italian presence was aimed at developing, economically and politically, a part of the world that was necessarily associated to primitiveness and underdevelopment.

The Italian colonial experience in Somalia will end in 1941, when, during the Eastern African campaign of World War II, the British forces occupied its territory and subjected it under a new authority, formally known as *British Military Administration*, which will last until 1949.

Chapter II: Somalia Under the Trusteeship Administration

2.1 The Italian African colonies at the aftermath of World War II

The Italian state formally gave up on its former colonies that were lost during the war with the signing of the Treaty of Peace with Italy of 1947.

The four main victorious powers (the USA, the United Kingdom, France and the USSR) tried to arrange a solution for the division of the Italian African colonies, but eventually failed to do so in a short time, and thus the jurisdiction over the argument passed to the newborn United Nations in 1948.⁶³

Even after having committed to follow these international arrangements, the Italian Government considered the subtraction of the African colonies as unacceptable, and it kept on reclaiming them.

The then-President of the Council of Ministers Alcide De Gasperi has been a very charismatic figure during the negotiations for the future of the colonies. He truly believed that the new Republic still had the right and the duty to maintain its colonies on the base of the experience that the Italians managed to show in the process of their civilization.⁶⁴

De Gasperi thought that the intentions of the victorious nations about depriving Italy of its colonies were led by those powers' geopolitical interests of weakening the newborn Republic on the international scenario.

There were two main reasons why Italy wanted to keep its colonies: the first one was political, wanting to maintain a logic of continuity of the foreign policy regardless of any internal change.

The other was socio-economic: Italy had invested huge amounts of capital in its colonies, having contributed in their development and valorization for years; moreover, there were still thousands of Italians that settled there,⁶⁵ living with their families.

De Gasperi saw the Italian colonial adventure as a successful result, in terms of the positive cohabitation between diverse people, as well as of the cultural and social improvement of the native populations.⁶⁶

Still, he did repudiate the fascist methods and policies, acknowledging the illegitimacy of the annexation of Ethiopia.

The right to retain the colonies should have been granted in the name of their revalorization and because of their importance for the geo-political stability in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.⁶⁷

⁶³ Morone A.M. *L'ultima colonia: come l'Italia è tornata in Africa 1950-1960*, (Edizioni Laterza, Bari 2011) p. 5

⁶⁴ *Italia e Somalia: dieci anni di collaborazione*. Istituto poligrafico dello stato, Roma 1962 – Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

⁶⁵ Remo Roncati and Renato Maccanti report the presence of, more or less, 75.000 Italians in Eritrea, 150.000 in Libya and 10.000 in Somalia immediately after the end of WWII (Roncati, Maccanti p. 125)

⁶⁶ Roncati, Maccanti p. 125

⁶⁷ Aruffo A. *Dossier Somalia. Breve storia dal mandato italiano all'intervento ONU 1948-1993*, DataneWS 1994 p. 22

Such positions were shared among other political figures of different ideologies, such as by the then socialist leader Pietro Nenni, who thought that it was a moral and civil obligation to mend the damages suffered by the Somali population during the fascist regime.⁶⁸

Despite everything, the works of the Paris peace conference witnessed another Italian failure, given by the fact that the victorious nations had expansionist ambitions over the former Italian colonies: in particular, Hailè Salassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, was interested in getting the entire Eritrea, while the British were attracted by the Cyrenaica region of Libya and by the rest of Somalia, wanting to annex it to the already existent British Somaliland.⁶⁹

At that time, even Benedetto Croce expressed resentment and sorrow at the sight of the Paris agreement; he heavily criticized the decision of depriving Italy of those lands where an ambitious and tough project of civilization and valorization was carried out, employing ingeniousness and great amounts of capital.⁷⁰

Since then, the Italian Government pursued a series of more-or-less-secret actions in the former colonies through the means of the *Ministero dell’Africa Italiana* (MAI) in order to re-establish contacts with the native populations and to favor a return of Italy in Africa.⁷¹

In the view of the MAI, the colonies did not represent a mere political argument, anymore, but the reason of the Ministry’s very own existence.⁷²

2.2 The rise of Somali Nationalism

As previously stated in the previous chapter, Italian Somalia was militarily attacked in 1941 by the British, who managed to annex it almost flawlessly; the British action was a counter attack in the framework of the war in East Africa, where, in 1940, Italy managed to briefly occupy the territory of British Somaliland.

The former colony of Italian Somalia was now under a military administration led by the United Kingdom; the Italian part was kept divided from the British Somaliland, and it was initially organized as the *Occupied Enemy Territory Administration* (OETA), while becoming *British Military Administration* (BMA) in 1942 and finally *British Administration of Somalia* in 1949.⁷³

Despite the shock of the changing of *status quo* after the British annexation, there was a part of the Somali public opinion which saw the British presence as legitimate and favorable in the long run.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Roncati, Maccanti p. 129

⁷⁰ Zaccaria M. *Rimuovere o riscrivere il colonialismo? Il lavoro degli italiani in Africa*, in Morone A.M. (a cura di) *La fine del colonialismo italiano: politica, società, memorie*, Le Monnier, Firenze 2018, p. 87

⁷¹ Morone p. 7

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Roncati, Maccanti p. 119

That was because the British were responsible for the end of the fascist rule over Somalia, making it possible for thousands of Somalis to self-determine and to exit from the previously imposed regime of racial segregation.

The fascist order relegated the natives to the very bottom of the social pyramid, discouraging their education and not allowing them to cover any prominent role in the field of civil administration and bureaucracy.

The restoration of rights of association, as well as the involvement of local Somali people in the ranks of the BMA and of the Gendarmerie were all important incentives that favored the development of Somali nationalism.

Nationalist feelings in Somalia were not an exception before the African context, since decolonization and self-determination principles and ideas were starting to become popular all over the African continent.

A very important driving force for the development of a nationalist sentiment in Somalia was education, since the British allowed for a greater participation involving Somalis from all social realities.⁷⁴

In 1943, the *Somali Youth Club* (SYC) was established; it will eventually become the most influential social movement during the years of the Trusteeship and the most important political party during the years of the democratic rule of the Republic of Somalia (1960-1969).

The *Club* adopted a “radically secular” footprint inspired by socialism thanks to the figure of Yasin Haji Osman, one of the original founders of the movement;

Still, Islam maintained a relevant role in the shaping of the Somali national identity.⁷⁵

The *Somali Youth Club* became the *Somali Youth League* (SYL) in 1947, becoming more and more similar to an established political party: An Assembly was formed in order to decree the general political-organizational direction of the movement, and in order to elect the thirteen members of the Central Committee.

The latter was commissioned to appoint the Central Direction, which was the executive branch of the party, with the task of carrying out the decisions of the Committee.⁷⁶

The SYL managed to open many of its sections all around the former Italian Somalia and the other Somali-speaking territories in the Horn of Africa (including the Ogaden region, a long-contested territory between Ethiopia and Somalia, and French Somalia, otherwise known as Djibouti).

The *League* also opened an abroad section in Manchester, showing its affinity with Britain; the abroad section would serve as an antenna, in order to follow the international developments regarding the destiny of the Italian colonies.

Somali people started to get involved in the dynamics of Nationalism and associationism through schooling, cultural clubs and poetry, which detained a fairly important role within the Somali traditional society.

⁷⁴ Morone p. 10-11

⁷⁵ Morone p. 11

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 12

Colonialism was not seen as a driving force of the civilization of the native peoples; instead, it was the reason for the “balkanization” of Somali society, which brought about the creation of five different “Somalias”.

