

# ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE MIGRATION OF ALBANIANS TO ITALY BETWEEN 1924 TO 2020

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the political trends in Albanian migration to Italy from 1924 to 2020, with a focus on the historical relations between Albanian and Italian migrants, migration policies in Italy, and changes in political collaboration between the two groups. The findings reveal that Albania and Italy had established contacts before the 1900s, enabling cross-national collaboration. Italy's acceptance of migrants has played a significant role in facilitating Albanian migration. Currently, Italy and Albania are active partners with robust economic relations, and they possess a comprehensive understanding of each other's policies and situations result from migration and exchange. The two nations have also established institutional communication channels. However, the study identifies the lack of innovative policies linking migration to development as a shortcoming that requires immediate attention. The national strategy should prioritize integration, particularly in non-immigration-related administration. The country-pair analyzed in this study may not be the optimal choice for implementing development-friendly migration policies. Successful Albanian immigrants have mostly made return investments without any government support, relying on their entrepreneurial abilities to identify promising sectors and secure financing.

***Keywords:*** *Italy, Albania, Migration, Policies, Political Collaboration*

## **Introduction**

This study examines the political trends in Albanian migration to Italy from 1924 to 2020. The paper first examines the migration policies of Albania and Italy, then analyses the political changes in Albanian migration to Italy, and finally evaluates the political changes in collaboration between Albania and Italy's migrations. Understanding the political changes in Albanian migration to Italy is crucial, as Albania is a significant source of migrants to many nations. As of 2004, Albanians accounted for 13.2% of all registered foreign residents in Italy (316,659 out of 2.4 million). According to a report by Verga<sup>1</sup>, the number of Albanians in Italy has rapidly increased in the last ten years and expanded tenfold from 1992 to 2003. Currently, Albanians can be found in various regions of Italy.

Italy has a long history of emigration, with at least 25 million Italians having left the country between 1876 and 1973. During this period, migration policy focused primarily on protecting Italian emigrants. However, in the 1970s, Italy started to experience significant international migration due to a lack of precise labor migration recruitment measures and an effective regulatory framework.

## ***Background of the Study***

Albania and Italy have a long-standing historical relationship, with Italy historically attempting to protect its interests in Albania through various negotiations and treaties. For instance, Italy was able to guarantee Albania's status as a guarantor at the 1920 Conference of Versailles through diplomatic efforts<sup>2</sup>. Italy and Albania signed their first official agreement in January 1924, which included a secret marine therapy that was not approved by Parliament, followed by the Consular Services Treatment and a memorandum certifying the appointment of colonels in specific districts<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Elisa Verga, . In Italia quella dei migranti è un'industria [In Italy, immigration is an industry worth over 4 billion], in "Il sole 24 ore", 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/in-italia-quella-dei-migranti-ormai-e-unindustria-e-vale-oltre-4-miliardi-ADc5MSoB>

<sup>2</sup> Bernd J. Fischer, Mbreti Zog dhe Përpjekja për Stabilitet në Shqipëri [King Zog and the attempt for stability in Albania], Çabej, 2004, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Fischer, Mbreti Zog.; Giannini, Luciano, Migration of the skilled from Albania: Brain drain or brain gain?, in "Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies", 13(3), 1940, pp. 339–356.

Italy also provided significant assistance in establishing the Bank of Albania in 1925, which could help Italy gain economic hegemony through the SVEA fund, which was designed to invest in Albania through Italian companies<sup>4</sup>. In addition, Italy presented President Ahmet Zogu with a 3 million gold fringe as a gift<sup>5</sup>. The First Treaty of Tirana, also known as the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, was signed in November 1926, cementing Albania's political control and including elements "of military collaboration" that lasted for five years<sup>6</sup>. Italy and Albania stated that any violation of the status quo on Albanian territory would be considered detrimental to both sides' interests, empowering Italy to intervene if the status quo was threatened<sup>7</sup>.

In November 1927, the Treaty of Alliance was signed due to the internal situation in Albania, with Zogu feeling threatened by the different uprisings that erupted across the country, particularly in the north<sup>8</sup>. Italian military planners were also inserted to gather information and develop an Italian political and economic clan<sup>9</sup>. According to Italian diplomatic records, the establishment of the Kingdom was a recommendation from Italy, with Italian diplomat Ugo Sola expressing this intention to Zogu in September 1927 after the second therapy was prescribed. Although Zogu was initially apprehensive, Mussolini advised Sola to proceed with caution<sup>10</sup>. Overall, Italy's historical relationship with Albania has had a significant impact on both countries, with Italy attempting to protect its interests through various negotiations and treaties, including economic and military collaborations. The development of migration policies between the two countries and their

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<sup>4</sup> Sandro Trani, *Strumenti CLXXIII, L'Unione fra L'Albania e Italia Censimento delle fonti 1939-1945* [Tools CLXXIII, The Union between Albania and Italy Census of sources 1939-1945], Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Paulin Milo, *Politika e Jashtme e Shqipërisë* [Foreign policy of Albania], Toena 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Annalisa Biagini, *Tutte le accuse contro l'ong Jugend Rettet* [All the accusations against the NGO Jugend Rettet]. in "Internazionale", August 8 2000. Retrieved from <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/08/08/accuse-ong-iuventa-jugend-rettet>

