

Fusari's subjects carried a double stigma of marginalisation. Interestingly, however, Fusari demonstrates how some Italo-Eritreans could mobilise aspects of their experiences to attain citizenship, since subsequent Italian legislation opened citizenship to Italo-Eritreans who had an Italian socialisation and education. Boris Adjemian's chapter examines the treatment of stateless Armenians in Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941, asking questions about subjecthood and citizenship both before and after the Italian occupation. Armenians were well-integrated into Ethiopian society, with some supporting the Italians and others going over to the anticolonial resistance. Their ambiguous status, Adjemian makes clear, revealed the 'indecisive and permeable' boundaries between categories of citizen and subject (p. 239).

In the Afterword, Frederick Cooper provides a concise and illuminating overview of the volume. His presentation groups together the essays geographically, thematically, and temporally, narrating the history of Italian colonialism and the contribution of each scholar to it. The patterns through which people were incorporated into the Italian Empire, Cooper concludes, were 'more complex and less stable than a simple dichotomy of citizen and subjected, colonizer and colonized' (p. 247).

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Italy in the Modern World: Society, Culture and Identity

by Linda Reeder, London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, ix + 334 pp., \$32.95 (paperback), ISBN 9781350005174

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Up in the hills of inland Sicily, there is the town of Sutera: once a dislocated village that suffered, like many other parts of Italy, from the 'brain drain' of young people, but which, in recent years, has become an outstanding example of a cosmopolitan integration of welcome immigrants and long-standing local cultural traditions. The final image of Linda Reeder's *Italy in the Modern World*, Sutera represents one of the main themes of her historical, political and cultural analysis of the last two centuries of the boot-shaped country, from Unification to recent times.

Despite its chronological structure, the book's narrative is centred around the fundamental question of how Italy progressed from a collection of divided states to a unified nation-state, reflecting on the challenges of a still-present cultural and political regionalism. Thanks to the judicious inclusion of statistical and economic data, the book breaks down the evolution of Italy as a nation-state by focusing on five recurrent forces: the relationship between northern and southern Italy; the struggle between the centralisation and regionalisation of power; the political and cultural influence of the Catholic Church; the role of gender; and that of migration.

The building blocks of these arguments can be discovered by the reader through the author's chronological examination of historical events. This is divided into four main sections, each starting with a valuable overview on how historians developed their critical

commentary of events over time, proving the point – as the author states – ‘that the past is made in the present’ (p. 203).

Since its unification, Italy has failed to embrace a geographically inclusive course of economic development, with social and economic growth confined to its northern and central regions, with the result that southern Italy was left behind and exhibited different political characteristics, notwithstanding more than a hundred years of dedicated policies from the central government. Moreover, the ‘backwardness’ of the South is a divisive issue on its own. American political scientists like Robert Putnam and Edward Banfield traced the problems of the region back to ‘a distrustful, apathetic citizenry’ and to a culture that is ‘antithetical to democracy’ (p. 205), but, as summarised in Reeder’s book, this theory is challenged by social historians who have proved that issues such as the mafia and corruption are systemic rather than geographical.

Italy’s Southern Question is still present in the country’s debate about the relationship between the central and the local governments. At the beginning of the Liberal state Prime Minister Cavour extended rules and policies that derived from the Piedmont system to the rest of the country, postponing the creation of a shared post-unification national system and identity. As noted by the author, this imposition ‘generated anger at Piedmont and distrust of the new Parliament’ (p. 61) which ultimately led to events such as the fall of the Liberal state, the advent of Fascism and the birth of the Republic. The centralised form of government actually reached its height during Mussolini’s regime, when the Fascist Party tried to transform the whole country into a Fascist state. The postwar 1948 Constitution of the Republic laid the ground for a more distributed and participatory form of government, with the creation of the regions and the subsequent emergence of regional parties and civic movements.