The mission of the *League* was to reunite these five different regions and to reorganize them into the very first Somali national state.⁷⁷

In fact, paradoxically, the colonial partition managed to both divide and unite the Somalis

Moreover, the SYL statute provided for a huge reform of the Somali society, intended to detach Somalis from the bonds of the clan, calling for the rise of a new national identity.⁷⁸

The *League* was considered by Britain as the perfect tool in order to discourage any Italian colonial ambition in Somalia; it also met the plans of the British Government, which «was looking for new national élites that would help it in dismissing the direct rule order in the colonies».⁷⁹

In fact, the new Labour-led government was carrying out a reform of the imperial colonial system, which was essential because it was determined «to maintain as far as possible the structure of British global interests in the fight against Communism».⁸⁰

On the other hand, the SYL would benefit from the “Bevin Plan”, named after the then-British minister of foreign affairs; it proposed the creation of a “Greater Somalia” in a fashion similar to the demands of the *League*, except it was conceived to be a British trusteeship.⁸¹ If the Somali nationalists saw the British interferences as a huge opportunity to reach independence soon, the UK sponsored its interests as a way to replace Italian fascism with its own rule, in a way to continue the British colonial legacy in Africa. It was also crucial for Western powers to prevent the growing influence of the USSR in those “grey areas” of the rising Third World.⁸² The result was a latent contradiction between the hypothesis of English semi-protectorate and the one of Somali independentism, which, by the way, claimed the union of all the Somali-speaking territories, even those outside the jurisdiction of the BMA (such as Djibouti and Ogaden).⁸³ By mid-1947 and the transformation of the SYC into the *League*, the organization appeared to grow in self-confidence, distancing itself from the British tutelage, rejecting an alliance with the Ethiopian state, and

⁷⁷ the current flag of Somalia, adopted in 1954, has a light blue background, while the foreground is dominated by a white five-pointed star, whose five tips represent the five Somalias (Somaliland, Djibouti, Italian Somalia, Ogaden and Jubaland) (Pandolfo M. *Gli italo-somali dell'Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia (AFIS): una memoria dimenticata tra le pagine dell'Italia postcoloniale*, in *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea: Ponti fra nazioni e continenti: diplomazia, immaginari e conoscenze tecniche*, 30, 2/2017, 29/7/2017, nota p. 2

⁷⁸ Morone p. 18

⁷⁹ Flint J. *Planned Decolonization and Its Failure in British Africa*, in *African Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 328 (Jul. 1983), p. 20

⁸⁰ Hyam R. *Africa and the Labour government 1945-1951*, in Porter A. Holland R. (eds.), *Theory and Practice in the History of European Expansion Overseas*, Frank Cass, London 1988, p. 172

⁸¹ Morone p. 17

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Calchi Novati G.P. *Gli incidenti di Mogadiscio del gennaio 1948: rapporti italo-inglesi e nazionalismo somalo*, in *Africa*, XXXV, 1980, 3-4, p. 347

calling for a Greater Somalia.⁸⁴

Since the popularity of the *League* was reaching crucial levels, some other social and political movements started to rise; these groups were mainly composed of people of Hawiye and Rahanweyn heritage, particularly close to the Italians since the very first days of colonialism.⁸⁵

In 1947, these new movements merged into the so-called *Conferenza della Somalia*, which opposed the program of the *League* and aimed at maintaining the *status quo* of the Somali society and defending clan-based customary traditions and practices.⁸⁶

This proximity to the Italian interests was taken in order for the parties of the *Conferenza* to gain relevant positions in the moment of a future independence of Somalia under an Italian mediation.⁸⁷

If, on one hand, the SYL wanted an immediate independence and the union of all Somalis on the basis of a strongly centralized state organization, on the other the parties of the *Conferenza* called for a program of long-term institutional growth based on a more decentralized structure.⁸⁸

2.3 The Massacre of Mogadishu

The rise of Somali Nationalism, backed by British interests, was about to become a crucial issue for the potential return of Italy in Somalia; the hostility towards Italy was mostly exhibited against the Italian residents, because of their social and economic status, but also because they were the main object of the Italian propaganda for the return in Somalia.⁸⁹

The future of the country was about to be written, and it was fluctuating between very different tendencies: the return of Italy under a trusteeship governance, the passage under the definitive British influence in the form of an indirect rule governance, or the utopian idea of an independent Greater Somalia (to be eventually inserted under the sphere of influence of the UK).

A very important event that drastically caught the interests of the Italian public opinion and that necessarily reinforced the Italian claims over the keeping of Somalia was dubbed as the “Massacre of Mogadishu” (or *Eccidio di Mogadiscio* in Italian).

The event took place on the 11th January 1948, after a series of clashes between pro-Italian members of the Somali civil society and Somali nationalists, in the eve of an important diplomatic visit in Mogadishu, the *Four Powers Commission* (FPC), which operated under the mandate of the four victorious powers.

⁸⁴ Barnes C. *The Somali Youth League, Ethiopian Somalis and the Greater Somalia Idea, c.1946–48*, in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1:2, 2007, p. 285

⁸⁵ Morone pp. 21-22

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 24

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 30

The task of the *Commission* was to gather and analyze the *desiderata* of the local populations, to study the overall situation and to eventually come up with a solution before the deadline of September 1948, when the matter would be moved under the jurisdiction of the UN.⁹⁰

During the works of the Commission, two opposing parades collided on the streets of Mogadishu, resulting in an outbreak of violence, which was ultimately diverted to the Italian community.

The toll of victims was atrocious: 54 killed and 48 wounded among the Italians, while the Nationalists suffered 14 deaths and 43 wounded; on the other hand, the security forces charged to oversee the demonstration only suffered 2 minor injuries.⁹¹

From the very beginning, it was obvious that the situation was critical, and the relations between Britain and Italy risked a deterioration; In fact, the local War Office in Mogadishu initially informed the British government that the casualties were to be addressed to pro-Italian demonstrators; moreover, there were several suspects upon the possible involvement of the very BMA in the process of agitation of nationalist sentiments, also considering the very poor work carried out by the security forces, which ultimately did not prevent the massacre (and did very little to suppress it).⁹²

On the Italian side, the news from Mogadishu reached the Consulate in Nairobi only on the 13th of January; the Italians demanded that a Committee of Inquiry was to be established, and that Italy would have had a relevant role in it.⁹³ At this point, in order to avoid a worsening of the relations between the two countries, Britain and Italy started working on a diplomatic compromise.

Ultimately, the British agreed on the nomination of an Italian representative in Mogadishu and on the abrogation of the rules of war.⁹⁴

This was considered as a huge diplomatic success for Italy, mostly because it facilitated a reconciliation with the British, and also because it favored the development of a more stable Italian presence in Somalia, which was not granted since 1941.⁹⁵

The colonial question was a crucial theme of the newborn Republic, and the events of Mogadishu served as a new justification and a huge opportunity for Italy to re-establish its interests in the region. Now more than ever, the Italian political class and public opinion shared a quasi-unanimous thought about the keeping of the former colony of Somalia; more specifically, several interventions were made during the works of both the *Camera* and *Senato*, which condemned the massacre and tended to blame the British ambitions of keeping the Italians away from Somalia.

These debates were carried out by representatives of the whole Italian political spectrum, such as Giorgio Almirante (of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, a paternalistic-conservative party located on the right) up to

⁹⁰ Ibid p. 26

⁹¹ Roncati, Maccanti p.132

⁹² Morone p. 30

⁹³ Roncati, Maccanti p. 133

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 134

⁹⁵ Morone p. 33

Senator Umberto Terracini (a well-known antifascist, president of the *Constituent Assembly* and representative of the *Partito Comunista Italiano*).⁹⁶

2.4 The Anglo-Italian compromise and the concession of the Trusteeship Administration

The Massacre of Mogadishu completely changed the scenario around the future of Somalia; the Italians and the British saw a moment of reconciliation, mainly dictated by the recent developments of the dynamics of the international scenario, that required a stable and safe decolonization process in order not to allow the former colonies to join the Eastern Bloc.

In 1949, the hope for this new reconciliation was represented by the Bevin-Sforza compromise, named after the two ministries of foreign affairs of the two countries.

According to this plan, which determined the split of the former Italian colonies, Somalia was to be assigned to Italy under a trusteeship rule, while Eritrea was to be divided between Ethiopia and the British colony of Sudan, and Libya under the joint trusteeship of Italy, Britain and France.

Some considered this compromise simply as a colonial-style arrangement between two world powers, made only to comply to the nascent geo-political international scenario.⁹⁷

This compromise never saw light, since it was not approved in front of the UN General Assembly, halted by the veto of Haiti, a country that should have, according to the Italian concerns, supported the Italian reasons.⁹⁸

The failure of the Bevin-Sforza compromise forced prime minister De Gasperi to intervene before the UN General Assembly; he opened for the immediate independence of Eritrea and Libya, while still supporting the idea of trusteeship only for Somalia.