<sup>7</sup> Shkencave, Ardiان, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar Vëllimi III* [History of the Albanian people Volume III], Toena, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Natalia Smirnova, *Historia e Shqipërisë Përgjatë Shekullit XX* [The history of Albania during the 20th century], Ideart, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Klejd Barjaba, Jonila Barjaba, *Embracing emigration: The migration-development nexus in Albania*, Migration Information Source (Migration Policy Institute), 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Bedini, "Italy and Albania: The story of the establishment of a kingdom, in "Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development", 2014, pp. 31-38.

impact on the sending country can be evaluated through the significant migrant flows over the last fifteen years.

### *Albania Migration*

Several civilizations, including the Illyrians, Thracians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, and Ottomans, have called Albania home over time. The Albanians formed the independent Principality of Arbr in the 12th century. Albania's Kingdom and Principality were also established between the 13th and 14th centuries. Skanderbeg's leadership of the Albanian resistance to Ottoman progress into Europe won them reputation throughout Europe prior to the 15th century capture of Albania by the Ottomans (Hammond, 1974). During the Middle Ages, the Hellenic civilization founded settlements along the Albanian shoreline, most notably the urban center of Apollonia. This location played a significant role in fostering intellectual and educational pursuits. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire held sway over the area encompassing Albania, thereby exerting its influence. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Byzantine empire held sway over the area encompassing Albania, thereby exerting its influence<sup>11</sup>. During the medieval period, the Venetian Republic exercised dominion over a number of coastal regions in Albania, thereby consolidating their commercial and naval sway. The Ottoman Empire, which underwent a period of expansion from the 15th century onwards, succeeded in conquering Albania during the same century.

Throughout the nearly five centuries of Ottoman control in Albania, many Albanians (also known as Arnauts) rose to prominence across the empire, particularly in the south of the Balkans and Egypt. The cultural developments that occurred between the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of Albanian spiritual and intellectual development contributed to the Renaissance. Following the Ottoman defeat in the Balkans, Albania's modern nation-state declared independence in 1912<sup>12</sup>. Italy, which invaded the Kingdom of Albania and founded Greater Albania before becoming a

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<sup>11</sup> Ardian Muhaj, (2019). The economy of the Albanian territories in the century of Scanderbeg and the European economic crises during the Late Middle Ages, in "Studia Albanica", 56(1), 2019, pp. 149–160. Retrieved from <https://albanica.al/studialbanica/article/view/351>

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Ivan Zickel, Robert Walter, National awakening and the birth of Albania." In "Albania: A country study, US Library of Congress, 1994, pp. 13-24.

fascist state in the twentieth century, launched an invasion on the country. Enver Hoxha built the People's Socialist Republic of Albania after WWII, based on his Hoxhaist ideals. As a result of the Revolutions of 1991, communism was defeated in Albania, and the current Republic of Albania was created. The Austrian Empress Maria Theresa of Austria authorized the construction of an inter-imperial border in 1770 that served as a hygienic and military frontier between the Austrian and Ottoman empires<sup>13</sup>. An important precedent for defining future territorial boundaries in the Balkans was set with the establishment of military-sanitary borders, which were designed to halt both military incursions and the spread of illnesses from the Ottoman territory.

Albania is a developing country with an upper-middle-income economy dominated by the service sector, followed by manufacturing. It is a parliamentary constitutional republic with a unitary government. Once communism fell in 1990, it went through a period of transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy<sup>14</sup>. At elections in March 1992, the former communist Labour Party of Albania was brutally crushed. In 1990, the communist regime fell. As a result of the unstable economic situation in the 1990s, there was an Albanian exodus to countries such as Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Germany, and North America. The Albanian Unrest of 1997 was the crises' apex. Albania became a full member of NATO in 2009 as a result of improvements in the country's political and economic conditions throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. The country has made an application to the European Union<sup>15</sup>. The transformation of Albania from a state of political seclusion and financial adversity to attaining full membership in NATO in 2009 is indicative of noteworthy alterations in the nation's political terrain, which have consequentially influenced Albanian migration to Italy. The first decade of the 21st century witnessed a phase of political transformation and steadiness in Albania, subsequent to a prolonged period of political upheaval and reforms in the post-communist era. The nation underwent

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<sup>13</sup> Jelena Pesalj, Monitoring migrations: the Habsburg-Ottoman border in the eighteenth century, Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/70437>

<sup>14</sup> Danilo Zolo, Invoking humanity: War, law and global order, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Portera, Colin A. Grant, Intercultural and multicultural education. Enhancing global interconnectedness, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010.

a process of democratic consolidation, prioritizing the reinforcement of democratic institutions, the advancement of the rule of law, and the mitigation of corrupt practices.

