From 'Dependent' to 'Deviant': Highlighting structural racism and the Social Construction of Target Populations for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Italy

Ifeoluwatari Ajadi

Around 60 million people are currently displaced by war, political persecution and violence worldwide, with an added 26.4 million per year being forced to move by ecological and natural disasters.[1] This global refugee crisis has drastically impacted politics in the European Union, despite the uptick in forced migration primarily affecting developing nations in the Global South.[2] The political and economic bonds that joined the member states of the EU, already frayed from the damage caused by the Great Recession of 2008, have been weakened further by the rise of right-wing populism that has accompanied this crisis.[3]

Italy, as one of the few states within the EU that is proximal to the Mediterranean Sea, has fallen under the sway of this wave of populism, electing a coalition government that primarily comprises the right-wing League (formerly known as the Northern League) and the Five-Star Movement (variously described as populist and anti-establishment, combining anti-austerity politics with xenophobia).[4] The election of this coalition government likely augurs suffering for the hundreds of thousands of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants (shortened for brevity in this essay to RA-SMs) that currently reside within Italy, with Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini calling for a "league of leagues" to fight migration within the EU's borders.[5]

There remains, however, a question of how to systematically account for the treatment of RA-SMs by the Italian government. This essay will attempt to address this question by testing Critical Race Theory and Social Construction of Target Populations Theory with the Italian case

[1] Fröhlich, "A Critical View on Human Mobility in Times of Crisis," 5.
[2] Edmond, "84% of Refugees Live in Developing Countries."
[3] Fröhlich, "A Critical View on Human Mobility in Times of Crisis," 5.
[4] Coman, "'Italians First.'"
[5] Agence France-Presse, "'League of Leagues.'"

to determine the extent to which structural racism explains the marginalisation of RA-SMs in Italy.

I contend that processes of racialization in Italy underpin a policy context in which RA-SMs have become constructed as "deviants", or people with a negative social construction who have few political resources to mobilise.[6] This social construction of RA-SMs did not always exist – migrants from the Balkan region were, for instance, generally successful in their integration into Italian society in the early 2000s, while the 2013 Mare Nostrum operation indicated a humanitarian discourse that constructed RA-SMs as dependents.[7] The present normative context of refugee policy in Italy is thus one that seeks to ostracise RA-SMs from society, despite the different processes that affect their residence within the nation. Migration, therefore, is a highly racialised process that allows for the expression of racist sentiment under the cloak of human security and humanitarian guises.

By analysing the policies that govern the treatment of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants within Italy, this essay seeks to demonstrate the efficacy of policy design theories, as well as theories of social construction in demonstrating how the xenophobia present within populist discourses is shaping migration policy within EU states. These shifts in migration policy may ultimately contribute to the demise of one of the foundational planks of the European Union itself: the free movement of peoples.

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[6] Schneider and Sidney, "What Is Next for Policy Design and Social Construction Theory?," 107.
[7] Korac, "Integration and How We Facilitate It," 61; Kersch and Mishtal, "Asylum in Crisis," 98.

This essay will first outline the core tenants of both Social Construction of Target Populations Theory, as well as Critical Race Theory, before outlining the Italian case and concluding with a discussion of how these theories apply to the Italian example.

Social Construction of Target Populations Theory

First proposed by Schneider and Ingram, theories around the social construction of target populations (SCTP) address the "cultural characterisation or popular images of the persons or groups whose behaviour and well-being are affected by public policy."[8] According to this theory, the discursive and normative construction of different groups of people in society affects the agenda-setting process that prompts policy creation, design and implementation.[9] This effect on the policy process is recurring, as the implementation of policies affected by this social construction provides messages to the targeted groups about how they may be treated in the future, creating a 'feed-forward' effect that further entrenches the stereotypes that informed policy creation in the first place.[10]

SCTP theory requires the acknowledgement of *a priori* assumptions about how power is allocated and distributed, how policy influences politics, and how individuals perceive the world around them.[11] Firstly, according to SCTP, power is not distributed equally among actors in a political environment but operates similarly to Lukes' conception of the three faces of power: winning observable arguments, setting agendas, and constructing realities to influence preferences.[12] SCTP uses all three faces of power, as social constructions and stereotypes can

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[8] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 334.
[9] Schneider and Ingram, 334.
[10] Pierce et al., "Social Construction and Policy Design," 6.
[11] Pierce et al., 5.
[12] Pierce et al., 4.

