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**Italian Foreign Policy and Diaspora in Brazil: A Comparative Analysis and Insights for Future Policy-Making**

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# Contents

<b>CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION &amp; METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
PART I – INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART II – STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	3
PART III – METHODOLOGY.....	4
3.1 <i>Research Design and Approach</i> .....	4
3.2 <i>Data collection</i> .....	6
3.4 <i>Sampling Method</i> .....	8
3.5 <i>Interview Procedures</i> .....	8
3.6 <i>Assessment of the Findings</i> .....	9
3.7 <i>Limitations and Ethical Considerations</i> .....	10
PART IV – EXPECTED RESULTS.....	11
<b>CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>12</b>
PART I - ITALIAN MIGRATION AND FOREIGN POLICY.....	12
1. <i>Overview of Migration to Brazil</i> .....	12
2. <i>Political responses to migration</i> .....	14
2.1. From 1861 to 1900.....	15
2.2 From 1901 to the advent of fascism.....	17
2.3 The Fascist Regime.....	20
2.4 From World War Two to the 1950s.....	23
2.5 From the 60s to nowadays.....	25
3. <i>Economic value of the diaspora</i> .....	28
3.1 Political discourses.....	29
3.2 Remittances.....	30
3.3 Trade and Industrial Relations.....	30
4. <i>Citizenship law and its controversies</i> .....	32
PART II - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS OF “DIASPORA”.....	38
1. <i>Definition of Diaspora and its Role in International Relations Theories</i> .....	38
2. <i>Theoretical framework of diaspora engagement policies</i> .....	40
2.1 Benefits of diaspora engagement.....	45
<b>CHAPTER III - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS - DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT: THE CHINESE, INDIAN, MEXICAN, AND FRENCH CASES.....</b>	<b>49</b>
1. PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA’S (PRC).....	50
2. INDIA.....	54
3. MEXICO.....	57
4. FRANCE.....	61
5. FINDINGS.....	65
<b>CHAPTER IV - CASE STUDY - THE ITALIAN DIASPORA IN BRAZIL.....</b>	<b>69</b>
PART I – DATA AND BILATERAL RELATIONS.....	69
1.1 <i>Data on Italian Diaspora</i> .....	69
1.3 <i>Italy in Brazil</i> .....	72
1.3.1 Composition of Sistema Italia.....	72
1.3.2 Education.....	72
1.3.3 Associations.....	74
1.4 <i>The right to vote</i> .....	74
1.5 <i>Institutional Initiatives</i> .....	75

PART II – ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS .....	78
2.1 <i>Diaspora engagement rhetoric's</i> .....	79
2.2 <i>Italian institutional approach and initiatives</i> .....	80
2.3 <i>Diaspora value</i> .....	81
2.3.1 <i>Criticalities</i> .....	81
2.3.2 <i>Potentialities</i> .....	82
2.4 <i>The Ius Sanguinis law</i> .....	83
2.5 <i>The right to vote</i> .....	84
<b>CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION: FINDINGS &amp; DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>86</b>
PART I – FINDINGS & DISCUSSION .....	86
PART II – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS .....	91
PART III – CONCLUSIVE REMARKS .....	97
<i>Scope and Limitation of the Study</i> .....	97
<i>Advise for further research</i> .....	98
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>109</b>

List of Figures

**Figura 1: Overview of the steps in designing a diaspora engagement policy ..... 42**

List of Tables

**Table 1: summary of the comparative analysis..... 65**

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## List of Abbreviations

Anagrafe Italiani Residenti all'Estero: AIRE (Registry of Italians Residing Abroad)

Assemblée des Français à l'étranger: AFE (Assembly of French Nationals Abroad)

Comitati degli Italiani all'Estero: COMITES (Committees of Italians Abroad)

Conseil supérieur des Français de l'étranger: CSFE (Higher Council of French Nationals Abroad)

Consultative Council of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad: CCIME

Direzione Generale per gli Italiani all'Estero e le Politiche Migratorie: DGIT (Directorate General for Italians Abroad and Migration Policies)

European Union: EU

Gruppo Assicurativo-Finanziario Italiano: SACE (Italian Insurance and Financial Group)

International Migration Research Network: IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration, and Social Cohesion in Europe)

Organizzazione Internazionale Italo-Latino Americana: IILA (Italo-Latin American International Organization)

Institute for Mexicans Abroad: IMA

International Relations: IR

Istituti Italiani di Cultura: IIC (Italian Cultural Institutes)

Investment Information Centre (of India): IIC

Istituto Nazionale di Statistica: ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics)

Italian Trade Agency: ITA

Matrícula Consular: MC (Consular Registration Card)

Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale: MAECI (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)

Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito: MIM (Note: MIM is the new acronym after the recent renaming; MIUR was replaced in 2022)

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs: MOIA

Member of Parliament: MP

Non-Resident Indians: NRIs

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development: OECD

Persons of Indian Origin: PIOs

People's Republic of China: PRC

Research Question: RQ

Sistema della Formazione Italiana nel Mondo: SFIM (System of Italian Education in the World)

Small and Medium Enterprises: SMEs

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEM

Support Fund to the Network of French Associations Abroad: STAFE

United States of America: USA

World War I: WWI

World War II: WWII

## CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

### Part I – Introduction

The term “*oriundi*”<sup>1</sup>, derived from the Latin “*oriundus*” and the verb “*orior*”, eloquently captures the essence of heritage and origin. It refers to people who originate from one place but trace their ancestry to another, emphasizing the connection between birth and descendant. This concept resonates deeply among Italian immigrants, particularly in South America. In the 1930s, the term “*oriundi*” gained considerable popularity when numerous Italian descendants were invited to join the Italian national soccer team. These players were granted Italian citizenship to wear the iconic blue t-shirt proudly, symbolizing a sport event and a deeper cultural bond that Italian immigrants carried out in the late 19th century with mixed feelings of fear, nostalgia, and hope for their new life in the New World. Today, as Italy is at the forefront of the migration crisis to the European Union, it is essential to recognize that Italians have long been a migrant population. Since Italy's unification, around twenty-six million Italians have emigrated, equivalent to the entire population (Rosoli, 1992).

As of 2023, the Italian community enrolled in AIRE (“*Anagrafe degli Italiani residenti all'estero*”) amounts to nearly six million people worldwide, representing about ten per cent of the Italian population. Of these, Brazil is now home to the largest Italian population outside Italy: an estimated thirty-two million Brazilians are descendants of Italians, among whom six hundred thousand have officially obtained Italian citizenship.

This significant presence has led to several tangible consequences and challenges, which we will explain in this thesis. In recent years, Italian diplomatic representations in Brazil have faced an exponential increase in applications for Italian citizenship. Many applicants ask for an Italian passport as it is one of the most powerful in the world in terms of granting VISA-free access. The Internet age has contributed

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<sup>1</sup> The word “Oriundi” originates from Latin word “oriri” that literally means “to be born, to be created”. It is defined as people originating from a place and who reside in another, or descend from parents or ancestors who emigrated from their country of origin (Treccani Dictionary, s.v. “Oriundi”, <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/oriundo/>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.)

significantly to spreading information about the benefits of obtaining citizenship, making it a truthful “trend” on social media such as *Instagram* and *TikTok*. However, this widespread publicity is often misleading and linked to illicit counseling activities, including document forgery and illegal procedures to speed up the process. As a result, Italian Embassies and Consulates in Brazil often face discontent among Italian descendants due to the long waiting times for citizenship recognition. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, Municipal registry offices are flooded by e-mails that seek the presence of Italian ancestors in the archives.

While there is extensive literature on Italian migration and settlement in the United States and Argentina, evidenced by the numerous Little Italy neighborhoods in major United States cities and the prevalence of Italian surnames among two-thirds of the Argentinian population, the Brazilian case remains little explored, with limited research focusing primarily on migration from an anthropological and human rights perspective. Moreover, while a vast amount of literature exists on diaspora matters in social and humanities sciences and migration, little has been written on diaspora engagement policy (Newland & Patrick, 2004), and relatively little research has been devoted to the analysis of designing, pursuing and evaluating the effects of diaspora engagement strategies (Boyle, 2009). From a theoretical perspective, International Relations (IR) contributions to diaspora-related dynamics are rare. Greenidge (2013) identifies the following as the main reasons for the void of the role of diaspora IR mainstream theories. First, addressing the issue of the diasporas would have required a broadening of the very definition of the IR scope as theories have so far primarily focused on inter or intra-governmental relations. Second, the concept of diaspora has been mainly framed by political and media rhetoric of a few ethnic and religious groups in the context of non-voluntary movements, such as exiles and persecutions, or, more recently, of refugees and asylum-seekers (Greenidge, 2013).

The present research aims to fill this gap by exploring the Italian approach toward its diaspora since the Unification of Italy in 1861, with a particular focus on the Italian community in Brazil. While the history of Italian migration is a well-studied phenomenon, there has been no comprehensive analysis, to our knowledge, of Italian foreign policy toward Italians abroad, nor of the political debates, legislative measures, and institutional evolution to address the dynamics related to the existence of a diaspora abroad. This gap is especially wider regarding the case of Italian immigrants and their descendants in Brazil. Hence, the research void lies in the correlation between migratory outflows and foreign policy measures toward expatriates and toward the receiving country. This thesis aims to fill in the gap by

examining the Italian government's historical and contemporary approach to its citizens abroad to assess the nature of this relation, identify the complexities involved, and propose possible avenues for improvement in the future.

The motivation to conduct such research stems from the researcher's internship experience at the Consulate General of Italy in São Paulo, Brazil, which has become the third-largest Italian representation in the world. There, she immersed herself in consular and diplomatic activities during a pivotal year, 2024, considered as a historical momentum for the revival of political and institutional activities to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Italian migration to Brazil. The current exorbitant demand for Italian citizenship and the political debates on the nationality laws are only two aspects that highlight the need for further investigation.

## Part II – Structure of the thesis

This thesis presents five chapters. The first chapter contains four parts. It first introduces the research topic, elucidated the motivation behind the study, and now it is explaining how this study is structured. In the following parts, it will elucidate the methodology used to conduct the research. In particular, it will present the research question and research design, the data collection methods, the sampling method, the interview procedures, the criterias for assessments of the findings, and the limitations and ethical considerations. The final section of Chapter I will provide an overview of the scope and of the outcomes this research aims to achieve.

Chapter II is entirely dedicated to the Literature Review, and it is divided into two sections. The first part provides a historical overview of Italian foreign policy towards its migrants, starting from the Unification of Italy in 1861. This analysis places Italy's historical approach to Italians abroad in a broader context of world geopolitics and the Italian objectives arising from the world scenario. The second part proposes a theoretical framework of diaspora engagement in the domain of International Relations. It elucidates the main contributions in the existing literature on the study of the strategies states can pursue to engage with their citizens abroad.

Chapter III develops a comparative analysis of the approaches of China, India, Mexico, and France regarding their diasporas. At the beginning of the chapter, an explanation on the reasons why a

comparative analysis is pertinent, despite the differences with the Italian case, is provided. Each section is dedicated to one country in such a way as to highlight the characteristics of each different approach. Chapter IV, instead, is entirely devoted to the case study of the Italian community in Brazil. The first part outlines the data on the Italian population, the political bilateral relations between Italy and Brazil, the Italian presence in Brazil with the Sistema Italia, Italian schools, and numerous associations. It then analyzes the dynamics related to the right to vote, on the latest institutional initiatives of the Italian government, and the role of Italian companies in Brazil. The second part elucidates the main topic addressed during the three interviews that were carried out by the researcher to three key people in the bilateral relations: the former Italian ambassador to Brazil, Antonio Bernardini, the current Consul General in São Paulo, Domenico Fornara, and the Member of the Parliament elected in Brazil, Fabio Porta.

Finally, chapter V concludes the thesis by presenting the key findings of the whole study. It provides recommendations for policymakers on how to improve Italy's foreign policy towards its citizens abroad, particularly in Brazil. The chapter lastly proposes some suggestions for further research in this field.

## Part III – Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design and Approach

Based on the data and issues that the researcher was able to observe at the consulate general in São Paulo, the question that guided the writing of this research is as follows:

***RQ: How can engagement with the Italian diaspora in Brazil be strategically leveraged to improve Italian foreign policy?***

The research question was formulated with a “how” because previous studies have already demonstrated that diaspora engagement produces multiple benefits for the country of origin, the country of destination and their bilateral relations. This approach allows us to assess how Italy can benefit from its diaspora, given its legal framework, political dynamics and policy priorities.

The “how” of our research question requires an in-depth exploration of various topics related to diaspora engagement strategies. Consequently, a qualitative analysis is better suited to the objectives of exploratory research. Such an analysis provides an overview of our subject, elucidates the relationships between different factors within the system, and interprets the results of previous research.

Exploratory research was necessary due to the largely understudied nature of this field (Roy, 2021). The researcher felt that the existing literature failed to explain why it seems that Italy has not taken full advantage of its diaspora, and how it should address the current problems arising from these shortcomings.

Qualitative research aims to explore the subject descriptively, without considering the results as an objective truth. Consequently, the assumptions that guided our research approach and methodological choices followed an interpretive and pragmatic paradigm. Initially, exploring the relationship between the country of origin and its diaspora forced us to delve into the complexity of human experiences, which are closely linked to psychological aspects. Given that the foundation of our research is the linkage between immigration and politics, and that both involve human emotions, prevailing ideologies, interactions, values, and other subjective factors, our investigation adopted an interpretive approach. Subsequently, to draft policy recommendations based on our analysis, we focused on the applicability and usefulness of our findings in solving real-life problems (Creswell, 2009).

A descriptive methodology is also well suited to explaining the nature of the problem in question and its impact. In our case, we highlighted the current and future challenges of citizenship law and the gaps in Italy's policy responses to foster sustainable diaspora engagement. Among the many research design approaches for qualitative researchers, we decided to integrate two methods, namely a comparative policy analysis first, followed by a case study (Roy, 2021; Creswell 2009).

In the comparative analysis, we examined the similarities and differences in governmental approaches to diasporas in four countries: China, India, Mexico and France. As we'll mention in the literature review (see Gamlen's theory, ), diaspora engagement encompasses a wide range of policy sectors, directly or indirectly. To facilitate comparison in this vast field, we have chosen specific criteria deemed most appropriate for establishing our comparative framework (Rolbakov et al., 2020). In particular, the cases of China and India demonstrate that diaspora engagement policies can be strategically leveraged to foster economic development despite their different targets, namely students for the former and engineers and

businessmen for the latter. The main objectives of the Mexican approach were devoted to protecting the human rights of the Mexican community and preventing a deterioration in its bilateral relations with the United States. France and China are examples of the power of culture in maintaining ties with the mother country.

This chapter precedes the case study because our aim was to create an analytical framework based on our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each type of engagement. After identifying and summarizing the different approaches in a table, we applied these findings to the analysis of the Italian case of its community in Brazil.

As our analysis revealed that each country's approach focuses differently on a specific area, the comparative policy enabled us to generate models applicable to various engagement sectors. These countries were selected because they provide examples of engagement with different specializations, and government initiatives are considered “effective” in achieving their predetermined goals. In our study, establishing the parameters that define policies as successful was key to suggesting policy recommendations.

As far as the case study is concerned, we have adopted this methodological approach because it enables us to pursue in-depth explorations simplifying complex phenomena that have been insufficiently explored previously (Roy, 2021; Creswell 2009). According to Yin (2003), the main challenge in case study analysis is the choice and definition of the unit of analysis itself (Yin, 2003). Therefore, our case study was based on the previous criteria generated by comparative analysis to compare and identify patterns in the way other governments have treated - and currently treat - their diasporas, with the aim of determining what Italy has already done and what is still needed to make improvements in the future. The table drawn up could be a source of inspiration for the Italian governments in developing an engagement strategy, as well as for future research in this field.

### 3.2 Data collection

The idea of researching the relation between the Italian community abroad and Italian institutions was born when the researcher was a trainee at the Consulate of São Paulo, Brazil in the context of an

internship by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), Ministry Education and Merit (MIUR), and CRUI Association. Her engagement in firsthand consular and diplomatic activities were then enriched by evidence collected via documents and interviews to answer the RQ that guided this thesis.

- **Direct observations:** the researcher conducted formal and informal observations on the “site” of the research, namely at the Italian diplomatic representation in São Paulo, Brazil, for four months. Observations were made informally or formally. Among the formal observations, the researcher took part in an internal meeting of the *Sistema Italia* in Brazil and the visits of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Tripodi, and of the Minister of Economics and Finance, Giancarlo Giorgetti. The researcher also observed the applicability of the citizenship law in practice in the city that hosts the largest Italian community in the world (with 364,000 Italians registered in the AIRE) and took part in events that gathered representatives of the Italian governmental institutions and of the Italo-Brazilian community entities, such as the Patronato. Informally, the researcher gained insights into the perspectives of the Brazilians seeking Italian nationality and their general knowledge of Italy. Being a participant-observer allowed us to be present in the daily routine of consular activities and in the social and cultural interactions of Italian and Italian descendants that would have otherwise been impossible to access (Yin, 2003). The researcher could observe the applicability of the Italian norms, the operational behavior of the overall *Sistema Italia* in Brazil, and initiatives pursued by Italian and Brazilian authorities to bring the Italian descendants closer to their origins, which is valuable information for the development of our thesis.
- **Documents:** we devoted sufficient time to researching the most adequate documents to find out what had already been studied (Yin, 2003). The roles of the Literature Review are numerous, ranging from setting the basis of the knowledge required to build the research to visualizing the existing gap and, therefore, justifying the importance of the research study (Creswell, 2009). This step helped us identify the literature gaps concerning Italian foreign policy toward Brazil, on the diaspora engagement policies, and on the current debates and controversies that arose due to the pressures on diplomatic, juridical, and municipal administrations to meet the demand for Italian citizenship.

- **Interviews:** Essential for this case study, our interviews were guided but fluid, allowing interviewees to express their opinions based on past experiences and knowledge. We conducted open-ended conversations to gather new information about diaspora engagement policies and insights on future directions (Yin, 2003). We interviewed three individuals from different domains of the Italian administration to gain diverse perspectives on Italo-Brazilian bilateral relations. These individuals represented the diplomatic network, both from the Italian Embassy in Brazil and the Consulate General of Italy in Sao Paulo – the largest in the world - and the legislative power.

### 3.4 Sampling Method

The selection of experts for interviews was intentional and non-probabilistic, based on their current or past job positions related to diaspora engagement (Savoie-Zajc, 2021; Creswell, 2009). The experts worked or had worked at key Italian institutions involved in diaspora engagement: the national Parliament, the diplomatic network (Embassy and Consulate), and Italian-Brazilian organizations. A sample of three participants was chosen to gather diverse data from different backgrounds and expertise while ensuring feasibility, given the limited timeframe. Participants were contacted through professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn) and personal contacts (Savoie-Zajc, 2021). Interviewing three people holding different - but related - roles was crucial to get their expertise and their personal points of view from different angles belonging to different governmental institutions that are all at the forefront in the engagement with the Italian diaspora in Brazil.

### 3.5 Interview Procedures

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via video calls and lasted between forty and sixty minutes. The researcher formulated the questions used during the literature review analysis to complete the theoretical framework with practical insights. Most of the questions were consistent for all the interviews to facilitate comparison between different fields, while a few were differentiated to discover deeper insights into each participant's area of expertise. The questions were designed to be short, simple,

and clear to encourage exhaustive and comprehensive responses. The questions were also neutral to avoid deviating or guiding the answers in any direction (Creswell, 2009; Durand 2021).

During the conversation, the researcher took personal notes on the most relevant issues and topics she wanted to discuss further during the interview. The interview was recorded with the interviewees' prior consent and was held in Italian to eliminate cultural and linguistic barriers. The transcripts of the conversations are made available on demand. It is important to note that despite the support of the recordings, transcripts cannot capture the respondents' body language, tone of voice, emotions, and reactions (Creswell, 2009).

To conclude, this research thesis follows a linear-analytic structure: first, it offers a review of the prior literature; then, it explains the methodology decisions to carry out this research, analyses the collected data, and finally discusses the implications of the findings, proposing policy recommendations (Yin, 2003).

### 3.6 Assessment of the Findings

Validity is a crucial measure to assess the effectiveness of research. It demonstrates that the data used can accurately explain the research topic (Morrison, Cohen & Manion, 2007). The subjectivity inherent in the case study design challenges internal validity (Bourgeois, 2021). However, using documents from existing literature and official governmental websites ensures that our findings are trustworthy and rigorous.

External validity refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular case can be generalized to a broader population, cases, or times (Bourgeois, 2021; Morrison, Cohen & Marion, 2007). Our study aims to address the issues concerning Italian foreign policies toward its diaspora worldwide, but those issues derive mainly from Brazil, ensuring a limited generalizability of our findings.

Additional criteria for research quality include consistency and reliability. Consistency means that future researchers can replicate the study following the same procedures, allowing for comparison of findings.

Reliability refers to the use of consistent methods and procedures throughout the research process (Morrison, Cohen & Manion, 2007).

### 3.7 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

One major limitation of the case study design is its inability to generalize findings from a single or limited number of cases to a broader context (Yin, 2003). However, our case study aligns with Gabaccia's concept of "*Italy's Many Diasporas*" (Gabaccia, 2020), which emphasizes the unique cultural blend that Italian migrants develop between their homeland and host country. Our focus on the Brazilian context aims to highlight the significant challenges it presents for Italian policymakers and its relative underrepresentation in the existing literature. This case study thus contributes valuable insights to the field of diaspora engagement policies, particularly concerning the largest Italian community abroad.

Critics may also point to potential biases in the data collected through direct observation by the researcher. Observations can be subjective and influenced by the observer's perspective (Yin, 2003). In line with Creswell's suggestions, we clarify the eventual biases brought to the research that might be unintentionally shaped by our background, socio-economic origins, education, and culture (Creswell, 2009). However, the researcher's stay in São Paulo was short enough to maintain objectivity and distance from the Italian institutional viewpoint and the Italo-Brazilian community. Additionally, as Yin (2003) suggested, we have documented every procedure we followed to conduct our studies (Yin, 2003).

Moreover, this research's broad scope of topics necessitates acknowledging that more time and access to primary data would have allowed for a more comprehensive study. The researcher knows these shortcomings and advises further research to expand and deepen the findings presented here.

Finally, we ensured respect for the interviewees' rights, needs, values, and wishes, particularly given their highly visible positions at the institutional level (Creswell, 2009). All participants were asked to give their consent and could withdraw from the interviews or not reply to the questions they were uncomfortable with.

## Part IV – Expected Results

Unlike most of the literature, which studies the essence of diaspora by focusing on the migration aspect under predominantly humanitarian and sociological lenses, this thesis investigates the institutional dynamics of the country of origin, that is shaped by the presence of citizens abroad. This research adopts a multidisciplinary approach that ranges from theories of international relations, political science, domestic and international public law, and economics. Such a perspective is essential to navigate the complexities of a massive phenomenon that has shaped the country's history at multiple levels and whose effects will resonate even more strongly in the future.

The primary goal is to provide what is, to our knowledge, the first analysis of Italy's foreign policy approach to past migration flows and on its ongoing relationship with its diaspora. The research is based on the case study of the Italian community in Brazil because it has the largest community and, consequently, the greatest complexities and opportunities. This study argues that it is necessary to revitalize the relationship between the Italian government and the Italian community in Brazil because of a misunderstanding of the value that it could represent for Italy, and because of complexities that arise in the overall management of an extraordinarily large community- that is likely to grow shortly. Therefore, this thesis aims at demonstrating how Italian foreign policy can solve the current adversities and harnessing the potential offered by the Italian diaspora.

This research could be relevant to scholars for the development of future studies on these underestimated dynamics, to everyone in civil society for general knowledge, and to guide policymakers to create a policy framework dedicated to Italians abroad. The last section of this thesis, indeed, proposes pragmatic policy recommendations that can frame future policies of engagement with the vast community of Italians in Brazil.

## CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

### PART I - Italian migration and foreign policy

In the following chapter, we summarize the existing historical and sociological literature to obtain a concise but comprehensive picture of the most significant phases of Italian emigration from the Unification of Italy. At the same time, we complement the historical periodization with a two-level analysis, namely of the Italian political responses to migration and their consequences on bilateral relations with Brazil. The chronological gathering of relevant events and data will constitute the basis upon which this thesis is structured to understand the complexities of the interactions of policymakers, economic forces, and social needs throughout the last two centuries.

