

**The United Nations,
Italy and Somalia: a '*sui generis*' relation
1948-1969**

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Table of content

Introduction.....	p. 2
1. From colonialism to the AFIS (<i>Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia</i>)....	p. 9
1.1 European models of colonialism in Africa: Great Britain, France and Italy	p. 10
1.2 The Italian colonial experience.....	p. 14
1.3 Review of the literature on Italian colonialism	p. 20
1.4 The settlement of Italian colonies after World War II.....	p. 24
2. Setting the AFIS.....	p. 31
2.1 Somalia: a complex environment.....	p. 35
2.2 The creation of an agricultural system.....	p. 40
2.3 The development of an economic system.....	p. 44
2.4 The education system	p. 48
2.5 The creation of a multi-party system in a pastoral democracy	p. 52
2.6 From independence to Siyad Barre regime.....	p. 58
Conclusion.....	p. 63
Bibliography.....	p. 67
Archive sources.....	p. 74

Introduction

He who desires or attempts to reform the government of a state, and wishes to have it accepted and capable of maintaining itself to the satisfaction of everybody, must at least retain the semblance of the old forms; so that it may seem to the people that there has been no change in the institutions, even though in fact they are entirely different from the old ones.

Niccolò Machiavelli¹

The Italian colonial and post-colonial experience has not received enough attention by colonial and post-colonial studies due to Italy's limited colonial pedigree, or as Gianpaolo Calchi Novati argues because "Italian colonialism lacked impetus and legitimacy" (Calchi Novati, p. 47, in Andall & Duncan, 2005). The first problem an historian encounters in confronting with Italian colonialism is the lack of historiography and scholarly debate on this significant period of European history. The Italian experience was problematic due to its fascist colonial past; conversely, British and French historiography devoted to the topic several studies in different academic fields developing more of an African history than a colonial history. This represents a clear limit for Italian historiography because it has thus delayed of twenty years the creation of a *lieu de memoire* that could symbolize a shared colonial and post-colonial past. This is evident from the lack of writing on this specific period of Italian history (Labanca, 2002, p. 8). In fact, Italy's 'colonial history' was mostly written by historians supporting the colonial enterprise and often with the intent of propagandizing more than creating a common historical legacy.

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli (1950). *The Prince and the Discourses [1531]*, p. 182. New York: Modern Library

As Giorgio Rochat claimed forty years ago, in Italy “Colonialism, yesterday as today, has remained a field reserved to the right-wing patriotism” (Rochat, 1974, p. 11). Studies on Italian colonial history have been characterized until the 1970s by an ideological and often fascist approach. This attitude of Italian scholars and diplomats has delayed a critical examination of the relationship between Italy and its former colonies. Nevertheless, a new wave of studies emerged after World War II in opposition to the rhetorical and propagandistic colonial historiography. In order to offer the reader a clearer understanding of the development of an African and colonial historiography, this thesis presents an historical analysis of the studies conducted on the relationship between Italy and its former colonies, which allows us to explain the causes of such a late critical examination of the Italian presence in Eastern Africa. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of primary sources, along with the existing literature, offers the reader an historical introduction to Italian colonialism which is fundamental in order to explain the relations between Italy, the United Nations (UN) and Somalia, as well as the causes of the Italian failure during the *‘Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia’* (AFIS).

The aim of this research is, in light of the limits of those traditional interpretations, to emphasize the too often ignored aspects of the colonial and post-colonial expeditions and to illustrate the human and political costs for both the colonizing and colonized populations. A process of critical examination of the Italian colonial past came later; Italian colonialism was often portrayed as ‘beggar’ (*straccione*), ‘demographic’ or ‘rhetorical’ and its exceptional character was contrasted with the ‘classic’ British and French colonial experiences. The results achieved by the Italians in Eastern Africa after World War II were extremely modest. These have been carefully measured by Calchi Novati who maintained that,

“Italy had been unable to establish any of those structures of mutual partnership and complicity which were normally the result of European imperialism, and which had often proved stronger and more resilient than direct colonial administration” (Calchi Novati, 1994, p. 371).

Opportunely, in recent years a new scholarship attempted to reassess the colonial and post-colonial experience by emphasizing both sides of the story. This thesis - in relation with the new stream of researches on Italian colonialism and post-colonialism - presents the Italian experience in Somalia as an example of failure in Western post-colonial interventions. It does

so by analyzing the post-colonial intervention of a small colonial power that did not have a significant imperial past, Italy, in the most poor and complex of its former colonies, Somalia. The period under scrutiny goes from 1950 to 1960, during the AFIS. I decided to focus on a time span that goes from 1948 to 1969 in order to frame the AFIS administration in a broader perspective. This perspective firstly clarifies the geopolitical reasons behind the United Nations' decision to give to Italy the mandate over Somalia in light of the new global order. Secondly, considering the period from Somalia independence in 1960 to the dissolution of the state in 1969, it is possible to identify some of the failures that characterized the Italian post-colonial intervention in Somalia.

What I want to highlight is the existence of specific political, economic and cultural dynamics behind this difficult project. The story of this period involves the participation of three '*sui generis*' actors in the democratization of Somalia: the United Nations, Italy and Somalia. First, compared to other colonial powers, Italy is a '*sui generis*' case due to the exceptional character of its colonial past, that can be divided in two periods: the *Risorgimento* colonialism and the Fascist colonialism (Miege, 1976, p. 28). Second, Somalia represents a country with a complex and peculiar configuration of society, which makes it a '*sui generis*' case among African countries. Third, the system of trusteeship developed in the aftermath of World War II by the great powers and the UN constituted a new and '*sui generis*' method for the process of decolonization in Africa.