impact an individual's preferences for decision-making despite these constructions being

difficult to observe.[13]

Next, SCTP posits that actors within a constrained policy environment cannot process all

the information necessary to make a decision, so they rely on stereotypes and biases to filter

those preconceptions through their previous belief systems.[14] This assumption demonstrates that

standards of rationality within a political environment are constrained and that actors will

typically seek decisions that will benefit their aspirations (particularly when those aspirations

are for re-election.[15]

Finally, SCTP combines Kingdon's understanding of policy-making as an unstable

process with an insight that policies "send messages to citizens to affect their orientations and

participation patterns."[16] In other words, when governments implement policies, citizens

understand that said government's choice to distribute benefits or burdens to population groups

is an implicit communication of how the society at large views them. Policy benefits bolster

advantaged groups in their participation in political processes, and those that receive burdens are

(beyond the barriers that those burdens present) disincentivised to seek out a role in the political

process.

In Mondou and Montpetit's view, this process leads to a "politics of degeneration",

where electoral incentives are attached to sending messages to target groups about their place

in society.[17] This politics forces politicians to be risk-averse in challenging the stereotypes that

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[13] Pierce et al., 4.
[14] Pierce et al., 4.
[15] Mondou and Montpetit, "Policy Styles and Degenerative Politics," 704.
[16] Pierce et al., "Social Construction and Policy Design," 4.
[17] Mondou and Montpetit, "Policy Styles and Degenerative Politics," 704.

informed policy-creation in the first place, leading to a feedback loop that amplifies

the advantages or disadvantages of target groups.

SCTP combines these three sets of assumptions with previous insights to produce four

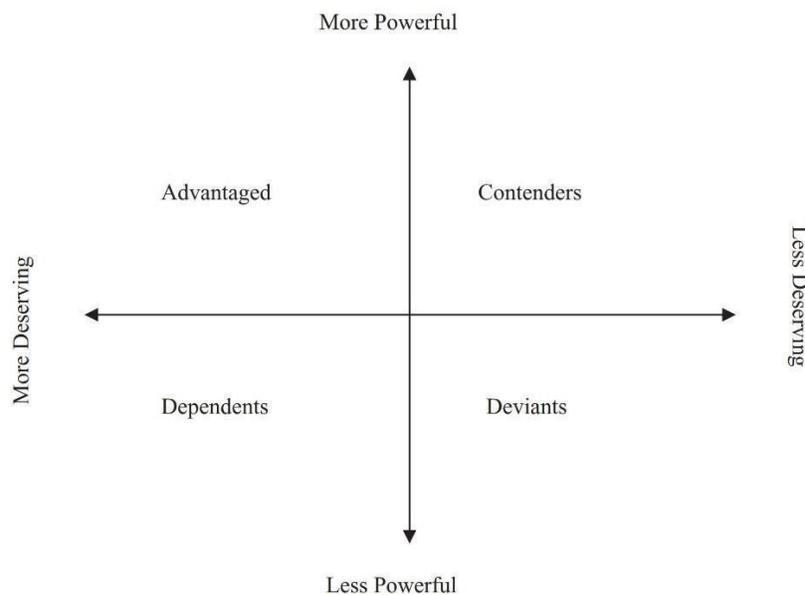typologies of groups' status within a society, as shown in the matrix in Figure 1:

More Powerful

Advantaged   Contenders

More Deserving   Less Deserving

Dependents   Deviants

Less Powerful

Figure 1: Matrix showing typologies within the social construction of target groups[18]

The matrix above illustrates the ideal types of construction for target groups within society.

The vertical axis represents access to power within political processes, and the horizontal axis

represents the social constructions that influence how society perceives these groups.

Advantaged groups, such as business leaders, enjoy high access to power and are perceived

positively by those in power.[19]

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[18] Mondou and Montpetit, 705.
[19] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 336.