After witnessing the end of its millenary temporal power, the Church of Rome initially avoided playing an active political role in the building of the nation, leaving the field to the cultural influences of the secularised *Risorgimento* movement. The Church’s abstention ended, however, on the eve of Mussolini’s advent to power, as it established first its centrality in the evolution of the nation’s identity, and then favoured the birth of the Christian Democratic Party, which ruled postwar Italy for more than 40 years. Notwithstanding Pope Pius IX’s *non expedit*, Italy never disowned being a Catholic country, and the Church’s tactical positioning proved to be successful in maintaining a strong influence in shaping the course of Italian history and culture throughout the twentieth century.

Women achieved a gradual rise in the structure of Italian society. Excluded until 1948 from the right to vote, women have been central in keeping the nation together during mass emigrations, and then becoming a vital workforce during the two world wars. Women’s silent leadership turned more vocal during the 1968 period of social unrest, with the success of local feminist movements in advocating the right to divorce and abortion. The gradual nature of the establishment of gender equality might also be seen as the product of a paternalistic interpretation of the Italian Constitution – with rights established as a concession – and of the culturally deep-rooted *pater familias* canon which is still formally present in the Italian civil code.

Migrations represent another key trend in building the nation and its relationship with foreign countries. The massive migration of Italians abroad between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth represented at first, with the loss of workers, a cause of concern for the central government, but then turned into a force for good. The series of unsuccessful attempts to join other Western powers in the territorial acquisition of colonies led the central government of Italy to develop a strategy of soft power to create an informal ‘empire of emigrants’, fostered by a dual citizenship policy that strengthened the bond between overseas local communities and their country of origin. This network enabled Italy to take full advantage of postwar globalisation,

establishing the first set of trade routes for the export-driven ‘economic miracle’ and favouring the establishment of a global cultural influence.

Even if not stated directly, it is easy to find in Linda Reeder’s account a progressive indication of how Italy should behave to achieve its best as a nation. Despite the current rise of populism and new forms of nationalism in the country, the author puts her bets on the good people – *italiani brava gente* – and their renewed silent effort to mend the regional, cultural and political divisions that are still strong in the *belpaese*. This underlying claim is debatable, considering how often at the tipping points of their history the Italian people showed their pragmatic attitude. A unification that happened through uncritical plebiscites and annexations; a social acceptance of a Fascist regime without a commitment to the Fascist culture; and the current volatility of the political consensus, might all represent signs of a community that prefers to manage its contingencies rather than commit itself to a collective vision towards its shared future. While proud and aware of their resilience as one nation in face of great and quasi-transcendental adversities – such as natural catastrophes like earthquakes and floods, or the recent COVID-19 pandemic – a persistent political majority of Italians seems in fact at ease with the two concepts of *il fine giustifica i mezzi* (the end justifies the means) and *Franza o Spagna, purché se magna* (France or Spain, so long as we eat). These ideas are recurrent in domestic, and populist, political discourse despite the incorrect popular attribution to the great Renaissance political writers Machiavelli and Guicciardini.

Italy in the Modern World is a recommended reading for scholars in social science, history and international relations who are looking for a comprehensive account of Italy’s modern history and documented interpretations of its global influence.

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Britain and Italy in the Era of the Great War: Defending and Forging Empires

by Stefano Marcuzzi, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, xii + 383 pp., £90.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-108-83129-1

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Coalitions consist of bilateral alliances. This simple but often overlooked truth forms the central argument of this excellent analysis of Anglo-Italian relations from 1911 to 1919. Drawing on exhaustive research in Italian, British and French archives, combined with a thorough review of the secondary literature, Stefano Marcuzzi demonstrates that an alliance with the United Kingdom – to gain support for a war against Austria-Hungary rather than from commitment to the Entente – motivated Rome to sign the Treaty of London in 1915. As the book’s subtitle indicates, he also shows how Italian political leaders balanced the desire for empire with the liberal commitment to completing the unification of Italy, while preserving public support for the war.