It is shared knowledge that many Western interventions in the World were clear failures; this thesis tries to add new findings to this issue by analysing a post-colonial Western failure that has been often ignored by post-colonial studies. This thesis is thus motivated by the desire to learn more about post-colonial interventions. The AFIS represented for Italy the possibility to overcome the shortcomings of its fascist colonial past. Moreover, the UN mandate was used at first as a means to supervise a post-colonial intervention. However, a careful examination shows that it was a 'disaster' for the future of Somalia. Three crucial moments are analyzed: (i) the disposal of Italian colonies as decided by the UN in 1949; (ii) the economic and political reforms pursued under the AFIS from 1950 to 1960; and (iii) the shift from independence to dictatorship in 1969. To do so it is important to clearly distinguish between the two sides of the story. On the one hand, the Italian side embedded in the aftermath of World War II. On the other hand, the Somali side embedded in the decolonization process. The Italian administration of Somalia was a political

‘disaster’, yet the reasons for such a failure are not straightforward and call for further investigation.

Looking at the case study of the AFIS experience, I intend to pinpoint some cultural and social aspects that too often have been ignored in favor of a more factual account of the Italian colonial history. This means that I dedicate less attention to the mere effects of the Italian policies that are considered as given facts, while I try to highlight the cultural and political contingent forces that kept the Italian administrators and Somali people interwoven. The research design explores what David Little indicates as “the space of ‘what might have been’ — also the space of contingent alternative developments that were equally consistent with the configuration of large structures and particular circumstances at a given time” (Little, 2000, p. 91). What I try to show is that, independently from which European power the UN would have entrusted, the internal ethnic, political and economic conditions of Somalia significantly influenced the achievement of the trusteeship objectives. The idea that Western interventionism could solve the problems of the underdeveloped world has collected a number of failures throughout the whole decolonization process. With this in mind, I intend to detect the specific political, economic and cultural dynamics behind the AFIS failure.

To sum up, the two main purposes of this thesis are: 1) to offer a contribution to a recently emerging, yet very small literature on Italian colonial history that is free from patriotic ideology and intends to critically reflect on this part of Italy’s past; and 2) to offer a contribution to the history of failed Western interventions, focussing on the reasons why the developmental agenda of the trusteeship bore so little fruit.

The methodology that I apply consists of four levels of analysis. In order to introduce the reader to the general types of colonial rule in Africa, the first level of analysis – Sections 1.1 and 1.2 - presents a brief overview of the two most representative European powers in Africa: Great Britain and France. The aim is to provide the reader with a broad European perspective in order to better understand the analysis of the specific features of the Italian trusteeship in Somalia. The second part of the analysis focuses on the features that constitute what is known as Italian colonialism, from an historical and historiographical perspective. Yet, the study of Italian colonialism presents several differences in terms of colonial rule due to different geographical and cultural features characterizing the environment of the colonies. Thus, it is necessary to consider each colony and each type of rule implemented considering territorial specificities.

The second level of analysis – Section 1.4 - describes the causes for a shift in the balance of power from the ‘old’ European powers to the new emerging superpowers: the United States (U.S.) and the Soviet Union. The thesis analyzes how the decision on the disposal of the Italian colonies was influenced by this new global order. With the end of World War II the world witnessed a shift in the international balance of power and the beginning of the decolonization process. This shift of power proved to be, first, an obstacle to the colonial purposes of many European powers. Second, it increased the speed of the decolonization process because the two superpowers were supporting the self-government of the remaining colonies. Thus, the second level of analysis addresses the following sub-question: how did the geopolitical changes which followed World War II influence the disposal of the Italian colonies? From that moment onwards the traditional European powers had to compete with the U.S. and the Soviet Union in order to protect their overseas interests. Moreover, the power that dominated the world with its empire was declining; Great Britain was passing the testimony to the U.S.. As Niall Ferguson argues, the world passed from the British empire to the more informal U.S. hegemony (Ferguson, 2012). In light of this new world balance of power, the U.S. gathered the role of global *primus inter pares* and during the peace conferences tried to reconfigure the role of the UN.

The second level of the analysis continues exploring the reasons behind the decision of the disposal of the Italian colonies, focusing particularly on the decision on the trusteeship of Somalia. This decision should be considered as a consequence of the new world balance of power. To identify the causes that led to the UN decision, it is crucial to consider the positions of the four great powers, in particular the positions of Great Britain and the U.S.. In fact, the British position on the Somalia issue was significantly influenced by the U.S. and Russia. The aim is to offer the reader a more critical view of the general geopolitical atmosphere after World War II in order to better understand the analysis of the AFIS project.

To this latter purpose, this thesis offers a brief historical account aimed at explaining the complexity of Somali society before the so-called ‘Scramble for Africa’. In order to collect information on Somali cultural and political history, Section 1.3 considers the numerous monographs and articles written by the anthropologist and Somali expert I. M. Lewis and articles published on academic journals on African studies. It emerges that Somalia was characterized by a geographical, cultural and economic complexity. In particular, Somali society had a strong tribal organization based on ethnic lineages.