#### 1. Overview of Migration to Brazil

The United States of America (USA), Argentina, and Brazil were the most popular destinations for Italian migrants in the first wave of migration during the period that preceded World War I. The uniqueness of Italian migration lies in its magnitude and rapidity (Rosoli, 1996). Less than fifty years of migration in Brazil have created the current community of Italian descendants, estimated at thirty million. Brazilian data show that the country received, in total, between 1820 and 1969, 5,603,682 migrants, including 1,607,888 Italians (Cervo, 1991, p.56).

Although Italians have been present in Brazil since the sixteenth century, the focus of our thesis is the mass migration because it was the *"mass"* dynamic that triggered the political responses (Cervo, 1991). It is also worth noting that scholars consider 1876 a historical turning point because the first statistical data were recorded from that year. Historians also agree to identify this year as the beginning of the *"mass"* migration (Vitiello, 2013). Migration trends to Brazil intensified due to the intense Brazilian program of attracting European peasants to fill in the penuries of the workforce in the agricultural colonies (Rosoli, 1996). They found their peak in 1891 when such incentives accelerated due to the abolition of slavery in 1888 (Cervo, 1991, p.55). Altogether, between 1976 and 1980 more than 26 million Italians emigrated abroad, a number that corresponds to the totality of population at the time of

the unification. More than half of migrants prior World War One migrated to Argentina and Brazil (Rosoli, 1996, pp.3-4).

The abolition of slavery, which dried up miles of coffee crops, and a substantial population increase in Europe, which caused negative pressure on wages and resource availability, were the two main factors driving the massive Italian emigration to Brazil. Other reasons were general agricultural crises, especially in Northern Italy, taxes on meat, and penuries of necessities (Cervo, 1991).

As part of the Brazilian program, the government provided funds to shipping companies to offer free trips to Brazil to all the farmers and their families who accepted a new job in Brazil (Constantino, 1965). Unlike Argentina and the USA, where migrants were generally men who used to leave their families in Italy, Italians mainly migrated in families to Brazil (Rosoli, 1996). In the initial absence of governmental intervention by the Kingdom of Italy, the Brazilian subsidized ship companies had free access to the countryside, where they offered free trips on ships from Genoa to Santos - the closest port to São Paulo – with monetary compensation between 5 and 10 liras, and promises of jobs and better lives (Constantino, 1965). At this stage, Italian migrants were low-skilled workers, mostly peasants, seeking better social and economic opportunities. Once they crossed the Atlantic Ocean, they were exposed to the same harsh working conditions as the slaves they replaced (Cervo, 1991; The Ambrosetti House, 2023).

From 1900, however, many Italians could move to the cities to work in the developing industrial sector. This social improvement paved the way for Italian exports in two ways: first, higher wages increased the purchasing power of Italians who began to seek Italian products; second, they imported industrial technologies that had not yet been developed in Brazil. By 1908, Italians owned three-hundred ninety-eight industries, and figures such as the entrepreneur Matarazzo<sup>2</sup> significantly impacted the Brazilian economy (Cervo, 1991). Italians, who most significantly contributed to Brazilian development, affected many aspects of society economically, culturally, and politically (Rosoli, 1996). Overall, between 1876 and 1900, around five million Italians emigrated abroad, of which 830,000 settled in Brazil, and, in total, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Brazil hosted 1.4 million Italians (The Ambrosetti House, 2023).

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<sup>2</sup> Francesco Matarazzo was one of the most important Italian entrepreneurs in Brazil. Definition extracted by Treccani vocabulary [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-matarazzo\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francesco-matarazzo_(Dizionario-Biografico)/). Last accessed on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

After roughly thirty years of mass migration, outflows to Brazil slowed down a little due to the enactment of the Prinetti Decree of 1901 in Italy. The Prinetti decree was the result of the combination of intricate political dissatisfactions on the subsidies that were strategically provided by the Brazilian government to attract Italians, and on the coffee crises. These crises, derived from a surplus of production of coffee, reduced the salaries of Italian workers by a third. The Prinetti decree prohibited migration to Brazil to protect its citizens from the deterioration of salaries and working conditions (as discussed in Paragraph 2.2 of this section) (Cervo, 1991, p.57).

## 2. Political responses to migration

Extensive research and literature exist on the Italian migration. However, these works still miss the impact of such a substantial national migration on the state-building process and on the discourse of the consolidation of an Italian identity throughout history. In Gabaccia's words, Italian historiography left millions of citizens from the country on the margin, but it's impossible to understand Italian funding values without understanding the migratory dynamics (Martellone, 2002; Gabaccia, 2000).

Although internal public policies did not directly impact the lives of the Italian diaspora living abroad, analyzing the juridical framework regulating migration is crucial for understanding the perspectives and priorities of public institutions, ruling elites, and national interests. Italian foreign policy strategies have had to adapt to changing political pressures, international configurations, and prevailing ideologies. (Rosoli, 1992). Therefore, it is essential to understand the dominant political culture during each historical period to interpret Italian migratory policies (Tintori, 2006). This thesis intentionally involves elements of research in both IR and Foreign Policy analysis fields. This approach applies the logic of Putnam's "Two-Level Games Theory". Putnam's theory (1988) overcame the grounding procedures of prior studies that make use of domestic factors to explain international affairs (Waltz's "Second Image" level of analysis), or, conversely, explain domestic policies through the influence of the international sphere (Gourevitch's "Second Image Reversed") separately. Instead, he sustains that two realms of foreign and internal politics should be simultaneously studied as bounded and mutually influenceable forces. The "Two-Level" notion refers to the necessary interaction process that entails consultations and bargaining steps among the constituents ("Level II") and the international negotiations pursued by the negotiators ("Level I"). The link between the two levels of actors lies in the "win-set", namely the set of

all possible agreements that were negotiated at the international level that the domestic groups would be willing to ratify (intended as formally or informally accept the measures) and apply internally (Putnam, 1988).

Therefore, we deduce that no foreign policy can be fully explained without considering both domestic and external factors. Hence, the essence of Italian foreign policy is better captured by acknowledging the negotiations of national decision-makers to achieve the best possible outcome in international negotiations (Diodato & Niglia, 2017, p. 88)

For our research, we consider engagement policies of the Italian diaspora to fall within the scope of Italian foreign policy, which, in turn, shapes both international and domestic scenarios. As Shain & Barth (2003) pointed out, “diasporas are among the most prominent actors that link international and domestic spheres of politics” (Shain & Barth, 2003, p.451). Hence, Putnam's theory is relevant to discovering the intertwined outcomes of diaspora engagement policies. At the international level, governmental engagement with the Italian community in Brazil requires interaction with Brazilian institutions to reach out to these communities in a wide range of areas. The set of agreements reached to make such interaction possible is therefore part of the bilateral relations between the two countries. At the national level, this study will discuss the consequences of the applicability of past and future diaspora engagement initiatives.

This section delineates the main phases of Italian migration, starting from the unification of Italy and examining the corresponding responses from Italian policymakers.

### *2.1. From 1861 to 1900*

To understand the first foreign policy trends of the newly unified Kingdom of Italy, it is fundamental to acknowledge that its creation was perceived as a destabilizing event of the equilibrium reached in 1815 of the Concert of Europe (by France, Germany, and, to some extent, by the United Kingdom), and a threat, especially by the Austrian-Hungarian empire. Hence, from 1861, the priorities of Italian foreign policy were, in chronological order, to obtain the recognition of Italy from the other states, and to conquer the cities of Venice (annexed in 1866) and Rome (annexed in 1870) (Diodato & Niglia, 2017). The most prominent character of the foreign policy was Emilio Visconti Venosta, best remembered for his quote that defined its strategy: “*Always independent, never isolated*” (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Hence, on the one hand, Italy was putting all its diplomatic effort to forge new alliances, as it could not afford a

military confrontation for its weak military power, focusing on the European framework. On the other hand, Italy was, and will always be in the future, attracted by the Mediterranean area due to its geographic location (Diodato & Niglia, 2017).

From the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 until 1876, migration concerned primarily European destinations. However, as previously stated, the first 1876 data show the beginning of the mass migration to the Americas. At that moment, the premature debates on migration, marked by a “*laissez-faire*” mindset, focused on whether the government should intervene in migration processes rather than how to regulate or assist migrants. Shortly afterward, the intensification of mass migration became subject to political debate that bifurcated into two main ideas: preventing expatriation versus recognizing migration as beneficial for Italian demographics (Tintori, 2006). This was because, at this first phase of migration, in the countryside of Northern Italy - where most migrants to South America originated - peasants' departures stabilized wages, making migration convenient for workers and landlords (Vitiello, 2013).

Juridically, the Kingdom of Italy inherited the “*Statuto Albertino*”, the Constitution of the Piedmont and Sardinia Kingdom, which did not address citizenship matters (Tintori, 2006). Concerning migration, however, two pieces of legislation were in force: the first one, dating 1857, defined the competence of the release of passports in the Kingdom; the second one, dating 1865, defined migration as a matter of public security. According to Vitiello, the initial lack of comprehensive migration policy could be explained by the political agenda priorities devoted to consolidating a fragile, newly unified state (Vitiello, 2013).

Later, the demographic equilibrium resulting from migration was broken by the agricultural crisis derived from the Great Depression, when migration accelerated and started to depopulate the countryside sharply. Consequently, landlords had to deal with strikes and riots from those who stayed, asking for more rights and higher salaries (Vitiello, 2013; Constantino, 1965; Falleni & Guerrini, 2011). The *laissez-faire* approach vanished with the 1873 memo that indirectly prohibited migration, both as an activity promoted by travel agencies and as “*spontaneous*” departures. This law, indeed, distinguished the “*artificial*” and the “*spontaneous*” migration: the former refers to those agencies - also subsidized by the Brazilian government - that “*illuded*” Italians by selling them a better life. The shipbuilding industries of Genoa were the main opponents to this law as migration represented valuable funds in the development of

technological innovations. In a sense, this was a legislative strategy to reduce migration by charging travel agencies without banning it directly (Vitiello, 2013). Indeed, the regulation introduced strict restrictions for the “*nullaosta*” (a document required to travel to Brazil), or prohibited those who couldn’t afford a round-trip ticket to leave the country (Constantino, 1965).

Given the ineffectiveness of the regulation, the Crispi government adopted the first migration law in 1888. The law allowed for free migration<sup>3</sup>, provided for migration contracts, and established provincial arbitration commissions. Although it was not explicitly defined as a right until 1919 (Vitiello, 2013), the law signs the beginning of the governmental intervention on migration issues in the domain of its international relations that shaped the future Italian foreign policy. Crispi cunningly understood that public policies could not prevent migration, so he decided to regulate it. At that time, Italian diplomats received instructions to register the number of Italians residing abroad and to defend the interests and dignity of migrants (Cervo, 1991). However, Crispi’s legislation regulated transports - for example, each person on the boat had the right to a one-meter space – but did not introduce any form of assistance for the people once arrived to the country of destination (Falleni & Guerrini, 2011).

Rosoli (1992) notes that this law also reflected the European economic expansionist mindset of the late nineteenth century, which focused on commerce and considered migration a tool for economic gain. He defines that imperialist approach as a “*boss system*” (Rosoli, 1992).

However, during this first wave of migration to Brazil, diplomats have already denounced the lack of proper diplomatic networks and facilities to deal with such a large Italian community. The Consul of Florianopolis Caruso McDonald, for instance, wrote about the difference that he observed between the German and Italian policies in Brazil: Germany provided extensive infrastructure for its community, whereas Italy “*was indifferent to the white people trafficking*” (Frau, 2018).

## 2.2 From 1901 to the advent of fascism

If migration at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was prompted by agricultural crises, in this second phase it was due to the surplus of laborers in the industrialization process in the North of Italy. (Falleni & Guerrini, 2011).

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<sup>3</sup> Legge 30 dicembre 1888, n. 5866 “Sull’emigrazione.” <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1888-12-30;5866>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

In 1901, the Crispi government enacted a new emigration law that reaffirmed the principles of the previous one and expanded state intervention. Recognizing the exponential growth of emigration, the law transferred supervision from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which established the General Commissariat of Emigration. This body ensured the freedom to emigrate, assisted travel, protected against exploitation by illegal agencies and poor working conditions abroad (Tintori, 2006; Rosoli, 1992), and assisted women and children (Falleni & Guerrini, 2011). In addition, the law provided for creating a migration inspection agency in the larger ports along with medical services. The provision also committed the Banco di Napoli to collect, manage, and transmit migrants' savings (Constantino, 1965).

However, all the welfare agencies and secretariats created in Italy and abroad between 1910 and 1923 were financed by the Emigration Fund, which revived funds from migrants' remittances, meaning that migrants were self-financing themselves. An example of these entities is the Patronato in São Paulo, which still exerts its functions nowadays (Constantino, 1965).

Tintori and Constantino have argued that this state mobilization demonstrated politicians' awareness of the benefits of expatriate communities: migrants were seen as "*trading colonies*" that could open new markets and exchange opportunities, as well as sources of remittances (Tintori, 2006; Constantino, 1965). Similarly, Rosoli suggests that migration was seen as a source of economic, cultural, political, and legal benefits, which convinced the government to enact policies to defend Italian citizenship and culture assertively (Rosoli, 1992).

As for Brazil, many dissatisfactions between the two countries led to the promulgation the Prinetti Decree of 1902. The decree prohibited subsidized migration except for those approved by the General Commissariat for Migration. Spontaneous emigration, however, remained permitted under migration legislation (Cervo, 1991). Italian authorities used the pretext of the coffee crisis that occurred in the late 1800s and the absence of labor rights protection regulations in Brazil. However, historical evidence shows that the decree resulted from mutual dissatisfactions that arose from negotiations to reach agreements on migration and customs duties (see the next paragraph 2.3).

Among the opinions on migration, it's worth citing Nicola Apuzzo, author of two handbooks in 1904 and 1906 presenting a systemic study of the Italian legislation on migration. He argued that migration is not a neutral phenomenon merely driven by the individual choices of migrants themselves. Instead, he advocates that it was also the result of the colonialist approach of the policymakers, who realized the diaspora's potential to influence international relations. The idea then was that Italy could not catch up

with the European colonialist race but that its diaspora could be part of an expansionary geopolitical tool (Tintori, 2006). Despite the Italian geographical predisposition toward Africa, the Italian colonialist ambitions appeared too late, when the African continent was almost entirely under French and English control. The possession of colonies, it was believed, could finally sort out Italy's weak image and satisfy the nationalist aspiration to become a European great power. However, Italy experienced many failures in its colonialist race, as demonstrated by the defeat in Ethiopia, and the conquests of Libya and Eritrea lasted just a few decades (Diodato & Niglia, 2017).

Likewise, Falleni & Guerrini (2011) sustain that Crispi's government caught the opportunity to combine the imperialist race aspiration with migration norms.

This colonialist meaning attached to diasporas was reflected, for instance, by the thought of the politicians Leone Carpi, who, already in his first handbook dated 1871, used the word "*colonies*" to refer to the communities of Italians abroad, a custom also replicated by Crispi himself (Constantino, 1965). The French economist René Gonnard wrote, for instance, that Argentina was "*an Italian colony without a flag*", and he was surprised that it caught even more mediatic attention than the French colony of Algeria had done in France (Constantino, 1965).

On the trail of the Anglo-American model, the Italian deputy Bonnin proposed institutionalizing a "*special relationship*" with the South American countries. This agreement would have allowed for the naturalization of Italians in their host land, intending to confer them the civil rights that would give them the power to create a lobby community that, he hoped, would act on behalf of their motherland. However, this project was never implemented due to the low social status of most expatriates (Tintori, 2006).

If we have been illustrating the path to the consolidation of regulations on migration, the presence of millions of Italians abroad raised the issue concerning their nationality. The Brazilian case, with its Naturalization policies, in particular, triggered responses from the Italian government that paved the way for delineating the citizenship law until nowadays.

One of the first controversies that arose in the relations between Brazil and Italy – and most in general to several European states – was due to the Brazilian "*Great Naturalization*" policy. Inserted in its Constitution of 1891 (art. 69), this law stated that all the foreigners that settled in Brazil as of 15 November 1889 - the date at which the Republic of Brazil was proclaimed - were automatically granted Brazilian citizenship unless they would declare their willingness to keep their ones within six months. Given the large geographical distances of the country and the low level of education of the workers in

the “*fazendas*” (lit. “farms”), this policy turned out to be quite effective. Germany reacted by granting the right to receive back their German nationality to all the descendants of migrants who were naturalized Brazilians. In Italy, in an unstable political atmosphere due to the fall of the Cabinet of 1910, the first Congress of “*Italians residing abroad*” took place to discuss and update the Civil Code of 1865 about citizenship. It resulted in the promulgation of the law (no. 555) of 1912 (Tintori, 2006, 2011) that guaranteed the *Ius Sanguinis* right to all the descendants unless the ancestors voluntarily renounced the Italian citizenship (hence, the “*forced*” naturalization was not valid), and, according to Art. 9, the Italians who were naturalized Brazilians as the result of the Brazilian law were granted the right to re-obtain the Italian one after two years of residence in the Kingdom of Italy (Tintori, 2011).

Concerning double citizenship matters, the original legal bill provided for minors born abroad to choose whether to obtain or not Italian citizenship at the age of majority. Instead, the law that was entered into force provides Italian citizenship to every child with at least one Italian parent. Some political exponents were skeptical of the very foundation of the citizenship that was believed to overshadow the sentimentalist aspect and identity ties to the motherland. Overall, this law combined the contrasting views of the political parties at the time, balancing long-term economic interests with the importance of Italian identity (Tintori, 2006).

### 2.3 *The Fascist Regime*

Mussolini took power and remained Prime Minister from 1922 to 1943, impressing a long-lasting footprint in Italy’s history and foreign policy. Scholars like Bertanha (2013), Diodato and Marchetti (2023) identify a discontinuity of Italian foreign politics during the Fascism regime that, broadly speaking, can be further divided into two main periods. Just out of WWI, Mussolini continued pursuing the same foreign policy logic of the precedent liberal government in which Mussolini seemed to want to lighten the tensions with the other European powers, with whom he sought to conclude a treaty concerning European and colonial matters for instance (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023 Diodato & Niglia, 2017). The same applies to the relationship with the Italian community abroad. In 1923, he stated:

*"Emigration is a physiological necessity for the Italian people. We are 40 million squeezed into this narrow and beautiful peninsula of ours that cannot feed everyone [...] I declare that the government must protect Italian emigration."*

(Bertonha, 2001).

However, the real change in his foreign policy was provided by the nationalist propaganda of the Fascist regime that used more aggressive rhetoric (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). Toward the Italian diaspora, the nationalist ideology prevailed over the concept of protection and turned migration policies into a propaganda campaign of "*reconquering*" Italians to forge a fascist community abroad (Bertonha, 2001). In 1925, Mussolini appointed Dino Grandi as Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs - who became Minister of Foreign Affairs four years later until 1932, when Mussolini replaced him. One of his first tasks was to render diplomats "more Fascists". The initial goal of merely acting as an "equilibrium actor" within the European continent was soon replaced by a truthful geopolitical doctrine aiming at reconquering the greatness of the Roman Empire intended as the power of reasserting its power in the international context (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023).

In regard to Brazil, Mussolini was more inclined than Crispi to maintain peaceful relations with Brazil and South America in general. Fascist sympathy for Brazil was reciprocated by Brazil, which admired the progress stimulated by the regime. The 1920s were the most fruitful years of their bilateral relations, thanks to changes in the dynamics that had previously led to conflicts of interest. First, emigration was no longer a mass phenomenon as a result of Brazil's stabilization of population density, which led the country to enact a constitutional law setting a quota for the entry of foreigners. Italy was able to handle the naturalization issue with its citizenship laws. Second, a new and final version of the 1900 trade agreement was reached (Cervo, 1991).

Mussolini's radical change of mindset in the 1930s, which now perceived migration as a negative force that would lead to depopulation, culminated in his attempt to prohibit migration. He did this through massive propaganda about the saturation of the labor market in the United States, for example. Then, he tried to change the interpretation of the phenomenon. The word "*migrant*" in the political sphere was replaced by "*Italians abroad*", and the *Commissariat for Migration* (Constantine, 1965) was abolished in favor of the creation of the *General Directorate for Italians Abroad*.

Mussolini also intervened with two pieces of legislation: first, Law No. 108 of 1926 provided for the removal of citizenship from those who harmed the interest of the state; second, it amended the 1912 law

to shorten the time of residence in Italy to regain citizenship from two years to six months (Tintori, 2006). As part of the principles embraced by the fascist government, diplomats were appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As anticipated, they were incentivized by the Ministry and received rigorous instructions on who to promote Fascism within the Italian diaspora. Examples include creating after-school activities, summer camps for children, and Italian language schools. However, the Fascist party membership rate abroad numbered less than one hundred eighty thousand, which, compared to millions of migrants, represents a relatively low membership rate (Tintori, 2003). The Brazilian case is particularly interesting for understanding the regime's "*subversive diplomacy*": a mix of cultural diplomacy, propaganda, and growing contacts with fascist movements in Brazil to mobilise the Italian population. Mussolini's effort toward Brazil, more assertive than toward other host countries, was due to the Italians' strong adherence to the Brazilian Integralist Party of Catholic and Fascist aspirations (Bertonha, 2001).

Overall, on the one hand, one can see a new and dominant effort by the regime to engage with its diaspora to spread Fascist values beyond the Italian frontier and a more prominent government presence through consulates on the ground (Tintori, 2003). For example, the historical diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs preserves copies of numerous letters sent by Mussolini to remote areas of Brazil to spread sentiments of "*Italianness*."

On the other hand, despite Mussolini's goals, there is a lack of data on the effectiveness of such policies, such as the type of people who sympathized with fascism and the impact of pragmatic assistance to the Italian community abroad (Tintori, 2003). In 1931, for example, Margherita Sarfatti<sup>4</sup> questioned the effect of propaganda in Brazil, where she noted that there was nothing left of "*Italianness*" after only one generational change. Her assertion was supported by other members of the fascist party who doubted the effectiveness of the enormous effort put in place to strategically use the Italian diaspora to spread fascist values (Bertonha, 2001).

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<sup>4</sup> Margherita Sarfatti was the first female art reviewer in Europe, known for being Mussolini's mistress for almost twenty years despite her Jewish origins (Piras, 2018) . <https://www.enciclopediadelledonne.it/edd.nsf/biografie/margherita-grassini-sarfatti> Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

## 2.4 From World War Two to the 1950s

World War II further exposed the fragility of the Italian diaspora's engagement policies, as evidenced by the fact that most expatriates sided with the host land in fighting against Italy. In Tintori's words, they chose to defend the "living" citizenship of their daily lives, which gave them a new wage, a new life, and new rights rather than the "latent" citizenship of their past (Tintori, 2006).

In 1942, Brazil broke diplomatic and economic relations with Italy, Germany, and Japan despite having fought on the opposing front for only a year. Although the authoritarian regime of Vargas would have opted for a neutral position, the decision was dictated by pressure from the United States, which, in the meantime, consolidated its power in several South American domains through President Roosevelt's "*good neighbour*" policy<sup>5</sup> (Cervo, 1991).

For Italy, 1943 marked the year of a change of course in Italian foreign policy that Diodato and Niglia (2017) define as "critical conjunctures". These are periods characterized by an evident uncertainty about the future of international politics, in which the political decision-makers play a major role in defining the direction of foreign policies of the future. Beginning with the armistice of September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943, and even more strongly from the establishment of the Republic in June 1945, Italy decided to counteract the post-war uncertainty by engaging in a democratization process both domestically and internationally, meaning that it decided to join the Western side of the Cold War which was on the verge. Indeed, its foreign policy strategy focused on joining Western organizations led by the United States, as it was perceived as the only possible way to reconsolidate the image of Italy destroyed by World War II. Despite its disappointment from not being allowed to contribute to the drafting of the 1945 UN Charter (Italy joined the UN in 1955), it participated in the 1947 Paris Conference to discuss the Marshall Plan, signed the agreement to conform to the principles enshrined in the Bretton Woods agreements, and signed the Atlantic Treaty (NATO) in 1949. But more importantly, the process that paved the way for integration into the European Union (EU) has been the one that has most affected the trajectory of Italian foreign policy since the late 1940s (Diodato & Niglia, 2017).