The Somali people needed the Italian aid to effectively and efficiently reach a solid maturation in order to finally claim their independence.⁹⁹

In 1949, the Foreign Minister, Carlo Sforza, stressed «the ability of Italy to merge its cultural, economic and historical background with those of its former colonies». He stated that «democratic Italy has always considered its colonies, not only as Italian interests, but mainly as Italian aspects of the world's interests».¹⁰⁰

In the same speech, he underlined the support of many states for an Italian trusteeship administration in Somalia. He said: «many countries agree with us that Italy still has many important tasks in Somalia.

⁹⁶ Roncati, Maccanti pp. 134-135

⁹⁷ Morone pp. 39-40

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 40

⁹⁹ Roncati, Maccanti p. 139

¹⁰⁰ Sforza C. *Cinque anni a palazzo Chigi*, Atlante, Roma 1952, p. 173.

Somalia's economic and social development still needs a hard-Italian commitment. This commitment cannot be interrupted or changed without any dangerous consequence in the process of Somali civilization».¹⁰¹

Most of the Somali public opinion, except for the nationalist under the flag of the SYL, was open for a possible return of the Italians; a particularly interesting intervention was made by Mohamed Sheikh Osman, a Somali delegate representing the *Conferenza della Somalia* during the discussions at Lake Success in 1949; according to his own words, the so-claimed-inferiority of Somalia compared to other French and British colonies was a vicious attempt to discredit the Italian works of economic and civil valorization of the territory, which truly helped the locals to improve themselves and reach maturity.¹⁰²

According to Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Giuseppe Brusasca, Somalia should become «the testing ground of social democracy and of the international constructive capacities of our people».¹⁰³

On 21 November 1949, the settlement of Italian colonies was arranged by UN Resolution 289. The resolution determined not only the territorial future of the colonies, but also gave guidelines for the Trusteeship Agreement, establishing that «Italian Somalia has to be recognized as an independent state in ten years-time, since the adoption of a Trusteeship Agreement by the UN General Assembly».¹⁰⁴

2.5 Somalia under the Italian trusteeship: general overview

The Italian Trusteeship Administration in Somalia (AFIS) officially began on 1 April 1950, and the Trusteeship Agreement was promulgated on 7 December 1951. AFIS was responsible to the UN for public order and the administration of the country, having precise guidelines to follow. Article 3 of the Trusteeship Agreement stated that the authority charged with the administration of the territory had to «encourage the development of free political institutions promoting the evolution of Somali population towards independence».¹⁰⁵ The economy of Somalia had to be improved through greater exploitation of its natural resources and the creation of agricultural, industrial and trade infrastructures. The administration had the duty to protect the fundamental freedoms of the population regardless of sex, race, religion and policy.¹⁰⁶ The Trusteeship Agreement placed crucial emphasis on the education system as the most important instrument for promoting Somalia's social, economic, political and moral progress.¹⁰⁷ Immediately after, a *Corpo di Sicurezza* was established and 6,500 troops were sent.¹⁰⁸

Ambassador Giovanni Fornari was the first Administrator of AFIS. At the same time that the administration was set up, the *Advisory Council* was established in Mogadishu. The Council consisted of three members:

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁰² Roncati, Maccanti p. 140

¹⁰³ Corriere della Sera, 9 February 1950

¹⁰⁴ UN Resolution 289, 21 November 1949.

¹⁰⁵ Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, Anno 92, No. 282, 7 December 1951 art. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., art. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Del Boca A. *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale, Nostalgia delle colonie* p. 55.

one from Egypt, one from Colombia and one from the Philippines, and was in charge of putting forward suggestions to the Italian administration, in the political, economic, educational and social security spheres. It actually had the role of “watchdog”, supervising the work of the AFIS.¹⁰⁹ Under the supervision of this Council, the Trusteeship Administration’s responsibilities were mainly:

- 1) the creation and development of a regional government organization;
- 2) economic and financial development;
- 3) improvement in the education system;
- 4) social progress and welfare;
- 5) shifting of power from the administration to local government.¹¹⁰

The very first obstacle that Italy had to deal with were, of course, the nationalists. The Somali Youth *League* was becoming very popular among Somalis, shaping their preferences under a nationalist outlook and persuading them not to accept the Italian administration. The attitude of the SYL towards the Italian presence in Somalia emerged during a meeting Brusasca had in Mogadishu with Aden Abdulla Osman, an influential leader of the SYL. According to Del Boca, while the undersecretary emphasized the hard work carried out by the Italians during the colonial era, and all the infrastructures and services established there, Osman replied: «This is true, but those who followed you (the British) gave us something much more important, they gave us the freedom to express our opinion, to create parties and to work for the future of our country».¹¹¹

On 8 June 1950, in order to improve AFIS’s relationship with the Somali population, Fornari introduced an amnesty for all offences committed before the mandate started. Yet this initiative did not mitigate the hostilities between SYL and AFIS. The *League* continued with its accusations that the Italian Administration wanted to destroy the SYL and increase the clans’ divisions, thus trying to suffocate Somali nationalism, while employing officials with a fascist background.¹¹² In fact, until 1952, AFIS was jointly administered by officers of both MAE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and MAI (Ministry of Italian Africa); the former provided for the appointment of the heads of the administration, maintained the relations with the UN and reported the developments of the mandate before the Council of Ministers;¹¹³ the latter dealt with all the rest, particularly with administrative matters, linkages and supply operations.¹¹⁴ the officers coming from the MAI were frowned upon, since most of them were considered by some Somalis as old-style colonizers with fascist tendencies, whose intentions were only to preserve the interests of the local Italian community; these

¹⁰⁹ Karp M. *The Economics of Trusteeship in Somalia* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1960) p. 15.

¹¹⁰ ASMAE, AFIS, *Rapport sur la Somalie sous Administration Italienne*, 3 June–24 July 1952, New York pp. 6–9, Box 1 File 4.

¹¹¹ Del Boca p. 224

¹¹² Ibid pp. 226-227

¹¹³ Morone p.69

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

concerns were shared by undersecretary Brusasca and Fornari too,¹¹⁵ who acknowledged the persistence, within the Italian community in Somalia, of some forms of devotion to racial privileges.¹¹⁶

2.6 The process of “Somalization”

One of the hardest tasks of AFIS was to ensure a process of “Somalization” of the administrative and bureaucratic sectors of the independent-to-be-nation, with the progressive substitution of Italian officers with native ones. On 30 December 1950, Fornari gave impetus to such a process with the creation of the *Territorial Council*.¹¹⁷ This represented an expression, for the first time in Somalia, of involvement of the local population in the administration of the country.¹¹⁸

A further step towards “Somalization” was the creation of the *Somali Economic Council*. Fornari appointed an Italian engineer, Anteo Mortara, as chairman of the Council, but the majority of the members were indigenous. From 1952, the *Somali Economic Council* had representatives of all social classes and a group of experts in the different economic fields from private and public companies as well as artisans.¹¹⁹ At the beginning of 1953, «Fornari handed over his position to the new Administrator, Enrico Martino, who started to prepare Somalia for the first democratic elections in its history».¹²⁰ «He felt it was extremely important to create a body of representative institutions as time was running out and a period of five or six years was very short to assess how successful democratization was in Somalia». The Administrator «was aware of the importance of achieving a consistent process of “Somalization” as well as of democratization».¹²¹

Following the *League's* strong showing in the 1954 local election, the Administration was under increasing pressure to transfer power to the Somalis. «Although after four years of mandate the process of “Somalization” had reached a considerable level, democratization was proceeding slowly. Clearly the main reason to hasten “Somalization” was the result of AFIS’s limited financial resources. Therefore, at the beginning of 1956 there were more than 5,000 officials, of whom 4,380 were Somalis and only 621

¹¹⁵ AFIS adopted a progressive policy aimed at increasingly involving Somalis in the administration of the country, but the Italian community had serious difficulty in understanding the importance of AFIS’s role. Fornari stated that «they do not want to accept that they are not the masters any longer» (ASMAE, AFIS, Letter from Fornari to Brusasca, 16 February 1951, Box 2, File 3)

¹¹⁶ Morone pp. 64-65

¹¹⁷ This Council was composed of 35 councilors of whom 28 were Somali; it was a consultative and representative central body with responsibility for all governmental activities, with the exception of foreign policy and defense. At the very beginning of its existence the Council was committed to preparing an internal statute and to providing suggestions for the creation of municipal councils throughout Somalia. The Council had to form an opinion about the adoption of the official language for education, and about company regulations (ASMAE, AFIS, pp. 11–12, Box 1, File 4)

¹¹⁸ Tripodi P. *The Colonial Legacy in Somalia. Rome and Mogadishu: from Colonial Administration to Operation Restore Hope*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999 p. 58

¹¹⁹ ASMAE, AFIS, Box 2, File 14.