Moreover, most Somali people lived a nomadic and pastoral way of life in a close relationship with ‘mother nature’. The challenges to transform a pastoral and nomadic society based on clan lineages into a self-government democracy were enormous. Thus, the experiment of the trusteeship and of a ‘democratic’ decolonization hid a number of contradictions and challenges for the new AFIS administration.

As concerns the fourth level, the whole Chapter Two investigates the AFIS period focusing on the objectives set out by the UN Resolution on Somalia: (1) the creation and development of a regional government organization; (2) economic and financial development; (3) the improvement of education; (4) social progress and welfare; and (5) the shifting of power from administration to local government². To this purpose, I retrieved some primary sources from the Archive of the Bank of Italy which contain useful figures and analysis of the economic and social aspects of the AFIS. A reflection on the reforms pursued during the AFIS is necessary in order to identify the causes that led to the failure of the Italian intervention - under the UN supervision - in Somalia. It can be claimed that the AFIS was a failure, or a partial failure, as the collapse of the new-born democratic Somalia in 1969 suggests. However, this thesis acknowledges that the AFIS achieved also some limited successes, in particular in the field of education.

² ASMAE, AFIS, *rapport sur la Somalie sous administration italienne*, 3 June-24 June 1952, New York.

1

From Colonialism to the AFIS (*Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia*)

Italian colonialism, in comparison with the experiences of Britain, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Portugal, was limited both in time and space. It lasted, indeed, only sixty years and it involved only a few African countries (Labanca, 2002, p. 7). According to the Italian historian Nicola Labanca, “Italy was the European power that maintained its overseas territories for the shortest time: from 1882 in Eritrea, from 1889 in Somalia, from 1911 in Libya and from 1935 in Ethiopia, yet never after 1943” (Labanca, 2002, p. 8). During those sixty years many Italians emigrated to the so-called ‘*Oltremare*’ in Eastern Africa. They were moved mostly by dreams of wealth and desire of new adventures. Yet, the reality they found was much less colorful and exciting than they had thought. Only few people accumulated large fortunes, while the economic and social conditions of Italian emigrants remained overall rather poor.

The aim of this Chapter is to give a general overview of the historical background which characterized the different stages of Italian colonialism within a broader European framework. It is divided in four parts. In the first part, I discuss briefly the different models of European colonialism in Africa; in the second part, I offer a brief historical account of Italian colonialism; in the third part, I provide a summary review of the literature on Italian colonialism, trying to identify both its limits and potentials for further research; in the fourth part I examine the Italian post-colonial experience, focusing on the UN trusteeship in Somalia.

1.1 European models of colonialism: Great Britain, France and Italy

The end of the nineteenth century was characterized by a steady increase of international trade. Economic liberalism paved the way to the creation of the so-called first globalization. (Hobsbawn, 1987, p. 60). On the colonial front, European powers – such as Britain, France and the Netherlands - started the so-called ‘*Scramble for Africa*’, a process which would cause massive movement of people and goods to and from Africa. Merchants in search of wealth, military colonial expeditions, scientists, missionaries and simple explorers would move to Africa in search of fortune, conquests, adventures, scientific discoveries or people to convert (Del Boca, 1984, p. 15).

Great Britain and France controlled the largest number of colonies in the African continent. Great Britain enlarged its colonial Empire with twenty new colonies³ and France with nineteen new colonies⁴ (Lange et al., 2006). According to Boyle (1986), in their control of the African colonies the two powers differed from each other. Great Britain applied a method based on so-called ‘*indirect rule*’ while France one based on ‘*direct rule*’. The two different models or concepts are not easy to define (Crowder, 1986). We can refer to direct rule when most levels of administration are occupied by Europeans. By contrast, indirect rule occurs when the governance of large districts of the colony are reserved to native elites under the supervision of the colonial administrators (Lange, 2004, p. 906). However, the idea of predetermined models is disputable since often the difference was not so clear-cut. The type of rule had to adapt to the specific environment that was significantly affected by the African customary institutions (Richens, 2009, p. 7). Nonetheless, the two models conserved some specific features. On the one hand, direct rule is a system organized in a centralized and hierarchic way that allows for the control of local populations via direct legal and administrative structures. On the other hand, Lange suggests that “indirect rule was based on a tripartite chain of patron–client relations linking the colonial administration to the population via chiefs” (Lange, 2004, p. 907). The ‘tripartite chain’ identified by Lange may lead to two separate and incompatible forms of rule that coexist diminishing the possibilities for growth.

³ Gambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Kenya, Ghana, Botswana, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Nigeria, Egypt, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Namibia, Cameroun, Zanzibar, British Somaliland and Sudan.

The debate on the benefits of each model of rule is still open. The literature has discussed the positive and negative features of each model. Scholars such as Migdal (1988), Boone (1994), Reno (1995), Mamdani (1996), for instance, claim that indirect rule left a system in which the central administration was ‘hostage’ of the local chiefs, thus creating a decentralized and inefficient system of rule (Lange, 2004, p. 906). Other scholars, such as Amsden (1985), Wade (1990), Huff (1994), Kohli (1994) and Lange (2003), alternatively advocate that direct rule left effective states with an efficient centralized legal and administrative structure (Lange, 2004, p. 906). What emerges from the available literature is that the two models shall not be regarded as monolithic and separate entities. Consequently, it can be argued that they have been sometimes combined to address the specific problems arising in the rule of different colonial environments (Richens, 2009, p. 6).