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<sup>5</sup> Interventionist policies toward Latin American countries characterising US's President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 until the aftermath of World War Two (Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Good-Neighbor-Policy-of-the-United-States>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.)

Diplomatic relations with Brazil were restored in 1943 through Swiss mediation and were officialized in 1944 with the reopening of consular activities. The priority of Italy was to counteract the harsh financial measures against Italian assets in Brazil, such as the auction of the Martinelli building in São Paulo, shares of the Pirelli industry and other companies, and the blockade of Italian ships in Brazilian ports. Brazil, as in the prewar period, instead, fought to obtain a reduction in customs duties on coffee. In 1949, after years of negotiations, a peace agreement was reached that sought to resolve mutual discontent related to the war, especially the issue of reparations (Cervo, 1991).

However, despite persistent diplomatic efforts and the agreement on migration of 1950, the Peace Accord failed to extinguish such conflicts. Since the end of the War, Italian emigration changed course to other destinations, mainly within the European continent, Australia, and North America (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). The migration agreement was similar to the ones reached with the European countries: it provided for compensation from the receiving country in exchange for Italian migrants (Gabaccia, 2000). Although this type of agreement was successful in some countries (see for example Belgium in the coal industry) (Gabaccia, 2000), thirty percent of those who emigrated to Brazil during that period were repatriated shortly after their arrival. The delay in repatriating Italian assets worsened Brazil's reputation and it was no longer viewed as a convenient destination to emigrate to. Rumors about the unwelcoming conditions on the belief of the Brazilian society and Italian descendants' community spread quickly within the Italian society. In addition, the Brazilian government accused the Italian consulates of restricting the criteria for granting visas to Brazil, which reduced migration flows. To overcome such disputes, a migration agreement was signed in 1960 and entered into force in 1965. Although it contained the most pragmatic migration regulations in the history of their bilateral relations, migration flows to Brazil never reached previous levels (Cervo, 1991).

Moreover, another way to evaluate diaspora engagement policies is to assess the percentage of the budget allocated to it. The 1956 bill in the Italian Senate on the expenditure forecast provided 28,623 million liras. Only 700 million was earmarked for emigration and Italian communities abroad, and 3,113 million for cultural relations. The 700 million was divided into financial support for local and international protection and assistance agencies, repatriation expenses, salaries of public administrators abroad, and bureaucratic expenses such as translation and editing of newspapers for emigrants. To put it another way, in practical terms this money was barely visible in the daily life of the Italian diaspora (Constantino, 1965).

## 2.5 From the 60s to nowadays

From the 1960s, Italian foreign policy complied with the conduct of the Cold War. Consequently, its consideration of the South American continent was the one shared by the US. The image deteriorated even more because the Cuban crisis of 1962 increased the fear that communism could spread in the whole area (Cervo, 1991). Bilateral relations with Brazil mainly consisted of diplomatic consultations concerning the future of the EU. Brazil and other South American countries worried that the consolidation of the EU common market would harm their exports. The acceleration of diplomatic initiatives with Italy increased to obtain a strategic point of access to the European market, or *trait d'union*, for Brazil (Cervo, 1991).

Bilateral relations experienced a short deterioration in the 1980s due to the Falkland-Malvinas war between Argentina and the United Kingdom. At the outbreak of the crisis in 1982, Giulio Andreotti (at that time President of the Commission of External Relations of the deputy chamber) was able to avoid Italy's participation in the embargo against Argentina. According to Cervo, the 80s saw a rapprochement between Italy and Argentina, but a loosening of contacts with Brazil. Paradoxically, political initiatives shrank at the moment in which, in contrast, the Italian private sector saw the greatest opportunities to develop in Brazil (Cervo, 1991).

Domestically, Italy's political transformation was accompanied by an economic "Italian miracle" that in less than fifteen years – in the 50s and 60s - made Italy one of the wealthiest countries in the world (Gabaccia, 2000, p. 154). This economic boom had enormous consequences on Italian migration because, although migration outflows did not completely stop from a merely sending state, it soon became a receiving one. Initially, Italians experienced two types of migrations: one internal, from South to North, and one external, to the European states.

A further novelty was that many institutional competencies concerning migration and engagement with the Italian diaspora were transferred to the regions. Beyond the new regional status, this decision reflects the strong migrants' identification with their regions of origin rather than the newborn Italian state of the Nineteenth century. Today, regions have developed new organizations known as "*nel mondo*" (lit. "in the world"), which have various hubs worldwide. These associations act as intermediaries between the diaspora and regional institutions, helping to develop relevant policies (Tintori, 2011).

Among the most relevant progresses, the first one is the establishment of institutions called COMITES (“Committees of Italians Abroad”) in 1985, still in charge nowadays. Their role consists in representing Italians abroad and advising Italian consulates regarding the rights and needs of Italians living overseas. The establishment of these institutions followed lengthy political debates about the degree of inclusion that the state should grant to the Italian community residing abroad.

A few years later, in the 1990s, discussions about migration became part of a visible “*sentimental nationalism*”, bridging both right- and left-wing parties. For the former, diaspora engagement resonates with their nationalistic patriotism; for the latter, it is a matter of an internationalist mindset to cope with current international affairs. This compromise led to the institutionalization of the voting rights legislation (Constitutional Law no. 1 of 17/01/2000 and Law no. 459 of 27/12/2002), allowing expatriates to elect six senators and twelve MPs according to four geographical areas: Europe, South America, North America, and Asia-Africa-Oceania (Tintori, 2011). Further explanations are provided in Chapter IV.

In addition, in 1994, the government Andreotti established *the Ministero per gli italiani nel mondo* (MIM) (lit. *Ministry for Italians in the World*). The Ministry operated during three mandates, namely from 1994 to 1995, then it was renovated by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi from 1994 to 1995 and from 2001 to 2006. In 2001 Minister Tremaglia was appointed to chair this Ministry due to his political engagement in strengthening the relationship with the Italians abroad, as demonstrated by its contribution to obtaining the right to vote from abroad. However, this was a Ministry “*senza portafogli*” (lit. “without wallet”) (Archivio del Senato della Repubblica<sup>7</sup>).

Concerning the bilateral relations between Italy and Brazil since WWII, overall, they have been, at times, very close and productive and, at times, completely silent. According to Cervo, the reasons for this up-and-down game, as demonstrated by the swing of the frequency of official visits, are due mainly to three reasons: the political instability of the Italian institutions; the ideological incompatibility of the center-socialist Italian government (run by the so-called “*blocco storico*” (lit. “*historical bloc*”) led by the Cristian Democratic Party) with the Brazilian authoritarian regime; and the direction of Brazilian foreign policies after the end of the authoritarian regime in 1985 that turned its gaze on new countries. By way

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<sup>6</sup> According to Art. 2 of the decree 300 of 1999, delegations of ministries without wallet are conferred by the Prime Minister, <https://www.openpolis.it/parole/che-cose-un-ministro-senza-portafoglio/>. Last accessed on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Ministero per gli italiani nel mondo (MIM) (2001 - 2006), <https://patrimonio.archivio.senato.it/inventario/scheda/mirko-tremaglia/IT-AFS-070-000915/ministero-italiani-nel-mondo-mim>. Last accessed on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

of example, at the end of the 80s, the Italian ambassador to Brasilia, Antonio Ciarrapico, with Andreotti, who became Minister of Foreign Affairs, inaugurated a plan called “Italia Viva” that aimed at reaching an investment and cooperative agreement, an extensive program of cultural events and meetings between entrepreneurs and prominent people, and an official visit by the Prime Minister to Brazil. However, this plan was never implemented because Italian foreign policy attention moved to Eastern Europe in the context of the end of the Cold War (Cervo, 1991).

Cervo’s opinion concerning political instability is backed by Diodato and Niglia who state that “*institutional uncertainty seems to have become the political norm*” (Diodato & Niglia, 2017, p. 91). For example, the Italian government’s tenure is four years, but between 1948 and 1968 there were twenty governments (Gabaccia, 2000, p. 154) and, from 1995 to 2001, five different cabinets. This is particularly relevant information for this research because the overall management of foreign policy is vested in the government. Each governmental mandate independently defines the agenda, the priority, and the targeted trends of foreign policy, based on the political preferences of the ruling party and international events. Hence, the stability of the government is crucial for pursuing the predetermined objectives over time. Despite the *de facto* primacy of the government in foreign policy matters, several departments participate in the decision-making process. The most relevant is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which coordinates diplomatic activity worldwide (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). It follows that the foreign policy decision-making process is certainly guided by international events that require an ever-evolving adaptation to each context and, parallel, the internal political forces. Leotta and Ferro (2011) call the interviewing of governmental actors involved in the process “polycentric” because the Prime Minister can pursue coherent and stable tactics only if the political sphere is stable (Leotta & Ferro, 2011).

The authors cited in this thesis agree that the Italian government struggled to define its foreign policy for at least twenty years following WWII (Cervo, 1991). Diodato and Niglia noticed that, since its Unification, and with the exception of the Fascist regime to some extent, the Italian foreign policy approach has always demonstrated that the government needed an external model to adapt its policies to the Western framework. At first, it did so because it needed to obtain recognition of its existence, and to consolidate its economy and democratization process, so it swung between the choice of allying with Prussia or France. Later, although Mussolini’s ideology was modeled just for the Italian system, without taking inspiration from foreign countries, his alliance with Nazi Germany changed its initial direction. From 1943 on, the essence of Italian foreign policy and its role in international affairs has always been

defined by the so-called “external constraint.” Once again, Italy has committed itself to the Western system by joining international organizations in order to rebuild the national political system and its role in domestic politics (Diodato & Niglia, 2017). During the Cold War, its foreign policy was dictated by the external events of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, in which Italy – sided with the US but with the greatest Communist Party in Europe, with strong ties with the USSR - played the role of *trait d'union* between the United States and the Mediterranean area. With the war over, Italy was unable to formulate a strategy to carry out its foreign policy (Ruggeri, 2021). Its role in international politics, therefore, became intrinsically anchored to the EU integration, which is still one of the pillars of its external engagement, along with peacekeeping missions and its role in multilateral organizations (Diodato & Niglia, 2017).

Altogether, the external “constraint” of the EU, governmental instability, and the extension and speed at which politics resonate in public opinion through the role of mass media shape the strength of Italian foreign policy that was not able to break through the door of its “medium power” status<sup>8</sup> (Diodato & Niglia, 2017).

### 3. Economic value of the diaspora

In this section, we delve into a comprehensive analysis of the main arguments withing the existing literature on the economic impact of the Italian diaspora. Specifically, we focus on the political debates that, since the nineteenth century, focused on the financial assets generated by the Italian migrants. and the resulting economic bilateral relations between Italy and Brazil. In order to provide a short, but complete, picture of the economic consequences of migration, we supply some data concerning the most recurrent topics in the existing literature: remittances and trade.

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<sup>8</sup> Middle power is an expression used to refer to the Italian foreign policy direction from WWII: a country that abandoned its ambitions of the past and immersed itself in a democratization process seeking to defend its economic interests (Diodato & Niglia, 2017, p. 58)

### 3.1 Political discourses

In 1926, the General Commissariat announced a statement that, according to Constantino, represents the essence of the mindset of the ruling elites. The statement affirmed that migration was a positive element for the balance sheet because migrants slowly guaranteed the economic entry of Italy into new markets in the form of trade and investments. Several years later, a similar formula was used by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Migration, Francesco Maria Dominedò, during De Gasperi's government in a statement to the Chamber. He called migrants "*real matrices from which policymakers activate international relations*" as independent generators of economic and trade fluxes and as triggers of international cultural and political relations (Constantino, 1965).

First, Constantino opposes the prevailing view of the mid-twentieth century, according to which the physical departure from Italy entails the complete detachment of the migrant from the Italian economic system. Instead, he argues that before leaving, Italians were already affected by the high levels of unemployment in the country and thus were already left out of the economy. Moreover, once abroad, Italians still contributed to the national economy as producers and consumers. The positive effects on the Italian balance sheet were even increased because the whole family nucleus contributed to the economy. The most tangible effect comes from the higher salaries earned abroad, which allowed migrants to increase their savings. This money was either sent to the family waiting for their departure or spent to consume goods of their country of origin, increasing the number of Italian exports and enriching the banks and the Treasury estates. Moreover, migrants diffused the knowledge and tradition of consuming Italian products in their host lands. In 1906, the Ministry of Agriculture Edoardo Pantano stated that the only reason to continue trading with Brazil was to export Italian goods consumed by the Italian communities in Brazil.

In addition, at a later stage, most migrants were likely to return to Italy for family tourism or to show their motherland to their children born abroad, thus increasing earnings in the tourist and naval industries. In other words, the previously marginalized Italians became essential economic resources. In the field of political economy, Prof. Oddone inserts migrants as a pivotal element of the international economy at the same level as currencies and goods to improve the international balance of debits and credits. Enrico de Leone, Secretary of the Italian Geographical Society, enlarged the correlation between unemployment and migration to define it as an economic and workforce capable of forging a political capacity (Constantino, 1965).

### *3.2 Remittances*

According to Pace, with minor exceptions, it seems that Italian migrants aimed to earn for themselves and lift their families out of poverty in Italy. The number of remittances paid by nineteenth-century mass migration significantly boosted the Italian economy (Pace, 2016) and was the most profitable source of income for Italian reserves. Remittances came in many forms. Italians sent money to repay debts incurred to emigrate or to survive when they were unemployed; to financially support the rest of the family remaining in Italy; to help their circle of relatives or friends; to send gifts from host lands in the form of donations for public works or religious bodies stemming from a nostalgic duty to the motherland; and as investments for future earnings. Beyond the nature and type of remittances, all these accumulations marked migrants' intention to repatriate in the future (Cervo, 1991). To provide some data, in the early years of its service, the Bank of Naples recorded an increase from n.62,381 lire in 1903 to 253,639 for 57,364,999 million lire in 1910 (Pace, 2016). Moreover, out of forty-two banks in São Paulo State between 1891 and 1905, twenty-two were Italian (Cervo, 1991), and between 1953 and 1962, remittances made up between 57 percent and 63 percent of the trade balance deficit - or import balance surplus. However, these statistics could double if the Italian Foreign Exchange Office counted all annual remittance receipts. The main players that benefited from migrants remittances are banks and shipbuilding industries. As for the former, in the execution of Law No. 24 of 1901, the Bank of Naples had exclusive jurisdiction over managing emigrants' savings (Costantino, 1965) until 1926. As anticipated, half of the savings were allocated to the "Emigration Fund" (Pace, 2016). This responsibility was transferred to the Roma Bank and, eventually, to the National Work Bank. Banks made money from immigrants when they bought the foreign currencies they needed before leaving and by selling or buying them on the money market (Constantino, 1965).

### *3.3 Trade and Industrial Relations*

The migration policies and the deriving conflicts of interest that we illustrated in the previous sections resonated in the trade relationship between Italy and Brazil. Before World War I, Italian exports to Brazil were insignificant compared to the trade levels with the most relevant host lands, such as Argentina and the USA. Although the Italian migration started way earlier, the first trade agreement dates to 1900. Historians and economists agree on the importance of the action of the Italian community in reaching

such a deal. The diaspora created a favorable market for two types of Italian exports: Italian products to fulfill the demand for Italian daily commodities, Italian machinery, and industrial technologies to initiate the industrial development of Brazil.

The trade agreement was meant to satisfy the different needs of the two countries: for Italy, it represented an entry to an unexplored market that needed new technologies to keep up with the industrial boom; for Brazil, it was a guarantee to trade its most valuable resource of that time - coffee - to the European market, as it was also negotiating with France at the same time. However, the agreement failed to boost commerce between the two countries. The dissatisfactions, concerning mostly customs duties, arose until an alarming deterioration of trade relations accelerated by the Italian threat to fully forbid migration to Brazil if Brazil didn't lower customs duties on its exports. Concurrently with the Prinetti decree, Italy kept high customs duties on coffee, and Brazil replied by raising trade barriers on Italian exports. In Brazil, the disappointment of the Italian entrepreneurs whose wages depended on coffee was evident. The Italian government reacted by claiming compensation for the drop in the salaries of Italians. This fragile situation remained stable until WWI, but the 1929 crises and the following recession significantly slowed down international trade.

In 1931, President Vargas insisted on reaching a new agreement that replaced the temporary trade agreement of 1900, which imposed the “most favorable nation” principle<sup>9</sup>. The agreement was then replaced by its successor of 1936, but none of them could overcome the trade restrictions fueled by nationalist movements characterizing the pre-war period.

The protectionist mindset soon propagated also in the industrial domain. Vargas based his industrial policies on self-reliance by raising customs duties, and Italy put all its efforts to increase its exports rather than on the establishment of subsidiaries of Italian firms. For example, the Zambelletti pharmaceutical firm even appealed to the court against its subsidy in São Paulo, blaming it for selling products not authorized to be purchased in Brazil with the accusation that it would harm its exports. Therefore, at the peak of the industrialization of Brazil, Italian firms lost the chance to play an active role and to extract profit from these dynamics. Pirelli was the only industry that followed its business instinct and distanced itself from the Italian political directives (Cervo, 1991).

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<sup>9</sup> “Most-favored” principle of the WTO (ex GATT) is a non-discriminatory principle that oblige applying the same treatment to every trade partner [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatise/tif\\_e/fact2\\_e.htm#seebox](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatise/tif_e/fact2_e.htm#seebox). Last accessed on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Brazilian data show that between 1949 and 1959, Brazil accounted for 2.5% of the total of Italian imports. Given all those years of official meetings, diplomatic negotiations, and commitment to three trade agreements, the result can be considered insignificant.

Trade relations improved at the end of the 1950s when Italy sent two commercial missions to Brazil involving Confindustria and other important stakeholders.

In the 1960s, decisive trade and economic relations were taken for the first time, replacing the previous shy initiatives. The Brazilian trade balance turned into a surplus due to the openness and diversification of its market. If coffee was the main exported commodity, Brazil caught the attention of foreign interest thanks to its raw materials and agricultural goods. Despite the Italian-Brazilian low volume of trade and the blurred political relations, Italy tried to recover its deficit through important foreign direct investments (FDI). In this context, the two countries signed an agreement on economic and industrial cooperation in 1982, stimulated by, on the one hand, the Brazilian call to foreign investments to finalize its industrial development and, on the other hand, by the Italian need for raw materials and abundant workforce. From 1974 to 1988, Italy climbed the ranks of foreign investors from the 15th to the 7th biggest investor in Brazil. It also contributed to technical assistance, such as in the engineering training program for the national railways. The most profitable Italian industries are now implanted in Brazil, such as Fiat, Olivetti, and many others. Even the former President of the European Commission and Italian Prime Minister, Romani Prodi, stated during its trip to São Paulo in 1989, at the prevention of the project “*Italia Viva*” that the cooperation between Italy and Brazil never reached the real potential level they could attain, and this despite the cultural proximity between the two societies marked by the history of the Italian migration (Cervo, 1991).

#### 4. Citizenship law and its controversies

Italian institutions, political parties, and organizations influence the political realm of migrants through citizenship laws, electoral laws, remittances, and capital policies (Vitelli, 2013).

In the following section, we provide the historical and political path of the citizenship law based on the *Ius Sanguinis* principle<sup>10</sup>, which is still in force today.

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<sup>10</sup> Definition extracted from the Treccani Vocabulary [https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ius-sanguinis\\_\(Neologismi\)](https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ius-sanguinis_(Neologismi)). Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

The concept of *Ius Sanguinis* was first introduced with the Pisanelli Code, the first civil code of the Kingdom of Italy enacted in 1865 (Vitiello, 2013). Article 1 defined citizenship for the first time in Italian legislation as a fundamental requirement to enjoy political and civil rights<sup>11</sup>. Article 4 states, “The son of a citizen is a citizen”, officially establishing the transmission of nationality through blood relations (Calabrò, 2018).

The 1865 law was further modified and integrated with ad hoc dispositions, but the massive migration and the different legislations in force in the countries of destination (see the “*Big Naturalisation*” policies in Brazil) required a new regulation (Calabrò, 2018). The new citizenship law was adopted in 1912<sup>12</sup>, and despite many controversies, it remained unmodified until the law of 1992. At that time, the *Ius Sanguinis* principle was perceived as the most effective way to avoid the naturalization of Italians in the context of the political thought we illustrated previously. One of the disputes was, for instance, the double citizenship and the rights deriving from it, concerning the mandatory military conscription between Italy and Argentina that was solved with a bilateral agreement in 1971 (Tintori, 2006; Tintori, 2009).

According to Vitiello, the citizenship law emerged as a compromise between the benevolent duty to safeguard expatriates’ rights and the nationalist interest in involving them as part of the nation (Vitiello, 2013).

The law in force today, dating to February the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1992, n.91<sup>13</sup>, allows anyone with Italian roots to request Italian citizenship without generational limitations. This law reflects two historical characteristics: Italy's recent unification in 1861, one of Western Europe's newest countries, and the need to build a cultural identity. The citizenship law, therefore, aimed to strengthen national unity and maintain connections with migrants, even in cases of repatriation, and with the descendants to guarantee a continuity of the “*Italianness*” over time (Fornara, 2014).

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<sup>11</sup> Codice Civile del 1865, Libro I, Titolo I, Art. 1 “Della cittadinanza del godimento dei diritti civili.” [https://www.notaio-busani.it/download/docs/CC1865\\_100.pdf](https://www.notaio-busani.it/download/docs/CC1865_100.pdf) Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> Legge 13 giugno 1912, n. 555 “Sulla cittadinanza italiana.” <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1912-06-13:555@originale>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Legge 5 febbraio 1992, n.91 “Nuove norme sulla cittadinanza.” [https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/servizi/old\\_servizi/legislazione/cittadinanza/legislazione\\_30.html](https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/servizi/old_servizi/legislazione/cittadinanza/legislazione_30.html)

The procedures of the process for the recognition of Italian citizenship are illustrated in the Circular of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 1991, n. K.28.1<sup>14</sup>. Its articles 1 and 7, based on the Law of 1912, regulate the process for the demand of the descendants of Italian migrants. They can ask for the nationalities in two ways, namely through the consulates or through municipalities. In both cases, they must provide the birth certificates, marriage certificates, and death certificates of all the descendants of the Italian one, with an official apostille and translation to Italian. The authorities then must verify that none in the genealogical tree explicitly renounced Italian citizenship. If the demand is successful, the “new” citizens are enrolled in the municipality of preference of the citizen, who must then indicate their residency abroad at the AIRE.

Given the massive number of requests, consulates are exposed to challenging pressure that slows down the overall proceedings. To accelerate the process, those who have the possibility may consider moving their residency to an Italian municipality for the required time and submit the request to the municipality itself. Usually, they choose the municipality of their ancestors as it’s easier to find the required certificates or the biggest cities, especially if they intend to settle in Italy and find a high-skill job (Tintori, 2009).

Following the 1970 reform on the decentralization of administration to the Regions<sup>15</sup>, some of them unilaterally implemented policies to engage with the Italian diaspora. The first initiative was taken by Piedmont, which in 1987 created the Regional Council on Emigration, which provides measures to facilitate the integration of the descendants in Piedmont, such as free trips and initial accommodation. The region of Veneto followed the example with its regional council, established in 2003, for the “*Veneti nel mondo*” and projects aiming at reintegrating the descendants of Veneto through the “*Progetto Rientro*”. The objectives are to create synergies in the economic and commercial sectors with migrants, to spread knowledge of such phenomena among young citizens, to inaugurate classes for the integration into the job market of migrants, and to promote the Italian language and culture (Tintori, 2009).

These initiatives seem to repair the historical void of engagement with the Italian diaspora. However, the performance of such policies brought out some weaknesses of the administration and the underlying ideological framework. Concerning the latter, critics note that such policies apply only to Italian

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<sup>14</sup> Circolare n.K. 28.1 8 aprile 1991 “Riconoscimento del possesso dello status civitatis italiano ai cittadini stranieri di ceppo italiano.”[https://www.esteri.it/mae/normative/Normativa\\_Consolare/ServiziConsolari/cittadinanza/circk28\\_1991.pdf](https://www.esteri.it/mae/normative/Normativa_Consolare/ServiziConsolari/cittadinanza/circk28_1991.pdf). Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Legge 16 maggio 1970, n. 281 "Provvedimenti finanziari per l'attuazione delle Regioni a statuto ordinario." <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1970-05-16;281!vig=>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

descendants but that today belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> generations. Hence, although they have been far away from Italy during their whole life, they enjoy many more benefits than other nationalities migrants who reach Italy to find better life conditions.

