

Bruno Mascitelli, Rory Steele
& Simone Battiston

The 2001 Italian expatriate vote: Was it worth it?

A view from the Africa-Asia-
Oceania-Antarctica college



PETER LANG

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Migration, Homeland and Host Land Engagement

Migration in whatever form it takes will continue to be a complex demographic phenomenon throughout the coming decades not only for receiving countries that have been transformed as a result of massive levels of migration such as the United States, Canada and Australia but also for sending countries in 'old Europe' like Italy, Ireland, Germany and France. It is a topic enshrouded in controversy and debate almost everywhere in the world. Though public attention has tended to focus on the more controversial aspects of migration such as illegal immigration and refugees, for the most part the movement of people is uncontroversial and 'normal', dictated by personal circumstances and often in hope of better economic and societal opportunities. In general people who move to settle in new homelands do so to seek economic opportunities, acquire legal security and eventually political rights, and are welcomed there. International students studying away from their home country are becoming a new wave of intellectual migration in countries such as the United Kingdom, United States and Australia.

The total number of migrants throughout the world recorded in 2010 was approximately 214 million according to official data.¹ This figure saw an increase in international migration from an estimated 150 million in 2002 making up approximately 3.1 per cent of the world population. This has meant that one out of every 33 persons in the world today is a migrant (whereas in 2000 it was one out of every 35 persons). The percentage share of migrants varies greatly from country to country. Countries with a high percentage of migrants in-

1 See data provided by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in <<http://www.iom.int>>. Web-site accessed on 31 March 2012.

clude Qatar (87 per cent), United Arab Emirates (70 per cent), Jordan (46 per cent), Singapore (41 per cent), and Saudi Arabia (28 per cent). Countries with a low percentage of migrants include South Africa (3.7 per cent), Slovakia (2.4 per cent), Turkey (1.9 per cent), Japan (1.7 per cent), Nigeria (0.7 per cent), Romania (0.6 per cent), India (0.4 per cent) and Indonesia (0.1 per cent). If all migrants were to be put together they would constitute the fifth most populous country in the world.² In some circumstances conflicts have produced sudden human displacement and, especially during the 1990s in the post-cold war period, communal conflicts around the globe have forced millions of people from their homes. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees and other “persons of concern” grew from 15 million in 1990 to over 22 million by the year 2000 (Grace 2003).

The world continues to witness the movement of people on a major scale, including those flows that are sanctioned or promoted as well as those due to individual choice. Despite the closed nature of many countries and ongoing difficulties surrounding visa issues and entry into certain countries, it is probable there will continue to be a major transfer of people from country to country. Migration should be seen as an integral part of societies and as an essential element of people’s livelihood rather than a rupture (de Haan 1999).

The motives and aspirations of individuals on the one hand and of states, both sending and receiving, on the other, need to be considered. More than ever citizens are conscious of or aspire to rights that they believe they are entitled to, whether they have emigrated or have never left home. Many emigrants do so for economic reasons, moving from poor countries to richer ones, in the hope of making a better life for themselves and their families. The sending states in many cases view such emigration favourably, as an opportunity for national economic gain.

While migrants wish to remain connected to their country of origin, the forms with which this can occur are many and can include social, economic and political links and activities in their new host land. Increasingly countries of origin and those that have become hosts have

2 International Organization of Migration (IOM) data, *op. cit.*

warmed to the idea that migrants are an asset rather than the liability they were once considered to be. Sending country support for emigrants has broadened its traditional base from promotion of language and ethnic language newspapers, associations supporting welfare of migrants, and old age assistance. Host country attitudes have become more positive towards immigrants, especially those with education and skills, recognizing in many cases also that they are an important element of demographic advancement.

One of the new areas of study in relation to the economic effects of migration for sending states has been the growth of remittances and the ability to measure and calculate them. While the measurement of remittances is yet to be perfected, estimated total remittances sent in 2010 by migrants reached a staggering US\$440 billion. The actual amount is considered to be significantly larger but the tools for its measurement are imperfect with a tendency to treat remittances as a private activity. In 2010, the top recipient countries of recorded remittances were India, China, Mexico, the Philippines, and France. Rich countries are the main source of remittances and the United States is by far the largest, with US\$48.3 billion in recorded outward flows in 2009. Saudi Arabia ranks as the second largest, followed by Switzerland and Russia.³ Only recently and on the top of these forms of homeland support has the desire for homeland connection escalated to political and societal connections.

A relatively new phenomenon in contemporary emigration and immigration is that of expatriate voting and representation. For many around the world this has only come to their awareness through cases where controversy has arisen. With overseas voting established in many places for the first time, in many cases these voting procedures have been undertaken with little fanfare or complication. In other cases however these electoral procedures for expatriates have occasionally come to public attention when electoral abuses have emerged where controls have been inadequate and the election system not quite perfect. These examples will be discussed in more detail in later chapters of this study. Despite the publicity the issue is not widely understood, nor is there any consensus on the very principle of permitting

3 International Organization of Migration (IOM) data, *op. cit.*

expatriates to engage politically with their homelands. In many cases it remains controversial and dependent on the views of the homeland parliament and their expectations. Where countries have provided voting facilities for their expatriates there is enormous variety in terms of voting eligibility and entitlement, as well as in legislation related to citizenship in all its aspects.

Before embarking on a deeper appreciation of migration, citizenship and expatriate voting, the associated terminology should be made clear.

1.1 Terminology and scope of the study

Certain terms in the area of expatriate voting need to be highlighted and explained. While the legal basis of these terms is generally well understood their political meaning can sometimes vary. For the most part this study will adopt meanings used in other studies and by other authors.

A growing number of states ascribes citizenship at birth, applying either the principle of *ius soli* (according citizenship to those born on the sovereign territory) or *ius sanguinis* (according citizenship to an individual descended from a parent with that nationality), or both. Those not ascribed a particular citizenship at birth may be eligible to acquire it later through naturalization (Barry 2006: 22). For our study we will use terms such as citizenship and nationality interchangeably, aware that some scholars have used the terms with differentiation. Italy is the central focus of our study and the *ius sanguinis* principle governs its citizenship laws; we note that this principle is also common to many other countries including Greece, Ireland and Germany.

Transnationalism is a term that covers a new fluidity and flexibility on citizenship issues, referring to the way political, economic and cultural realities have increasingly transcended territory and borders. As will be elaborated later in the study, transnationalism derives from