The British and French powers reacted to the African environment with different methods that mirrored their different national character and political traditions. In the colonial era Western Africa and Eastern Africa were characterized by very different conditions. In Eastern Africa⁵ most of the regions were occupied by complex and populated pre-colonial societies (Oliver & Atmore, 1994). In these regions it was more difficult to establish a link between rulers and local chiefs because a centralized state system was absent. Moreover, the geographic conditions influenced the extent of colonization, which was frequently pursued through a mixed model of rule, as these areas were characterized by a nomadic agriculture and a pastoralist way of life - British Somaliland is an example. On the contrary, Western Africa⁶ was characterized by a number of small political units along the coasts linked to larger kingdoms (the Ashanti) or empires (Mali) with their own statutory structures (Lange et al., 2006, p. 1431). This environment facilitated the creation of ties between colonial administrators and local chiefs, yet the models pursued also in this case mixed indirect and direct rule. Nonetheless, in these different environments both Great Britain and France gave the authority to local chiefs, although with different methods. Thus, independently from the method of rule followed by the colonizer, the participation of local chiefs was crucial for the conservation of power and order. It is thus clear that the division between direct and indirect

⁴ Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Madagascar, Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

⁵ Eritrea, Ethiopia, British East Africa, German East Africa, Djibouti, Mali, Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya, Zanzibar, British Somaliland, Italian Somalia, Sudan.

⁶ Nigeria, French West Africa, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Gold Coast, Cameroon, Angola, German South west Africa.

rule is too clear-cut. In fact, every population and territory had its cultural and geographic specificity that influenced the model of rule followed by the colonizers.

Great Britain normally adopted a form of indirect rule. British administrators rarely interfered with the chief authority because they supported a local self-government via local institutions (Crowder, 1964, p. 199). In Africa they opted for the conservation of local institutions, without dismantling indigenous political and judiciary structures (Fage, 2002). In this way they were able to establish strong ties between British political officers and native chief authorities, hereby reinforcing the legitimacy of their occupation (Whittlesey, 1937, p. 366). However, in countries such as Kenya and South Africa they pursued a hybrid form of indirect rule. As Lange et al. point out, “The white settler and indigenous populations lived under separate institutions — the settlers in direct systems of colonialism, the Africans in indirect systems - yet the former depended on the latter for labor” (Lange et al., 2006, p. 1432). Hence, this method contributed to create an atmosphere of fractionalization, dividing more than uniting the communities (Richens, 2009, p. 37).

French administrators, instead, despite giving the authority to local chiefs, decided to pursue a form of direct rule with a strong subordination of local chiefs to French political officers. The local chiefs in the territories occupied by France acted as simple agents of the French government with clear and limited duties and rights (Crowder, 1964, p. 201). This method undermined the relationship between the French and indigenous populations, but in the French officers' view it increased the efficiency of the overall colonial system. In doing so, French colonizers pursued an idea of integration of the indigenous population into French colonial society, with the aim of transforming them in ‘French citizens’. This attitude was reflected in the importance French colonizers gave to the teaching of French language, while British colonizers were eager to permit the use of vernacular languages (Crowder, 1964, p. 203). Yet, this was not always the case, as French administrators often depended on the indigenous governmental machinery in order to maintain the order in a colony (Delavignette, 1950). Certainly, the British and French models of colonial rule were not clearly defined and often they had to adapt more pragmatically to the local environments they were confronted with. However, the main goal of both was to create favorable conditions for the production and extraction of goods and natural resources. At the end of the day, the methods they decided to carry out in order to reach this goal were not so radically different. In fact, the

complexity of the African continent did not allow for the application of a specific type of rule. This was the case also in the Italian colonial experience.

Similarly to the colonization strategies, the colonial institutions established in Eastern Africa did not have a uniform character in time and space (Labanca, 2002, p. 330). Nevertheless, the colonial state had to perform two main tasks. First, it had to facilitate the plundering of the territories oversea, and second, it had to preserve the order in indigenous societies (Labanca, 2002, p. 332). Similarly to the colonial institutions established by other European powers, the Italian ones did not represent a direct extension of the metropolitan institutions. These institutions were rather adapted to the Eastern Africa geographical and cultural context. However, it is possible to identify some common features between the Italian rule and the French and British ones. Similarly to the other European powers, Italian rulers had to collaborate with groups or segments of indigenous societies, granting the authority to local chiefs. These chiefs possessed a formal authority, although they were substantially nominated by Italian governors. Moreover, the local chief authority was transformed in a centralized way, on the basis of French experiences. Thus, it can be argued that the Italian model of relationship with local chiefs was a mix of direct and indirect rule.

The second ‘dilemma’ for the Italians was between the preservation of the existing indigenous political structures and the creation of two separate institutions of rule of law: the Italian ones and the indigenous ones. Again, the decision had to take into consideration the specific differences among the Italian territories in Eastern Africa. In Eritrea, Italian rulers pursued a more indirect method of rule with three separate judiciary systems: Italian courts, traditional/local courts and colonial courts. In Somalia, due to the limited number of Italian people residing in the territory, governors adopted a more indirect type of rule. Conversely, in Libya, in particular during the fascist period, the Italian government promoted a direct dominion due to the large presence of Italians living in the Libyan territories (Labanca, 2002, p. 345). Independently from the type of rule that the Italian elites adopted in Eastern Africa, the outcomes from an economic and social point of view have been modest.