Concerning the former, it is appropriate to mention two cases that show the fragility of implementing such policies without pertinent consideration of the extent of the surrounding context of the Italian diaspora abroad. The first one is the case of the city of Belluno, in the Veneto region. Right after the approval of the plan of the new regional law to facilitate integration in the society of 2003, the municipality received a sharp increase in the demand for Italian citizenship from Brazilians who had transferred their residency there. Since that year, around two hundred procedures have been initiated annually for recognized citizenships. However, only around thirty percent of the “*new*” citizens remained in the city, while others left Italy to apply for jobs abroad. There are numerous reasons for this, but the mismatch between the expectations of better life standards and higher salaries and the economic crises and high unemployment rate in Italy is one of the major ones.

Beyond the pragmatic consequences of this law, many critics question the ideological foundation of the *Ius Sanguinis* principle. According to Taddone, for instance, the 1992 law is a “reparatory” instrument for apologising to those Italians who didn’t receive any support from the government for their future nor as a form of assistance in the migration process. But critics also date back to the 23<sup>rd</sup> parliamentary legislation in the twentieth century, when the ruling élite whispered the idea of introducing a law that would remove Italian nationality for “*non-utilization*” or “*tacit renunciation*”. But those voices never materialized. In 1959, for instance, the jurist Roland Quadri drafted an article called “*Citizenship*”, in which he assessed that this law did not reflect the real life of the Italian descendants but was just the result of the missionary mindset of early twentieth-century policymakers (Taddone, 2020).

Likewise, Quadri asserted that the 1912 Law reflected “*a missionary and paternalistic mindset*” that did not consider the long-term effects, rendering Italian citizenship a “*secondary*” or “*reserve*” nationality that does not derive from a genuine sentiment of belonging to the Italian identity (Quadri, 1959).

Further controversies concern the unconstitutionality of the gender discrimination attached to the law, or the time needed to address it. Until the Italian Constitutional Court's verdicts of 1975<sup>16</sup> and 1983<sup>17</sup>, respectively, according to Law 555/1912, women married to non-Italian men automatically acquired their husband's nationality—losing the Italian one—and they couldn't transfer the Italian nationality to their children (Taddone, 2020). Modifying such a discriminatory instance that breached the Italian Constitution took twenty-seven and thirty-five years.

The 1992 Law, still in force to date, reaffirmed the *Ius Sanguinis* right, simplified the procedure to reacquire citizenship, and extended this right to the descendants of citizens living in the ex-Austrian Hungarian Empire territories (Tintori, 2006). However, the right of the descendants of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire inhabitants was abrogated in 2010<sup>18</sup>.

Tintori argues that the ineffectiveness of the Italian law toward its diaspora is evident in the boom of citizenship requests from South American countries since 2000. Although the citizenship inheritance is automatic, most of the requests today come from the children of Italians who forgot to declare their birth. To obtain it, there are no generational limits of ancestry, no residency requirement in Italy, and the only proof needed is that none in the genealogical tree voluntarily renounced Italian citizenship.

The Italian administration abroad, through its consular network, is objectively struggling to handle the pressure of the requests for Italian citizenship. Requests skyrocketed in conjunction with mainly three geopolitical factors: the financial crises of 2001 and 2002 that hit South America, triggering migration for working reasons, and the consolidation of the free European market initiated since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. Italian citizenship grants the Italian passport that represents a pivotal tool for accessing both European and US job market (Tintori, 2006).

In the span of less than ten years from 2000, the number of Italians registered at the consulate of Madrid, Spain, experienced a four hundred percent increase, and seventy percent of the applicants were born in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. This demonstrates how the passport is instrumental for entry into the

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<sup>16</sup> Corte Costituzionale, 9 aprile 1975, n. 87, in "Gazz. Uff." n.108, 23 aprile 1975 <https://www.cortecostituzionale.it/actionSchedaPronuncia.do?anno=1975&numero=87>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Corte Costituzionale, 28 gennaio 1983, n.30, in "Gazz. Uff." n.46, 16 febbraio 1983 <https://www.cortecostituzionale.it/actionSchedaPronuncia.do?anno=1983&numero=30>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Riconoscimento della cittadinanza ex legge 379/2000 e ex legge 124/2006 <https://www.esteri.it/it/servizi-consolari-e-visti/italiani-all-estero/cittadinanza/riconoscimento-della-cittadinanza-ex-lege-n-124-2006-ai-connazionali-di-istria-fiume-e-dalmazia-e-ai-loro-discendenti/>. Last accessed on August 16th, 2024.

European Union, especially in Portugal, due to language affinities, where they can benefit from public health care, and to the United States of America under the visa waiver program. There, they can usually find a job informally through the support of the large Latin American community. Those not traveling usually ask for an Italian passport “just in case” for the future to secure a safe way out from potential crises (Tintori, 2011).

This phenomenon raises public budget concerns for the health insurance system and voting rights (Tintori, 2011). The right to vote for Italians residing abroad, introduced in 2001, shows that holders of Italian citizenship are more likely to vote than Italians born in Italy and living abroad temporarily. The law predicted that Italians abroad could elect eighteen Members of Parliament (MPs) and six Senators, divided by four global constituencies (the law was reformed in 2020, see Chapter IV, Part I, paragraph 1.4). This significant representation can heavily impact Italian legislation, a country where the diaspora has never lived nor will experience the consequences (Tintori, 2006).

For Tintori, a paradox exists between the governmental expectations and reality: the government aimed at mobilizing its diaspora to strengthen its Italian image, but actually, it is the community that is now leveraging the Italian legislation for its interests (Tintori, 2006). The diaspora’s interest might be of an ideological or material nature. For the former, the motherland’s foreign policy can shape the image of the country and improve its integration into the host society; for the latter, communities abroad participate in the decision-making process of its motherland’s foreign policy (Shain & Barth, 2003).

## PART II - Conceptual frameworks of “*Diaspora*”

### 1. Definition of Diaspora and its Role in International Relations Theories

Traditionally, the word “diaspora” has been used to refer to the Jewish people, a population that escaped violence throughout history and was displaced from its homeland.

However, since the 1960s, academics and policymakers have begun to use the term again to refer to groups living outside their country of origin. This definition encompasses temporary migrants, first-generation migrants or descendants of migrants who wish to retain identity boundaries, community solidarity, and any form of link with the mother country (Gamlen, 2006; Fratelli, 2017). Sociologist Robin Cohen has expanded the concept of the diaspora to include all communities that have left their homeland for reasons of work, trade, imperialism, and culture (Pretelli, 2019).

In this thesis, we use Shain's definition, which describes diaspora as people who share the same origin and who live outside the boundaries of their ethnic or religious homeland. They define themselves as part of the national community of their homeland and thus are called upon to participate in homeland-related affairs. He distinguishes members who play an active or passive role within a diaspora. This thesis subtends that the Italian diaspora is of an “active” kind because it interacts with its motherland and influences its policies (Shain & Barth, 2003).

As we explored in the historical section, using Cohen's model of diaspora types, we identify the Italian diaspora as a labor diaspora, originating with expatriates who migrated in search of better social and economic opportunities (Boyle et al. 2009).

Diaspora studies have proliferated since the 1990s as it is linked with the wave of globalization and the new concept of transnationalism (Pretelli, 2019; Gamlen, 2006). In the IR field, major theories (realism, liberalism, constructivism, and Marxism) have always focused on interstate relations, that is, relations between state entities. It follows that diaspora, by definition, does not fall within the scope of research in the field of international relations studies (Greenidge, 2013). However, diaspora engagement strategies have rekindled the interest of IR theorists as complementary to the resurgence of interest in transnationalism (Boyle et al 2009). Scholars have argued that the concept of diaspora, which today is

mainly the subject of humanitarian and social studies, should be incorporated into IR theories as an extra-territorial phenomenon (Greenidge, 2013).

To our thesis, it is crucial to define the concept of "*country*": the word does not always refer to the nation-state but rather to the expatriates' social and legal context of origin. A requirement for the definition of diaspora is its temporal permanence: to create the structural elements of the definition of a diaspora, as such, at least one generation should live in the host country. Host country is the geographic territory where members live but do not fully identify with it (Greenidge, 2013).

Among recent attempts to study diaspora involvement policies in the theoretical framework of IR, liberal and constructivist theories have provided the most appropriate approach for our thesis's goal. Shain and Barth (2003) propose a theoretical framework within the IR field to explain how diasporas influence their mother country's foreign policies. Their theory combines constructivism and liberalism.

Constructivism emphasizes of identity in shaping state behavior. As opposed to the realist rational approach, for constructivists, the state is a social actor composed of interweaving identities of its people. Social interests stem from national identity, making national interests dependent and fluid variables that evolve over time in response to both domestic and international phenomena. Identity originates from the people and their interactions within society, not from the state itself. Therefore, members of a diaspora are defined as a group sharing the same interests and identity, even though they reside outside their homeland's geographic boundaries (Shain & Barth, 2003).

Applying this concept to diasporas, a diasporic identity is constructed by its people's identity and their migratory experiences (Greenidge, 2013). In this sense, constructivism is best suited to expand the definition of citizenship because it recognizes that diaspora members often attach greater importance to their national identity than those who reside in the homeland. This happens because the latter do not experience their culture daily, so they tend to shape and engage more tenaciously in issues concerning their origins (Shain & Barth, 2003).

Coming to liberalism, Shain and Barth's theory further claims that liberalism is best suited to explain that diasporas should be considered a domestic group of individuals because they can effectively influence decision-making at home and in the host country, contributing to strengthening their national identity. In this sense, liberalism enlarges the definition of "domestic" to include people who feel like belonging to

a certain identity, not only in physical terms. Liberalists do not consider states as the most important actors in the IR field and believe they are not unitary. Instead, the state is the sum of the actions and interests of individuals and private groups who, through coalitions and bargaining, reflect the interests of the dominant power. Individuals' influence on a country's foreign policy is directly proportional to the strength of relations between political institutions and society. However, the degree of influence on foreign policy varies depending on the ability of diaspora members to organize themselves into an influential group i.e., a democratic form of government, the permeability of the home country's institutions to receive such influence, and the "*balance of power*" between the two countries, which, in turn, determines the direction of the foreign policy of the homeland towards the host country. In other words, diasporas, as people within the national identity but outside the borders, exert greater influence on the mutual foreign policies of their homeland and host country when the states concerned are "*permissive*" and willing to listen to the needs and interests of the diaspora (Shain & Barth, 2003).

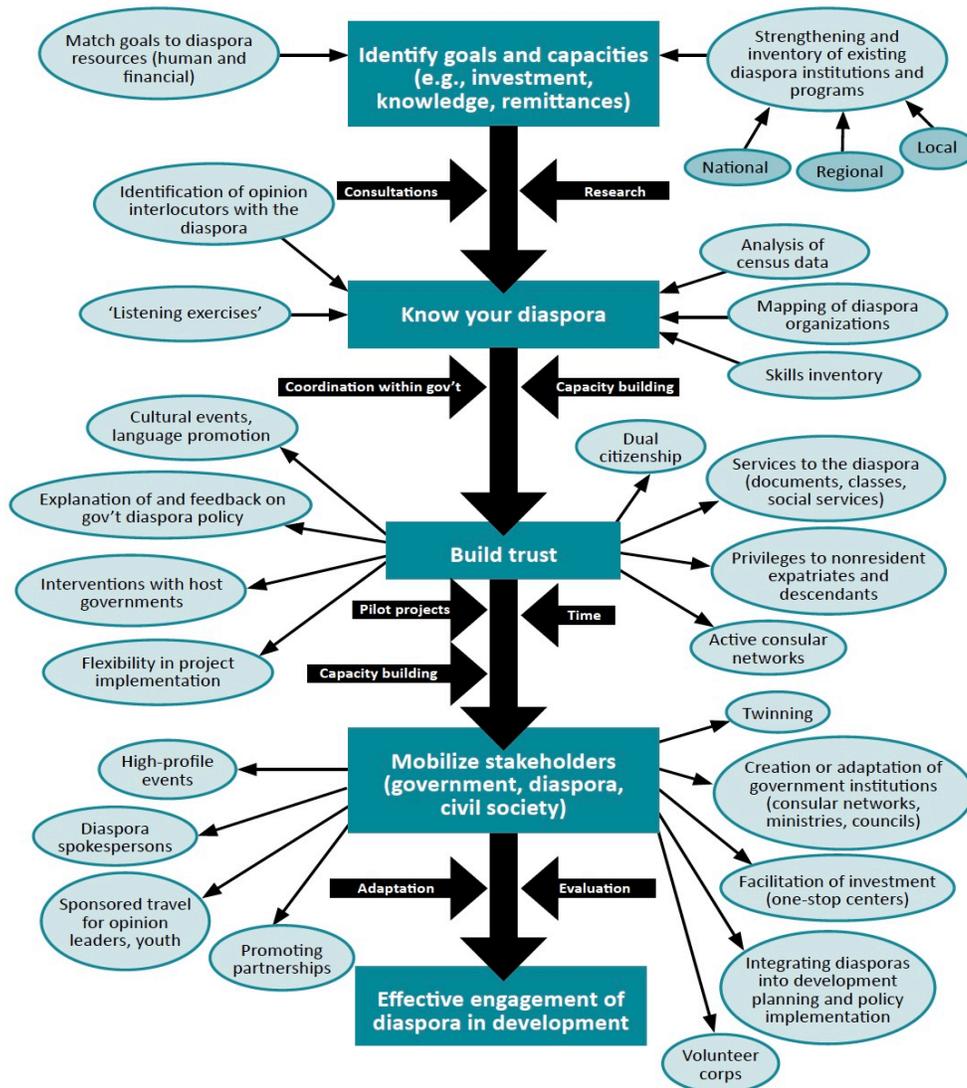
## 2. Theoretical framework of diaspora engagement policies

Diaspora policies are defined as practices implemented by state institutions for the benefit of members of the state residing abroad. They therefore aim to include the diaspora and its civil society living within the state's borders (Gamlen, 2006). Filipovic, Devjac and Ferfila (2012) define diaspora policy strategy as a broad framework that coordinates practices in the field of public policy that are generated and implemented by various organizations. To be effective, diaspora engagement policies must be realistic, equitable, and achievable over the long term. These policies may target different fields of action but, above all, diaspora engagement should focus on managing the lives of its members rather than on providing a positive environment and resources to secure their needs and rights (Filipovic, Devjac & Ferfila, 2012). In their workshop about diaspora engagement policies, Boyle et al (2009) observed that the "*prerequisite for a successful diaspora strategy is a motivated diaspora, willing and minded contributing to national development*" (Boyle et al., 2009, p.17). They therefore explain that a government strategy has a responsibility to maintain and develop social and cultural links with its diaspora. Similarly, Newland and Patrick (2004) consider that pragmatic approaches to strategy design are likely to be more successful in maintaining, creating or rebuilding links with its diaspora by promoting national cultural values. Initiatives such as granting dual nationality to future generations and

offering cultural and linguistic promotions abroad could ensure the diaspora's proximity to its country of origin in the long term (Newland & Patrick, 2004).

The following roadmap has been included here because it provides a pragmatic guide on how to develop diaspora engagement strategies. This roadmap, designed by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) at the request of the Dutch government in 2009, is, to our knowledge, the most comprehensive in the existing literature. The roadmap describes the fundamental requirements for designing an effective long-term strategy. The first step is to establish the objectives the government wants to achieve through engagement with its diaspora and the capacities it has at its disposal to achieve these objectives. These goals may concern national issues, or interests arising from bilateral relations with the destination country. The second step is to carry out detailed studies of the diaspora to understand its composition (low- or highly skilled, social status, age, gender, etc.) and to identify the needs of the community and the value it can bring to the homeland. Thirdly, governments should implement initiatives aimed at developing a bilateral relationship in which both parties perceive the need to derive mutual benefit from engagement. A lack of trust between the home state and its diaspora could be a factor in the failure of the overall strategy. Beyond the creation of semi-autonomous institutions, trust is built through privileges designed for the diaspora and its descendants, such as reduced currency transfer fees or job offers for descendants who have not yet acquired citizenship, and legal authorization to grant dual citizenship. The final stage involves the effective mobilization of diaspora resources through new legal tools or institutions (Migration Policy Institute, 2009).

**Figure 1: Overview of the steps in designing a diaspora engagement policy**



Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 2009

Furthermore, Lafleur and Vintila (2020) comparative analysis of diaspora engagement policies of the European Union member states argues that governments can use two types of infrastructures to establish a relationship with their diasporas: descriptive infrastructure refers to the practice of institutionalization

of homeland entities with the mission of acting on behalf of the interest of the diaspora, whereas substantive infrastructure is the making of policies concerning social protection (Lafleur & Vintila 2020).

Concerning the role of institutions in dealing with the diaspora, the road map for engaging Diasporas in Developed designed by Agunias and Newland (2013) identifies six types of entities, namely a ministry, sub-ministry, consular network, quasi-governmental institutions, and those can function either at the local or at the national level. Institutions can be located both in the country of origin and in the country of destination (Agunias & Newland, 2013, p. 72). According to them, the advantages of centralizing the decision-making process in one ministerial entity are budgetary allocations and the development of a straightforward mandate. When comes to the application of such strategy, consulates remain one of the most important actors due to their privileged position at the forefront of the relationship between the government and the diaspora. Many states started to send specialized personnel trained to deal with diasporic matters (Agunias & Newland, 2013). However, an extensive consular presence does not reveal whether the overall diaspora engagement strategy is adequate for the diaspora nor its effectiveness. The same applies for public governmental institutions under the ministerial and sub-ministerial levels. Their mission is to support the diaspora to a larger extent than consular services, reaching the population in their daily life by providing more visibility of the commitment of the sending state. The downturn, however, is that they rely on the political mandate of the government, and, as in the case of Italy and France, they might vanish. Further types of entities are interest-representation institutions that are further divided into two categories: it can take the form of representation at the legislative body through the elections of MPs for foreign circumscriptions or of representative bodies acting as conductors of national public policies and diaspora interests (Lafleur & Vintila, 2020).

Lastly, we believe Gamlen's theory (2006) brings an innovative interpretation of the meaning of diaspora engagement. From his analysis, based on his study of previous literature, the author noticed that most countries do not have a diaspora engagement policy defined as such, in other words, a policy package dedicated to the relationship with their communities abroad does not appear in their national policies as an independent field. Instead, diaspora matters are regulated through other institutions, such as migration regulations or consular activities. And it's exactly because diaspora engagement concerns many contexts that he calls for better planning and management of diaspora engagement policies. Among his concerns, he evaluates the impact that communities abroad have on the public administration of the sending state.

For example, wherever diaspora members are granted the right to vote abroad, legislators "*face a conflict of interests*" when it comes to protecting locals or diasporas' interests (Gamlen, 2006, p.7). Policymakers also face important decisions concerning the access of public goods to people residing abroad when (and if) they return to their motherland. According to Gamlen, a well-defined engagement mechanism would provide solutions to address such important question marks. For instance, Bhagwati (2003) argued that if illegal migration is difficult to contain worldwide, then the governmental approach to the problem should change. He believes that the diaspora engagement model is the one that is most consistent with human rights because it involves granting a range of rights to both past and present migrants and their descendants. However, this diaspora model cannot be considered complete without the other side of the coin, namely obligations. Because rights and obligations should be included in a diaspora strategy, he proposed an expatriate tax in India, which has already been used by the United States (Bhagwati, 2003).

Besides institutional adaptations, Gamlen argues that states should define their diaspora engagement strategy to intensify and extract the diaspora's values and opportunities. Within this context fall policies aiming at promoting knowledge and technology transfers, facilitating returns, investments, remittances, and others (Gamlen, 2006). Furthermore, if in compliance with international norms on non-interference, demonstrating that the sending state intends to regulate migration matters can be positively seen by the receiving country. Hence, diaspora engagement policies can improve the settlement process of migrants and the bilateral relation with the receiving country at the same time. With this assumption, Gamlen advocates that diaspora engagement studies should be incorporated into global studies. In summary, Gamlen provided three reasons why diaspora engagement should be a separate policy area requiring a meticulous strategy: the state's interests, the benefits of diasporas that are a precious "national" resource, and international cooperation (Gamlen, 2006).

Similar to Gamlen's globalist perspective, according to Filipovic, Devjac and Ferfila (2012) the establishment of a set of diaspora engagement policies is fundamental to demonstrate that the government aims at fulfilling the interests of every citizen, no matter their geographical location (Filipovic, Devjac & Ferfila, 2012). Such types of policies require constant communication with the diaspora and long-lasting initiatives to promote collaboration (Agunias & Newland, 2013; Filipovic, Devjac & Ferfila 2012). Communication is also pivotal in Boyle et al (2009)'s comparative analysis. According to their findings, creating two-way communication portals between motherlands and their diasporas should be a

priority in the designed strategy.

### *2.1 Benefits of diaspora engagement*

In the previous section, we saw a few theories explaining how governments should base their practices on a conscientiously designed strategy. In this second part of the chapter, we provide the main arguments for the reasons why such a strategy is advisable. It is worth noting that the reasons that lead government to structure their strategies is influenced by the period, by the political preferences, and by the state culture that is specific in each decision-making process. Hereunder the researcher resumed the most recurring topics.

Despite the existing literature gap on diaspora policy analysis, the recent revival of diaspora matters in political science was mostly inserted into the development studies field and focuses, in particular, on the role played by the remittances poured into the state's coffers by immigrants (Agunias & Newland, 2013). The Italian case is not an exception to such a void considering the magnitude of its migration flows throughout history. However, recent research attempted to “rescue the value of diasporas” to demonstrate that it can be a source of economic capital, human capital, and soft power that ultimately reinforces international cooperation (The European House – Ambrosetti, 2023).

Filipovic, Devjak and Ferfila resumed existing literature on remittances that identify them as an important economic consequence of transnationalism. Remittance benefits are often the reasons why states decide not to obstruct migration but to stimulate it by implementing diaspora engagement policies. Traditionally, remittances are defined as capital transfers from migrants to their country of origin, and migrants can assume different forms according to their purpose (Filipovic, Devjac & Ferfila 2012). Since remittances are substantial sources of foreign exchange currencies that count in the national balance of payment, they also contribute to achieving macroeconomic stability. In the long term, remittances create more opportunities for investments that ultimately reduce poverty rates as they provide access to educational and health systems. Overall, Agunias & Newland (2012) consider that the impact of remittances is more noteworthy for developing countries than for developed ones (Agunias & Newland, 2013). To provide some data, in its 2023 Migration and Development Brief, the World Bank estimates six-hundred fifty-six billion USD worth of remittances globally, affirming that they are pivotal resources to foster economic development and to face food insecurity and debt issues (The World Bank, 2024). This data is

likely to be higher as only official money transfer channels are computed, leaving outside the transfers of material goods or transfers sent through informal channels (Filipovic, Devjac & Ferfila 2012).

Despite the undeniable economic consequences of remittances, Newland and Patrick (2004) research on diaspora as a source of its motherland's poverty alleviation strategy reveals that diasporas generate many other financial assets (Newland & Patrick, 2004). Diasporas are major sources of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) or any other form of concrete economic contribution, play a pivotal role in "*bridging*" markets, are promoters of knowledge and technology transfers, of tourism, and can open up new trading and investment opportunities paths with the host country (Boyle et al 2009; Kuznetsov, 2006; Newland & Patrick, 2004).

First, while remittances represent valuable resources, their effects are generally short-term. Agunias and Newland argue that FDIs are capable of sustaining economic growth over the long term due to the human development associated with it. Although there is no universal strategy to attract FDI, they suggest targeting key aspects of entrepreneurship to foster new business opportunities, jobs, and innovation. Key areas for policy intervention include the creation of information networks, training programs, funding mechanisms, and public infrastructure. For instance, an online platform for the diaspora that contains all the financial and bureaucratic information needed to invest, along with the organization of business events targeting strategic domains, would increase visibility and awareness among its members. Such initiatives should be pursued through cooperation between banks, the private sector, and the government (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Second, diasporas stimulate different channels of exchange creating new channels of trade. They create favorable conditions to raise their home country's exports of national goods, the so-called "*nostalgic*" trade that is created by the diaspora's willingness to buy their national products. Their purchase is very likely to be extended throughout the hosting society. In this sense, expatriates are valuable promoters of their homeland image, reputation, and products, creating favorable dynamics that will, in the long run, lower transaction costs (Lowell & Gerova, 2004).