The Principality of Arbr and a Sicilian alliance that formed the Kingdom of Albania in the Middle Ages were established. These regions became part of the Venetian Empire, and afterward the Serbian Empire. Between the mid-14th and late 15th centuries, much of today's Albania was ruled by Albanian princes, until the Ottoman Empire arrived and soon overran the Albanian states. Albania was still controlled by the Ottoman Empire as part of the Rumelia region until 1912, with sporadic disturbances caused by the emergence of Albanian lords seeking independence. The enhanced political stability and Albania's strengthened integration with Western institutions, such as NATO, have fostered a sense of assurance and hopefulness among the populace of Albania. A significant number of Albanians perceived migration to Italy as a favorable chance to pursue enhanced economic opportunities, increased remuneration, and better living conditions for both themselves and their kin.

As a result of the Ottoman invasion, the western Balkans and the Adriatic Sea formed a dividing line between the sultan's memâlik-I mahrûse (Ottoman well-protected territories), the Italian Peninsula, and central Europe. An inter-imperial boundary, serving as both a military and sanitary border, was established between the Austrian and Ottoman empires in 1770 with the approval of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria<sup>16</sup>. During this time, a precedent was established for the delineation of future territorial borders in the Balkans: the establishment of military-sanitary frontiers, designed to deter both military incursions and the spread of illnesses from Ottoman areas. Albania provides free basic and secondary education as well as universal health care to its citizens<sup>17</sup>. Albania is a member of the OIC, NATO, World Bank, UNESCO, COE, WTO, and UN. Albania has been a candidate for membership in the European Union since 2014. In addition to the Organization for Economic Cooperation in the Black Sea

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<sup>16</sup> Lucian N. Leustean, Irina Marin, Contested Frontiers in the Balkans: Ottoman and Habsburg Rivalries in Eastern Europe, in "European History Quarterly", 44(4), pp. 751-752. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265691414547183s>

<sup>17</sup> Chris Gratien, Chris, Nükhet Varlık, Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600, in "Osmanlı Araştırmaları", 2016, pp. 482-486. <http://doi.org/10.18589/oa.588176>

and the Union for the Mediterranean, the country is a founding member of the Energy Community.

### **Italian-Albanian Relations**

During the 1990s, the uncontrolled movement of people, drugs, and weapons across the Straits of Otranto became a visible issue for law enforcement and the public. In response, Law 563 of 1995, also known as the “Apulia Law,” was enacted to establish temporary reception facilities for undocumented migrants fleeing the Balkans (Gedeshi & Xhafa, 2017). The importance of controlling the flow of illegal activities over the strait led to the Italian government prioritizing cooperation with Albania (Ferri & Varese, 2007).

The decade of the 1860s marked a pivotal moment in the political and historical trajectory of this particular area. The impact of the Kingdom of Italy, Austria-Hungary, and the Russian Tsardom in this region facilitated the emergence of Panslavism and regional nationalistic movements<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, this influence resulted in the Adriatic Sea becoming a novel inter-imperial “maritime frontier.” Italy’s foreign aid to Albania was aimed at achieving political and social stability, as this was expected to reduce criminal activity leaving the country. Albania received significant Italian development aid, with a total of 600 million euros provided between 1992 and 2005, as well as military and police cooperation.

During this time, the Italian Coast Guard and border officials were extremely active, resulting in several naval interceptions. Thousands of Albanians were either caught along the shore or turned back without ever setting foot on dry soil after arriving in Apulia. Italian naval patrols were more aggressive, resulting in disastrous occurrences “such as the sinking of the Kater I Rades in March 1997, which took the lives of at least 58 Albanians after being hit by an Italian cutter in international waters. A lot of other unfortunate occurrences occurred throughout 2002. With the collapse of the country’s pyramid schemes and the ensuing public uproar, an even larger flight of Albanians occurred in 1997, with about 18,000 people arriving by boat in Italy. Substantial investments were undertaken in Albania in order to restore order and mitigate the impact

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<sup>18</sup> Richard S. Rust, *Minds Behind the Brain: A History of the Pioneers and their Discoveries*, in “European Journal of Paediatric Neurology”, 5(3), 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1053/ejpn.2001.0486>

on Italy, which deeply scared the Italian people. Collaboration began, and an Italian paramilitary presence was developed, particularly around the port of Vlore. Italy led a global “ormalizedon” effort known as “Operation Alba,” in which other countries such as France, Turkey, Greece, Spain, and others participated<sup>19</sup>. The Italian Interforce Police mission began counselling and assisting Albanian police in June 1997. The Tirana-based operation maintains outposts at maritime border controls, as well as in Shkoder and Dures. The Delegation of Italian Experts (DEI), which assists in overhauling the whole Albanian state security apparatus, maintained the Italian military presence in Albania in accordance with a protocol made on August 28, 1997 in Rome by the Italian and Albanian Ministers of Defense.