1.2 The Italian colonial experience

Italian colonialism has often been regarded as ‘exceptional’ in comparison to the more ‘classic’ colonialism of Great Britain, the Netherlands and France. The historian Nicola Labanca pointed out three main peculiarities which characterized the Italian colonial experience. First, it was the first form of colonialism led by a Fascist regime. Second, it was one of the few colonial initiative that encouraged the emigration of Italians to Africa; for this reason Italian colonialism was also known as ‘demographic’ colonialism. Third, it represented an exception compared to the colonialism of ‘old’ colonial powers because Italy never had an empire, or any idea of it (Labanca, 2002, p. 12). However, if we emphasize only the exceptions, we run the risk of leaving the Italian experience in Eastern Africa circumscribed as a provincial and ‘exclusively Italian’ phenomenon. This is certainly not true: Italian colonialism is an important part of the broader European colonial experience in Africa.

The Italian territories had a common feature: the substantial lack of natural resources. The Italian government pursued different strategies in its African territories, because the latter were extremely different from a geographic, economic and cultural point of view (Del Boca, 1993). In Eritrea, the Italians focused on commerce and agriculture. In Somalia, the environment was dominated by the desert with limited fertile areas, thus the possibilities for agricultural production and commerce were modest. In Libya, again commerce and agriculture dominated the economy. Ethiopia represented the only colony endowed with large natural resources, yet it proved to be particularly difficult to control, due to its cultural and political homogeneity (Labanca, 2002, p. 40). Hence, the colonial economic model – generally based on commerce and agriculture - was difficult to pursue in those territories, since most inhabitants were nomadic and semi-nomadic populations. Therefore, different pre-existing conditions did not facilitate the establishment of a clear and specific model of colonial economy.

Italy - politically unified in 1861 - was participating to the ‘Scramble for Africa’, preparing itself to compete with the great powers for the control of African trade routes and natural resources. Italy represented at that time,

“The Mediterranean country heir of the maritime republics and of old commercial exchanges which had always had contact with countries

and peoples, with civilizations and markets overseas: yet, it never had - in contrast to London and Paris, or Madrid and Lisbon - a 'personal' overseas territory. The difference was radical" (Labanca, 2002, p. 16).

Moreover, the African colonial experience was influenced by the significant economic and military unbalances among European powers. Italy moved its first steps in Eastern Africa as a poor and underdeveloped country. Only 9 per cent of its population lived in the urban centres of Naples and Milan, which were still poor and under-industrialized cities (Labanca, 2002, p. 23). The Italian path towards a colonial empire was problematic and exceptional because Italy lacked an economic and political imperial structure, typical of other European powers instead.

It is essential to explain how and through which institutions the Italian government ruled its colonies in Eastern Africa. There are different types of colonialism. Hobson (1902) in its work *Imperialism* describes them as commercial, financial, industrial and so forth. Lenin (1916) instead, defines colonialism as "a giant financial capitalism" with a specific national character. Moreover, historians as Hobsbawn (1986) underline the specific capitalistic and economic character of imperialism which manifests itself in the division of the globe among the most powerful European powers. Generally speaking, the Italian project was not considered as a large economic venture. Lenin referred to Italian colonialism as 'beggar colonialism'. Besides economic and political difficulties, the main problem was Italy's incapability to pursue a direct or indirect colonial rule or any other ideal model of colonial rule.

The history of Italian colonialism presents some contradictions in its legacy. According to J. J. Mieke, from an ideological point of view, Italian colonialism can be distinguished into two periods: the *Risorgimento* period (1880-1915) and the Fascist period (1918-1945) (Mieke, 1976, p. 20). The development of a colonial ideology came later compared to other European colonial powers (Mieke, 1976, p. 27). The colonial ideology developed in Italy in the nineteenth century was based on three priorities. First, an economic priority, aimed mostly at the plundering of natural resources. Second, on political and diplomatic needs: Italy wanted to gain a significant role among the European powers involved in the colonization. Third, on the idea - shared with other colonial powers - that Africans had to be civilized. In other words, the Italian colonial enterprise was motivated

through a rhetoric that stressed the role of colonizers as those who could free Africa from 'darkness' (Miege, 1976, p. 42).

The ideological motivations remained the same also during the Fascist colonialism. Yet, under Benito Mussolini, a strong 'ideal' link emerged with the memory of the Roman empire's power and the role of Italy in the Mediterranean sea (Miege, 1976, p. 137). Italy became a 'small' colonial power after the occupation of the bay of Assab (1882) and Massaua (1885) in Eritrea (Labanca, 2002, p. 57). Even though the geographical extension of the occupation was insignificant in comparison with the empires of other colonial powers, the conquered territory represented the first Italian colony. The political and cultural consequences in Italy were significant, as many felt to be finally part of the 'imperialist era' (Labanca, 2002, p. 58). Behind the first Italian steps on the Eritrean coasts there was the shadow of the British empire. British diplomacy was afraid of the presence of French and German forces in the Red Sea territories and Italy, with its limited financial and military possibilities, represented a good ally in the Horn of Africa (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 86). Thus, the new-born Italian colonial power, with the support of Great Britain, took official possession of Eritrea in 1890. The new Italian colony had a population of 200-250,000 inhabitants and its capital was Asmara (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 88). Once settled in the new colony, Italy wanted to extend its colonial settlements to Ethiopia and Somalia.

