

**REVIEW OF SIMONE PAOLI,  
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In the current period of heated debates over rules and practices governing migrations in Europe, the scientific community and the public at large are in the urgent need for relevant historical research, to place events, policies and issues in a correct perspective. The historical process leading to the Schengen agreements has captured a lot of attention, with major scientific analyses – those by Andrew Moravcsik, scholarly Didier Bigo and Ruben Zaiotti – proposing diverse appreciations of the actors and moving forces behind the current political and juridical regime. Simone Paoli enters this ongoing debate taking the standpoint of a country which had had little or no role in the setting up of the EU rules collectively referred to as “Schengen” that is Italy. Its role and policies he argues, had been a core preoccupation of the entire political process leading to that regime; and Italy is now, also for those reasons, on the front line of the European migrations crisis Paoli’s thesis is bold and clear: the design and implementation of the Schengen regime, from the 1984 Franco-German Saarbrücken agreement to the latest negotiations leading to Italy’s April 1998 accession to the Schengen system, was expressly, if not exclusively, geared at forcing Italy to abandon its *laissez-faire* cum humanitarian policy regarding Mediterranean migrants; and to create a set of rules designed to make Italy adopt the Northern European culture

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and legislation of migration limitation, but also to shoulder the political and economic burden of the Southern European border checkpoints. The Italian case was particularly important also because it set a precedent for all peripheral countries in the South and, later on, in the East. This process literally forced Italy into a severe learning process to the extent of the migration policy. Such an Europeanisation was then in deep contrast with the view of the great majority of Italian political parties, economic interests, and societal actors.

Based on a plurality of national and international archival and other documentary sources, therefore full of evidences and “*Zeitgeist*”, the book is divided into three chapters set in a chronological order. The first part analyses the genesis of the Schengen system within the broader framework of the historical evolution of the Community policy of free movement of persons. It explains the reasons for the 1984 Saarbrücken and 1985 Schengen Agreements – intergovernmental agreements among a limited number of the EC Member States that were experiencing their own national migrant crisis, and that refused, except for Benelux countries, to develop a proper EC policy – and those of the Italian exclusion from both agreements. It also highlights the main internal and international initiatives that the Italian Government had put in place in reaction to both treaties, before requesting for its accession to the Schengen Area on the basis of an important change in the internal political phase and in the development of international relations.

The strength of the anti-Italian resistance in Europe and, above all, the breadth, articulation and radicality of the opposition to Schengen in Italy are highlighted. The Italian leader of that period was Socialist Minister Claudio Martelli, the author of a bill expressing the Italian projects of Euro-Mediterranean integration, who took note of the demographic dynamics of North Africa, expressed a strong spirit of solidarity typical for almost all Italian parties and in particular of the major ones, the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party, of the Church, of NGOs, of trade unions. Italy then did not need and therefore did not lack the legislation and structures to deal with phenomena of immigration, in which a spirit of international solidarity dominated while many turned a blind eye on the deteriorating living conditions of the domestic migrant population. It found itself, however, restricted in

the choice between its own orientation and its willingness to be part of the European epochal dismantlement of internal border checkpoints. The renunciation of such an essential dimension of the integration process was not conceivable to leading political leaders like Giulio Andreotti, Gianni De Michelis, Giorgio La Malfa, and Italy therefore adhered to the system. In terms of South Europe, it was used for extending to the countries of Southern Europe rules tailored to the objectives of the countries of Northern Europe receiving migration, and to transform the states of Southern Europe in a buffer area able to stop and bear the economic and political costs, to be the borderline of Northern Europe. Even French President Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl were directly involved in negotiations and political pressures. This is to say that migration rules, visa and asylum policies, police cooperation, information exchange, etc., far from being “low politics” engaged the highest political leadership and filtered down apparatuses and societal sectors, showing how they were perceived to be affecting the core of national sovereignty.

The book then analyses Italy’s difficult acquisition of the European mentality in terms of the management of migratory flows, even after the first Albanian exodus in 1991, when Italy perceived, for the first time in a broad and clear manner, that it had become a country of immigration. As pointed out, at the time when the main European countries were facing the dramatic consequences of the end of the Cold War and the explosion of a new Mediterranean issue, the Italian difficulty in complying with the Schengen system caused particular concern. In the same chapter, Paoli discusses how the general situation contributed to complicating the construction of the Schengen Area and how, following the traumatic transition from the First to the Second Italian Republic in 1992–1994, Italy lost its place in the group of countries that had founded the area. This meant that a few years later, Italy had to face a new set of tests and passages of foreign and domestic policy to attain the conditions of entry, with a particular emphasis on the “Turco-Napolitano Law” on immigration, a restrictive law that was the key step for the final Italian participation in the Schengen Area.

According to Paoli, the process of developing the Schengen acquis was initially inspired mainly by France, the recipient of massive migration flows and the first country on the Continent to have recorded the phe-

nomena of xenophobia and, with the Front National, a politicisation of the migration issue, but was later largely dominated and determined by Germany's interests: after 1990 Berlin was able to shape the juridical regime in accordance with the dual objective of opening the eastern borders of the EU and closing the southern ones.

The insight into the domestic conditions in the Members States, their loss of control over the changing domestic socio-cultural attitudes, emerging dangerous feeling and political opposition, had to be balanced against their urge to protect diplomatic relations with sending countries. In this balanced picture there is no innocence in the European failure to face the novel and huge difficulties of mass migration from the South, but there are no real culprits either in the historical process that nobody has seemed able to contain, even if some were more able than others to protect their own interests, they hardly accounted for the shared European interest.

Although the migration phenomenon has occupied a fundamental space in the construction of the Schengen acquis from the Saarbrücken agreement in 1984 to the implementation agreements in 1995, the paper shows how other aspects and serious challenges – terrorism, drug trafficking, international mafias, etc. – have motivated the acquis governing the free movement of persons and the rules and management of external borders and checkpoints. It underlines how numbers of governmental, political, economic, social, institutional actors have been involved in the elaboration of the new juridical system, policy and culture of the Schengen acquis in European countries; that Schengen acquis has been an intergovernmental diplomatic process, a community policy, an issue in the domestic consensus among the Member States and the response from governments to the politicisation of the migration issue; it has been a clash of cultures, interests and power policy. This is why this book, whether one shares its conclusions or not, is an excellent and inspiring sample of history of international relations.