¹²⁰ Tripodi p. 64

¹²¹ Ibid.

Italians».¹²² The need for transferring authority and jurisdiction to the Somalis was dictated by the small amount of time that the Italian mandate had to comply with. As a consequence, this process of “Somalization” was ultimately carried out in a long-term non-efficient and unsustainable way, making room for inadequate and unqualified personnel. Furthermore, AFIS started receiving fewer and fewer funds, making the development of the process even worse.¹²³

2.7 The role of AFIS in the economic development of Somalia

When Italy returned in Somalia through the employment of AFIS, the economic situation of the African country was very dramatic, since the previous British administration managed to close every Italian-funded agricultural settlement and assets (like *Villabruzzi*);¹²⁴ moreover, most of the local population was employed in nomadic pastoral activities, and very few people were employed in secondary or tertiary sectors.¹²⁵ Paolo Tripodi highlights how the economic situation in Somalia «was afflicted by Italy’s domestic problems: the country had to recover from the damages suffered during WWII, and both the Italian budget and the AFIS budget were in deficit».¹²⁶

As a consequence of Italy’s poor financial resources, the Administrator’s commitment «was to invest the budget in the establishment of the social structures Somalia needed; so, despite the fact that public order still remained one of the main concerns in the country, Fornari cut the military budget and personnel, in order to increase investment in political and economic institutions».¹²⁷ However, in 1951 the Italian government cut the AFIS budget by a quarter,¹²⁸ making the work of Administrator Fornari even tougher, as he stressed that «despite the fact that he had achieved consistent savings by cutting military expenses, the new budget reduction could stop many activities that Italy had agreed to undertake under the trusteeship».¹²⁹ Even though, In September 1951, the *School for Health Inspectors* and, in May 1952, the *Secondary School of Agriculture* were established.¹³⁰

According to Martino there were several reasons why the economy was poor. One was the uncertainty about Italian and international economic aid streaming into Somalia; Another was the uncertainty about the political and legal situation of Somalia when the mandate would have ended.¹³¹

Following the first wave of investments, in the period 1954-1960 a seven-year economic development plan

¹²² Del Boca p. 270

¹²³ Tripodi p. 76

¹²⁴ Roncati, Maccanti p. 146

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Tripodi p. 60

¹²⁷ Tripodi pp. 60-61

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 61

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ ASMAE, AFIS, Box 2, File 14

¹³¹ Tripodi p. 65

was issued.¹³²

In the fields of labor and social security, the Italians managed to re-establish those conditions that were erased during the BMA; a new social security system was issued, in conformity with international labor conventions.¹³³ Moreover, several professional schools for the training of workers were established.¹³⁴

In terms of urban development, the work of AFIS focused on the renovation of existing infrastructures and buildings in the major cities of the country, with a particular focus on the road systems.¹³⁵

In the 1951-1959 period, exports increased by 262%, while imports reached an increase of 28%. The national economic deficit decreased from a median 75.5, million (So. Sch.) in 1951-1953 to a median of 62.1 million in 1954-1956 and to 49.51 million in 1957-1959.¹³⁶ Italy was, naturally, the major importer of the Somali total economic output (at least 75-80% of total Somali exports) and also the major exporter to Somalia (being the 45-50% of Somali imports). Most of this output consisted of bananas, pelts, canned meat and fish¹³⁷ (The rest of exports was directed mainly directed to the Arabian Peninsula and, to a lesser extent, to Kenya and Zanzibar.¹³⁸

Despite these improvements, «an acute balance of payments deficit persisted, and the administration had to rely on foreign grants and Italian subsidies to balance the budget».¹³⁹ Martino stated that many measures have been adopted in favor of Italian companies. The main act was to extend until December 1955 the exemption from taxes of all machinery used by industries and farms. Moreover, there was a considerable number of small and medium-sized Italian industries which were protected and assisted by AFIS. In many cases a capitalistic exploitation of Somali resources was realized.¹⁴⁰

2.8 The contribution to the education system and schooling

The Trusteeship Agreement placed special emphasis on the education system as the most important instrument for promoting Somalia's social, economic, political and moral progress.¹⁴¹ When Rome set up the mandate, Somalia had only 29 primary schools and about 2,850 pupils. The AFIS education programme had three main aims:

¹³² It provided for the investment in the fields of agriculture, zootecnical, communications, urban renewal, artisanship, industry, commerce and credit, for a total of 124.281 of thousands of Somali schillings (Roncati, Maccanti p. 150).

¹³³ Ibid. p. 151

¹³⁴ Remo Roncati and Renato Maccanti cite about a school for health-care workers, a school of artisanship and many others (Ibid.)

¹³⁵ Roncati and Maccanti focus also on the establishment of the very first Somali national airline, financed by Alitalia (Ibid.)

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 152

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Metz C. H. *Trusteeship and Protectorate: The Road to Independence*, in *Somalia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress (1992)

¹⁴⁰ Tripodi p.70

¹⁴¹ Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, Anno 92, No. 282, 7 December 1951 art. 4

- 1) to provide the majority of Somalis with at least primary education;
- 2) to offer the few scholars and academics already existing in the country higher education;
- 3) to promote the formation of a new, well-educated elite.¹⁴²

Yet the paucity of primary schools in 1950 was not the only problem. Somalia had very few teachers.¹⁴³ Therefore, from 1952, an increasing number of Somali teachers were sent to Italy to attend teaching courses. On 20 September 1950, the *School of Political and Administrative Preparation* was set up.¹⁴⁴ This School was particularly important, both for the training of Somali civil servants and for its political impact. Many of the students were members of the SYL who, after attending courses at the school, and in many cases after going to Italy for further education, softened their attitude towards the Administration. During their residence in Italy, they used to attend courses organized at Perugia University. On completion of their courses, Somali students were offered the opportunity to stay in Italy for a short time.¹⁴⁵ In 1953, the establishment of the Institute of Social Science, Law and Economics, with courses beginning in the 1954–1955 academic year, made room to the creation of the *University Institute of Somalia*, which will be, eventually, reorganized into the *Somali National University* in 1969. The new institution was mostly run by Italian lecturers with limited participation from Somalis.¹⁴⁶

According to Helen Metz in her work named *Somalia: A Country Study*, between 1952 and 1957, «student enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels doubled. In 1957 there were 2,000 students receiving secondary, technical, and university education in Italian Somaliland and through scholarship programs in China, Egypt, and Italy. Another program offered night-school adult literacy instruction and provided further training to civil servants. However, these programs were severely handicapped by the absence of a standard script and a written national language. Arabic, Italian, and English served as media of instruction in the various schools».¹⁴⁷

2.9 The difficult road to an independent Somalia

The May 1954 elections «represented the first truly significant event in the history of the relationship between the Italian Administration and Somali political movements, as this was the first opportunity to test the true support of all parties. A high percentage of registered voters (more than 75%) participated as a result

¹⁴² Costanzo G.A. *L'Educazione chiave dello sviluppo della Somalia*, in *Affrica*, Vol. XV, No. 3, May–June (1960) pp. 141-142

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 142

¹⁴⁴ offering a three-year course in administration, law, history of civilization, Islam, international law, UN organization, economy, geography and the international statute for the organization of Somalia (*Ibid.*)

¹⁴⁵ ASMAE, AFIS, Box 1, File 1.

¹⁴⁶ Costanzo pp. 139-145

¹⁴⁷ Metz H.C. *Trusteeship and Protectorate: The Road to Independence*, in ed. *Somalia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992

of the vigorous campaign that AFIS and all political groups conducted». ¹⁴⁸

The *League* «obtained a decisive victory, polling 47.7 per cent of the votes cast and returning 141 out of 281 counsellors. The remaining seats were divided among the many political groups in existence at that time. Fornari and Martino's prediction that the SYL would play a significant role in the future of Somalia was now confirmed». ¹⁴⁹ One result of the elections was that the Administration had to change its attitude towards the SYL. The SYL's power increased remarkably, while the derisory results of the *Conferenza* parties was disappointing to the Italian Administration. The SYL extremist wing increased its power within the party, although Abdullahi Issa, the SYL leader of the anti-Italian faction, softened his position towards the Administration. ¹⁵⁰

As a result, after the 1954 elections the SYL abandoned its suspicious and implacable position towards AFIS, even though, according to Del Boca, the Administration was «still far from recognizing the aspirations of the Somali population». The SYL, which considered itself as the only representative of Somali people and Somali interests, now decided to co-operate with AFIS in order to achieve a sustainable independence for Somalia, ¹⁵¹ since it was the only way to afford a stable majority once the country would be independent.