The Italian priority in Eastern Africa was the occupation of Ethiopia. Eritrea and Somalia represented only the initial stage of this process. Somalia passed under the Italian control, under a chartered company named Filonardi Company in 1889, thanks to an agreement with the Sultans that controlled parts of the Somali coasts (Labanca, 2002, p. 89). Initially, the control of these territories was in the hands of large groups of Italian merchants. Only in 1908 Italy took official control of Somalia through the unification of the northern and southern regions of the country (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 89). At that time Somalia had a population of 300,000 inhabitants and its capital was declared Mogadishu, a city on the Indian Ocean coast (Labanca, 2002, p. 93). The country was clearly divided in two different areas. The inhabitants of the coasts were mostly merchants involved in trade activities with other countries and populations (Arabs, Indians and Europeans), whilst, the inhabitants of the internal arid regions were nomadic populations. The Italians concentrated their colonial efforts mostly in the port cities of Mogadishu, Kisimayo and Merca.

Ethiopia, differently from Eritrea and Somalia, was a politically and militarily organized kingdom ruled by a strongly centralized government. During their occupation, Italian colonizers were confronted with several challenges. They clearly underestimated the Ethiopian military capacities. At the beginning the Italian diplomacy obtained a positive result with the signature of the Treaty of Wichale or Ucciali in 1889 (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 91). According to the Italian diplomacy, the Treaty established the birth of an Italian Protectorate over the reign of Emperor Menelik. Nonetheless, Emperor Menelik was not of the same idea. Italian diplomacy tried to obtain the political support of Ethiopian aristocracy in order to destabilize Emperor Menelik's inner circle. Yet, these efforts were not successful. From 1890 to 1894 the Italians conducted several battles, with few victories and huge military losses (Labanca, 2002, p. 75). On March 1886, in the battle of Adua Italy was badly defeated. Over 4-5,000 Italian soldiers and thousands of Ascari, the indigenous Eritrean soldiers, died. As a consequence, with the 1886 Treaty of Addis Abeba Ethiopia was recognized as a sovereign and independent state (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 92).

Italy's colonial ambition reemerged in the twentieth century with the campaign of Libya. After a long diplomatic preparation the Libyan territories in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania became the first goal of the Italian foreign policy. In order to occupy these territories, Italy had to defeat on the battlefields the Ottoman Empire; this was not an easy mission and to achieve it Italy needed the *placet* of the other European powers. Between 1911 and 1912 Italy obtained several successes, yet it did not manage to maintain its control over the territories (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 95). Between 1914 and 1915 most of the territories fell apart under the Ottoman military corps. In 1916 Italy took control of the main coastal cities it had previously occupied in 1912. The occupation of Libya was then formalized with two Treaties signed in London (1916) and in Paris (1917) (Labanca, 2002, p. 123).

In 1919 it was thus possible to assess the results of the *Risorgimento* colonialism in Eastern Africa. Italy participated in the 'Scramble' in order to gain respect and power in the so-called '*Oltremare*', overseas territories. Its colonial territories were geographically large but poor in natural resources. Moreover, Italy registered two defeats. In the first phase, a military one by the indigenous Ethiopian forces in the battle of Adua. In the second phase, a political one, accepting the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles which were clearly adverse to Italian diplomatic interests. As Labanca points out, "in one word, the territories came but without the prestige" (Labanca, 2002, p. 128).

During the Fascist colonial period (1918-1945) Italy pursued a very aggressive form of imperialism. In those years for most of the European powers colonialism was going through a descending path (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 96). By contrast, the Fascist regime created by Benito Mussolini in 1922 decided to continue the dream of the Italian '*Oltremare*'. The colonial initiative of Fascist Italy was displaced almost on all fronts in Eastern Africa. The new program for the African colonies was advertised in Italy with ideological and propagandist means. In particular, the fascist rhetoric succeeded in convincing the Italian public opinion of the ideas on the reminiscence of the Roman empire and the '*mare nostrum*'. The first initiative of the Fascist regime was the re-occupation of Libya, as the Italian settlements at that time were limited to the cities of Tripoli and Bengasi (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 99). Once the military operations were over, the Fascist regime tried to impose its values and symbols to the local population. The strong fascist propaganda brought many lower-class Italians to Libya. This peculiar Italian phenomenon became known as 'demographic colonialism' (Del Boca, 1984). With the support of the Italian emigrants the colonial regime, under the command of governor Italo Balbo, started a massive project of infrastructure building (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 100). Nonetheless, most of these projects were abandoned for the imminent outbreak of World War II, despite the involvement of many Italian workers (Labanca, 2002, p. 207).

Meanwhile in the 1920s the occupation of Italian Somalia was completed. The Somali territories were unified in 1925 under governor Cesare Maria De Vecchi until 1928 (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 101). Somalia presented a complex geographical and ethnic environment. Moreover, its territory was vast and semi-arid and, most importantly, it was divided among different clans and sub-clans, not all of them being under Italian control. Thus, at first, the colonial administration decided to settle the Italian emigrants mostly in the more fertile regions around the Jubba and Shebelle rivers. The creation of a system of irrigation to increase the agricultural production was problematic, due to adverse climatic conditions that caused a severe drought in 1928 (Labanca, 2002, p. 171). In those years many problems persisted in Somalia, in particular in remote internal areas where the resistance of Somali people to the Italian occupation was still strong. Nonetheless, despite the resistances, Italy made enormous efforts for the Italianization and Fascistization of the colony, achieving however very limited outcomes.