Third, technology and knowledge transfers have been recently gaining attention through the "*New Growth*" economic theory. This theory emphasizes the role of knowledge, entrepreneurship, innovation,

and technology in economic development<sup>19</sup>. In this context, diaspora members are catalysts of economic growth because they promote knowledge spillovers, technology transfers, contacts, business networks, and financial and political assets (Gamlen, 2006; Boyle et al., 2009). Governmental policies can intervene to foster brain circulation (Boyle et al., 2009). Two policies are the most commonly deployed to promote such exchanges: promulgating policies that facilitate the reintegration of expatriate students and researchers (calling *inward*) or sending researchers abroad to create the so-called “*diaspora knowledge networks*” (going *outward*) (Gamlen, 2006; Kuznetsov, 2006).

In this context, interpersonal relationships between societies are the most powerful channel to generate the transfer of knowledge and business opportunities. Expatriates bring a luggage of knowledge upon which they are likely to build a reputation in the new society that, through communication, might attract investors and businessmen and create new trade roots and offshoring activities. In this sense, migrants are also the first explorers of the market of the new society, and their influence is widened when they are backed by a promotion program by the sending government (Lowell & Gerova, 2004).

In addition, philanthropic donations from the private sector to their mother country are capturing the attention of economic development studies. They refer to the transfer of money from high-income diaspora members to a variety of programs, sometimes also with the support of intermediaries (organizations, foundations, and online networks). An example is provided by the American Indian Foundation (AIF) (see Chapter III, case 2) (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Finally, diaspora value rests on its pivotal role in opening new markets and generating tourism. Diaspora members are more likely to visit their country of origin for sentimental purposes, and they tend to consume products associated with their motherland's culture and tradition. Agunias & Newland argue that there are several areas of intervention. Policies can promote medical tourism, enhancing the country's health system; it can stimulate business tourism facilities and accommodations for business conferences (which, in turn, can attract FDI); it can foster heritage tourism through genealogy and cultural celebration; and promote national cultural or religious celebrations (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

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<sup>19</sup> Definition of New Growth Theory, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/new-growth-theory.asp#:~:text=The%20new%20growth%20theory%20is,of%20people's%20pursuit%20of%20profits>. Last accessed on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The topics addressed so far are the subject of a comparative policy analysis to which the third chapter of the thesis is devoted. The researcher selected four countries, China, India, Mexico, and France, to present a pragmatic demonstration of the application and results of diaspora engagement policies.

### CHAPTER III - COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS - Diaspora Engagement: The Chinese, Indian, Mexican, and French cases

To deliver a comprehensive work, we believe it is essential to highlight other cases where diasporas of various nationalities have positively contributed to economic growth through trade and investments and enhanced diplomatic relations through soft power. It is important to note that when evaluating the success of these cases, readers should be aware of the differing dynamics that apply to each case. Those illustrated here differ in terms of the demographic size of the diaspora, the historical timing in which most of its members emigrated, the socio-economic status of migrants that creates different needs, and, finally, the concentration rate in the countries of destinations (Lafleur & Vintila, 2020).

Compared to Italian migration flows, the following countries' diaspora engagement deals with more recent migration flows, so their policies are dedicated to the migrants themselves and their children at the latest. The current Italian community includes descendants in their fourth or fifth generations. Differences also concern the social status of expatriates and the reasons for leaving the country. As previously stated, the Italian mass migration dealt with low-skilled migrants who were escaping from low wages and penury of essential commodities.

Despite these differences, we believe these examples provide valuable insights into diaspora engagement that Italy can learn from. Italy must recognize that it cannot simply adapt or update its previous policies based on past circumstances. It seems unlikely that copying and pasting other governments' diaspora engagement strategies would automatically result in successful engagement. However, conducting a comparative analysis is useful for acquiring new knowledge that should then be adapted to the specific context in which those strategies should operate. In other words, there is not a universal approach that works for every political system and every kind of diaspora (Boyle et al., 2009).

The Italian migration policies resulted from a slow process aimed at solving practical issues of its own social and economic structure. It represents a unique case that didn't take inspiration from other countries' examples or theoretical frameworks (Vitiello, 2013). However, the analysis of other governments' strategies could be a source of inspiration for models of best practices upon which the Italian government should then adapt to its context and objectives for the future (Boyle et al., 2009)

The following cases provide examples of how meticulously designed long-term strategies can draw benefits for the whole country system. We adopt the definition of the Migration Research Hub by the.

International Migration Research Network (IMISCOE) delineates diaspora engagement policies as “a variety of government measures aiming at engaging, maintaining or developing a relationship with their diaspora living abroad”<sup>20</sup>.

## 1. People’s Republic of China’s (PRC)

This chapter aims to present the Chinese’s policies pursued to engage with its diaspora. As it will be discussed, the Chinese case is a pragmatic example of the application of Putnam’s Two-level game theory (see Chapter II, Part I, paragraph 2) as diaspora engagement policies are inserted in both domestic and foreign policy agendas.

Despite the strong cultural ties that overseas Chinese tend to naturally maintain with their homeland, the assertiveness and persistence of China's extensive diaspora engagement programs have significantly strengthened their relations (Agarwal, 2017). The community of Chinese living abroad, including their descendants, is estimated to reach 60 million people - roughly equivalent to the population of Italy - and they are located in every country in the world. Although China does not recognize the right of dual citizenship, the Chinese government and the *Communist Party of China* (CPC) put great effort into including both Chinese and ethnic Chinese without citizenship in the “*great Chinese family*” and maintaining a strong Chinese identity among them. It follows that China’s diaspora engagement policies involve every Chinese person based on ethnic criteria, not legal terms. This effort stems from recognizing the value that its diaspora can play as a pivotal resource for its development and modernization goals (Schäfer, 2022; Newland & Patrick 2004).

China’s strategy can be examined through two interconnected perspectives. First, on the domestic public policy domain, the government enhanced Chinese diaspora’s role in the country's economic development initiatives. Second, the diaspora was strategically used to create a robust soft power to improve its image internationally through the promotion of Chinese culture, language, and values abroad (A. & S. Darmawan, 2022).

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<sup>20</sup> [https://migrationresearch.com/taxonomies/topics-migration-governance-migration-policy-and-law-diaspora-engagement-policies?query=china&page=1&sorting=relevance\\_desc&taxonomies\[\]=132](https://migrationresearch.com/taxonomies/topics-migration-governance-migration-policy-and-law-diaspora-engagement-policies?query=china&page=1&sorting=relevance_desc&taxonomies[]=132). Last accessed on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Concerning the domestic realm, the Chinese government has strategically used these communities to accelerate the achievement of its national goals. Today, the Chinese government's engagement be viewed within the context of its strategic objectives, such as the "*Made in China 2025*" initiative, which aims to establish China as a leading independent technological power, and the "*Belt and Road Initiative*", which seeks to enhance trade and investment relationships across Asia, Africa, and Europe (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). Even before that, since the creation of the People's Republic in 1949, the government has always inserted overseas Chinese in its foreign and domestic strategies. Domestically, the Chinese diaspora was incentivized to financially contribute to China's modernization through their FDI and remittances. Internationally, the presence of Chinese abroad was used as a pretext to foster China's image, status, and soft power worldwide. For example, Southeast Asia was the main target of the first diplomatic initiative when China opened itself to the world because it was the land of the largest Chinese community (A. & S. Darmawan, 2022). This argument is supported by Schäfer who sustains that nowadays, under Xi Jinping's presidency, the Chinese diaspora has become an integral part of its new foreign policy, part of the Chinese's "*discourse power*" ambitions (Schäfer, 2022).

In particular, China's diaspora engagement strategy has garnered considerable attention in the existing literature due to its strong emphasis on knowledge and technology transfers. The Chinese government has been pursuing policies to encourage repatriation, particularly among highly skilled workers and students who bring back valuable knowledge, capital, and expertise acquired abroad (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). Already in 1977, the leader Deng Xiaoping called on the Ministry of Education to encourage Chinese students to study abroad to acquire new modern technologies (Xiang, 2007) and planned to recruit 400 scientists from the Chinese community abroad to work in China (A. & S. Darmawan, 2022). The regulations implemented to allow Chinese students to study overseas in those years laid the groundwork for the "*Twelve-word Approach*", implemented in 1993, that defined the milestone of the Chinese mindset, namely "*support study overseas, encourage returns, guarantee freedom of movement*" (Xiang, 2007). In 2013, President Xi Jinping expanded this approach, highlighting that the CCP and the government would ensure that the Chinese would play a major role when returning to China and would make all the efforts needed to allow overseas Chinese to contribute to China's economic development also from abroad (Agarwal, 2017; Sen, 2020).

Chinese students must sign a contract with the government when they go study abroad with a government sponsorship, and their dossier is entirely managed by the Chinese consulates and embassies abroad. In

this case, they are also obliged to return to China upon graduation, with penalties for non-compliance. The Ministry of Personnel created a Return Overseas Students/Scholars to manage and assist the process of the reintegration of students. In addition, many cities and provinces of China offer specific policies to attract Chinese students from abroad, such as high salaries, advantageous tax rates, special business loans, housing, and education for their children's subsidies (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Xiang, 2007). Other incentives are provided by the long-term multiple-entry visa policy, which allows Chinese citizens with foreign citizenship to enter China without limitations (Xiang, 2007).

Moreover, in 2005, the government sponsored the "*One-Hundred Eleven Project*", the successor of the "*One-Hundred Talent Programme*", whose aim is to recruit top-level students in Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines in exchange for two hundred forty thousand USD for three years. This initiative allows top diaspora students to collaborate on research projects with domestic researchers. China invested eighty-eight million USD in the research process of talent (payment for the short trip to China and their salaries) (Agunias, Newland, 2013).

Liu, She, and Wang from Stanford University research assess the effectiveness of such a policy based on a comparison of the productivity of scholars between pre- and post-recruitment to China. The study shows that the program successfully attracted Chinese studying abroad and increased the productivity of research works, especially in the chemistry, life sciences, and engineering fields. They further argue that human capital nowadays is a crucial aspect triggering international competition and that in the future Chinese policies could change the current equilibrium by drawing talented foreign students away from the USA, on which they are highly dependent (She, Liu & Wang, 2023).

At the institutional level, the government established various bodies in charge of managing specific aspects of diaspora engagement. In 2018, Xi Jinping centralized even further the control of diaspora policy, which today lies mainly in the hands of the Party's United Front Work Department (UFWD) (Schäfer, 2022). In practice, the UFWD plays a major role in managing relationships with the Chinese diaspora on political, commercial, and cultural matters, playing a major role at the institutional level (Agarwal, 2017).

In 1974, after a short period of decline in Chinese commitment toward its community abroad during the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping created the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAO<sup>21</sup>), an institution in charge of strengthening diplomatic and cultural ties with the Chinese abroad and strengthening trade and political relations with the host countries (A. & S. Darmawan, 2022). OCAO, which is under the State Council, is in charge of coordinating the policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the diaspora policies promulgated by the State Council and the CCP. Abroad, it provides research and recommendations on how to attract talents and technologies from abroad, it supports diaspora communities by maintaining information databases, protecting their rights, and implementing educational exchange programs (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Agunias, Newland, 2013; Sen, 2020).

In addition, the Chinese government set a specific body to observe Chinese diaspora trends and data. The Advisory Committee of Overseas Chinese Affairs provides recommendations based on its observations of the diaspora, allowing for timely policy adjustments according to the variations of the diaspora (Agarwal, 2017).

Moreover, the Chinese engagement with its diaspora is maintained through continuous periodical communication. The government organizes annual conferences to keep contact with expatriates, such as the Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations, which seems to enjoy a certain amount of success as Chinese living in more than one hundred thirty countries participated, and the World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC), taking place every two years, which aim at strengthening social and economic ties with Chinese entrepreneurs abroad (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Sen, 2020). The government is also committed to spreading Chinese identity values through the “*Roots-Seeking*” program, which offers Chinese language and culture courses (Agarwal, 2017).

Overall, through political campaigns, economic incentives, and scholar compensations, China's strategic diaspora engagement has effectively mobilized the diaspora to contribute to China's economic development and implement the new foreign policy strategy. Xi Jinping's call to the diaspora to “*tell China's story well*” demonstrate that diaspora engagement is a pivotal element in its public diplomacy discourse aiming to improve China's soft power (Schäfer, 2022; A. & S. Darmawan, 2022).

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<sup>21</sup> Official website: <https://www.gqb.gov.cn/>. Last accessed on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## 2. India

Unlike China, which always pursued a coherent strategy to engage with its diaspora, the Indian government originally despised emigration. Over time, it changed its strategy and became one of the most actively engaged in establishing good relations with its diaspora (Newland & Patrick 2004).

In 2000, the Indian community abroad was estimated at twenty million. The Indian government, however, separates the “*non-resident Indians (NRIs)*” and “*Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)*”, and India’s Ministry of External Affairs has a division in charge of each category.

Generally, the main objective of Indian diaspora engagement appears to be to attract funds and FDI to foster the country’s development. For this, the government created the Investment Information Centre (IIC), the agency responsible for providing advice and assistance on any financial topic. It provides data, explains government policies, and shows investment opportunities in Indian industries (Newland & Patrick 2004).

The principal actor at the forefront of Indian diaspora engagement policies is the *Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)*. A centralized and single agency, it plays a pivotal role in keeping constant ties with the Indian community worldwide. Besides annual meetings, promoting investments, philanthropy, exchanges of knowledge, education, and cultural matters, it also provides assistance in the settlement process on various aspects, such as legal status, voting rights, welfare, social and cultural connections, remittances, and business relationships. However, it is interesting to note that in conjunction with its efforts to keep such strong ties, it reminds Indians that they must adapt to and their first loyalty should be addressed to their new country of residence (Boyle et al., 2009).

As an example of Boyle et al. communication channels (see Chapter II, Part II, section 2) the Indian government set up the Prime Minister’s Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians that organizes events twice a year, once in India and once abroad, to gather Indians together. Such initiatives ensure effective consultation and engagement with the diaspora (Boyle et al., 2009). In 2000, a High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora was set to collect socioeconomic data on the Indian community abroad. The report indicated that around 35% of India’s GDP was generated by the Indian diaspora (Newland & Patrick 2004).

India's engagement with its diaspora is institutionalized through the MOIA and the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (PBD), a biannual event organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. PBD, held on January 9th to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa, serves as a platform to assess the progress of Indian expatriates (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). The first celebration and the first Indian Diaspora Conference took place in 2003, gathering politicians, Nobel laureates, and other notable figures of Indian origin and their descendants from sixty-three countries (Newland & Patrick, 2004).

On the same path as the Chinese and Taiwanese cases, the Indian government has launched several initiatives to encourage Indian students and professionals to return. Notable examples include the Ramanujan Fellowship for researchers and the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children. The scientific field receives significant investment through various programs, networks, and summits to attract scientists back to India (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). Additionally, the MOIA launched a program called "Know India" – a three-week internship dedicated to Indians from the second generation on to introduce them to Indian society, culture, and values. (Agunais & Newland, 2013; The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023).

The Indian diaspora's contributions have benefitted both India and host countries. For instance, Indian professionals in the United States, particularly in Silicon Valley, have facilitated significant investments in India. Companies like *Intel*, *Oracle*, *Texas Instruments*, *Sun Microsystems*, and *IBM* have established operations in India, enhancing education levels and stimulating economic development (Lowell & Gerova, 2004; Kuznetsov, 2006). The Indian economic boom, driven by the software industry and supported by diaspora contributions, underscores the effectiveness of policies focused on education and technological development.

India's case illustrates the importance of understanding and engaging with the diaspora. The creation of the MOIA in 2004 followed a comprehensive study of the diaspora's size, education level, employment, and willingness to maintain ties with India. Although India does not offer dual citizenship, the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) provides special rights and benefits, including a permanent visa for eligible individuals (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

India has also facilitated remittances and donations through initiatives like the Remittance Gateway, which allows for instant, low-fee money transfers. Philanthropic efforts are exemplified by collaborations

with organizations such as the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, which supports rural health projects, and the American Indian Foundation, which raised funds for victims of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake (Boyle et al., 2009; Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Beyond traditional economic and educational strategies, the Indian government promotes cultural integration and loyalty to host countries. Among cultural initiatives, we found monthly online magazine for expatriates managed by the government which collects the most relevant news from India, and the "*Tracing the Roots*" service, which helps individuals explore their family history. In addition, honors and awards are granted to keep a vivid interest over time. India annually delivers the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards honoring up to twenty diaspora members for their significant contributions, enhancing their prestige and reinforcing cultural ties (Boyle et al., 2009).

In conclusion, China focused on the "*brain trust*" strategy, leveraging the return of human capital. In contrast, India focused on its development through FDI, technology transfers, and out-sourcing opportunities (Newland & Patrick 2004). Although their engagement strategies differ, both countries view their expatriates as valuable economic and social remittance sources, encompassing access to markets, knowledge, foreign capital, expertise, ideas, and best practices (Agarwal, 2017).

### 3. Mexico

Like India, it took Mexico decades to understand the value the diaspora could bring (Newland, Patrick 2004).

Today, the Mexican diaspora engagement strategy is widely regarded as the most progressive in the world. Rather than simply implementing engagement policies, Mexico has established a comprehensive diaspora framework that integrates numerous institutions and legal norms. This extensive commitment by the Mexican government aims to protect Mexicans abroad. As will be discussed, this strategy promotes and facilitates the integration of Mexicans into their host societies, particularly in the United States, where ninety-five percent of Mexican migrants reside (Orozco, 2020). Therefore, the Mexican diaspora's engagement is deeply intertwined with the bilateral dynamics of American-Mexican relations. Unlike countries such as China, Taiwan, and India, which emphasize repatriation, Mexico envisions long-term benefits for itself, the USA, and their bilateral relations through promoting integration in the countries of destination (Laglagaron, 2010).

The foundation of Mexican migration dates to the end of the nineteenth century under the jurisdiction of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 (Greenidge, 2013; Laglagaron, 2010). The current diaspora framework, however, is a response to the intense migration to the USA (Laglagaron, 2010), categorizing Mexican migrants as "*transnational communities*" separated only by territorial boundaries (Greenidge, 2013). The government's initial engagement efforts began in the 1970s, focusing on the degrading working conditions faced by migrants in the United States (Orozco, 2020).

In the 1990s, the government issued two programs to protect returnees at the Mexican border and facilitate some procedural steps in the administration in the United States of America (Newland, Patrick 2004). This relationship peaked under President Vicente Fox, who referred to the diaspora as "*Very Important Paisanos*" and "*heroes*" and established the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IMA) (Orozco, 2020). The Fox government also introduced two important legislations: the first allows for Mexicans to hold USD accounts in Mexico; the second recognizes dual citizenship rights, even though they cannot vote for Mexican polling (Newland, Patrick 2004).

The Mexican diaspora is highly concentrated in one destination, the United States of America (Newland, Patrick 2004). Approximately eighty-five percent of the Mexican diaspora consists of working-age men, suggesting that migration is primarily driven by the search for new job opportunities, with fifty-nine percent of the eleven million seven hundred thousand migrants immigrating illegally, thereby lacking access to public services (Laglagaron, 2010). Since the 1950s, hometown associations have aimed to combat illegal labor and provide training and mentoring programs for career development (Kuznetsov, 2006). Mexico had to address the challenges arising from such large numbers of low-skilled, illegal migrants in the United States (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Since 1998, Mexico has allowed for dual citizenship under the *Ley de Nacionalidad* for children of Mexican parents. In 2018, the New Migration Policy of the Government of Mexico, effective until 2024, was introduced to enhance diaspora protection, ensure sustainable development, and facilitate the reintegration of repatriates (Orozco, 2020). Post-9/11 security measures in the United States reinforced the Matriculate Consular (MC). Issued by consulates, it is an identity card for unauthorized Mexicans that enables them to access administrative services such as driving licenses and bank accounts. This policy benefits the Mexican diaspora and improves American-Mexican relations by facilitating identification in case of a breach of American law (Orozco, 2020; Laglagaron, 2010).

At the institutional level, the overall migration management to the United States is pursued by the IMA, an independent Ministry of Foreign Affairs department. The advantage of being independent is given the freedom of action without the interference of long bureaucratic procedures at the ministry level. The IMA oversees civic engagement, education, health, and finance initiatives, collaborating with over fifty-six United States and Canada consular units. Civic engagement projects aim to improve Mexicans' reputation, ruined by the strong anti-Mexican sentiment in the States, by fostering leadership and integration into American social and political life. Education is a priority, given the low educational level of migrants. Educational initiatives address low educational levels and language barriers, while health initiatives like Binational Health Week offer medical screenings and workshops. Financial activities focus on managing remittances, which accounted for twenty-six billion USD, or three percent of Mexico's GDP, in 2008 (Laglagaron, 2010).

The government ensures constant communication channels through the Consultative Council of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (CCIMA). As a quasi-governmental type of institution, the Consultative

Council cooperates tightly with the government but, at the same time, it makes the diaspora feel like an equal agent, not a subordinated community to its country's power, and therefore raises trust among the community (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Among the most famous projects, we find the "*3x1 Program*". Initiated by the *State of Zacatecas*, the idea is that for every dollar a diaspora organization invests in the Mexican community - for modernization, urbanization, or caritative projects - the federal government, the state, and the municipality will add one dollar each. (Orozco, 2020; Kuznetsov, 2006). The program's success is attributed to a robust monitoring and evaluation system, with 2,488 projects approved and a hundred million USD in funding by 2010 (Agunias & Newland, 2013). However, successful development projects require management and monitoring by various stakeholders, including the government, expatriates, and infrastructure stakeholders (Kuznetsov, 2006). Another relevant caritative initiative is the "*Padrino program*" to attract investments from Mexican American businessmen. The peculiarity of this program is how it tries to grant funds: it focuses on the personal involvement of such businessmen to overcome the fear of investing in development projects in Mexico due to the high levels of corruption. The money collected from this project was devoted to infrastructures such as schools, roads, and water facilities, among others (Newland & Patrick 2004). Moreover, in 2005, the Mexican Talent Network was created by a partnership of different governmental institutions and the IME with the support of some Foundations in Mexico and the USA. This network looks for resources among the highly skilled members of the Mexican diaspora in specific sectors to foster knowledge transfers (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

The Mexican government encourages diaspora voting and has implemented initiatives to facilitate community integration, such as Mexican American clubs and Financial Education Week, which provides seminars and workshops on personal and family finance (Orozco, 2020). Educational programs on finance in Spanish and bilateral cooperation with United States partnerships further support the diaspora. Recent initiatives include "*Housing for Mexicans Living Abroad*" and "promote repatriation" programs (Orozco, 2020).

Mexicans in the USA benefit from the *Directo a México* system, an interbank system created by the *US Federal Reserve* and *Banco de México*, which facilitates cheaper and safer money transfers from American bank accounts to Mexican bank accounts (Agunias & Newland, 2013).

Overall, better integration of Mexicans into the USA society brings benefits to the USA as they constitute a more robust workforce, filling manpower gaps, and ultimately improving United States-Mexican foreign relations as Mexico shares the costs and responsibilities of migration. In the long term, Mexico gains from remittances and donations, as demonstrated by the success of the 3x1 Program (Laglagaron, 2010).

#### 4. France

The fourth and last case of this comparative analysis is France. After analyzing two densely populated and fast-developing countries located in Asia, and a Latin American country that is at the center of media attention due to illegal migration to the USA, the French case moves back the focus of the analysis to the European continent. Being Italy's neighbor and EU partner, the French diaspora policies are an example of how the government keeps its ties with the French community abroad having a similar political and legal system to the Italian ones.

According to the Association of the French in the World,<sup>22</sup> as of the beginning of 2024, the number of French registered in the "*Registre des Français établis hors de France*" reached 1,692,978 people. However, this number is likely to be higher because enrollment in this register is not mandatory. The most favorite destinations for French expatriates are the Benelux area, the other EU member states, and the USA and Canada (Français du Monde (ADFE)).