On 7 November 1954, «the AFIS Domestic Affairs Office reported to the Italian Foreign Ministry that, in view of the next elections scheduled for 1956, the time was right to begin a process of gradually transferring powers from AFIS to the *Territorial Council*». ¹⁵² «The report stated that this measure, that would have a very good echo both in the country and on the international scene, is advisable mainly in consideration of the political progress of the territory». It would be appropriate that the *Territorial Council*, after four years of activity, could take this step to reach gradually complete independence by 1960. ¹⁵³ According to Tripodi, «conferring legislative powers to the Territorial Council, beside satisfying the aspirations of the Somali élite, would increase the responsibility of the *Territorial Council* in administering the country». Furthermore, after the SYL achieved significant success in the administrative elections in March 1954, postponing for a later period the transfer of powers to the Territorial Council would create tensions and hostility between the Administration and Somalis. ¹⁵⁴

The Italian Parliament should have been the institution responsible for the drafting of an Act conferring legislative powers on the *Territorial Council*. However, the Italian internal political situation was fairly

¹⁴⁸ Tripodi p. 66

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Del Boca p. 142

¹⁵² Tripodi p. 77

¹⁵³ ASMAE, AFIS, Department of Internal Affairs, Telespresso N 589136, 27 November 1954, Box 2, File 31

¹⁵⁴ Tripodi p. 77

complicated: In 1954 Italy was a very young democracy, still recovering from the disasters suffered during WWII. Politically, it was still uncertain which path to democratization would have been undertaken and only a few Italian officials had a clear view of the complexity of Somali society. «Italian officials considered Somali society to be archaic, where the clan system represented the negative aspects of the past, whereas the adoption of a political system fashioned on a Western liberal democracy was synonymous with modernity».¹⁵⁵

The electoral law was promulgated on 31 March 1955 in a decree by Ambassador Anzilotti, who had replaced Martino.¹⁵⁶ A mixed electoral system was introduced. On the one side, «people resident in the cities could express their preference directly, while Somalis living in the smaller villages and nomads were invited to appoint a representative to express the preference of a clan, or more than one clan».¹⁵⁷ Somalis voted for the Legislative Assembly on 29 February 1956; the SYL again won a decisive victory, «taking 43 out of the 60 seats. This confirmed the northern tribal orientation of the first government».¹⁵⁸

Abdullahi Issa was appointed Prime Minister and the SYL held the principal positions in the government. The move from the Territorial Council to the Legislative Assembly and the establishment of the government «represented a significant step towards Somalia's political independence. Somalis had the opportunity to experiment with four years of self-government, although under continued Italian presence».¹⁵⁹ However, «the most delicate issue of Somalia's journey towards independence was the introduction of a constitution by 1960, when Somalis would take over all political and administrative functions from the Italians».¹⁶⁰ In 1957, Administrator Anzilotti established a *Political Committee* and a *Technical Committee* charged with making the necessary arrangements for the drafting and the adoption of the constitution.¹⁶¹ The latter had to consist of experts, and, therefore, «it was impossible for Somalis to be members of it because even the best educated did not have enough official qualifications».¹⁶² (The Italian constitution became the main model for drawing up the constitution of the Somali state. Together with the Italian constitution, however, the Committee considered several other parliamentary constitutions.¹⁶³

The general elections were set for 1 March 1959; however, in 1956 it was evident that the electoral law

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 78

¹⁵⁶ ASMAE, AFIS, Decree of Anzilotti on 31 March 1955, Box 2

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Mukhtar M.H. *The Emergence and Role of Political Parties in the Inter-River Region of Somalia from 1947 to 1960 (Independence)*, in Puglielli A. *Third International Congress of Somali Studies*, Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore, Roma 1988, p. 312

¹⁵⁹ Tripodi p. 81

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Costanzo G.A. *Problemi costituzionali della Somalia nella preparazione all'indipendenza*, Guiffrè, Milano 1962, pp. 17-18.

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 20

¹⁶³ such as the French one of October 1946 and the West German constitution adopted in 1949, but also presidential constitutions (such as the American one) and Islamic constitutions as well, such as the one of the Kingdom of Libya (1951) or the Egyptian one (1956) (Tripodi p. 82).

adopted for the general elections was inadequate. The new electoral law (which provided for proportional representation) was approved by the Legislative Assembly on 22 November 1958, and endorsed by the Administrator in December.¹⁶⁴

The introduction of the new electoral law became one of the main areas of tension between the SYL and the opposition parties. Moreover, after 1956 the SYL suffered a major crisis. Hagi Mohamed Hussein, chairman of the *League*, was expelled by Aden Abdulla Osman and Abdullahi Issa Mohamud in May 1958, making room for the creation of another nationalist movement: The *Greater Somali League* (GSL), adopting the extremist and anti-Italian position of the SYL.¹⁶⁵

The internal political situation was in turmoil, and Somalia had to become an independent country in a less than two years-time. The emerging Somali state was supposed to be based on democratic rules, but political life was being administered exclusively by the SYL. Despite everything, in the last years of the administration, the Italian commitment was directed towards the creation of an independent and democratic Somalia, with the intention of concluding its mandate without major complications, protecting «the big financial interests and mainly those linked to the exportation and trade of bananas».¹⁶⁶

At the end of 1958 and at the beginning of 1959, tension between the SYL and the opposition parties was growing dramatically. On 24 and 25 February, just a few weeks before the elections, 280 members of the GSL, its chairman Hagi Mohamed Hussein and other members of the opposition parties were arrested. The opposition parties now decided not to participate to the election. When in March 1959 the Somalis voted for the new Legislative Assembly, the SYL, facing a nonexistent opposition, won 83 seats out of 90. Although the Egyptian member of the *Advisory Council* reported to the UN all the problems concerning the election and suggested that new elections should be held with better control, the situation did not change.¹⁶⁷

By 1959, the process of “Somalization” was almost completed: Somali civil servants had replaced all the Italians and the main activity of the new SYL-led government was aimed at creating the young state’s foreign policy, where Italy would have had a crucial role even after independence. The constitution was approved, but not yet adopted, on 21 June, just a few days before the lowering of the Italian flag in Somalia. Finally, after almost 10 years of trusteeship, Southern Somalia merged with British Somaliland to form the Republic of Somalia, the 1st of July 1960.

However, the country’s situation at the beginning of its independence was ambiguous: the political system

¹⁶⁴ Although the new electoral law was for the first time universal and direct, the problem remained how to register the population living outside the municipal districts. Following the problems that emerged during the 1953 census of the rural population, the Administration decided to adopt a mixed electoral system of a direct and indirect voting (Tripodi p. 85).

¹⁶⁵ Tripodi p. 87

¹⁶⁶ Del Boca p. 275

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p 279

was built upon an Italian-inspired constitution and electoral law, whose impact on a clan-based society was still to be experienced. The economy was in poor conditions, and even the future of its main production was dependent upon Italy. The so-called process of “Somalization” did not work out properly, since it was carried out too quickly and inefficiently. Finally, crucial foreign policy issues, such as the problem of border demarcation between Somalia and Ethiopia, were still unresolved.