The control of the other Italian territories in Ethiopia and Eritrea was often subjected to external diplomatic pressures. Despite this, Italy signed with Ethiopia in 1928 a commercial agreement and an economic agreement (Labanca, 2002, p. 177). Unfortunately, these agreements remained only 'in the paper' and in practical terms they did not lead to any results. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was against the intervention of Rome and preferred to establish alliances with the United States and Japan (Labanca, 2002, p. 177). Italy did not accept this diplomatic decision and began to militarize the territories of Eritrea and Somalia along the borders with Ethiopia (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 97). Thus, for Fascist Italy the military solution was becoming once more central in its colonial policy. While most of the European powers involved in Africa were consolidating their presence in the Continent, Fascist Italy was preparing its last aggressive colonial war (Labanca, 2002, p. 178).

For the Fascist regime Ethiopia represented a crucial obstacle for the control of Somalia and Eritrea, due to the ongoing border disputes between those countries (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 103). The tension between Italy and Ethiopia led to the battle of Ual-ual - a border area controlled by the Italian army on Ethiopian soil - where Italy managed to win thanks to its military superiority (Miege, 1976, p. 214). At the same time Italy was negotiating with the French and British diplomacies the '*desistement*' of the two powers. Once Mussolini reached an agreement with France and Great Britain, the campaign against Ethiopia began (Labanca, 2002, p. 187). At this point Ethiopia decided to raise the issue at the League of Nations in order to find a diplomatic solution (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 103). However, Mussolini decided not to wait for the decision of the League of Nations and invaded Ethiopia crossing the Ethiopian-Eritrean border on the river Mareb. Despite the League of Nations' intervention to stop the war, Italy continued the invasion from both Eritrea and Somalia. Ethiopia was left alone in the defense of its independence against Italy (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 104). The Italian invasion was carried out by an army which included 55,000 soldiers, 55,000 civilians and 80,000 Ascari. The Ethiopian army responded with 250,000 badly equipped soldiers (Labanca, 2002, p. 190). The war went on for more than one year in the Ethiopian territories, which were immense and hard to invade. The Italian army used all the available means to defeat the Ethiopians including chemical gases (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 104). The use of chemical gases triggered an international reaction against Fascist Italy. Nevertheless, Mussolini ignored the international sanctions and on the 9th May 1936 announced the creation of the Italian Empire.

The Italian colonial experience in Eastern Africa came to an end with the changes brought about by World War II. Until 1940 the Italian army maintained the internal order and limited the military offense in Eastern Africa (Labanca, 2002, p. 208). Following the war declaration of the 10th of June 1940 problems in the Italian army emerged, which paved the way to the Italian defeat (Labanca, 2002, p. 210). The battles in Eastern Africa continued for several months, until the Italian territories first in the Horn of Africa and then in Libya were occupied by Great Britain between 1941 and 1943. Meanwhile France invaded from Western Africa the region of Fezzan in Libya. Furthermore, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Addis Adebba supported by the Allies' army and liberated its country from the Italian occupation (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 352). Italy was thus defeated in Eastern Africa and the future of its former colonies had to be settled by the victorious great powers under the supervision of the UN (Tripodi, 1999, p. 370).

1.3 Review of the literature on Italian colonialism

A review of the Italian historiography on the colonial period is difficult due to its ideological and political complexity. Most of the colonial powers developed a number of studies - from linguistics to ethnological studies - often connected with the political and diplomatic *momentum* (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 91). Conversely, in Italy a reflection on the national colonial history came late and was often characterized by a disorganized and a-critical perspective. In particular, many of the works published during the *Risorgimento* colonialism were characterized by a diplomatic attitude. An example of this attitude is reflected in the work by Ettore Rossi *Storia di Tripoli e della Tripolitania dalla conquista araba al 1911* (1922). The research was conducted with a rigorous approach, however it presented only the Italian side of the story (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 91). Another example is the work of Carlo Conti Rossini *Storia dell'Etiopia. Dalle origini all'avvento della dinastia* (1928).

During the second period of Italian colonialism – the Fascist period - most of the studies emphasized the Italian role in bringing civilization to the indigenous Africans without considering the history of the African countries involved. Few works published in that period are noteworthy, because the general aim of fascist literature was the celebration of Fascism and of the Italian presence in Eastern Africa (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 91); among them *La marcia su Gondar* (1936) by Achille Starace and *La preparazione e le prime operazioni*.

Introduzione di Benito Mussolini (1937) by Emilio de Bono (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 92). The studies on this period of Italian history were often biased by fascist propaganda until the republican period (Rochat, 1973). For instance, in 1938 Raffaele Ciasca published *Storia coloniale dell'Italia contemporanea: da Assab all'impero*; this work was characterized again by propagandist aims and by a mere diplomatic account of the story (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 92). Moreover, the Fascist institutions prohibited any kind of critical examination of Italian colonial enterprises. The *Società Geografica Italiana* (Italian Geographic Society) and *Istituto Coloniale Italiano* (Italian Colonial Institute) did not encourage independent research, nor did they publish works that might sound critical to the regime (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 92). Researches were conducted with a nationalistic approach so to emphasize the Italian efforts in the so-called 'civilizing mission' (*missione civilizzatrice*).