Of course, Italy was not the only country seeking measures to ensure Albania’s long-term stability. When it was first proposed in 1998, Italy sponsored the Stability Pact for South East Europe, an international proposal for the Balkan region<sup>20</sup>. On June 10, 1999, the agreement was signed. Despite the Stability Pact’s initial focus on conflict resolution, criminal justice reform, and economic development, the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Return Regional Initiative was developed because migratory challenges were eventually normalized. This attempt is now little more than a talking shop, with a concentration on immigration, asylum, integrated border control, visas, and consular matters. Italy, in any event, is neither a donor nor a participant in the MARRI initiative. In 1999, the Italian government normalized its broad initiative to foster stability throughout the Balkans, including Albania.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims that Albania is no longer a top priority for their country. Huge migrant flows have been halted as a result of police collaboration and the fact that Albania” has previously relocated a major portion of its labour force outside<sup>21</sup>. Italy continues to be a major commercial partner for Albania, receiving 74.8% of all Albanian exports and 31.5% of Albanian imports. Yet, from an economic standpoint, it is not a top priority due to the country’s limited market and “the high

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<sup>19</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 1101 (28 March 1997), Retrieved from [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1101\(1997\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1101(1997))

<sup>20</sup> Anna Triandafyllidou, Aleksandra Kotic, Albanian immigrants in Italy: Policy implementation, coping strategies and identity issues, in “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies”, 29(6), pp. 997-1014.

<sup>21</sup> Julie Vullnetari, Internal migration in Albania, in Robert Pichler (Ed.), *Legacy and change: Albanian transformation from multidisciplinary perspective*, LIT Verlag, 2014, pp. 47-67.



level of risk associated with investment in the country. Upon comparing the data from 2017 to that of 2016, it is evident that the trend of favorable employment rates has persisted, as observed in previous years. Notably, the number of employed Italians has increased by 1.2%, surpassing the overall increase in the foreign population by 0.9%. This marks the first time in five years that such a positive shift has occurred<sup>22</sup>.

### ***Immigration policies of Italy from 1924 to 2020***

Italy has a lengthy history of migration-sending, with at least 25 million Italians departing the country between 1876 and 1973. During that century, the main focus of migration policy was the protection of Italian emigrants. International migration to Italy began in the 1970s in the absence of any specific labor migration recruitment measures or even a proper legal framework.

Many institutional interests within the Italian government have various effects on policy. For example, the Prime Minister's office prioritizes issues, responds to coalition partners' requests and frequently drafts legislation. The Ministries of Labor and Social Policy, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, are in charge of deciding the technical component and enforcing the law. Despite belonging to the same political party, these Ministers must deal with the interests of many constituencies (employer federations and organizations, labor unions, and civil society), and their priorities may differ. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participates, particularly when negotiating bilateral agreements with countries and regulations pertaining to immigration law are also required. Because these regulations can only be accepted after years of deliberation and negotiation, new laws are not implemented until roles and obligations are assigned. When certain projects are decided or contested at many levels of administration, the continuous decentralization of administrative functions to regional, provincial, and even municipal authorities adds another degree of complication<sup>23</sup>. In 1986, Italy enacted Law 943/1986, the country's first modern immigration law, to govern the entry of immigrants seeking work.

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<sup>22</sup> Carlo Saraceno, Davide Benassi, Poverty in Italy: Features and Drivers in a European Perspective Retrieved from [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=l5r6DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&xpg=P-P1&dq=poverity&ots=9aVWcpcNF7&sig=ev\\_EXAgdrkyT9oHATQVK2ouWXks](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=l5r6DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&xpg=P-P1&dq=poverity&ots=9aVWcpcNF7&sig=ev_EXAgdrkyT9oHATQVK2ouWXks)

<sup>23</sup> Maurizio Ambrosini, Why irregular migrants arrive and remain: the role of intermediaries, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 43(11), 2017, pp. 1813-1830.

The sudden rise in migration in the late 1980s, which was caused more by the changing labor market than by any legal changes or the fall of the Iron Curtain, prompted the quick passage of a more comprehensive law in 1990 (Law 39/1990) that established standards for foreigners' rights and obligations in Italy, as well as their stay and employment conditions and other issues pertaining to family reunification and" social integration. Asylum, which had not yet had a substantial influence on Italy, was also debated. At the time, Albania was still a closed country<sup>24</sup> . Under the fascist rule of Benito Mussolini, Italy implemented a strategy aimed at advancing Italian nationalism while simultaneously discouraging immigration. The governing body enforced stringent policies, including the Immigration Law of 1926, with the objective of restricting the influx of non-native individuals and safeguarding the homogeneity of the Italian race.

The 1990s saw a significant surge in immigration, owing largely to migration from Albania, prompting the center-left government to implement Law 40/1998 (also known as the Turco-Napolitano law or Testo Unico). Later, the center-right government reaffirmed the law, which was passed when Albania was still the main source of immigration to Italy. It established a three-pillar immigration policy system based on three issues: (a) combating illegal migration through bilateral agreements and criminal penalties, (b) controlling legal migration through an annual quota system, and (c) integrating resident foreigners through a national immigration fund.