Conclusion: final considerations and the importance of the Italian legacy in Somalia

Paolo Tripodi, author of a very detailed work on the Italian-Somali history and relation says that «in the moment in which Somalia gained independence, there were still several concerns about the possibilities of success of the newborn state; The economy, which was vital in order to guarantee Somalia's financial autonomy, was in its infancy and destined to rely massively on foreign aid after 1960. On the political side, the Administration had not even considered what impact a Western political model on Somali society would have».¹⁶⁸

After less than ten years, in 1969, General Mohamed Siad Barre overthrew the democratic government, installing an authoritarian rule that will eventually last until 1991; Since then, Somalia has been without a functional central government, making it the longest-running instance of complete state collapse in postcolonial history.¹⁶⁹

How much is Italy responsible for that? At first glance, we could say that this statelessness situation is the demonstration of the weakness of those institutions crafted under the Italian colonial (and successive trusteeship) influence.¹⁷⁰

3.1 Negative assessments about AFIS and the Italian influence over Somalia

Historian and journalist Angelo Del Boca presents an extremely negative view of the Italian commitment in Somalia, claiming that Italy's attempt, in the ten years of Trusteeship Administration, to repair the damage caused during the colonial period was inadequate.¹⁷¹

From the point of view of Umberto Triulzi, «Rome did not succeed in improving Somalia's economic structure and production. Several factors contributed to this: the limited time available and Somalia's own scarce resources, but also the limited financial aid and the way it was invested». Triulzi concludes that «although Somalia obtained political independence, this did not mean that it had reached an equal level of economic independence».¹⁷²

In the end, what most of those critics say about the responsibility of Italy for the current situation of Somalia is that when the country proclaimed its independence in 1960 it had a form of state inspired by the Italian model. Its main political institutions were the fruit of the Italian trusteeship administration (AFIS).

¹⁶⁸ Tripodi p.73

¹⁶⁹ Menkhaus K. *Governance without government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping*, in *International Security*, vol. 31, No. 3, The MIT press (2007) p. 74

¹⁷⁰ Morone p.182

¹⁷¹ Del Boca p. 598

¹⁷² Triulzi U. *L'Italia e l'economia somala dal 1950 ad oggi*, in *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*. Vol. XXVI, No. 4, (1971) p. 627

«The task of leading Somalia to independence was too great a commitment for Rome, and Italy did not have the economic and financial resources to establish a stable economy able to support Somalia's political structure after independence. In addition, most Italian officials did not have a clear understanding of the complex Somali clan system with all its political implications. They underestimated the dangerous impact that the adoption of a Western political model could have on Somali society. The establishment of a centralized state system based on the Italian experience of the second half of the 1940s proved to be unsatisfactory in laying the foundations that Somalia would need to begin the process of democratization. In 1955, halfway through the mandate, very little had been achieved and the economy, which it was hoped would pave the way for political independence in 1960, was still in a state of disarray».¹⁷³

Moreover, the foreign policy issues, remarkably the ones with Ethiopia, have never been settled; Italy «did not contribute, as it could have done, in establishing peaceful relations between the two countries. The border issue remained the main cause of tension between Mogadishu and Addis Ababa, and it caused several limited conflicts and eventually led to the war over Ogaden in 1978».¹⁷⁴

Most of these critics have seen the very concept of trusteeship as a form of neo-colonial form of influence, inheriting the darkest and most controversial aspects of the very colonial regime.

According to professor Morone, Italian colonialism manipulated and transformed subdued societies; but, unlike other colonialisms, the Italian one was particularly feeble in successfully pursuing a proper colonial project that would transcend the very concept of conquest.¹⁷⁵

This failure in setting up a proper colonial project was supposedly inherited from AFIS, which did not have the tools and the capabilities (and for some, the will) to carry out a long-term sustainable process of political and economic maturation.

Paolo Tripodi is very critical about the Italian involvement in Somalia: he points out how it is evident that Italian colonialism and neocolonialism until the 1960s has had mainly reasons of prestige.¹⁷⁶

He motivates this statement by pointing out the successive ambiguous relations between the two countries after the end of the trusteeship mandate.

He finds hypocrite how Italy was the first country to recognize Siad Barre's regime and how the Italian government, and particularly the Socialist Prime Minister Benedetto Craxi, supported the dictator even after the several condemnations for his regime's atrocious violations of human rights.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Tripodi p. 49

¹⁷⁴ Ercolessi M.C. *Conflitti e mutamento politico in Africa*, Franco Angeli Editore, Milano 1991 p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ Morone p.182

¹⁷⁶ Tripodi p. 167

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

How is that possible that a western democratic country, that used to administer a former colony for ten years in order to prepare it for becoming mature and “modern”, would support an authoritarian dictator that exploited a fragile political system in order to gain power?¹⁷⁸

Even more hypocrite was the position of Italy about the Somali-Ethiopian border conflict where Rome pursued a balanced foreign policy towards Mogadishu and Addis Ababa, in order to be on good terms with both countries.

Probably the main concern for Rome was that in view of Somali independence, as a result of the unification of Somaliland with Somalia, the newly established Republic of Somalia might join the British Commonwealth; and this is why Italy also backed the long-time rival Ethiopia, since the latter was mainly concerned that Somali membership of the Commonwealth could create a strong state on its border, jeopardizing its national interests.¹⁷⁹

3.2 Positive assessments towards the Italian experience: an attempt to justify colonialism or a look from another perspective?

On the other hand, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the Italian project of civilization and economic valorization of Somalia has been made difficult by other stakeholders or dynamics, upon which Italy could have very little influence.

First of all, Somalia was, and still is, a very archaic society, where clan-based dynamics and customs have always been extremely influential. Most Somali academics and scholars, such as professors Afyare Abdi Elmi and Abdullahi Barise, agree that most of Somalia’s current problems are to be searched into the very socio-cultural sphere. Elmi and Barise argue that «Somali culture rewards violence, and three main features shape it: namely, clan rivalry, collective punishment and negative competition».¹⁸⁰

A particularly interesting take on the dynamics of Somali society is given by Ahmed Samatar and Terrence Lyons, who argue how blood-ties and the ideology of kinship constitute an interlinked web of social, economic, and political institutions, and how the introduction of Islam, which eventually became the most widespread religion in the country, shaped these relationships even more.¹⁸¹

The already difficult socio-cultural framework got worse since the rise of nationalist movements, whose strongest handler has clearly been the SYL.

¹⁷⁸ Apparently, Barre was probably the one who could guarantee that the bribery system we have already mentioned before would be preserved (Ibid.).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 92

¹⁸⁰ Elmi A.A. – Barise A. *The Somali Conflict: root causes, obstacles, and peace-building strategies*, in *African Security Review*, 2006 p. 38

¹⁸¹ Lyons T. – Samatar A.I. *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention and Strategies for Political Reconstruction*, The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. 1995 p. 8

On the economic side, we have already said how Somalia was one of the poorest regions in all the African continent; even though, the Italian settlers have shown that it was actually possible to carry out several activities, mainly concerning agriculture and cultivation of crops. Some Italian works have actually been recognized for their ambitiousness and innovativeness, such as the *Società Agricola Italo-Somala*, operating in the modern settlement of *Villabruzzi*, or such as all the other works of urban and infrastructure development and upgrading.

Denis Mack Smith argues that «in the colonies, huge amounts of capital were continually invested with very poor profits, and the trade balance, in spite of all chances, was never in favor of Italy [...] They (the Italians) used to build vast road networks and the local populations benefited, thanks to the juridical abolition of slavery, from the control of epidemics and famines and from the administration of justice, crucial advantages in comparison to the peoples living under the bordering British colonies».¹⁸²

For what concerns AFIS, Remo Roncati and Renato Maccanti stress out how the international community remained overall satisfied with the trusteeship mandate's accomplishments during the very first years of the administration.

More specifically, at the United Nations, several reports of the *Advisory Council* have been praised for the commitment and the dedication employed by the Administration in carrying out its tasks.

These praises came both from world-leading powers, such as the United States, The United Kingdom or the USSR, and from developing countries such as Colombia, Argentina or the Philippines.¹⁸³

Furthermore, a particularly positive aspect about AFIS is considered to be the one regarding education; Again, the results coming from Italy's investments in that area were internationally acknowledged; in particular, the role of the *Somali National University* gained prominent importance.

In 1967, Somalia's university system was subjected to a complete renovation that was made possible by a noteworthy use of Italian funds and investments.

It should be noted how cooperation between Somalia and Italy in this area continued even after Siad Barre's *coup d'état*.