Conversely, those whom society perceives as deviants, such as criminals, have little power and

are perceived negatively. The implications of being attached to these typologies, for Schneider

and Ingram, are significant to policy outcomes:

> Public officials find it to their advantage to provide beneficial policy to the
> advantaged groups who are both powerful and positively constructed as "deserving"
> because not only with the group itself respond favorably, but others will approve of
> the beneficial policy's being conferred on deserving people. Similarly, public
> officials commonly inflict punishment on negatively constructed groups who have
> little or no power, because they need fear no electoral retaliation from the group itself
> and the general public approves of punishment for groups that it has constructed
> negatively.[20]

The outcomes of policies targeted towards advantaged and disadvantaged groups are

thereby shaped by these social constructions, whose effects can be found in the different

designs, rationales and distributions of policy benefits and burdens within a given polity.[21]

SCTP bolsters the consideration of values, norms and discourses within broader theories

of policy design, thereby expanding scholars' consideration of design to include more than

'rational' choices or explicit normative claims like stated policy goals or rationales.[22]

Dimensions of policy that can be reviewed within this framework include policy implementation

and evaluation structures, as well as policy tools.[23] Despite being criticised for lack of a detailed

mechanism for change, as well as for lack of empirical methods to support the theory, SCTP has

become a prolific and well-established contribution to theories of public policy.[24]

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[20] Schneider and Ingram, 336.
[21] Schneider and Ingram, 338, 339.
[22] Schneider and Sidney, "What Is Next for Policy Design and Social Construction Theory?,"
105.
[23] Schneider and Sidney, 105.
[24] Pierce et al., "Social Construction and Policy Design," 21.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) focuses on the role of race as a social construction in producing inequities for racialised peoples. Emerging from the legal tradition with figures such as Derrick Bell, CRT theorists perceive society as being structured and stratified by race, with processes of power that disenfranchise racialised peoples.[25] CRT aims to raise consciousness about the institutional and interpersonal mechanisms that shape how race and racism are expressed in the life-course of racialised peoples.[26] It addresses issues of colour-blindness, interest convergence and social construction to explain the development and maintenance of racial inequalities.[27]

As Hylton notes in his review of the use of CRT in research, this understanding of the world prompts scholar-activists to "remain conscious of the crucial social processes that structure their worlds and …consistently look 'to the bottom' for answers as well as questions."[28] In so doing, CRT avoids a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach – instead, CRT theorists are primarily concerned with reflecting the experiences of racialised peoples to contribute to "anti-racist, anti-subordination, social justice and social transformation activities."[29]

CRT applies to the study of refugee and immigration policy insofar as it can provide an analytical frame for the discourses associated with forced migration.[30] As Burrell and

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[25] Hylton, "Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk," 24.
[26] Graham et al., "Critical Race Theory as Theoretical Framework and Analysis Tool for Population Health Research," 82.
[27] Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris, *Critical Race Theory (Third Edition)*, 9.
[28] Hylton, "Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk," 24.
[29] Hylton, 24.
[30] Burrell and Hörschelmann, "Perilous Journeys," 4.

Hörschelmann note, "[one] of the prevailing arcs of the narrative of the refugee crisis is the focus

on the dramatic, frightening and overwhelming arrival of "other" bodies onto European shores, a

fear communicated and stoked by invasive and tangible metaphors such as that signalled by

Bauman's (2016) "strangers at our door.""[31] CRT contextualises these discourses within a long

lineage of thought that tacitly constructs racialised bodies as alien or unwelcome within White

spaces, uncovering hidden narratives of violence and subordination within Western societies.

CRT also unpacks narratives of colour-blindness, or the efforts to render race as immaterial,

which undermine the lived experiences of racialised peoples within society.[32] These narratives of

colour-blindness, or as Migliarini notes "colour-evasiveness", are "about avoidance or escape, not

about explicitly creating solutions to problems."[33] . It engages explicitly with differential processes

of racialization or the reification of racial hierarchies within society.[34] By engaging these narratives

and exposing the sustenance of White supremacy that typically accompanies them, CRT scholars

hope to reshape the seemingly "natural" status of the status-

quo.[35]

CRT accounts for some of the shortcomings of SCTP because it provides a more in-depth

analysis of how social constructions are formed and proliferate within society. Its

methodological flexibility allows for its usage in discussions of education, migration, population

health and criminal justice.[36] SCTP also acts as a useful counterpoint to CRT, as it helps to give

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[31] Burrell and Hörschelmann, 4.
[32] Migliarini, "'Colour-Evasiveness' and Racism without Race," 439.
[33] Migliarini, 439.
[34] Oliveri, "Racialization and Counter-Racialization in Times of Crisis," 1857.
[35] Hylton, "Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk," 25.
[36] Ford and Airhihenbuwa, "The Public Health Critical Race Methodology"; Hylton, "Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk"; Brown, "Race, Racism, and Mental Health"; Oliveri, "Racialization and Counter-Racialization in Times of Crisis."

structure to the diffuse nature of CRT, while still allowing for the effect of discourses and

ideas on policy design. The combination of the two will provide insights into the Italian case

by tracing the impact of colour-blind discourses throughout Italian society that contributes to

the present crisis.