### ***Emigration from Italy***

In 2018, there was a rise of 1.2% in the number of individuals who were deregistered from the population register of the resident population and emigrated to foreign countries, totaling 157,000. Approximately 75% of the individuals in question were emigrants of Italian origin. According to data from 2018, the majority of Italian expatriates were male, comprising 56% of the total population<sup>25</sup> Up until the age of 25, there was an equal number of male and female emigrants, with both groups consisting of 18,000 individuals. Furthermore, their age distributions were completely overlapping. From the age of 26 and onwards, there was a consistent

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<sup>24</sup> Pietro Elisabetta, Migrants in Rome Try to Recover after Ponte Mammolo Camp Is Destroyed, in "The New York Times", May 15 2015. Retrieved from <https://nyti.ms/2BFLuFU>

<sup>25</sup> ISTAT, The Italians moving abroad increase while immigration decreases, 2019. Retrieved from [https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/05/Migrazioni\\_EN.pdf](https://www.istat.it/it/files//2020/05/Migrazioni_EN.pdf)

increase in the number of immigrants compared to emigrants. However, this trend reversed in old age, with emigrants becoming more numerous once again. The two distributions overlapped once more at the age of 75. The average age of individuals who migrated was 33 years for males and 30 years for females. 20% of the emigrant population consisted of individuals under the age of 20, while 66.67% were between the ages of 20 and 49. The remaining 13% were over the age of 50<sup>26</sup>. The major mechanism used in Italy to manage the flow of foreign workers is the quota system, which caps yearly entrance for labor purposes. From 2002 and 2005, the yearly quota was established for 79,500 foreign employees each year, with 50,000 accepted only for seasonal work<sup>27</sup>. The allocation was quadrupled for 2006. In Italy, there are no quotas for family reunifications. It has long been Italian policy to offer preferential quotas to countries that collaborate in the fight against illegal migration, either through bilateral agreements or consent by the Ministerial Working Group tasked with making recommendations directly to the Prime Minister.

Forced migration to southern Italy began thirty years ago. 30,000 Albanians arrived in Apulia in a single day, in March 1991. There are many parallels between the current migration crisis and the history of Albanian migration. One visible parallel is how it is perceived: images of boats carrying thousands of refugees arriving in Italian ports gave the impression of an “invasion” both then and now. Another constant feature is the human cost; hundreds of people died at sea on board boats traversing the Adriatic from 1991 to 1997. Finally, the Italian government was forced to build additional reception facilities and issue exceptional short-term humanitarian visas. The fourth is a shift in visa policy when it became evident that the population deluge would not be stopped and other EU countries began to worry about secondary movements<sup>28</sup>. The fifth factor is the expansion of the smuggling trade, and the sixth is the use of cautious military countermeasures, such as a naval blockade in Albania. In 2009, the Northern League party’s anti-immigrant interior minister attempted to resolve the issue by conducting refoulment on the high seas. The European

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Eurostat, The National Strategy on migration governance and action plan 2019–2022 [Government of Albania report], 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Annalisa Camilli, Tutte le accuse contro l’ong Jugend Rettet [All the accusations against the NGO Jugend Rettet], Internazionale.it., August 8, 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/08/08/accuse-ong-iuventa-jugend-rettet>

Court of Human Rights barred this technique in a historic ruling involving a boat full of Eritreans who had been pushed back to Libya, which was at the time regarded as a dangerous nation for persons in need of protection. Since the year 2000, this sequence of events has almost perfectly repeated itself, in the Strait of Sicily.

Notwithstanding the fact that Italy's migration policy has evolved within the larger context of the Common European Asylum System and EU regulations on both legal and irregular migration, Migration, Italy has struggled to manage migrant arrivals from the Mediterranean region in accordance with EU laws. Formerly, proper identification and processing were primary concerns. Asylum seekers who enter the EU without a valid visa and without immediate family members who live in another EU member state are required by Dublin asylum procedures to apply for refugee status and have their application handled in the EU member state where they first arrive. Nonetheless, the bulk of immigrants regard Italy as merely a transit nation. They try to avoid being identified in Italy in order to go north to more prosperous areas. Italy (and Greece) has a poorer system than other countries in terms of processing applications, providing appropriate housing, and giving integration opportunities. As the New York Times has reported, many recognized refugees have ended up in slums on Rome's outskirts<sup>29</sup>. "The government has enacted a number of significant reforms" since 2013. It is noteworthy that it has ceased issuing emergency instructions to control the entire reception system. Hiring skilled persons to staff the panels is another step, as is expanding the number of committees that assess asylum requests. Another novel feature is the creation of immigration-specific court sections, as well as the disputed elimination of one level of judicial appeal in order to speed up the procedure. In contrast to Germany, Italy does not have an obligatory distribution key, and municipalities participate in the standard receiving scheme on a voluntary basis. In regions where municipalities refuse to participate, the central government can nonetheless lodge migrants in specific facilities (hotels, apartments, or other kinds of accommodation). The situation is gradually improving because of increased financial incentives for municipalities, and a recent change of the bidding process for receiving centres should

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<sup>29</sup> Tommaso M. Cappiali, *Activism of Immigrants in Vulnerable Conditions and Radical-Left Allies: A Case Study of Italy's Struggle of the Crane*, in "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies", 42(15), 2016, pp. 2508-2527.

result in greater openness as well (ISMU, 2018).