During the early 1970's, several Italian universities used to run some particular faculties, such as the one of Medicine (managed by the University of Rome-Sapienza) or the one of Engineering (Pavia); moreover, scholarships had been issued and Italian academics and scholars used to visit Somalia for academic reasons.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Smith D.M. *Le Guerre Del Duce*, Editori Laterza, Roma 1985, p. 91

¹⁸³ Roncati, Maccanti pp. 165-166

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 192-193

In a very interesting study conducted by CENSIS called *La cooperazione italiana per l'Università Nazionale Somala* (1985), Pierluigi Malesani focuses on the importance of the Italian cooperation with the Somali university system. The study shows how there were certainly positive results, mainly for what concerns data about students' enrollments and graduations; still, he discusses how a lot of further improvements should have been eventually carried out.¹⁸⁵

In addition, many scholars (even the most critical ones) admit how there have been several UN deficiencies in carrying out the trusteeship mandate. Antonio Morone and Gilbert Ware argue how, during the negotiations for the issuing of the trusteeship, several parties of the *Conferenza della Somalia* called for an Italian mandate of thirty-years, thinking that less would have been pointless.¹⁸⁶

These claims were not wrong at all, since we have already said how the short amount of time that AFIS had to deal with was definitely a crucial cause of the long-term failure of the Italian mandate.

Roncati and Maccanti argue how a period of twenty or thirty years could have been enough in order to allow sustainable and just processes of transformation of the Somali state and society.¹⁸⁷

However, as Morone further discusses, the Trusteeship Agreement peremptorily conceded a period of ten years-time in order to prepare Somalia for independence, while there were no other deadlines for what concerned the other conventions within the same agreement.¹⁸⁸

3.3 Conclusion

At this point, it is indeed necessary to answer the question we asked ourselves at the beginning of this dissertation; namely, to what extent is Italy responsible for the current situation of Somalia?

As we have been discussing in the course of this thesis, I personally conclude that the Italian State has a lot of accountability from a political, institutional and administrative perspective; that is because the institutions upon which the independent Somali State was built were modelled on the Italian ones, and the ease with which Siad Barre took power, almost immediately, after the aforementioned independence demonstrates the weakness of such institutions.

For what concerns the economy, Somalia has always been a very poor country and the Italian intervention, in a long-term perspective, could only add very little to the *status quo*. Plus, the bribery system employed during the administration of AFIS and later on and the economic dependency on foreign aid are certainly responsible for the underdevelopment of the country.

¹⁸⁵ Malesani P. *La cooperazione italiana per l'Università Nazionale Somala*, in *I Quaderni di Cooperazione*, rapporto CENSIS, Fratelli Palombi Editori (Roma 1986) pp. 4-5

¹⁸⁶ Ware G. *Somalia: From Trust Territory to Nation, 1950-1960*, in *Phylon (1960-)* 26, no. 2 (1965) p. 175

¹⁸⁷ Roncati, Maccanti p. 167

¹⁸⁸ Morone p. 46

Moreover, foreign interferences (mostly by Egypt, Ethiopia and, initially, the United Kingdom) played a crucial role in the shaping of a Somali nationalist sentiment, possibly the greatest concern for Italy during the post-colonial administration.

Finally, should Italy invest more resources and capital in aiding Somalia in its path to political and social stabilization? It is important to say that the Italian Republic is already employing a lot of effort in such processes of pacification and peace-making, not only unilaterally but also multilaterally.

Italy participated to both *United Nations Mission in Somalia* (UNOSOM) I and II missions and joined the *United Task Force* (UNITAF) during the first moments of the terrible civil war still going on.

Today, Italy is committed in the EU CSDP tri-mission made of *Operation Atalanta* (counter-piracy operations), *EUTM Somalia* (military training for the Somali National Army) and *EUCAP Somalia* (supporting of regional maritime capacity-building).¹⁸⁹

It also participates in supporting the *African Union Mission in Somalia* (AMISOM) and it is also an active cooperator of the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development* (IGAD), a regional organization comprising eight African states of the region of the Horn; regarding the latter, Italy has promoted the establishment of a *Partners Forum* (IPF) in 1997, and it has held its chairmanship since then.¹⁹⁰

Italy and Somalia have had entangled histories during the last century, and this affinity and cooperation between the two must continue in the future on multiple levels.

¹⁸⁹ EU NAVFOR website

¹⁹⁰ IGAD website – Partnerships

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Riassunto in Italiano

Al giorno d'oggi, "Somalia" è spesso sinonimo di instabilità politica e sociale, di guerra, devastazioni, pirateria e di mancanza delle opportune istituzioni economiche e politiche necessarie per assicurare una *governance* stabile e sostenibile nel lungo periodo.

All'interno del già difficile contesto economico, politico e sociale del continente Africano, la Somalia, dopo quasi trent'anni di guerra civile, si distingue per la drammaticità della sua situazione.

Nella consapevolezza dell'influenza che l'Italia ha avuto nella storia della Somalia, occorre chiedersi quali siano le responsabilità del nostro paese rispetto a questa situazione tanto tragica ed, apparentemente, senza possibilità di risoluzione nel breve periodo.

La parabola storica della Somalia rappresenta un'eccezione nel più grande *framework* del processo di decolonizzazione del continente Africano.

Questa sua eccezione si è manifestata attraverso l'assegnazione nell'anno 1949, da parte delle neonate Nazioni Unite, all'Italia, potenza sconfitta, di un ruolo di responsabilità rispetto alla guida del Paese.

Fu, pertanto, istituita l'*Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia* (AFIS) dal 1950 al 1960, anno in cui l'ex colonia avrebbe ottenuto l'indipendenza unendosi al Somaliland Britannico, riorganizzando il paese nella Repubblica Federale di Somalia.

Questa dissertazione si propone di analizzare l'esperienza coloniale e il contributo dell'Italia alla civilizzazione e alla valorizzazione economica della Somalia, sia durante il periodo in cui quest'ultima è stata amministrata come colonia vera e propria, sia durante il periodo in cui è stata guidata sotto il mandato di tutela, che aveva come principale obiettivo quello di preparare l'ex possedimento alla futura (ed inevitabile) indipendenza.

Capitolo I: La Somalia sotto il dominio coloniale italiano

Il primo capitolo analizza le modalità attraverso le quali il neonato Regno d'Italia riuscì ad infiltrarsi nel Corno d'Africa verso la fine del XIX secolo.

Infatti, nonostante l'unificazione italiana fosse avvenuta solo pochi anni prima dall'inizio della sua avventura coloniale, diversi esponenti carismatici ed influenti dell'Italia liberale (come Francesco Crispi e il ministro degli Affari Esteri Pasquale Stanislao Mancini) ritenevano necessaria una costante ed efficace presenza italiana nel continente africano, che in quei decenni stava cedendo alla controversa ondata imperialista da parte delle potenze europee.

La Somalia, nello specifico, aveva attratto l'attenzione italiana soprattutto per la sua posizione strategica nel Corno d'Africa, che avrebbe garantito al Regno una rilevante influenza geo-politica e commerciale nell'area.

Inoltre vi era l'aspettativa di sfruttare le risorse naturali della regione, ancorchè fosse notorio che si trattava di un paese generalmente arido e abitato da una popolazione in gran parte nomade e dedita alla pastorizia.

Le prime attività svolte dagli Italiani in Somalia, solitamente, non andavano oltre la mera esplorazione del territorio e la ricerca del contatto con le popolazioni e con i sultanati locali allo scopo di instaurare un primo protettorato.

La svolta avvenne nel 1892, quando l'Italia e il sultanato di Zanzibar conclusero, dopo anni di trattative e prime concessioni economiche, una convenzione che stabiliva una sicura e stabile influenza italiana su gran parte del territorio della Somalia meridionale.

Vennero, pertanto, istituiti dei protettorati inizialmente amministrati, sotto la fiducia del Governo, da società commerciali come la *Compagnia Filonardi*.

La scelta della formula della *indirect rule* venne inizialmente giustificata dall'intento di garantire una penetrazione pacifica nel territorio ed, al contempo, di assecondare anche le istanze di quella parte dell'opinione pubblica italiana anti-colonialista.

Nonostante il decisivo contributo nel contrasto alla schiavitù, l'esperimento basato sull'affidare i protettorati alle compagnie commerciali si rivelò ben presto poco efficace, sia sotto l'aspetto amministrativo, sia sotto quello relativo allo sviluppo ed alla valorizzazione economica del territorio.

Di conseguenza l'iniziale esperimento di queste forme di protettorato venne superato dall'acquisizione di un diretto ruolo coloniale dello stato italiano.

Pertanto, l'Italia avviò un processo di pacificazione dei conflitti locali, di espansione territoriale volta ad acquisire nuove conoscenze sul territorio in un'ottica di sfruttamento economico delle risorse.