It is also important to notice that this amount counts for French people who were born in the French territory and who later moved abroad. People born in a foreign territory can be granted French nationality only if at least one parent was a French national. In other words, the *Ius Sanguinis* principle is applicable only for one generation (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères<sup>23</sup>).

Therefore, although France does not have a significant diaspora compared to other EU countries, the French government has developed a large-scale diaspora engagement strategy, more extensive than other EU Member States, through a vast institutional network of ministries, diplomats, representative bodies, parliamentarians, and political parties (Arrighi & Lafleur 2020; The European House – Ambrosetti, 2023).

Arrighi and Lafleur (2020) argue that France has primarily been a country of destination rather than an emigration one. Compared with other European diasporas like the Italian, German, and Portuguese, the French community abroad has only recently grown due to increased emigration over the past twenty years (Arrighi & Lafleur, 2020).

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<sup>22</sup> <https://francais-du-monde.org/2024/02/22/francais-etablis-hors-de-france-2024/>. Last accessed on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/services-aux-francais/etat-civil-et-nationalite-francaise/nationalite-francaise/article/1-attribution-de-la-nationalite-francaise>. Last accessed on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

The two authors performed a study on French diaspora engagement in relation to its historical context in which they argue the following: first, the width of its diplomatic network and the right to vote for expatriates, among other policies, reflect the custom used during its colonialist and imperialist phases; its citizenship laws reflect the principle of equality, that has always been a milestone of the Republic pact; the spread of cultural and educational initiatives is a strategy to enhance soft power internationally (Arrighi & Lafleur, 2020).

The institution in charge of engaging with the French community abroad is the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Until 2017, there was a sub-ministry entity for the French abroad, but President Emmanuel Macron did not extend its mandate (Arrighi & Lafleur 2020). Today, its role was given to one of the four Ministers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is specifically in charge of external trade, attractivity, Francophonie, and French residing abroad<sup>24</sup>.

In addition, France created consultative institutions for the French abroad called the Consular Council, whose main task is to defend the interests of the French community abroad (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Arrighi, Lafleur 2020). Moreover, it's worth noting that its diplomatic network is the third largest in the world, following the USA and China, counting 213 consulates and more than 500 diplomatic missions (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Arrighi, Lafleur 2020).

Being among the oldest sovereign and independent nation-states, France institutionalized citizenship matters in 1789, allowing the election of seventeen deputies for the French living in overseas territories. This early regulation of nationality reflects its colonialist past, its aspiration to be a global actor, and its commitment to provide an *avant-gardist* welfare state. The last point underpins today's strong infrastructure offering welfare services to French residing abroad, making France's engagement strategy the most extensive and complete among the European Union member states, as it was declared in the 2017 Report on the situation of French living outside France requested by the Prime Minister (Arrighi, Lafleur 2020; Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2023). For instance, the French government manages the "*Fil d'Ariane*<sup>25</sup>", an online service that provides all the relevant information and latest news concerning the host country and France. This program acts as an interlocutor between France and the French abroad, that also includes assistance in case of emergency.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/les-ministres/>. Last accessed on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

<sup>25</sup> <https://fildariane.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fildariane-internet/accueil>. Last accessed on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

Historically, the first representation for French expatriates was established in 1949 under Robert Schuman's government, creating the *Conseil supérieur des Français de l'étranger* (CSFE). Schuman also allocated three seats representing the French in Morocco, Indochina, and Tunisia (Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2023; The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023). With the creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958, these representatives became Senators, and their number eventually increased to nine. The government aimed to engage its diaspora by encouraging registration with consular offices. However, until 1982, expatriates could only vote if they were members of a French association. The 1982 law allowed for the election of CSFE delegates nominated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Significant reforms followed in the 1990s, culminating in the 2003 establishment of the *Assemblée des Français de l'étranger* (AFE), which in 2004 replaced the CSFE with 155 representatives. In 2008, the number of overseas deputies increased to eleven (Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2023; The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023).

As anticipated, French residing abroad have the right to vote in the elections for national assembly, for European elections, and for national referendums. They can cast their vote at their consular constituency or appoint a proxy online via a dedicated website. Hence, beyond the institutional representations, France counts eleven seats for the *Assemblée Nationale* and twelve for the Senate worldwide, elected by overseas French citizens (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Arrighi & Lafleur 2020). The right to vote and the institution of representations at the parliamentary level resulted in the proliferation of federations and political groups abroad, and, in 2018, the Support Fund to the Network of French Associations Abroad (STAFE) was created (Arrighi & Lafleur 2020).

The French foreign policy strongly emphasizes cultural engagement. Although the actions taken on educational matters abroad usually target non-nationals, they directly impact the lives of its citizens as well. The main actor is the Institut Français, which, like the German Goethe Institute or the British Institute, gained important visibility worldwide. Administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, its mission is to promote French culture abroad. Likewise, the *Alliance Française*, created in 1883, promotes the French language in a hundred thirty countries with a thousand thirty-six offices.

The Agency for the Teaching of the French Language Abroad manages four hundred ninety-five schools, with one-third of students being French citizens. These institutions support France's soft power strategy

and help expatriates maintain a connection to French culture (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023; Arrighi, Lafleur 2020).

Overall, the strength of France's diaspora engagement lies on two grounds: on the one hand, its institutions were able to delineate a common strategy based on shared values between themselves and between them and the diaspora's members, and on the other hand, they strategically invested in culture and education (The European House - Ambrosetti, 2023).

## 5. Findings

The four cases analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that each country adopted different policies and programs due to their distinct motivations and institutional frameworks, generating different approaches and outcomes that reflect their geopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts.

In this paragraph, we propose a summary of the key findings in the form of a table to facilitate the reading. The elements that make up the table below will then be used as examples from which the Italian government can draw inspiration to implement its engagement policy.

Once the key themes are defined, this paragraph will elucidate the similarities and the divergences between the cases.

*Table 1: summary of the comparative analysis*

	<b>Type of diaspora and citizenship recognition</b>	<b>Reasons to engage with its diaspora</b>	<b>Focus of diaspora engagement policies</b>	<b>Main institutions</b>	<b>Most famous policies and outcome</b>
<b>China</b>	Around 60 million people based virtually everywhere. China doesn't allow dual citizenship.	To accelerate its development process. Today, it's part of the "Made in China 2025" and Belt and Road initiatives.	The main target are students and high-skill workers to guarantee knowledge and technology transfers, and to improve China's Soft Power.	-The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO)- Party's United Front Department (UFWD)  -The Advisory Committee of the Overseas Chinese Affairs.	-"111 project" to recruit top-level STEM students  -Conference for Friendship of Overseas Chinese Associations  -The World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention

<b>India</b>	India doesn't allow for dual citizenship. Indian abroad are divided into "non-resident Indians (NRIs)" and "Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs). Today, Indian diaspora is the largest in the world.	The focus was on its economic development through FDI, technology transfers, and outsourcing opportunities.	Many aspects: -to improve its image and reputation in international politics -to raise investments in the technological domain -to attract return of students	-The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)  -The Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of Overseas Indians.  -A High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora.	-Remittance Gateway.  -Indian Diaspora Conference.  -Ramanujan Fellowship for researchers and the Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children.  -"Know India" program  -The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)  -The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards
<b>Mexico</b>	Most of the Mexicans abroad reside in the USA. Mexico allows dual citizenship.	To ensure decent standards of life abroad and avoid deteriorating bilateral relations with the USA	To ensure decent standards of life abroad and avoid deteriorating bilateral relations with the USA	-The Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IMA)  -Consultative Council of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (CCIME).	-New Migration Policy of the Government of Mexico  -The Matriculate Consular (MC)  -Educational activities  -Binational Health Week  -"3x1 Program"
<b>France</b>	Around 30 million descendants worldwide. France allows dual citizenship.	To offer its welfare services abroad and to enhance its soft power in international affairs.	To spread the French "know-how", culture, and language, and to enhance the <i>Francophonie</i> .	-Vast diplomatic network  <i>-Institut Français</i>  <i>-Alliance Française</i>	-Numerous bilateral agreements with the host countries of its diaspora on

				-The Agency for the Teaching of the French Language	
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Source: own approach.

Before entering into the details of the approach each country adopts toward its diaspora, it is crucial to first understand how each government defines its diaspora and the criteria it uses to define the boundaries. The main factors that influence the designing diaspora engagement policies are the size of the community and principle of citizenship.

In the cases studied, China and India have millions of citizens in every corner of the world, making their diaspora among the largest worldwide. In contrast, the French and the Mexican diasporas, though significant, are comparatively smaller. Concerning citizenship rights, although neither China nor India allows for dual citizenship, their diaspora policies are not limited to those having their nationality. Instead, they extend the scope of the application of such policies to individuals of Chinese or Indian origins who naturalized in their host country. This broad definition allows them to keep their culture and language alive regardless of the civil status of their diasporas. The generational shift is also relevant to defining the population: nationality laws in Mexico and France, which do allow for dual citizenship, grant their nationalities to all children with at least one parent holding Mexican or French nationality.

The comparative analysis also demonstrated that each government had different reasons for implementing diaspora policies, reflecting each country's broader national priorities. For China and India, diaspora policies were incorporated into their economic development policies. Both leveraged their diasporas for technological and educational advancements. Their economic development has been backed by significant FDI and remittances received by their nationals abroad. This was partly possible because part of their large diasporas was able to raise its socio-economic standards abroad. Chinese students who study in the USA and import Western technologies and know-how, as well as the FDI from the Indians working in the Silicon Valley that generated part of the actual technology of the Indian giant are the most significant examples of success of engaging with diasporas.

Mexico, on the other hand, adopted a more socio-political approach, centered on ensuring the welfare of its nationals, particularly those living in the USA. This focus was influenced by the type of its diaspora, which is mainly composed of low-skill workers that, most of time, leave the country without the documentation required, like the USA Visa. Mexican policies aim at protecting the rights and well-being of Mexicans by providing basic services, like health insurance and education. To assist its migrants in the USA, it needed to reach necessary agreements by deploying an extensive and meticulously coordinated diplomatic effort. This further demonstrates the Mexican intentions to actively intervene in the situation that, together with the diplomatic work between the countries, helped in reducing the tensions.

France's engagement instead aims to strengthen its global cultural and linguistic values that are source of soft power. This approach reflects its historical path characterized by extra-territorial possessions – colonies in the past – which some became "*Territoires d'autres-mer*" (Lit. "*Overseas territories*"). The cultural affinities and shared *Francophonie* with some countries enable it to obtain privileged positions and agreements that overall reinforce its reputation. Examples include the Canadian province of Québec on education and health insurance, with Brazil, given the shared Amazon with the French Guiana. These relationships highlight how France leverages its community to sustain its cultural and diplomatic influence,

Furthermore, once the target and the objective are defined, each government has established different institutions to implement its diaspora policies. In China and India, the design and implementation of these policies are centralized. China operates primarily through the ruling party and institutions like the Chinese OCAO, while India utilizes a dedicated ministry, the Indian MOIA, to manage its diaspora engagement. France and Mexico, by contrast, maintain their connections through more diversified channels, primarily via their diplomatic missions and various associations that work closely with their diasporas.

In conclusion, different types of diasporas require an adaptation of the diaspora policies engagement. The cases analyzed here illustrate that engaging with the diaspora does not always require a single, unified national program labeled as "diaspora engagement." Instead, these countries demonstrate that governments can maintain strong ties with their diasporas and achieve their preset objectives through a variety of initiatives, institutions, and continuous commitment over time.

## CHAPTER IV - CASE STUDY - The Italian Diaspora in Brazil

### PART I – Data and Bilateral Relations

#### 1.1 Data on Italian Diaspora

Since 2006, the Fondazione Migrantes has released an annual report on Italians Abroad. The last available version, dated 2023, highlights that while Italy is experiencing a worrying slowdown in demographic growth, it is actually a country “*that grows outside Italy*” (Fondazione Migrantes, 2023, p. XIV).

As of early 2023, the Italians residing abroad and enrolled at the AIRE were 5.933.418, corresponding to 10.1% of the Italian population living in Italy. Since 2006 (the year of the first publication of the Report), the number of Italians registered abroad has increased by 91%.

According to the latest recording of the inscription to AIRE at our disposal, published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* in January 2024, as of December the 31st, 2023, there were 1.956.648<sup>26</sup> Italians registered at the AIRE in South America (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2024). In 2022, less than 10% of the Italians in South America were born in Italy<sup>27</sup> (ISTAT, 2022).

The AIRE community is composed by Italians born abroad, those who obtained Italian citizenship, and Italians born in Italy who later emigrated abroad.

But what it is more interesting to note is that, since 2006, the number of Italians born in the peninsula who left the country has grown by 44.9%, while the number of Italians born abroad has surged by 175%, and those who acquired the nationality through the principle of *Ius Sanguinis* by 144%. Therefore, Italy is growing outside its borders due to both endogenous factors – births among Italians already living abroad – and exogenous factors – such as the citizenship law.

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<sup>26</sup> Decreto 31 gennaio 2024 “Pubblicazione del numero dei cittadini italiani residenti nelle ripartizioni della circoscrizione Estero alla data del 31 dicembre 2023.” <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2024/02/05/24A00664/sg>. Last accessed on August 10th, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Comunicato Stampa ISTAT, 2022 “Gli italiani residenti all’estero.” <https://www.istat.it/comunicato-stampa/gli-italiani-residenti-allestero-anno-2022/>. Last accessed on August 10th, 2024.

Among the nearly six million Italians living abroad, Brazil hosts the fourth largest Italian community in the world, after Argentina, Germany, and Switzerland. Brazil is also the most popular destination for Italian emigrants outside Europe registering 5,219 Italians moving there in 2022 (Fondazione Migrantes, 2023). This indicates that Brazil is still attractive nowadays in terms of work opportunities, cultural affinities, and a vibrant, dynamic society that contrasts with the aging European reality (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022).

Of the around 6.5 million Italian descendants worldwide, the Italian Embassy in Brazil estimates that more than 730.000 live in Brazil (around eleven percent of the total), making Brazil the biggest host land of the Italian community. However, estimates predict that Brazil is home to more than 32 million Italian descendants (Ambasciata d'Italia a Brasilia, 2023).

Being the largest community of descendants, ISTAT also reveals that the Italian community in Brazil is the one that most frequently obtains citizenship through the *Ius Sanguinis* principle. This process can be pursued via an administrative request: applicants can either send their request and all the required documentation to the Consulate of their place of residence's circumscription or request it directly to an Italian municipality where they reside. Due to the long waiting lists, that in some Consulates reached ten years, many Brazilians opt for the second option. However, this procedure gave rise to illegal economic activities of some self-declared "travel agencies" that offer fake residences (and sometimes even falsified family trees) in Italy, allowing the applicants to leave right after the inspection to verify they reside in the address indicated (see the Ivrea, Asti, Villaricca and other cases) (Studio Legale Giorgianni<sup>28</sup>, 2023). This trend is confirmed by the ISTAT data of 2022 that showed that, unlike other nationalities, Brazilians who obtain citizenship through residency tend to leave Italy soon after. In fact, 79% leave the country within one year of obtaining citizenship. The report of Fondazione Migrantes defines it as a "migration of return", indicating that Brazilians often choose to live in their home country even when they obtain Italian nationality (Fondazione Migrantes, 2023).

A further procedure to obtain Italian nationality is through a judicial process. This is particularly used in the case of descendants from a woman born before 1948 (see Chapter II, Part I, section 3) and when Consulates cannot conclude the procedure in 730 days from the first day of the request (Studio Legale Giorgianni, 2023).

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.studiolegalegiorgianni.com/it/cittadinanza-italiana-per-via-giudiziaria/>. Last accessed on August 14th, 2024.

It's important to note that the data presented here, at the time of drafting this thesis (August 2024), may be subject to inaccuracies for two reasons: first, the 2023 data has undergone variations from the regular flows as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic; second, the inscription to the AIRE was not legally mandatory yet, so the actual numbers are likely to be higher. The *Legge di Bilancio* (Lit. “Budget bill”) of the end of 2023 entered into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and introduced mandatory AIRE enrollment, with financial penalties for non-compliance<sup>29</sup>. Therefore, data from 2025 onwards is expected to be more accurate.

Although official 2024 data are not available yet, the Consulate General of Italy in São Paulo released its data for the first half of the year. In its circumscription, which includes the States of San Paulo, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Rondônia, and Acre, 364,000 Italians are registered – a population larger than the number of citizens of the city of Florence. In this way, the São Paulo circumscription is the eighth biggest Italian “city” (Consolato Generale d’Italia a San Paolo, 2024).

## 1.2 Political relations

The Official Website of the Embassy of Italy in Brazil describes the bilateral political relationship between the two countries as being founded on shared democratic values. A common vision ensures their strong commitment and cooperation at international organizations (Ambasciata d’Italia a Brasilia<sup>30</sup>).

On a political level, current bilateral relations are grounded in the “*Strategic Partnership*” that was signed in 2010 in Washington by the Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, and the President of the Federal Republic of Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula Da Silva. The preface of this plan of action emphasizes the “*the solid and traditional relations of friendship that unite Italy and Brazil, strengthened in the past by the significant presence in Brazil of a wide community of Italian origin*”. The strategic plan envisages cooperation in the political dialogue; judicial matters; interregional cooperation between the Mercosur and the EU; in the defense and technical-military domain; in the spatial field; economic, commercial, industrial, and financial cooperation; between the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); in tourism

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.diritto.it/multa-per-non-iscrizione-aire-omissione-retroattivi/>. Last accessed on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> On “Italy and Brazil”, official website of the Embassy of Italy in Brazil, <https://ambbrasil.esteri.it/italia-e-brasile/>. Last accessed on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

activities; energy field; cultural and academic; scientific and technological; on support to third countries; health issues; sport; and finally, for the Italian communities in Brazil and the Brazilians in Italy<sup>31</sup>.

### 1.3 Italy in Brazil

#### 1.3.1 Composition of Sistema Italia

The Sistema Italia in Brazil is composed of the Embassy of Italy, six consulates (two Consulates General in São Paulo and in Rio De Janeiro), an extensive network of honorary consulates, two Italian Institutes of Culture (ICC), the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), a subsidiary of the Bank of Italy, six Chambers of Commerce, and the Italian insurance-financial group (SACE Group).

#### 1.3.2 Education

The government institutionalized the *Sistema della Formazione Italiana nel Mondo* (SFIM) to promote and diffuse the Italian language and culture abroad. Managed by the direction of the Office V - General Directorate for Public and Cultural Diplomacy within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of International Cooperation, SFIM is a network of Italian educational institutions located worldwide. Every five years, school directors from Italy, selected through ministerial calls, are sent abroad by the diplomatic representations and Italian Institutes of Culture to manage these institutions. The schools fall within the following categories:

- Italian state schools abroad (Scuole Statali): which replicate the educational model of the local Italian schools.
- Peer Schools (Scuole paritarie) which are established by private entities and obtain the recognition of the equality of the educational path with Italian schools and release the Italian high school diploma.
- Italian Sections: based at foreign, bilingual, European, or international institutions.
- Entities offering Italian language courses: these receive funds from the Ministry of Education.

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<sup>31</sup> “Partenariato strategico tra la Repubblica Italiana e la Repubblica Federativa del Brasile.” <https://ambbrasil.esteri.it/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PianoDAzioneitaliano.pdf>. Last accessed on August 14th, 2024.

-Universities Lectureships: Italian language professors who teach at foreign universities, assist in academic work, and conduct research in Italian language and culture (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2024).

In Brazil, there are three *Scuole Paritarie*: two in São Paulo—the *Collegio Dante Alighieri* and the *Instituto Eugenio Montale*—and one in Belo Horizonte, the *Fundação Torino*.

- **Collegio Dante Alighieri** was established in 1911 by Italian immigrants, led by Rodolfo Crespi, a prominent Italian businessman in São Paulo, who raised funds from affluent families. The school offers various curricula, and its *Liceo Scientifico* regained parity in 2022, after losing it during World War II when President Vargas banned the teaching of Italian and German languages in Brazil (Official Website of Scuola Dante Alighieri).
- **Scuola Italiana Eugenio Montale** was founded in 1982 by Italian families with the support of local institutions and companies. Its *Liceo Scientifico* also holds the status of a *Scuola Paritaria* (Official Website of Scuola Italiana Eugenio Montale).
- **Fundação Torino** was established in 1975 by the Italian automobile company FIAT, even before the opening of its first branch in Brazil. FIAT aimed to ensure educational continuity for the children of its employees. In 1992, the school opened its doors to Brazilian students, offering two curricula. Today, it is an international school, and its Primary, Secondary, and High Schools (*Liceo Scientifico* and *Liceo Scienze Umane*) are recognized as *Scuole Paritarie* (Official Website of Fundação Torino).

The efforts of these schools to gain recognition for Italian diplomas should be viewed in the broader context of the role of education in migration and nationality policies. The Report on Italians Abroad emphasizes that the educational level of both immigrants and emigrants has recently become a focal point in institutional debates. Specifically, public discourse often centers on the "brain drain" phenomenon, which affects highly educated young Italians. While this issue is not the focus of this thesis, attracting young talent from abroad is emerging as a potential strategy to counteract the loss of knowledge and skills from Italy (Fondazione Migrantes, 2023). According to the report on the Italians abroad of 2020, edited by the Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, Circolo Studi Diplomatici and MAECI, trying to withhold unemployed graduates would not resolve the economic weight of the state that provides for unemployment benefits. Similarly, offering financial incentives to encourage repatriation is unlikely

to produce the same advantages as their employment and living standards abroad. Instead, policies promoting a “brain circulation” could help filling the talent gap and guarantee the internationalization of knowledge (Pittau, 2020). Considering the high-quality courses offered by these schools—beyond the invaluable benefit of producing bilingual citizens—and the high cost of private education in Brazil, these students are typically well-educated individuals, from medium-high social classes, with the means to travel (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022).

### 1.3.3 Associations

As of 2020, there were approximately 6,000 Latin American-Italian associations. This vibrant associational spirit demonstrates the commitment of many in the Italian descendant community to maintaining strong ties with Italy across various sectors, including religion, health, retirement, sports, culture, and politics. These associations were initially formed to foster cooperation in numerous aspects of public life. Today, they play a crucial role as intermediaries between the Italian diaspora and both Italian institutional representations and local institutions (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022). In the State of São Paulo, various *Patronati* and the *COMITES* (Comitato degli Italiani all’Estero) work in synergy with the *Sistema Italia* to disseminate information and bring Italian institutional realities closer to the daily lives of hundreds of people.

In 2019, a group of Italian-origin deputies launched the *Frente Parlamentar Ítalo-Brasileira* at the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo intending to strengthen political and economic ties with the Italian government. A similar initiative was launched in 2023 at the National Parliament in Brasília under the name of “*Frente Parlamentar Mista Brasil-Italia*”<sup>32</sup>.

### 1.4 The right to vote

The right to vote for the Italians abroad is enshrined in the Constitution under Articles 56<sup>33</sup> and 57<sup>34</sup>. In 1998, the right to vote for the *Circoscrizione estero* (Lit. “*Foreign Constituency*”) was introduced,

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<sup>32</sup> [https://ambbrasil.esteri.it/it/news/dall\\_ambasciata/2023/06/storico-lancio-del-fronte-parlamentare-misto-brasile-italia/](https://ambbrasil.esteri.it/it/news/dall_ambasciata/2023/06/storico-lancio-del-fronte-parlamentare-misto-brasile-italia/), Last accessed on August 20th, 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana 1 gennaio 1948, Art. 56 [https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:costituzione:1947-12-27~art56#:~:text=56,a suffragio universale e diretto.&text=dei quali eletti nella circoscrizione Estero.&text=Sono eleggibili a deputati tutti,i venticinque anni di età](https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:costituzione:1947-12-27~art56#:~:text=56,a%20suffragio%20universale%20e%20diretto.&text=dei%20quali%20eletti%20nella%20circoscrizione%20Estero.&text=Sono%20eleggibili%20a%20deputati%20tutti,%20i%20venticinque%20anni%20di%20età.). Last accessed on August 20th, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana 1 gennaio 1948, Art. 57 [https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:costituzione:1947-12-27~art57#:~:text=57,seggi assegnati alla circoscrizione Estero.&text=dei quali eletti nella circoscrizione Estero.&text=; il Molise ne ha due,la Valle d'Aosta uno](https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:costituzione:1947-12-27~art57#:~:text=57,seggi%20assegnati%20alla%20circoscrizione%20Estero.&text=dei%20quali%20eletti%20nella%20circoscrizione%20Estero.&text=;il%20Molise%20ne%20ha%20due,la%20Valle%20d'Aosta%20uno.). Last accessed on August 20th, 2024.

allowing for the election of representatives from the Italian community abroad. In addition, postal voting was introduced in 2001 to enable a larger portion of the population to participate in the elections (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2020). The voting procedures are listed in Law n.459 of 2001 and were modified by the reform of 2020 which reduced the number of Members of Parliament (MPs).