Case Study: The Treatment of African Refugees, Asylum-seekers and Migrants in Italy

The current framing of the "migrant crisis" in Italy began in 2013 when over 600 people

died on the shores of Sicily trying to cross the Mediterranean.[37] Italy, as one of the two main

entry points to the European Union from the African continent and the Middle East, became the

nexus of activity in both security and humanitarian arenas to stop human trafficking and to

manage the flow and residence of migrants.[38] These people and the scores of others that landed

safely in Italy are framed throughout much of the discourse as simply "migrants", or "a person

who leaves home to seek a new life in another region or country."[39] In fact, there are three

different statuses that are relevant to the Italian state's treatment of RA-SMs: a) refugees,

defined as a person who has fled their country because of persecution and thus has international

protection; b) asylum-seekers, or someone who has left the country seeking protection but has

not yet been designated as a refugee; and c) a migrant, who may or may not have the right to stay

in another country (those who do not have the right are called undocumented migrants).[40] These

definitions are relevant because they account for differential experiences of reception, processing

and integration for people making the journey across the Mediterranean.

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[37] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 725.
[38] Pinelli, 725.
[39] Open Society Foundations, "Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union."
[40] Amnesty International, "Hotspot Italy," 4.

The Italian government's response to the ensuing crisis in 2013 was to institute Mare

Nostrum, a sea rescue operation designed to safeguard and process migrants attempting to reach

Lampedusa from Libya, while simultaneously capturing and prosecuting human traffickers.[41]

This program was partially a response to Italy's prior contravention of the Convention of

Human Rights in 2009, where the state would routinely intercept and return migrants to Libya

via boat without processing their asylum claims, meaning that the Libyan authorities (who were

partially funded by the EU) would likely torture the migrants.[42] Mare Nostrum, on the other

hand, was considered to be a success – with some estimates indicating that the program saved

over 130,000 people.[43]

After a year, the operation was stopped and replaced by an EU funded program (Triton)

that cost significantly less, was less effective, and patrolled a narrower portion of the

Mediterranean Sea.[44] The justification given by the Interior Minister at the time was that the

program was an emergency operation,[45] but there were also concerns within the EU that Italy

was lax about patrolling its borders with other EU nations. The upshot of this relaxed attitude to

policing its internal borders meant that those that landed in Italy were transiting to Northern

European states to seek asylum despite the Dublin convention which allows for asylum claims

to only be processed in their first country of entry.[46] Moreover, many within Italy perceived that

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[41] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 728.
[42] Frelick and Human Rights Watch, "Pushed Back, Pushed Around."
[43] Taylor, "Italy Ran an Operation That Saved Thousands of Migrants from Drowning in the Mediterranean. Why Did It Stop?"
[44] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 729.
[45] Taylor, "Italy Ran an Operation That Saved Thousands of Migrants from Drowning in the Mediterranean. Why Did It Stop?"
[46] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 729.

Mare Nostrum, with its €9 million a month cost, actually *attracted* migrants, and privileged their

needs to the detriment of the broader Italian economy.[47]

The response from the EU was to develop the 'hotspot' approach, which according to

Amnesty International was conceived as a "sticking plaster."[48] Designed to increase controls on

refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants while simultaneously share the burden of processing and

adjudicating claims to states across the EU, the 'hotspots' came into fruition as centres designed

for fingerprinting, assessment of protection needs and filtration into different streams of

application for asylum or return to their home nations.[49] The 'hotspots', however, have not

achieved their goal of lessening the burden on border states like Italy or of harmonising the

asylum system – on the contrary, only 1,196 people out of 131,000 who landed in Italy were

repatriated to other countries.[50]

Moreover, the 'hotspot' approach within the EU was not framed by any specific piece of

EU-wide legislation, so the use of force to obtain fingerprints and to detain people falls directly

onto Italian regulations and prerogatives.[51] The four 'hotspots' that are operational hold 1,600

people, and it is here where initial determinations about the validity of their migratory paths are

made. Pinelli notes that the filtration process within these 'hotspots' changes depending on the

nationality of the person being reviewed:

> Subdividing and sorting are selection procedures that generate a hierarchy among
> newly arrived migrants. In 2014, Syrians and Eritreans were treated differently from
> other groups, placed in centers from which it was easier to escape, and often not

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[47] Pinelli, 728; Taylor, "Italy Ran an Operation That Saved Thousands of Migrants from Drowning in the Mediterranean. Why Did It Stop?"; Musarò and Parmiggiani, "Beyond Black and White," 245.
[48] Amnesty International, "Hotspot Italy," 5.
[49] Amnesty International, 5.
[50] Amnesty International, 6.
[51] Amnesty International, 12.

subjected to identification and fingerprinting procedures. Migrants from other regions, especially West Africa, were instead subjected to fingerprinting, held in centers from which it was harder to escape, monitored during any trips they made to border areas or prevented from attempting to flee. Migrants identified as boat drivers or from countries that maintain readmission agreements—Tunisians, for example— were sent to deportation centers.[52]

Here, the Italian government sends a signal about which migrants are palatable, and which are perceived as a threat to the state. This filtration, when combined with a new screening process that forced RA-SMs to state that they were seeking arrival immediately upon rescue without a full understanding of their rights in Italy, implies an institutional logic of fear and coercion.[53]

The differential processes of filtration have consequences for the treatment that people receive after their initial landing. Pressure from other EU member states about Italy's lax policing of its borders meant that the EU imposed a 100% fingerprinting rate for migrants, which, under Italian legislation, could be collected by force.[54] This use of force was also encouraged by the European Commission.[55] Allegations of torture and police violence abounded after this directive was handed down – according to Amnesty International, "people…recounted having suffered beatings as well as being subjected to electric shocks by the police by using electrical batons (also known as stun batons), weapons that inflict significant pain without leaving long-lasting physical traces on the body of the victim."[56] These cases of torture, sexual humiliation and violence, sometimes committed against children, were combined with arbitrary detention within hotspots to

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[52] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 734.
[53] Amnesty International, "Hotspot Italy," 35.
[54] Amnesty International, 17.
[55] Amnesty International, 23.
[56] Amnesty International, 17, 18.

increase compliance with fingerprinting protocols.[57] The response of the Italian state to

the influx of RA-SMs, therefore, was nothing short of coercion. The humanitarian logic

that underpinned Operation Mare Nostrum was promptly replaced by a regime of

surveillance, violence and misinformation.

Another fundamental issue raised by the Italian state's response to the increase in

RA-SMs is the support and integration that refugees and asylum-seekers receive once they

have passed through the initial screening process. Once an individual is eligible to apply

for asylum, they complete a C/3 form and are supposed to know the outcome of the

application within 30 days of submission.[58] The average time of adjudication, according

to Medicins Sans Frontieres, is 307 days.[59] The reception centres that host some of the

asylum-seekers are, according to Pinelli, spaces of exploitation and deprivation, with

extreme surveillance and restrictions on fundamental freedoms including the ability to

leave the facilities or have visitors at any point.[60] Because there are many more asylum-

seekers than spaces in reception centres, and because Italian rules offer no degree of

proportionality to their ability to expel asylum-seekers from the centres, many asylum-

seekers end up living in informal accommodations with no financial or logistical support

where they are vulnerable to exploitation from the Mafia.[61]

This treatment stands in contrast to the treatment that asylum-seekers from the

former Yugoslavia, Albania and others received in the late 1990s. Korac notes in their

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[57] Amnesty International, 25, 29.
[58] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 734.
[59] Medecins Sans Frontieres, "Out Of Sight," 3.
[60] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 738, 739.
[61] Medecins Sans Frontieres, "Out Of Sight," 4; Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 735.

2003 review of settlement procedures for refugees in Italy and the Netherlands that

"[almost] none of the refugees I interviewed had Italian citizenship and almost all had

temporary, humanitarian, permits to stay, based on this special decree. This temporary

status was usually granted without any lengthy determination procedure and included the

immediate right to work and study."[62] Moreover, while settlement procedures in Italy

were similarly inadequate at the time, the refugees from Albania and the former

Yugoslavia reported feeling a great deal of community and integration into Italian society,

in part because a sense of Italian superiority did not accompany their integration.[63]

The mood in Italy has dramatically shifted since Operation Mare Nostrum was at

its peak. RA-SMs from the African continent, have come under increasing attacks in 2017

and 2018, including the shooting of six people from Nigeria, Mali and Ghana in revenge

for the murder of an Italian woman by a former Nigerian asylum-seeker.[64] Salvini, now