Forcibly removed migrants from Italy face the same challenges as the rest of Europe for those whose asylum applications are denied. Authorities are unable to locate one out of every ten estimated irregular migrants. Also, there aren't many readmission treaties negotiated at the national or EU levels including "concern" nationalities. In comparison to the about 4,000 forced repatriations and the approximately 35,000 people who acquire an order of expulsion, aided voluntary repatriation (AVR) only includes a tiny number of people each year. After arrival, only a small number of Egyptians, Moroccans, and Tunisians are deported. Some people are turned away at border crossings or are deported to Greece<sup>30</sup>.

### ***Political Changes in the Migration of Albanians to Italy from 1924 to 2020 Albania Politics of Migrations***

Prior to 1991, Albanian history can be split into two primary periods: the period before the foundation of the communist government and the period that followed. Prior to the creation of the communist government in 1946, there was both an internal and an international movement. On its own, internal migration, took the shape of rural people migrating to large cities while industry, communications, trade, and services were taking off. Despite the growth of the urban population, 80 percent of people lived in rural areas in 1945 (Aro, 2011). Men predominated in foreign migration, which was mostly labor migration<sup>31</sup>. Migrants had few alternatives for study, training, and educational possibilities. International migration has had an impact on the country's socioeconomic development, as evidenced by rising levels of education in areas with the highest migration rates.

Internal migration was prohibited and foreign migration was carefully controlled under the communist rule. Yet, until 1950, Albania suffered some emigration, mainly from persons with political allegiances opposed to the new power. Only brief, authorized official trips or approved research were

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30 Ferruccio Pastore, Eugenio Roman, Implementing selective protection. A comparative review of the implementation of asylum policies at national level focusing on the treatment of mixed migration flows at EU's southern marine borders, Working Papers FIERI. 2014. [http://fieri.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/WP\\_FIERI\\_FINAL\\_Implementing-Selective-Protection\\_PastoreRoman\\_Oct-20141.pdf](http://fieri.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/WP_FIERI_FINAL_Implementing-Selective-Protection_PastoreRoman_Oct-20141.pdf)

31 Janine Dahinden, The circulation of people. Understanding the dynamics of transnational formations among Albanian-speaking migrants in Switzerland by bringing in theories of mobility, social inequality and ethnicity, 2014 [Working Paper No. 6].

permitted across borders after 1950. The state organized internal migration in order to improve distant mountain areas, particularly in the health and education sectors, and to build various metropolitan cities in accordance with labor force needs in various industries. Beginning in the early 1960s, a domestic passport was required, and there was a combination of rural retention and low urbanisation<sup>32</sup>. The pashaportizimi method of issuing internal passports replicated the hukou in China, the internal passport in the old Soviet Union, and the internal passport in contemporary Russia<sup>33</sup>. To “control the flow of population,” the Soviet Union established an internal passport system in 1932. China made the hukou system, which grants domestic passports through family registration, permanent in both rural and urban areas to govern population distribution and migration from rural to urban areas. Albania’s internal passport system, like those of China and Russia (and the former Soviet Union), was meant to balance population movement between rural and urban areas, control internal migration, and support the country’s two most important economic sectors, industry and agriculture. Internal movement restrictions were primarily imposed to curb rural-urban migration, particularly to Tirana. Many were able to circumvent these prohibitions, though, by relocating to rural areas surrounding the prohibited towns and marrying city people, for example.

### ***The Post-1991 Migration and the Entanglement of Internal and International Migration***

Once the communist system crumbled, migration became a focal point in Albania. In fact, migration is “one of the most significant shifts in post-communist Albania. Although internal and international migration began in 1990 as people anticipated the government would soon topple, Albanian citizens’ mobility was only liberalized in 1993. Article 22 of the Law on Changes to Constitutional Provisions, enacted in 1993, recognized all Albanian” nationals’ freedom of movement within the country and emigration abroad. According to the 1998 Constitution, which was in effect until 2016, everyone has the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely around the state’s territory, and no one should be stopped from doing so<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Vullnetari, Internal migration in Albania...

<sup>33</sup> Florence Lévy, *Entre contraintes et interstices, l'évolution des projets migratoires dans l'espace transnational: Une ethnographie des migrants de Chine du Nord à Paris* [Between constraints and interstices, the evolution of migratory projects in transnational space: An ethnography of migrants from northern China in Paris]. EHESS 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Triandafyllidou, Kotic, Albanian immigrants in Italy...

Because other countries have entry restrictions on Albanians, the Albanian constitution uses the term “nobody shall be prevented from freely leaving the country,” rather than “everyone had the right to leave the country,” according to Ikonimi<sup>35</sup>. According to Wihtol de Wenden, the freedom to leave the country was acknowledged, but the right to enter another country was not<sup>36</sup>. This violates the spirit of several international agreements, notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, adopted in 1990, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To be more precise, to leave Albania, citizens could only enter another country if they met its visa criteria of that country. The EU and other industrialized countries adopted rigorous visa regulations, making it harder for Albanians to leave lawfully. The bulk of visas given for business, education, and tourism trips have various restrictions based on the applicant’s financial situation and work status in Albania. Albanian nationals may also travel for work on standard work visas if they meet all requirements of the foreign target country and the target country approves their application. As a result, the reduction of visa requirements for tourist travel to the Schengen region in 2010 marked a crucial turning point in the development of Albanians’ rights to freedom of movement.