Italians abroad can vote for the Foreign Constituency, which is divided into four regions: Europe (including Russia and Turkey), South America, North and Central America, and Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Antarctica. Eligible citizens are called to vote for members of both Chambers of the Italian Parliament—eight deputies and four senators—as well as for abrogative and confirmatory referendums. However, Italians in Brazil cannot vote on European matters.

Unlike in countries such as Canada, Australia, and Cuba, where governments were initially reluctant to permit it, the institutionalization of the right to vote for Italians abroad faced no significant barriers in Brazil.

According to the study on Latin America of 2020 released by the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, an entity that provides analysis and reports for the Italian Parliament, the initiative to grant voting rights to Italians abroad was intended to encourage the Italian community to stay engaged with political affairs in Italy. This move aimed to forge a politically conscious community that could contribute to strengthening bilateral relations between Italy and the host countries, thereby serving as a form of soft power.

However, a limitation of this system is the assumption that the Italian community abroad still shares uniform needs and interests. In reality, the Italian community is well-integrated into the societies of their host countries. In the case of Brazil, the community has significantly contributed to the creation of its socio-economic structure, which is a synthesis of Italian and local identities. As a result, their political preferences are shaped by their personal views, experiences, and affiliations, rather than solely by their Italian origins (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2020).

### 1.5 Institutional Initiatives

The year 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of Italian migration to Brazil. To commemorate it, the Brazilian Parliament established February 21 as *Dia Nacional do Imigrante Italiano* (Lit. “National Day

*of the Italian Immigrant*”), in honor of the day in 1874 when 380 Italians landed in Vitória from Genoa on the ship *Sofia*. This year, Italy and Brazil engaged in a dense network of political exchanges.

2024 was also designated as the year of *Turismo delle Radici* (Lit. “*Tourism of the Roots*”), a project initiated in 2018 by the Directorate General for Italians Abroad (DGIT) of the MAECI. The core concept behind this project - that tourism can assume another meaning that goes beyond its traditional definitions and economic value, offering a deeper, more meaningful experience – was developed in the last few years due to the surge of tourists who visited Italy to rediscover their Italian roots. “Tourism of the roots”, denominated as “tourism of the origins” or “of the ancestors”, refers to practice of migrants, or by their descendants, to return to their homeland after a long period abroad. This journey often evokes powerful emotions as it materializes the stories that were told by the family through generations. Tourism of the roots does not only offer the possibility to mature awareness in the hearts and minds of the descendants, but it also offers Italy the opportunity to acknowledge its past since migration has always been a huge – but often denigrated - component of Italian history. Hence, fostering this kind of tourism is an initiative to fill in the voids of the past.

The MAECI conducted a survey involving 10,180 tourists, of whom 57.07% held an Italian passport, though only 9.46% were born in Italy. The participants were primarily from Argentina, Brazil, the USA, and Uruguay. The study examined several factors to identify individuals of Italian descent, including citizenship, language, and material assets such as property ownership and association membership. The regions of origin for most migrants were Veneto (12.36%), Calabria (11.38%), and Sicily (10.54%). The research concluded that most of these tourists are Italian descendants, often from the third or fourth generation, who are highly educated and deeply passionate about Italy, regardless of their citizenship status. They tend to stay in their ancestral hometowns for extended periods and are willing to make financial sacrifices to reconnect with their heritage. Beyond a strong desire to meet their relatives and explore ancestral locations, they are keen on taking Italian language and culture courses, participating in culinary and wine workshops, and engaging in activities related to traditional crafts (Gabrieli, Giumelli & Licata, *Sommario* 2022).

The project *"Il Turismo delle Radici – Una Strategia Integrata per la Ripresa del Settore del Turismo nell'Italia Post Covid-19"* was included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan as a collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This project aims to counteract the

depopulation of Italian villages by promoting and informing Italians abroad and their descendants about the opportunity to discover their ancestral origins. The objective is to incentivize long-term investments and activities that could revitalize these abandoned villages. The plan ranges across several sectors of intervention, from coordination with local institutions, support for economic activities, village revitalization, enhancing migration museums, promoting "working holidays" in Italy, and providing genealogists to study and document family trees (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022).

## 6) Italian Industries in Brazil and the Brazilian Economy

Italy boasts a significant historical industrial presence in Brazil, which has led to the establishment of extensive networks in key sectors of the Brazilian economy (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022).

In 2023, a study conducted by the Italian Embassy in Brazil and GM Venture revealed that 986 Italian companies are operating in Brazil, of which 52% (roughly 513) are located in the State of São Paulo. Italian industries span sixteen sectors, with the most prominent presence in machinery and industrial components (31.95%), followed by services (15.42%).

In recent years, business relations between Italy and Brazil have accelerated due to several significant achievements. Notably, ENEL has become the largest private investor and distributor in the electric energy sector and the leading generator of renewable energy in Brazil. Stellantis, whose four car models are among the ten best-sellers in Brazil, has invested heavily in upgrading its factories to integrate 4.0 technologies and increase exports. TIM was the first provider of 5G networks in Brazil and, with over 70 million users, is one of the largest telecommunications companies in the country. Pirelli has opened the largest and most advanced testing circuit in Latin America, and the Gavio Group, through its Brazilian subsidiary Ecorodovias, is now the leading private infrastructure operator in the country. Additionally, INC S.p.A. of Turin has been awarded the contract to build and manage the highway connecting the city of Belo Horizonte (Ambasciata d'Italia in Brasile & GM Venture, 2023).

Although the history and development of private business initiatives in Brazil would deserve dedicated research, it is important to highlight the substantial economic contribution of Italian businesses in Brazil because this shows the well-established, dynamic, and expanding nature of the Italian community across various domains. As a consequence, beyond the current support provided to these industrial giants, a strategy on diaspora engagement should include a component focused on assisting small and medium-

sized enterprises (SMEs)—not only financially but also in areas such as technology, legislation, and partnerships with local agents.

In addition to economic benefits, increasing investments in Brazil would strengthen bilateral relations with a country that possesses valuable raw materials critical to the energy transition (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2022). Brazil is the second-largest country that fulfills its energetic demand with clean energy, and its trade surplus is due to its energy and raw material sectors. The recent consolidation of Brazil's economy, which was one of the few to surpass pre-COVID-19 levels already in 2022, has granted its position as the tenth-largest GDP globally and facilitated its entry into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2022. Brazil's financial sector is solid and well-developed and has sufficient international reserves to cover its total foreign debt (Ambasciata d'Italia in Brasile & GM Venture, 2023).

## PART II – Analysis of the Interviews

The following paragraph is dedicated to the analysis drawn by the interviews we conducted to provide solid topics for answering our research question. Our research aims to provide a comprehensive framework in diaspora engagement initiatives of the Italian government and propose future recommendations given the past and present complexities. This research is the first of its kind to our knowledge, and, therefore, intends to pave the way for future in-depth study and commitment.

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed through a thematic analysis. To interpret these qualitative data, we followed the steps designed by Creswell (2009): after preparing the data (transcription, translation, and taking general notes), we first identified the general sense of the ideas of the participants, and then we proceeded with the coding practice. Coding is the process of labeling categories of the themes addressed during the interviews. We used the traditional approach of social sciences that entails developing codes gradually during the analysis of the collected information. Once the codes were defined, we generated some categories that were used to compare, contrast, or present the relationships between the themes (Creswell, 2009). Each category is the subject of each of the following paragraphs. At the end of the chapter, we propose a summary of the key findings.

## 2.1 Diaspora engagement rhetoric's

Given the existing gap in the literature concerning the current Italian diaspora in Brazil and the engagement approach of the Italian government, the interviewed were asked the question: *“At the institutional level, what considerations are made about the Italian diaspora, and whether it is a topic that is often talked about and whether it is part of the foreign policy priority?”*

All three responders agreed that the Italian institutions - mainly the Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - are well aware of the extent of the Italian diaspora in Brazil, but each one added a nuance to their replies. The MP Fabio Porta sustained that the most evident proof of the institutional engagement is the legislation of the right to vote for Italians living abroad (Porta, 2024). The Consul of the Consulate General of Italy in São Paulo, Domenico Fornara, confirmed that the *Farnesina* constantly monitors the situation in Brazil: *“Particularly the General Directorate of Italy of Italians Abroad, the DGIT, follows with great attention the dynamics here, they know this dynamic well and they are well aware of what are the potentials and criticalities of the Brazil case.”* (Fornara, 2024). The former Ambassador of Italy in Brazil, Antonio Bernardini, remarked that the Italian presence in Brazil was not constant in the political debate throughout history. Some governments turned their attention extensively to the Italian diaspora and to Brazil, such as when the right to vote was established, whereas others didn't include them in their priorities: *“The issue of the Italian diaspora has all the ups and downs in the Italian political debate because there were periods when governments thought that the Italian diaspora could be an important element in Italian politics as well, that there was an expectation of participation from Italian communities to be very high.”* (Bernardini, 2024).

However, when it comes to the societies (both in Italy and in Brazil) and to the mediatic attention, the Italian diaspora in Brazil is commonly an under-known dynamic. Fornara told us that every time he talks about the number of the Italian-origin people in Brazil, everyone, besides his close colleagues, remains surprised. He sustained that communication plays a fundamental role and that maybe today *“public opinion often stops a bit on the surface of things. Maybe it's also a consequence of the world today of very fast and very superficial communication [...] And of course, we care much more about the weight of what is in the garden immediately next to us.”* (Fornara, 2024). The information issue was presented also by Porta who stated that on multiple levels, from the mass media to the Parliament itself, there's not *“a true and in-depth and complete knowledge on the migration.”* (Porta, 2024). Indeed, the whole subject on Italian migration to Brazil and its consequences are left outside from the school curriculum of history

courses at Italian schools. For Porta, young-age education is the first fundamental step in the prospect of a long-term strategy for diaspora engagement. Indeed, he signed a law proposal to insert those topics at school because *“it is a way to educate also the younger Italian generations to an attitude of welcome, of multiculturalism, because it is to begin to explain that Italy and Italians are not only those within the borders, but there is another Italy that is a Brazilian Italy, an Argentine Italy, an Australian Italy, and it makes us understand how then the world is much more diverse, more articulated, and how from this integration between Italians and these countries then riches have been born in terms of economics, culture, and this, of course, is an approach that we should also enforce as well for welcoming those who come to our country and also from other nations. The other aspect of education is this, is to make our emigration better known so that we can then also make better use of it from an opportunity point of view.”* (Porta, 2024).

## 2.2 Italian institutional approach and initiatives

All three interviews sustained that Italy lacks a well-defined and long-term diaspora engagement strategy to deal with such an extensive community abroad. The reasons for such void lie, according to Porta, in the misunderstanding of the government on the overall phenomenon of migration. The initial institutional approach was dictated by a *“kind of debt that had to be paid off [...] on the part of the Italian political class that wanted to make up all in all [...] for the fact that so many generations of Italians had been forced to emigrate.”* (Porta, 2024). Historically, indeed, both Porta and Fornara claimed that the institutional approach toward the diaspora consisted of assistance for migrants in their settlement process in Brazil (Porta, Fornara, 2024). Diaspora engagement policies in the Brazilian case would be emblematic because the massive number of Italians reached every social, political, and economic sphere in the Brazilian society. What has surfaced from the interviews is that on the one hand, Italy granted a whole range of rights, institutions, and the presence of Parliamentary representations to such communities; but, on the other hand, the real value of the Italian diaspora in Brazil was never understood nor captured by a truthful political strategy, as it's proved by the lack of a widespread knowledge and on the scarcity of resources allocated to initiatives targeting the Italian diaspora in Brazil. Porta further noticed how, despite the numbers, Italy lacks a Ministry appointed for Italians abroad, as it is in other countries with much smaller diasporas (Porta, 2024).

The current year, 2024, signs the 150th anniversary of Italian immigration to Brazil. This recurrence, in conjunction with the contemporary presidencies of Italy and Brazil for the G7 and G20 respectively, produced the revival of institutional and political bilateral exchanges, namely the organization of countless events, several ministerial visits, and designed or implemented some projects to bring the Italian diaspora closer to its motherland. The recent visit of the President of the Republic of Italy to Brazil, the first one in twenty-four years, is the culmination of such a long series of exchanges (Fornara, 2024). This year was also instituted as the year of the *Turismo della Radici*. The grounded idea is to incentivize Italian descendants to visit the birthplaces of their Italian ancestors to discover their roots. In the long run, it would also promote the repopulation of abandoned ancient villages in Italy (Fornara, Porta 2024). According to Porta, this project is an excellent starting point, but it must be supported by a pragmatic, constant, and forward-looking approach in the future. One default that appears quite often in Italian political activity is the slow practical application of proposals that are made orally (Porta, 2024). Further considerations emerged on the political reactions to the criticalities tied to the citizenship and voting. Despite the criticism that dominates the political debate, no political forces proposed legislative reforms, or new policies, or a management system. In other words, none seems committed enough to change this deadlock situation, hence verbal criticism is not matched by consequential actions (Bernardini, Porta 2024).

## 2.3 Diaspora value

At the question “*What values does the Italian diaspora represent for Italy?*”, all participants pointed out both sides of the coin of the diaspora, namely the difficulties and the opportunities that it represents for the Italian institutions.

### 2.3.1 Criticalities

Concerning the criticalities, from the interviews, it emerged that the main difficulties arise from the numbers of the Italian community in Brazil, both of those already holding Italian citizenship and those who are entitled to it, which together is estimated to be around six - almost seven - million people. Such a large number of applicants for Italian citizenship is generating unprecedented pressure on the consular activities that the consular structures are struggling to keep up the pace with. Fornara explained that the

Consulate of São Paulo is facing “*pressure in terms of citizenship applications, passport applications, which clearly are disproportionate to the capacity of any national office, however much this is one of the largest service provider offices in the world.*” (Fornara, 2024). For Porta, “*the structure certainly is not adequate, and so the consulates should be strengthened obviously, the same about maybe Ministry of the Interior facilities, the municipalities, for those asking the citizenship, for marriage, for those returning to Italy for other reasons...*”. Bernardini also noticed that the Italian Institutes of Culture should increase its presence in Brazil due to the strong cultural affinities that were passed on by the Italian immigrants. The Italian Institutes of Culture would be pivotal to nourishing cultural relationships instead of just releasing administrative acts, what he called a “contradiction” of the Italian diaspora engagement: “*If one only has the structure to make passports and release citizenships it increases the number, but then in terms of actual influence or contact questions arise.*” (Bernardini, 2024).

### 2.3.2 Potentialities

Based on the replies provided by all the participants, everyone agreed that the Italian diaspora can be beneficial for Italy in many aspects, that we can resume in economic, influential, and demographic terms.

- Engaging with the Italian diaspora in Brazil is important to develop commercial-economic activities. Italian-descendant entrepreneurs in a wide range of sectors in Brazil are numerous, and cultural ties influence economic decisions. Bernardini was told by some businessmen that they “*prefer the Italian machine more because we have such a developed relationship of trust that there is no competition, in the sense that [...] I don't have to worry about the actual contractual relationship, because I know that he/she will fulfill its tasks in certain ways, and this is not true with partners from other parts of the world.*” (Bernardini, 2024). Brazil is also an important recipient of Italian investments from the private sector, showing that the “*the Italian economic world has known Brazil and seized the opportunities and this Italianness can certainly be a good opportunity.*” (Bernardini, 2024). Porta noticed that Brazilians who obtained Italian nationality belong to the middle-high social classes, and therefore generate also sources of income from tourism activities.
- In the same manner, as diasporic ties can enhance commercial activities, the presence of Italian-origin prominent people in the public sphere nourishes the political dialogue. Diasporic ties facilitate communication and “*empathy and communication are fundamental elements even in political relations [...] it is clear that (having Italian descendants in political position)\* already creates empathy, a ground for dialogue that by itself is not enough, however, it is certainly a huge potential.*” (Fornara,

2024). In practice, Fornara explained that institutional bilateral relations have visibly grown and that the Consulate constantly works tightly with the institutions of the State of São Paulo composed of a large number of Italian descendants.

- Engaging with the Italian diaspora in Brazil could be part of the solution to counteract the demographic decline affecting the Italian peninsula. Both according to Porta and Fornara, *“Italians abroad are the greatest ambassadors of Italy, that are therefore a resource for the country.”* (Porta, Fornara 2024). Those people might want to attend a university course, do an internship at an Italian company, or open a commercial activity and invest in Italy. Hence, diaspora engagement can be leveraged to enhance the capabilities of Italian policies to attract part of its diaspora to the motherland.

## 2.4 The Ius Sanguinis law

“Generosity” was the word used in all the interviews to describe the Italian Iure Sanguinis citizenship law. In the last twenty years, there has been a vivid debate to change the law because the public debate has always been referring to negative aspects regarding this law: *“sometimes a little hastily in public opinion and that of viewing it as an outdated law, an overly generous law.”* (Porta, 2024). However, given that the public debate focuses on the criticalities, Porta wanted to bring a different perspective as, according to him *“this law could, on the contrary, be used to give counter-responses to these problems that are instead real: the demographic problem, the problem of the attractiveness of the Italian system.”* (Porta, 2024).

Fornara devoted his answer to the underlying that adequate support should back this law, and that the Italian engagement should be dedicated to *“fostering a genuine link, a genuine connection”* to avoid reducing the citizenship to a *“far Italian drop of blood”* (Fornara, 2024). In this large community, just a portion is considerably interested in cultivating a relationship with Italy, so the Italian government should awaken the desire among the vast majority to get to know their country of origin (Fornara, 2024).

Bernardini, on the same wavelength, sustained that Italian citizenship should regain its profound identity value and not be reduced to an instrument to travel because today *“the request for an Italian passport is often an instrumental, opportunistic request [...]”* (Bernardini, 2024). However, since the political forces do not seem committed enough to change the current situation, hence he advised establishing stricter criteria for the assignment of Italian nationality, such as assessing the Italian language knowledge: *“In*

*my opinion, this can be addressed and needs to be addressed but I think there is very little will to do it today, that is the problem. I don't see any solution other than adding more stringent criteria.”* (Bernardini, 2024).

Further considerations arose on the very meaning of granting Italian nationality without generational limits. The *Iure Sanguinis* law is a right addressed to millions of Italian descendants who, in turn, do not fulfill Italian duties, such as paying taxes and joining the national army (Bernardini, 2024). Indeed, in his role of Consul, after the oath of office, Fornara this dichotomy between “*right*” and “*duty*” to encourage the “new” citizens *“To study Italian, teach it to your children, travel to Italy, follow Italian politics because if you vote in Italy, you must vote consciously, because it is a right but also a duty.”* (Fornara, 2024). Overall, it appears that both sides of the story should make an effort to make the Italian nationality more than a travel instrument: the applicants should learn more by themselves about the rights and duties of holding another citizenship, whereas the Italian government should foster interest, participation, and integration. This can be achieved through a truthful investment, in the form of education, Italian language, and cultural promotion (Porta, 2024).

## 2.5 The right to vote

The right to vote represents a major topic in the political debate concerning the engagement with the Italian diaspora. Bernardini added a key to the interpretation of the emotional bond that exists between the Italian diaspora and its motherland. He distinguished in this sense the “expatriates” - Italians born in Italy who are based abroad for work, study, or any other reason, and therefore keep a strong tie with Italy; and the descendants of migrants who arrived in Brazil decades/centuries ago. The former still maintains a vivid interest in voting for resolutions affecting the society the person identifies with. But the same is not true for the latter. Hence, Bernardini suggested a reevaluation of the type of people who are entitled to vote abroad to know better who they are and what their interests are (Bernardini, 2024).

The interviews further turned out some objective criticalities on the modalities and on the exercise of the vote abroad. Before the polling, the Consulates must send the ballots by mail to the address of residence. This process does not pose many problems in other countries, where the number of Italians is more limited, but in Brazil, it entails an immense work to check all the civil acts, namely that those people are still alive, are still living in the same circumscription, are still based at the same address, had children or got married. The relatively low rate of participation (around 20/30 percent) entails two downturns: first,

it makes this process considerably costly to print out the ballots; second, there is a high risk of interception (Fornara, 2024). Beyond the recent debates arising from the bill concerning the universal direct suffrage of the Prime Minister, Porta highlighted the urgency to modify the mechanism of the vote abroad to avoid electoral fraud, as it already happened in the past (Porta, 2024).

## CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Part I – Findings & Discussion

In this final chapter, we synthesize the conclusions derived from our comprehensive analysis, which includes a review of relevant literature, interviews with key people involved in the diplomatic and legislative fields of the Italian government, a comparative analysis with other countries, and an in-depth case study on the Italian diaspora in Brazil. The primary objective of this thesis has been to explore how Italian foreign policy can better engage and leverage the Italian diaspora, particularly in Brazil, to pursue national interests.

Our findings reveal that while Italy possesses a vigorous legislative framework, particularly in areas like citizenship and voting rights and an extensive network of diplomatic and institutional representations, it has historically lacked a cohesive, strategic approach to diaspora engagement. This gap has persisted despite the considerable size and influence of the Italian community in Brazil, which is one of the largest Italian diasporas in the world.

One of the key insights from this study is that the Italian government's engagement with its diaspora has been inconsistent over time. This inconsistency can be traced back to the very origins of Italian migration, where the government initially did not recognize the value of the diaspora.

The lack of a coherent diaspora engagement strategy, handed down by the succeeding cabinets over time, has left this potential largely unused. Our findings indicate that Italy's approach has been shaped primarily by political shifting of the priorities of successive governments. In other words, some governments seemed more open to granting rights to the diaspora than others, such as the *Ius Sanguinis* law, the vote to right, and the establishment of COMITES. More recently the recognition of the 150th anniversary of Italian migration to Brazil represents positive steps, these initiatives have often been driven by symbolic events, such as Italy's presidency of the G7 and Brazil's presidency of the G20, rather than by a sustained, long-term policy vision concerning the Italian community abroad.

Despite the enactment of crucial laws such as *Ius Sanguinis* without generational limit and the right to vote from abroad, these legislative measures have not been supported by a comprehensive policy framework that fully understands and utilizes the diaspora's potential. The study suggests that this lack of a structured policy derives from a broader issue: a lack of knowledge and understanding within the Italian government about the composition, needs, and opportunities associated with the Italian diaspora. This lack of awareness resulted into a missed opportunity to enhance the diaspora's potentialities to promote Italy's national interests, particularly in the domains of cultural diplomacy, industrial growth, and the consolidation of strategic international partnerships.

The literature review and interviews reveal that a diaspora that is consciously and willing to stay connected with its homeland is a prerequisite for diaspora engagement policies to be effective. However, the Italian's long inconsistent approach is a significant obstacle because it might have led to the estrangement of the diaspora. The challenge now is to recover this weakened relationship. While engagement was not completely absent, it has predominantly focused on legislative means, leaving aside the promotion of national cultural values and human connections. The fact that many people use the Italian citizenship for personal purposes is evidence that the social aspect of the Italian government's effort in this domain is insufficient.

This literature review and the interviews also highlighted the importance of diasporas as sources of economic capital in the country of origin. However, and more interesting for the Italian case, the focus today shifted on recognizing their role as Ambassadors of the country of origin, as promoters of values, and hubs of knowledge. This perspective aligns with the "New Growth" economic theory (see Paragraph 2.1, Part I, Chapter II) for instance. Because Italy is not a developing country anymore, perceiving its diaspora as ambassadors is pivotal to enhance its soft power on a global scale, helping to rise its status as a "medium power" in the international arena.