Deputy Prime Minister, personally intervened to stop ships filled with 177 RA-SMs from

disembarking in Italy.[65] In the two months after the coalition government was elected,

neo-fascist terrorists targeted immigrants in two murders, 12 shootings and 33 physical

assaults.[66] The coalition subsequently passed laws removing humanitarian permits for

those who were not eligible for refugee status,[67] and increased scrutiny on NGOs seeking

to provide support for migrants,[68] kicking thousand out of the reception centres and

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[62] Korac, "Integration and How We Facilitate It," 59.
[63] Korac, 61.
[64] Horowitz, "This Italian Town Once Welcomed Migrants. Now, It's a Symbol for Right-Wing Politics."
[65] Tondo, "Standoff in Italian Port as Salvini Refuses to Let Refugees Disembark."
[66] Giuffrida and Tondo, "Warning of 'dangerous Acceleration' in Attacks on Immigrants in Italy."
[67] Giuffrida, "Italian Government Approves Salvini Bill Targeting Migrants."
[68] Lunaria, "Chronicles of Ordinary Racism: Fourth White Paper on Racism in Italy," 10.

rendering them homeless.[69] The transition in mood and policy within Italy is notable,

not only in its scope but in its speed. The causes behind this degeneration from

humanitarianism into hostility are what I will focus on in the third section.

<u>Why have things gotten so bad for RA-SMs in Italy?</u>

From an SCTP perspective, the shift in Italian immigration policy may be explained by a

shift in the perception of RA-SMs from being a 'dependent' group to a 'deviant' group. Schneider

and Ingram note that the rationales for providing powerless populations with policy benefits are

typically justice-oriented, as opposed to instrumentally driven.[70] The humanitarian logics that drove

Operation Mare Nostrum, as well as the previous system of humanitarian permits, fall under that

category, as they have tended to place a financial burden on the Italian state.[71] The spotty

implementation of aspects of these programs such as the reception centres, as well as the financial

support nominally given to migrants, fits neatly with the definition of "dependent" policy tools, not

least because of the stringent eligibility criteria necessary to access

them.[72]

The construction of RA-SMs within immigration policy in Italy today, however, is as

"deviants", which means that they are negatively constructed and are the target of policy burdens.

According to Schneider and Ingram, policies aimed at attaching burdens to "deviants" will feature

heavily in election campaigns and will likely be excessive in their implementation of those

burdens.[73] Both the League and the Five-Star Movement ran on an election platform that

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[69] Tondo and Giuffrida, "Vulnerable Migrants Made Homeless after Italy Passes 'Salvini Decree.'"
[70] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 340.
[71] Pinelli, "Control and Abandonment," 729.
[72] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 339.
[73] Schneider and Ingram, 337.

had anti-migrant elements, with the League calling for anti-immigration alliances across Europe

and subsequently decrying the existence of the "Nigerian mafia."[74] Politicians that aim to

deliver policy benefits to "deviant" populations, such as former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi,

have a difficult time justifying why they should be the recipients of benefits despite the potential

efficacy of policies like Mare Nostrum.[75]

SCTP is not, however, a perfect fit for the Italian case. The theory posits that the

messages received from the policy design would 'feed-forward', shaping policy through both

instrumental and interpretive frames.[76] If RA-SMs in Italy were still perceived as "dependents",

that 'feed-forward' effect would mean that the message of reliance on government charity would

proliferate through society, therefore influencing at least a nominal sense of support for eligible

refugees and asylum-seekers.[77] Some attitudinal polling from August 2018 demonstrates that

these sentiments are consistent with public opinion in Italy, with 41 per cent of Italians feeling

warm toward refugees compared to 29 per cent who feel cold towards them.[78] Other attitudinal

polling, however, indicates a very different picture: Italy had the highest median score of any

Western European nation in a Pew Research Center ranking of nationalist, anti-immigrant, anti-

religious minority sentiment.[79] This paradox is only compounded by the fact that the Italians

elected a coalition government that ran on an explicit anti-immigration platform, but one that

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[74] Agence France-Presse, "'League of Leagues'"; Agence France-Presse, "Italy's Salvini in Trouble for Tweet on 'Nigerian Mafia.'"

[75] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 338.