Al contempo, venivano introdotte una serie di misure volte ad orientare una parte del flusso migratorio in corso in quegli anni anche verso la Somalia, in modo da incentivare una maggiore presenza di contadini ed operatori economici.

Vennero anche sviluppati una serie di progetti di agricoltura sperimentale in collaborazione con le popolazioni locali, come, ad esempio, la *Società Agricola Italo-Somala*.

A quest'ultima si deve l'istituzione dell'insediamento conosciuto come Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi, dedicato al fondatore e finanziatore della società.

Il contributo di tale iniziativa allo sviluppo agricolo della regione rimane uno dei più significativi nella vita della Somalia coloniale.

Inoltre, nel corso dei primi anni del XX secolo, vennero realizzate una serie di infrastrutture e di ulteriori iniziative in vari settori che determinarono una crescita e un rilevante sviluppo economico e soprattutto socio-culturale del paese.

L'esperienza coloniale italiana di quegli anni è stata ispirata ad un criterio di tendenziale pacifica convivenza tra colonizzati e colonizzatori, in una prospettiva destinata a mutare profondamente durante l'era fascista.

Infatti, durante il fascismo, iniziarono a manifestarsi tendenze razziste volte ad allargare la distanza rispetto alle popolazioni locali in un'ottica impositiva, meno dialogante e segregazionista.

I Somali vennero relegati ai margini della società e dell'economia, secondo un progetto di puro sfruttamento delle risorse e di impossessamento in via esclusiva dei ruoli centrali dell'amministrazione.

Capitolo II: la Somalia sotto il mandato di tutela

L'Italia, in quanto paese sconfitto alla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, perse tutte le sue colonie; nonostante ciò, la Somalia fu la sua unica ex-colonia ad esserle stata affidata dalle Nazioni Unite con la formula del mandato fiduciario, a causa di una serie di fattori concomitanti.

In primo luogo, per le estreme difficoltà socio-economiche in cui la stessa versava a seguito del periodo coloniale e della successiva occupazione militare britannica tra il 1941 e il 1949.

Inoltre, a seguito del componimento dell'annosa controversia italo-britannica proprio in tema di spartizione delle ex-colonie.

L'obiettivo principale del mandato di tutela era quello di creare i presupposti per il raggiungimento di una indipendenza piena e non traumatica entro il termine massimo di dieci anni.

Sotto la supervisione di un *Advisory Council*, i compiti dell'Amministrazione Fiduciaria erano fondamentalmente il riordino delle principali istituzioni politiche, amministrative ed economiche, lo sviluppo del tessuto economico-finanziario, la creazione di strumenti di stato sociale, la formazione della classe dirigente locale, ed, infine, il progressivo trasferimento delle funzioni dagli italiani ai somali.

Nel frattempo, nel periodo post-bellico, in tutto il continente Africano si sviluppò una rivoluzionaria ondata nazionalista ed independentista che si era estesa anche alla Somalia.

Infatti, già nel periodo di occupazione britannica era insorto un influente movimento nazionalista inizialmente denominato *Somali Youth Club*, poi trasformatosi in un vero e proprio partito politico con il nome di *Somali Youth League* (SYL).

Quest'ultimo si caratterizzò per un forte sentimento anti-italiano, motivato dall'attribuzione all'Italia di importanti responsabilità nel mancato sviluppo della Somalia.

L'avversione esplicita all'Italia del più importante partito somalo costituì uno dei principali ostacoli durante il mandato di Amministrazione Fiduciaria.

Oltre a tale ostacolo, la complessità del compito, le resistenze della comunità italiana locale all'accettazione del cambiamento ed una serie di difficoltà strutturali e culturali impedirono all'AFIS il pieno raggiungimento degli obiettivi prefissati.

Di guisa che il bilancio consuntivo dell'operato del mandato di tutela risulta solo parzialmente positivo.

Per un verso, va riconosciuto all'AFIS l'aver favorito il suddetto processo di maturazione politica attraverso l'istituzione dei primi organi legislativi e consultivi, fino ad arrivare alle prime vere e proprie elezioni nel 1954.

Va inoltre fatto notare come l'operato italiano in questa direzione fosse stato ricevuto con prevalente entusiasmo da parte della comunità internazionale, alla luce delle modalità pacifiche con le quali sono stati conseguiti tali risultati.

Sotto altro profilo, nonostante le critiche condizioni economiche dell'Italia del dopoguerra, sono stati prodotti consistenti sforzi in ambito economico, che hanno determinato un significativo incremento delle esportazioni e la ripresa del settore agricolo.

Inoltre, l'AFIS ha conseguito buoni risultati in materia di formazione scolastica, accademica e professionale, favorendo la diffusione di competenze culturali e tecniche.

D'altro canto, nel lungo periodo, L'AFIS ha dimostrato di non essere stata capace di realizzare appieno un modello politico-amministrativo adeguato.

E ciò vuoi a causa della particolare fase storico-politica che l'Italia stava attraversando dopo la fine dell'era fascista e la nascita dello stato Repubblicano, che anche per dell'inadeguatezza del tentativo di applicare alla realtà somala un modello politico non ancora sufficientemente sperimentato anche in Italia.

Anche sotto l'aspetto economico non fu portato a compimento il percorso di autonomizzazione della Somalia, la cui economia risentì fin troppo della dipendenza da quella italiana a sua volta alle prese con le difficoltà della ricostruzione.

Complessivamente, il percorso di "Somalizzazione" delle classi dirigenti, sia in ambito politico-amministrativo che economico, non fu completato anche e soprattutto a causa della brevità del lasso di tempo concesso all'AFIS e delle condizioni socio-culturali di partenza della popolazione locale.

Conclusione: considerazioni finali e l'importanza del retaggio italiano in Somalia

Nel 1969, un colpo di stato architettato dal Generale Mohamed Siad Barre pose fine al governo democratico instaurato dopo la fine dell'AFIS.

Il nuovo regime dittatoriale, caratterizzatosi per il ricorso ad una particolare ferocia nei confronti degli oppositori, cadde nel 1991 dando luogo ad una nuova fase di frammentazione politico-amministrativa nella quale, sino ad oggi, la Somalia non ha avuto esperienza di governi stabili.

In conclusione, occorre chiedersi quale sia stata la responsabilità dell'Italia in questo percorso storico-politico della Somalia.

Dalla parte dei critici – tra i quali si annoverano Angelo Del Boca, Umberto Triulzi e Paolo Tripodi – si è evidenziata l'inadeguatezza dell'Italia ad assumere il ruolo di guida della Somalia verso la modernizzazione e l'indipendenza, a causa delle difficoltà interne in cui versava nel difficile periodo del secondo dopoguerra.

In tal senso si è sostenuto che l'Italia abbia, dapprima, condotto una politica coloniale di bieco sfruttamento e, successivamente, preteso di applicare, in modo miope e quasi presuntuoso, un modello occidentale alla realtà arretrata della Somalia in modo acritico e senza avere il necessario bagaglio di conoscenze di detta realtà.

È pur vero che, a detta di altri studiosi, le obiettive responsabilità dell'Italia vanno considerate alla luce di tutta una serie di concause che hanno inciso, in modo altrettanto determinante, sull'evoluzione della Somalia.

Ad esempio, diversi accademici somali, come Afyare Abdi Elmi e Ahmed Samatar, tendono a sottolineare l'importanza degli atavici conflitti interni ai numerosi clan tribali esistenti nell'area.

Sotto altro profilo, c'è chi – come Remo Roncati, Renato Maccanti o Denis Mack Smith – ha lodato, nel complesso, l'iniziativa italiana e ha riportato nei propri scritti vari esempi di buona amministrazione e di lodevoli iniziative economico-amministrative.

Di sicuro l'Italia ha importanti responsabilità storiche per ciò che attiene alla obiettiva fragilità istituzionale somala che, infatti, non ha costituito un adeguato argine, dapprima, alla dittatura di Siad Barre e, successivamente, alla riorganizzazione del paese dopo la caduta del regime.

Ciò non toglie che la presente vicenda presenta caratteri di particolare complessità e va esaminata con il giusto distacco ed alla luce di tutti quei fattori storici, politici, sociali e culturali che hanno inciso sull'evoluzione della Somalia dal dopoguerra al giorno d'oggi.