Through the comparative analysis (Chapter III), this research draws important conclusions from China, India, Mexico, and France examples. Each of them has developed different strategies to engage their diasporas for national benefit. China and India (sections 1 and 2 respectively, Chapter III) have successfully mobilized their diasporas to pursue technological innovation and economic growth, while keeping important cultural ties at the same time. Mexico (section 3, Chapter III), despite the difficulties arising from illicit migratory flows and the resulting discontent from the USA, it was able to provide

essential services to its migrants. France (section 4, Chapter III), on the other hand, has emphasized the promotion of its language and culture as a means of extending its soft power globally. Italy, in contrast, has not yet fully recognized the strategic value of its diaspora, particularly in South America. Although its economic development momentum was decades ago, the Chinese and Indian cases are useful examples of how to use foreign policy to attract such diaspora to pursue national interests. Italian priority might not be the development of the technological hub nor the acquisition of foreign technologies, but to revitalize its industries and promote its Made in Italy throughout the world. For its close links, guaranteed by the presence of Italian-origin stakeholders in the political and economic realm in Brazil and in other countries in South America, Italy has the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the context of the EU project to stipulate new strategic alliances in the realm of security, energy, and international promoters of peace and democratic values. Beyond the soft power image that Italy would gain in the EU and in South America for its engagement, it would also offer the opportunity to strengthen economic ties with Brazil, that is a rapidly developing country, rich in natural resources and manpower. This engagement could also significantly benefit the Italian private sector, which is already well-established in Brazil, by providing new opportunities for growth and collaboration. The significant presence of Italian enterprises in Brazil demonstrates that the country offers a profitable market for Italian industries. Therefore, the Italian strategy should aim at further leveraging such resources.

Although the Mexican migration is comparatively newer than the Italian mass migration and it is concentrated toward one country of destination, the Mexican approach is a good model to show how engagement with the diaspora requires a constant engagement strategy in foreign policy to strengthen bilateral relations with the host country. And finally, the French commitment in the cultural domain is an example that show the relationship between public diplomacy and soft power. By promoting the Italian language, educational system, and cultural values, Italy can reconnect with the descendants of 19th-century Italian migrants and introduce them to the modern Italian state. This cultural diplomacy might not only strengthen Italy's soft power but also helps to attract the diaspora into Italy's contemporary society and economic activities.

Overall, this research suggests that addressing the gaps in Italy's diaspora policy is not only about reforming citizenship laws or enhancing voting rights. Reforms concerning the *Ius Sanguinis*, for instance, would not automatically reduce the number of demands or incentivize young people to go studying or working in Italy. In other words, while these legislations are important, the history and its

results show that they alone will not solve the criticalities presented. The thesis argues that a more comprehensive approach is needed, one that includes targeted policies aimed at strengthening bilateral relations, promoting economic ties, and enhancing Italian culture. Such an approach could also contribute to contrasting other challenges, such as the “brain drain” and aging population issue.

This thesis aims to be the first attempt to widen the knowledge on the size and potentialities of the Italians abroad. This is particularly relevant at this time when citizenship law matters rekindled in the political debate.

The findings of this thesis contribute significantly to answering the research question by providing both a theoretical framework and a practical analysis of the Italian community in Brazil. The theoretical framework, outlined in Chapter II, Part II, highlights that diaspora engagement can entail different areas of interventions, which can assume through either an "inside-out" or "outside-in" dimension. The "inside-out" approach refers to create relationships with the diaspora in the host country. A few examples are provided by granting rights such as citizenship and voting, as well as providing essential services like healthcare and education, and the organizations of events to gather representatives of the Italian and Brazilian community. This approach necessitates strong political ties with the host country to ensure effective support for the diaspora community. On the other hand, the "outside-in" approach emphasizes encouraging remittances, FDI, and the return of highly skilled individuals to their home country. Chapter II, Part I, presents two key findings regarding Italy's engagement with its diaspora. First, while the Italian government's diaspora engagement has not been formally labeled as such, its policies manifested through migration and citizenship laws. Second, this engagement has been inconsistent over time, supporting the existing literature by confirming that Italy's engagement with its diaspora has been alternating between active commitment or disregard.

This thesis proposes something different from the existing literature by highlighting dynamics that, if not properly addressed, could generate challenges, but also argues that a new foreign policy approach can turn these challenges into opportunities. The gap in the literature is substantial, as previous studies have primarily focused on migration to countries like Argentina, the United States, or, more recently, EU states, with little attention given to the Italian diaspora in Brazil. Moreover, the existing political Italian discourse has largely centered on citizenship laws for incoming migrants rather than referring to the potentialities of Italians abroad.

Indeed, the distinct contribution of this thesis is to explain, proposing a new perspective, how and why Italian foreign policy can better engage with its diaspora, particularly in Brazil, and transform it into a strategic asset for Italy. Acknowledging the needs and the skills of the Italian-Brazilian community is pivotal to understand how to behave to benefit from such potentialities. The hope is that this work will expand the knowledge within academic and policymaking, but also in the society and media world.

In conclusion, this research highlights the significant role of foreign policy in the realm of diaspora engagement, that's what answers to the RQ.

Foreign policy in the domain of diaspora engagement should be intended as an extension of the traditional function of foreign policy, going beyond the diplomatic and political functions between governments. It takes the role of the instrument to connect with citizens living outside national borders. This approach inserts foreign policy as the central channel through which a country can establish a relationship with its diaspora, reflecting the intention to enlarge the scope of national interest to include those global citizens.

Foreign policy operates in two interconnected ways. First, foreign policy acts as an instrument of soft power through public diplomacy. Whether it promotes culture and language, as well as creates economic opportunities, such as organizing forums for businessmen, or pursuing a campaign for attracting the diaspora to Italy, foreign policy brings together all the entities engaged in such initiatives. All kind of projects requires prominent coordination among Italian institutions and ministries, as demonstrated by the project of the *Turismo delle Radici*. This cooperation also maximizes the performance of diaspora engagement, as it shows unity and coherence that, in turn, raises trust among diaspora members.

Secondly, and fundamentally, diaspora engagement effectiveness is strongly dependent on the diplomatic activity that backs such initiatives. Diplomatic support is crucial because it provides the basic legal and political framework in which diaspora policies can operate. At the local level, institutional agreements foster the creation of collaborations and partnerships between the Italian and Brazilian communities. This demonstrates the importance of a well-directed foreign policy strategy that integrates diplomatic and public diplomacy activities.

To recall the “Two-Level” theory by Putnam (see Chapter II, Part I, section 2), the research emphasizes how foreign policy is the link between the international and domestic spheres, particularly in the context of diaspora engagement. Diaspora engagement policies lie in the middle of foreign and domestic policy,

dealing with citizens who reside outside national borders, meaning that an international phenomenon influences internal affairs.

Foreign policy is the tool through which the Italian government should systematically strengthen its relationship with the diaspora. Conversely, it will also be the mechanism through which the diaspora, in the long term, will bring lasting benefits to Italy.

The next paragraph offers practical recommendations for policymakers, emphasizing the need for continuous knowledge development and continuous commitment to a successful engagement in the years to come.

## Part II – Policy Recommendations

In light of all the findings drawn so far, this thesis finally proposes a comprehensive tool of practical guides to offer a clear overview of the many present and future opportunities offered by the Italian diaspora in Brazil, as a source of economic capital, human capital, and soft power.

These recommendations sub interpret that, for diaspora engagement policies to be effective, policies to create economic incentives and foster cultural connections must be mutually supportive and interdependent.

The aim is to demonstrate that the development of a clear strategy of engagement is a way to enhance Italian foreign policy in the sphere of international cooperation and address domestic issues simultaneously. Bearing in mind the current geopolitical scenario, today it is of primary importance for Italy to establish privileged political and economic relations by leveraging the shared historical past and social and cultural affinities with countries that have availed themselves of the Italian presence in their state-building process – like Brazil.

In fact, the Italian government and Sistema Italia need an approach that is complementary and constant over time, supported by a corresponding strategy of cooperation designed to address common global challenges, especially with the support of Italian networks and associations abroad, including youth, that lay the foundations for the development of cultural relations, the promotion of dialogue initiatives and the exchange of information that fosters institutional dialogue. These policy recommendations aim to

emphasize the role of cultural diplomacy in implementing activities abroad to engage young people belonging to the Italian community, by birth or origin, as an instrument of the soft power of Italian foreign policy. The term “cultural diplomacy” was coined by the American ex-diplomatic Edmund Guillon in the 1970s who defined it as the influence exercised by the public administration in the idealization and enforcement of foreign policy. In other words, public diplomacy is the performance of the soft power in several sectors, including the engagement with the local society and media (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023). The website of the Italian MAECI defines it as a “*set of activities undertaken by a state to communicate with foreign audiences*”<sup>35</sup>.

This chapter proposes a set of policy recommendations addressed to Italian policymakers, formulated throughout the redaction of this thesis. These recommendations were inspired by the literature review on the theoretical framework of diaspora engagement policies and by the suggestions from the interviews conducted. They are presented according to the “Rational Model” of the policy-making process. Despite its few limitations, such as bounded rationality and the large number of actors involved which make the process much more complex, the procedure offers a pragmatic and direct approach– that’s what is needed to address the void in diaspora engagement. The steps include identifying the problem, clarifying the objectives, sorting out all the possible policies to reach the settled goal; analyzing the costs and benefits; and choosing the most effective and cost-efficient strategy (Diodato & Marchetti, 2023, pp. 23-24).

## Step A: Identification of the problem

### *1. Problems related to the diaspora*

- **Limited understanding** of the Italian Community in Brazil: The literature review and the interviews revealed a significant lack of studies and comprehensive knowledge on the size, characteristics, and potential opportunities within the Italian diaspora in Brazil. Italy's population is growing outside the peninsula, however, the Italian community in Brazil has been integrated into Brazilian society for generations. These individuals often use Italian citizenship for personal reasons and rarely come to live in Italy.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.affarieuropei.gov.it/it/comunicazione/eventi/public-diplomacy/#:~:text=>. Last accessed on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

• **Bureaucratic complexities:** The high demand of Italian nationality leads to overwhelming pressure at the Italian Consulates that struggle to comply with the statutory procedural time frame. The long waiting line, in turn, often generates illicit activities from “citizenship agencies” that are not governmental institutions and high-cost judicial cases in Italian courts.

• **Limited understanding** of Italian culture and language: The knowledge of Italian culture is often outdated, dating back to the time when their ancestors left Italy. This has an impact on the Italian language which is rarely learned given that it is not a requirement for obtaining Italian citizenship.

## *2. Problems unrelated to the diaspora*

• **Demographic challenges** in Italy: Italy is experiencing a population decline due to a significant brain drain and a decrease of birthrate. This decline might lead to a labor shortage and threaten economic stability in the long term.

### Step B: Identifying the objectives and the capacities

Once the problem is identified, the first step, as outlined by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) (see Chapter II, Part II, section 2), is to define objectives and assess the capacities necessary for implementing a diaspora engagement strategy. In the context of Italy, the government should aim to:

• **Attract young people and skilled workers:** Develop policies aimed at attracting young people to foster brain and knowledge circulation, and to fill in the labor shortages. Such policies should be directed toward two directions: offering appealing economic incentives (tax incentives or remunerations etc.) and stimulating ideological proximity with Italy (prospect of living conditions).

• **Reduce legal and administrative complexities:**

Implement measures to decrease the number of court cases, reduce the waiting time at the consulates, and counteract illicit activities.

### Step C: Research to collect data on the diaspora

After identifying the objectives and the resources at the disposal, the second step is to get to collect data on the diaspora to understand whether its capabilities align with the predetermined objectives. To “know your diaspora”, it is fundamental to perform an analysis of demographic data, such as age, sex, generation, region of origin, occupation, educational level, and any other relevant factors. The sample should also include the descendants who have not obtained the nationality yet, especially those on the waiting list or who have the intention and the financial possibility to demand it. For example, India and China set up a committee in charge of collecting such data.

### Step D: designing a diaspora engagement strategy to address the issues

#### *1. Develop a long-term and pragmatic policy framework for engaging with the Italian diaspora in Brazil*

Although some governments do not label their relationship with their diaspora as “diaspora engagement strategy”, it is important for the Italian government to design a package of policies containing directives in several areas of interventions. Given the irregularity of Italy’s engagement with Italians in Brazil, it is essential to envision a durable and pragmatic strategy. This strategy should be pursued by every succeeding government and should aim to reach most of the Italian community, intervening directly in their daily lives. It should be supported by strong political and diplomatic dialogue to enhance bilateral cooperation and enable interventions through bilateral agreements. Partnerships should also be encouraged to ensure cost efficiency (see the following steps).

#### *2. Define the specific target of each policy*

Once knowing the diaspora, the government should define the boundaries of the target of the policies. This step entails determining how many generations should be considered as “Italians abroad” among other factors.

#### *3. Build trust*

A two-way relationship is likely to generate more effective and long-lasting effects. From the case study it emerged that, despite the feeling of affection for the Italian ancestors demonstrated by the political

representatives in Brazil with Italian origins, a strong sense of criticism of Italian institutions is present due to the long waiting time of the procedure for obtaining Italian citizenship. The Italian government should restore trust within the Italian community in Brazil by promoting contemporary Italian values and language. Diaspora policies should emphasize cultural and human connections rather than just administrative services. For instance, the long waiting line for obtaining Italian citizenship at some Consulates might have deteriorated the image of Italian institutions. Projects like *Turismo delle Radici* is a good start to bring closer the diasporic community to current Italy, similar to the “Tracing the Roots” project from India.

#### 4. *Establish or reorganize the infrastructure dedicated to diaspora engagement in Italy and in Brazil*

Diaspora engagement policy should guarantee a strategy on how to maintain in the long run, financially and politically, an ensemble of institutions.

•**In Italy:** The presence of a Ministry or a stakeholder entirely dedicated to the community of Italians abroad would render the decision-making process more smoothly because of the centralization of the ultimate decision. Differently from the past experience of the Ministry “*senza portafogli*” (see Chapter II, Part I, section 2.5), this Ministry should endure overtime to guarantee a stability of the diaspora engagement support. An example is provided by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

•**In Brazil:** The role of the consular network and existing associations should be evaluated to determine if their activities adequately address the needs and interests of the diaspora, and whether they have the capacity to implement new measures within a specific strategy. The fact that they exist does not necessarily mean that they are able to connect with the diaspora. Strengthening relationships with local institutions, including the private sector, could lead to partnerships that share administrative costs and combine resources to create more impactful and effective initiatives.

#### 5. *Adopting policies that target key domains*

• **Culture and Education:** At the local level, policies should aim at strengthening the promotion of Italian culture abroad through an extensive network of cultural initiatives - continuing the revival of initiatives of the year 2024 – to bring the diaspora closer to today's Italian reality. Moreover, Italian language courses offered by the IIC should be more widely advertised to increase participation. Furthermore, projects that simulate “brain circulation” among students, academics, and researchers

should be reinforced. For instance, enlarging the exchange program among university students (like the European Erasmus+ Project) initiating a bilateral program for internships, or a “working holiday” in Italy are examples that may encourage transfers of knowledge, cooperation in research, and circulation of manpower in the long term. For instance, scholarships for diaspora members to study in India are an example of imitative of fostering scientific networks. The Chinese “111 Project” stimulated the creation of talent hubs in China, whereas the French extensive network of schools and cultural and language institutions demonstrates how investing in education is pivotal to keeping cultural identity and language alive worldwide even for decades. In Italy, the LUISS Guido Carli University, in partnership with the International Itali-Latin American Organization (IILA), funded the basis for the creation of partnerships and exchanges and offers scholarships to study in Rome for Italian descendants. The official LUISS website explains that this scholarship was born from a reflection on the role of the Italian diaspora in the political, economic, societal, cultural, and security concerns<sup>36</sup>

- **Communication and synergies:** It is pivotal to foster communication both between the Italian community and governmental institutions, as well as among the institutions themselves. Establishing strong communicative channels between high-level representatives and the community would enhance the promotion of initiatives and events and ensure greater transparency and accountability in the work of Italian institutions—two essential elements for building trust. Since most projects are carried out by multiple institutions, agencies, and organizations, improving coordination is crucial to avoid wasted costs and efforts and to accelerate the implementation of these policies.
- **Legislation:** Simplify visa requirements for young people and professionals who want to come to Italy and revise the legal framework on nationality to make it more efficient.
- **Public-private partnerships and networking:** Considering the wide presence of Italian industries in Brazil, promoting partnerships and networking events would build stronger connections among the Italian and Italo-Brazilian societies as well as between the institutions of the promotion of Made in Italy, such as ITA, with their Brazilian correspondents, and develop stronger technological and knowledge cooperation. An example is the Mexican “Padrino program” which leveraged partnerships with Mexican private businessmen residing in the USA to attract investments.

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<sup>36</sup> On the Diasporas in the World, LUISS Guido Carli University, <https://www.luiss.it/diaspore-nel-mondo>. Last accessed on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## *6. Implement a monitor and compliance mechanisms*

Following the Advisory Committee of Overseas Chinese Affairs example, establishing a system for continuous monitoring and compliance to assess the effectiveness of measures and institutional role would allow for timely adjustments and prompt identification of issues. This system would ensure that policies are always updated to the circumstances and would reduce the time of reaction in case of need of adjustments. For instance, a monitoring system on the modalities of overseas voting procedures could lead to cost savings and reduce the eventuality of fraud.

### Part III – Conclusive remarks

#### Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study discovered the complexities of the factors surrounding the question of the Italian diaspora abroad. To our knowledge, this research is the first attempt to collect and present a full picture of the historical, political, economic, and social dynamics of the past and the present, to try to delineate future developments in the relations between the government and its diaspora. These theses demonstrate that the Italian diaspora is much more than the subject of the politicized debate concerning the citizenship law. It also shows the inadequacy of the current political tools due to the unclear and unstable political direction caused by the lack of information on the massive Italian community outside its frontiers.

Indeed, the study provides valuable grounding findings for Italian policymakers and for future research. However, given the complexity of the phenomenon that entails political, economic, social, cultural, and historical dynamics, this study could only study a few aspects, considered the most urgent to address, related to the Italian diaspora.

This is pertinent, especially for conducting an exhaustive comparative study of foreign policies between countries. This study does not cover into details the trends of each government of our case studies (China, India, Mexico, and France) toward a specific community in specific countries due to a lack of time and resources. Such a study requires collecting data on the site to assess the intervention of the governmental policies, in the same manner as we did in Brazil.

As described in Chapter I, part III, section 3.7, the limited number of people interviewed represents a further limitation to our study. Additionally, as public officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the diplomatic staff could not release comments on the Italian legislation for visibility issues. Also, this research might have a cultural bias since all the interviewees are from Italy. Given the lack of time and space delimited by a master's thesis, it was not possible to get insights into the perceptions and beliefs of the Italo-Brazilian community in Brazil.

Moreover, a further difficulty arises in generalizing the findings of a case study. This thesis studied the engagement policies of the Italian government with its diaspora in Brazil. However, as we have reiterated on several occasions, it was important to focus on the Brazilian case for two reasons: first, due to the lack of studies concerning the migration flows to Brazil in contrast with the Argentina and American cases; second, because Brazil is land of the largest Italian community, it is land the biggest potentialities and criticalities.

#### Advise for further research

Given the limitations enounced in the overhead paragraph, we advise further research to conduct a quantitative analysis to complete the qualitative analysis of this thesis. To further assess the impact of the Italian foreign policy on the Italian communities abroad it is pertinent to study the demographic variables of the Italian community abroad and to conduct surveys on the site among the Brazilian population of Italian origin to know better the diaspora as to include the perspective of the Italian community in Brazil.

This thesis focused on the Italian government's legislation concerning the Italian community abroad to delineate future paths of Italian foreign policy. Further research could also display, in parallel, the political, economic, and social development of Brazil and Italy as well as the unilateral policies of Brazil in reaction to the Italian migration to assess the overall impact of the Italian diaspora on the bilateral relations between the two countries.



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## ABSTRACT

Oriundi, Little Italy neighborhoods, and Argentinians holding Italian passports are familiar topics in public discourse as many families in Italy share stories of grandparents or uncles who emigrated to the Americas decades ago. However, a lesser-known aspect of this migration history is the mass exodus of Italians in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its significant impact on political affairs, international relations, and geopolitics.

While migratory studies in humanistic, sociological, and historical fields – mostly focused on migration towards the United States of America and Argentina – are numerous, the case of Brazil remains largely unexplored despite hosting one of the largest Italian communities outside Italy.

To our knowledge, there is no comprehensive study in Italy on how the Italian government engages with its citizens abroad. Hence, this thesis aims to fill in this gap by analyzing the interaction between the Italian institutions and the Italian diaspora in Brazil. Brazil, the land of “Italy growing outside Italy”, is a fascinating case to study how Italy’s cultural and political influence extends beyond its geographical borders. The objective of this thesis is to unveil the political motivation behind its engagement and analyze the role of foreign policies, institutions, and legal instruments used to maintain contact with this community. Additionally, the purpose is to bring the light on the potentialities that such diaspora holds and to argue that, if properly leveraged, it could bring a pivotal value to overcome current Italian challenges.

This project was idealized during the internship at the Consulate General of Italy of São Paulo in Brazil, where the researcher could observe the complexities originating from the management of the requests for Italian citizenship. This experience generated a curiosity to investigate what policies, if any, Italy has implemented toward the Italians who do not live in Italy. In other words, the researcher wanted to assess whether the consular services were supported by a broader, systematic approach to diaspora engagement. The research methodology is multidisciplinary and the data were collected through direct observations of the consular work; through a meticulous analysis of the existing literature review on theories of diaspora engagement policies and on the Italian history of foreign policy; and through interviews that were conducted to key representatives of bilateral relations, namely the previous Ambassador of Italy in Brazil, Antonio Bernardini, the current Consul General in São Paulo, Domenico Fornara, and the Member of the Parliament for the South American constituency, Fabio Porta. These conversations

provided valuable insights into the bilateral relations and application of Italian foreign policy and approach to diaspora engagement.

This thesis is structured into five chapters. The literature review chapter presents a historical overview of Italian foreign policy which reconstructs the overall management of migrants and their descendants in the context of the geopolitics in which Italy has been predominantly involved. The second part places diaspora engagement policies in the broader theoretical framework of International Relations (IR) to understand how diaspora management is closely linked to foreign policy as a connector between multiple states. It also claims that diaspora matters have been recently re-discovered by analysts as a source of strategic benefits. The third chapter offers a comparative analysis of diaspora engagement policies of China, India, Mexico, and France to examine how other countries have integrated their diasporas into national strategies. The analysis reveals that these countries have successfully leveraged their communities abroad to pursue national goals, namely economic investments, political influence, and soft power. Although their contexts differ from the Italian case, these cases provide pragmatic examples for the policy recommendations addressed to Italy that are illustrated in the final chapter. The fourth chapter focuses on the Brazilian case, providing some data about the Italian community and the difficulties arising in the management of such large numbers.

Key findings of this research indicate that, first, Italy lacks a coherent, long-term strategy for engaging with its diaspora, especially in Brazil. Unlike the countries analyzed, Italy's approach has been inconsistent, often interrupted by the frequent change of governments. As a result, Italy's engagement is fragmented and mostly based on consular services and on the presence of Italian private companies in the Brazilian territory.

Second, the Italian community in Brazil represents a valuable resource that, if properly leveraged, could address some of the most pressing challenges. Domestically, the Italian government could use the diaspora to help overcoming issues such as demographic decline. Many Brazilians of Italian origin keep a cultural – at times nostalgic - cultural ties with Italy, but are not incentivized enough to come to study, work, or move to Italy in the long run. Internationally, a stronger commitment to the Italian diaspora could strengthen Italy's foreign policy and forge stronger diplomatic ties. Brazil is a pivotal country in the whole Latin America area, being a consolidated, fast-growing democracy in possess of strategic assets for the technology and energy transition. The presence of the Italian community facilitates

diplomatic and economic ties and could lead to greater influence in the region, particularly in strategic sectors such as technology, raw materials, and energy.

In light of the findings, this research ultimately suggests that the Italian government must develop a long-lasting and feasible strategy of diaspora engagement. Given the multi-sectoral applicability of diaspora engagement, this strategy should not only be focused on the consular activities and institutional presence in Brazil, which is well established and branched, but rather target a large spectrum of sectors, that include political, economic, and cultural engagement to overcome the disruption of Italy's foreign policy efforts of the past.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates the critical importance of diaspora engagement as a manner to reinforce the image of Italian foreign policy. The Italian community is an outstanding asset that Italy has yet not fully recognized or harnessed. In the long term, Italy can leverage its diaspora by integrating it in its national objectives and enhance its influence at the global level.