[76] Pierce et al., "Social Construction and Policy Design," 6.

[77] Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations," 342.

[78] More In Common, "Attitudes towards National Identity, Immigration and Refugees in Italy," 8.

[79] Diamant and Starr, "Western Europeans Vary in Nationalist, Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes."

denies the existence of racism within the state.[80] These polling numbers and the electoral

outcomes that they produced are an indication of the transition between "dependent" and

"deviant" status. There seems to be a disjunction between how Italians perceive refugees ought

to be treated and the government they elected to deliver this treatment. The 'feed-forward' effect

does not appear to work in this case because the coalition government, along with the media, has

transitioned into a different feedback loop.

It is here that Critical Race Theory may provide insights to bolster SCTP. Racialization

works as a process of denial in Italy.[81] Within Italy, racism is often framed as an attitudinal,

individual blight, as opposed to a structural form of discrimination actively promoted by

governments and the media.[82] Henry et al. discuss this phenomenon within the Canadian

context as "democratic racism", or an ideology in which "two conflicting sets of values are

made congruent to each other. Commitments to democratic principles such as justice, equality,

and fairness conflict but coexist with attitudes and behaviours that include negative feelings

about minority groups, differential treatment, and discrimination against them."[83] Henry et al.'s

framing of democratic racism is a useful framing of the dislocation found within Italian anti-

racist discourses. It allows for actors like the League to skirt the emotional dissonance of

sympathy towards refugees and hatred of immigrants by claiming that the presence of the

migrants is some form of injustice against the Italian people, thus allowing citizens to absolve

themselves of the policies that marginalise RA-SMs.

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[80] Speak, "As Racist Attacks Increase, Is There a 'climate of Hatred' in Italy?"
[81] Oliveri, "Racialization and Counter-Racialization in Times of Crisis," 1855.
[82] Oliveri, 1856.
[83] Henry et al., "The Ideology of Racism," 114.

Discourses of democratic racism are amplified by a refusal to acknowledge racism. In Lentin's sociological study of anti-racism movements across Europe, she notes that "the problematic of racism in the Italian context is almost universally understood to be one of immigration which, in turn, is seen as being the local translation of a global-level object of study: migration."[84] In other words, the migratory process itself is a process of racialization. Migliarini notes that this tendency is actually "colour-evasiveness": a purposeful avoidance of culpability for systemic violence.[85] She notes that many Italians refuse to mark social difference by race, preferring "ethnicity" or "culture" to differentiate between populations, demonstrating an unwillingness to discuss their colonial and racist past, and a tendency to frame Whiteness as neutral.[86] Asserted efforts by scholars to emphasise that "race did not exist" after the Second World War contributed to the construction of this colour-evasiveness in Italy, which was counter-balanced by the co-mingling of sexualisation and fear of Black bodies within media throughout the 20th century.[87]

This erasure, when mapped onto other dynamics of othering within Italian society (including the economic and cultural divide between Northern and Southern regions) means that the "tensions that define their [racialized migrants'] citizenship status are located between lines of internal exclusion, differential inclusion, segregation and their eventual promotion within the social and racial hierarchies."[88] In essence, colour-evasiveness acts as a shield for the true mechanisms of structural racism at play within Italian society. As the numbers of RA-SMs who reached Italy increased, the latent racism within Italian society became exposed, prompting the

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[84] Lentin, *Racism And Anti-Racism In Europe*, 163.
[85] Migliarini, "'Colour-Evasiveness' and Racism without Race," 439.
[86] Migliarini, 439, 440.
[87] Migliarini, 441.
[88] Migliarini, 442.

election of the coalition government and indicating a shift from "dependent" to "deviant" status. Actors within the political process can mask state crises of underfunding of core resources, unemployment and a lack of trust in institutions by placing policy burdens on RA-SMs. Understanding this process of racialization, therefore, is crucial in contextualising the shift in social construction that is described by SCTP.

Conclusion

The shift in treatment that refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants faced in Italy from 2013 until now can be characterised by a shift in the way the policies that affected them were designed. The humanitarian logic behind Operation Mare Nostrum gave way to a logic of coercion and surveillance that characterised the 'hotspot' approach. This transition can be characterised using the social construction of target populations theory to be a shift from a "dependent" construction to a "deviant" construction. The motivation for this shift is a process of racialization that activates structural racism within Italian society and will lead to a new 'feed-forward' effect that will amplify these sentiments further.

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