Furthermore, because Albanians were unable to freely emigrate and irregular border crossings were rendered illegal, activities such as smuggling and human trafficking became very profitable businesses for organised crime and the mafia<sup>37</sup>. This made it difficult for them to enter many other countries. Despite numerous instances of drowning and death, speedboat smuggling of migrants to Italy via the beach city of Vlora continued at a high pace until the late 2000s. The border with Greece in southern Albania became a hub of activity, offering resources to neighbouring settlements. Villages would offer shelter to prospective migrants preparing to cross the border, as well as group transportation and human guides, and would collaborate with Greek partners who supported migrants crossing the Greek border. All of these efforts contributed to the socioeconomic well-being of these settlements.”

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<sup>35</sup> Ledio Ikonimi, *E Drejta Migratore: Manual Trajnues [The migratory right: A training manual]*, IOM.

<sup>36</sup> Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *Faut-il ouvrir les frontières? [Should borders be opened?]*, In “Forum 2015. La conférence socio-politique de Caritas: Immigration” [2015 Caritas socio-political conference: Immigration], Caritas Suisse, 2015, pp. 15-20.

<sup>37</sup> Wihtol de Wenden, *Faut-il ouvrir les frontières?*

### ***International Migration***

With the overthrow of Albania's communist government, worldwide migration "exploded spectacularly". INSTAT data shows that 1.5 million Albanians, or approximately one-third of the country's population, lived outside Albanian territory in 2017. The majority of migrant groups are centered in Italy (448,407) and Greece (356,848), two neighboring countries. Albanians, on the other hand, are progressively migrating to other European Union countries, as well as to North America and Canada (GoA, 2018). Foreign migration in Albania began in the post-communist period in 1990, thanks to the so-called "embassy phenomenon" (Aro, 2011). On July 2, 1990, around 6,000 Albanian nationals sought shelter at the foreign embassies of 14 countries in Tirana. The West-German embassy was the most sought-after shelter, with about 3,200 asylum seekers seeking refuge there<sup>38</sup>.

Albanian women have also left the nation for higher studies since the early 1990s. Italy has remained the most popular destination for migrant students, partly due to government-sponsored scholarship programs and weak admission rules at Italian universities. Enrolling in an Italian university in the early 1990s required either sending a formal letter of guarantee from an Italian individual or entity (typically a religious institution) or depositing about 4,000 euros in an Italian bank (Klliči, 2015)<sup>39</sup>. Following their first academic year, a student may apply for a scholarship, because most Albanian families were struggling financially in the late 1990s, almost all Albanian students qualified for scholarships primarily based on their socioeconomic situation.

### ***Political Changes in Cooperation between Albania and Italy Migrations from 1924 to 2020***

Italy is a relatively new host country, having relatively recently attracted large numbers of international workers. Its immigrant population is relatively low compared to other EU countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, or France. According to Caritas' most recent data report from the beginning of 2002, there were 1,388,153 foreign nationals (including

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<sup>38</sup> Marco Borgogni, *Tra Continuità ed Incertezza, Italia e Albania (1914-1939)* [Between continuity and uncertainty, Italy and Albania (1914-1939)], Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Klinton Këlliçi, Enriketa Danaj, *Promoting equality, perpetuating inequality: Gender propaganda in communist Albania*, in "History of Communism in Europe" (7), Zeta Book, 2015, pp. 39–62.



citizens of EU member states) living in Italy, accounting for around 3% of all population.

Throughout the last few years, this population has had a period of stability and settling. A quarter of all immigrants have been in Italy for more than ten years, compared to one-third of all immigrants who have been there for more than five years. Throughout the last two years, family reunification has been the principle legal pathway for non-EU citizens to immigrate to Italy, and the proportion of international students enrolling in Italian schools has increased sixfold. Naturalizations are rare because obtaining Italian citizenship is difficult under existing law.

According to Caritas research from 2002, the majority of immigrants in Italy come from Morocco, Albania, Romania, the Philippines, China, the United States, Tunisia, the former Yugoslavia, Senegal, Germany, and Sri Lanka, in that order. In 2001, there were 34,782 foreign non-EU nationals legitimately residing in the province of Florence, where we conducted our research. The five largest groups were Chinese (6,433), Albanians (5,289), Filipinos (2,701), Romanians (1,408), and Americans (1,889). Only 489 Polish nationals were registered as immigrant labourers in the Florence area<sup>40</sup>.

Albania is a country in transition, grappling with substantial social, political, and economic issues, as well as the significant challenges of transitioning to a capitalist democracy. There is substantial unemployment and widespread economic misery, with a considerable number of young individuals, in particular unemployed and representing a large, dissatisfied, and unpredictable migration potential. Migration from Albania was basically non-existent due to the grip of the authoritarian regime on the country until 1989. One million Albanians, or around 25% of the population, are thought to have left the country because of political developments in the 1990s. Because of its proximity to Albania, Italy, along with Greece, is the principal destination for Albanian immigration. The Adriatic Sea separates Albania and Italy by only 50 miles at their closest point.

Although it appears that around 250,000 Albanians have emigrated to Italy, exact numbers are missing because the majority of them entered

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<sup>40</sup> Lorenzo Mosca, Tronconi Filippo, Beyond left and right: The eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement, in "West European Politics", 42(6), 2019, pp. 1258–1283.

the nation without proper paperwork, typically at night along the Apulian coast. Notwithstanding the ongoing migration of Albanians to Italy during the last 10 years, two crisis periods may be identified. The first significant wave of Albanian immigration was reported following the collapse of Albania's communist regime in March 1991. The Italian government first welcomed this early immigration, considering Albanians to be refugees fleeing a harsh authoritarian rule. Yet, public attitudes and policies concerning Albanian immigration shifted in a short period of time. In April 1991, Law 39/1990 was amended to make it simpler to deport immigrants. Following this period, negative prejudices of Albanian immigrants became widespread, not least through mainstream media commentary.

With the implosion of Albania's financial "pyramid schemes," a second "immigration crisis" erupted in January 1997, resulting in massive social unrest. The Italian government officially recorded approximately 17,000 Albanians who landed in Italy in the months following the conflict. Border patrols were increased in anticipation of a larger influx, and the EU was approached to assist in managing the crisis. In March 1997, the Italian government issued an emergency order permitting local governments to set up welcome centers and give 90-day residence cards to Albanians deemed to require temporary protection. These licenses were later renewed until November 30, when Italy launched a concerted campaign to remove Albanians without legal status. According to accounts, many persons "disappeared quickly after their arrival, apparently moving to other Western European countries or finding work in Italy's underground economy."

In May 1997, the Albanian and Italian governments established a combined task force to combat the issue of illegal migrants from Albania to Italy, tightening controls along the Adriatic Sea and the Otranto crossing. The annual ferrying of hundreds of Kurds, Albanians, and Chinese from Albania to Italy demonstrates how difficult it is to manage Italy's 5,000 kilometers of coastline. Authorities estimate that approximately 50,000 illegal immigrants enter the EU through Italy's borders each year. Apart from Albanians, who were formerly removed immediately due to a bilateral agreement, illegal immigrants captured have only 15 days to leave the country.

According to information obtained from the Florence FO, 5,289 Albanian immigrants in the Florentine province had regular stay permits as of

February 2001. (3,609 men and 1,680 women). This is how young people migrate. Around 65% of these visas were issued for employment-related reasons, with the other 30% given for family-related reasons. Albanians move as professionals, skilled workers, and unskilled laborer's. They work primarily in agriculture and construction. Naturally, there is no information in Florence about illicit Albanian immigration.

### ***Conclusion***

The intricate relationships between Italy and Albania, characterized by extensive migration and economic interdependencies, necessitate a reevaluation and strengthening of their respective immigration policies. The value of this connection is highlighted by the significant number of Albanian students studying in Italy, the considerable remittances sent home by the Albanian diaspora, and the robust economic and cultural ties between the two nations. Moreover, the potential for development is vast, as shown by the increasing number of Albanians gaining permanent residency in Italy, enabling a freer exchange of people and ideas, and the ongoing development initiatives in Albania that take into account the reality of migration.

However, despite these promising signs, there remain areas for improvement. There is a lack of comprehensive institutional understanding of the relationship between migration and development, particularly within the Italian administration, and this has led to a disjointed approach. Additionally, Albania's national policy needs greater integration, especially in departments not primarily responsible for managing migration-related challenges. Further, certain approaches to fostering development through immigration regulations may not be suitable for the unique context of these two nations, as demonstrated by the mismatch of seasonal work programs in Italy with the overlapping agricultural and tourist seasons in Albania.

The study of Albanian-Italian relations and immigration policies throughout the twentieth century indicates a need for further knowledge and collaboration to optimize the relationship between these two countries. Opportunities for development exist even without institutional aid, as evidenced by the entrepreneurial initiatives of returning immigrants. However, more supportive policies could facilitate the return of students and stimulate the desire of more Albanians to study in Italy, thereby further fostering the growth and development of both countries. Therefore, the

necessity for co-development to take center stage in Italy and Albania's immigration policies is clear. It is crucial to bridge the gap between migration policy and development policy, to foster collaboration, and to ensure that immigration regulations are tailored to the specific context of both countries. This will not only enhance the relationship between Italy and Albania but also harness the potential of migration for mutual development.

To harness the full potential of the existing socio-economic ties and migration patterns between Italy and Albania, it is crucial that both countries prioritize co-development in their immigration policies, fostering a more integrated approach that addresses the unique context of both countries, bridges the gap between migration and development policy, and ensures the mutual growth and development of each nation.