Following World War II, colonial studies experienced some transformation due to changes in Italian politics (Labanca, 2002, p. 10). The former Italian colonies were considered as parts of Italy, that could represent a possibility for the reconstruction of the country in the aftermath of World War II. In this context, right-wing parties defended the economic ties with the former colonies, while left-wing parties wanted to protect the colonies in order to safeguard the remaining Italians in Africa (Ruggiero, 1978, p.93). In this ambiguous political landscape also Italian scholars adopted quite evasive perspectives. In Italian universities there were few courses of African history, yet, between the end of World War II and 1960, several scientifically relevant studies were published. These new studies were characterized by ambiguity: as Romano Ruggiero points out "the studies gave different interpretations, but they had a high degree of unity in considering the colonial adventure as a colonialism that despite its limitations, was humanitarian and beneficial for the indigenous" (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 95).

While this was happening in Italy, the other European colonial powers were going through a reassessment of the colonial period, in particular with the development of 'colonial' or 'African' studies (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 44). The atmosphere was slowly changing also in Italy. The first work that represented a clear signal of opposition to the previous studies on Italian colonialism was published in 1958 by Roberto Battaglia: *La prima Guerra d'Africa*. Battaglia's study represented a break with previous works on this topic because he refused to adopt an imperialistic ideology. Furthermore, the works by Alphonso Castagno (1956; 1960) confirmed the change in the attitude of some scholars. These works represented the first steps

toward a critical re-examination of the colonial studies, which continued throughout the period between the end of World War II and African decolonization. In this new international atmosphere, in 1968 the Italian *Associazione degli Africanisti* (Association of African Studies) was founded with the aim to reassess Italian colonialism on the waves of the ongoing decolonization process (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 100).

In the 1970s a new critical examination of Italian colonial history emerged. Among the main works, *L'Africa nella coscienza europea e l'imperialismo italiano* (1973) by Pasquale Stanislao Mancini and *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale dall'Unità alla Marcia su Roma* (1976) by Angelo del Boca. In particular, the work of Del Boca represented a significant break with previous studies. His new approach acknowledged the complexity of the issues, ideas and political and social forces involved in Italian colonial history (Ruggiero, 1978, p. 101). A similar perspective was also adopted by Giorgio Rochat *Il colonialismo italiano* (1976). The fascist and ideological perspective were finally replaced by a critical account of the relations between Italy and its former colonies. From that moment onwards Italian scholars tried to consider in their researches both sides of the story: on the one hand, through a critical approach that emphasized the ambiguities of Italian colonial enterprises, and on the other hand, through a new perspective that highlighted the African efforts in the decolonization process (Labanca, 1993, p. 541). Examples of this new attitude are: *Storia dell'Africa e del Vicino Oriente* (1980) by Alessandro Triulzi and *Africa come storia* (1980) by Irene Taddia.

As concerns the topic of my thesis - the Italian trusteeship mandate in Somalia (1950-1960) under the UN supervision – until the twenty-first century there were only few works available. As Labanca pointed out “its history still has to be written” (Labanca, 1993, p. 543). The Italian mandate was briefly analyzed by Umberto Triulzi in *L'Italia e l'economia somala dal 1950 ad oggi* (1971), a work that offers a mainly economic account of the AFIS results. The first article that focuses entirely on the AFIS experience was written by Luigi Gasbarri *L'AFIS: una pagina di storia italiana da ricordare* (1986). A more critical account of the AFIS mandate was proposed by Alessandro Aruffo in its work *Dossier Somalia* (1994). Aruffo, more than other scholars, underlines the crucial aspects of Somali society that hindered the achievement of the objectives indicated by the United Nations.

These works focus mainly on the economic aspects of the AFIS and aim at assessing if Italy achieved the objectives that the UN indicated in its resolution. The shortcomings of

this economic approach are at least three. Firstly, there is no analysis of the reasons for the decision of the United Nations to concede the mandate to Italy. Secondly, the analysis of Somali society is not sufficiently documented. Thirdly, there is a lack of analysis of the ethnic organization of Somali society and of its transformation in a modern organization based on political parties. Nevertheless, significant works that address some of the limitations of previous studies on the AFIS have recently appeared. These are: *L'ultima colonia. Come l'Italia è tornata in Africa 1950-1960* (2011) by Antonio M. Morone and *The Reasons for Underdevelopment: The Case of Decolonisation in Somaliland* (2011) by Donatella Strangio. These works are samples of good research and study of archive documentation, however, in particular Strangio's work focuses on the economic aspects of the AFIS and does not offer a comprehensive account of the Somali side of the story.

In my opinion, in order to assess the outcomes of the Italian Administration in Somalia, it is necessary to understand the relations between and the efforts made by the two actors involved in the AFIS: on the one hand, the Italian efforts to transform Somalia in a democratic state; on the other hand, the Somali efforts in the decolonization process. In light of this thesis, I try to address some of these issues. Firstly, besides an economic and political account of the results achieved by the AFIS, I want to identify the actors involved in the transformation of Somalia from a pastoral anarchy to a pastoral democracy. Secondly, in order to assess if the AFIS was a failure, I refer to the UN Guidelines for the Trusteeship Administration of Somalia. These shall be considered as the benchmarks for a final judgment on the trusteeship's achievements in the economic, political and educational fields. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the AFIS, and in particular the UN resolution, in light of the new global order emerged at the end of World War II.

More in general, the study of Italian colonialism and post-colonialism should entail a dual perspective: on the one hand, it should not undermine the peculiarity of the Italian colonial experience; on the other hand, it should try to frame it in a broader and more comprehensive European colonial and post-colonial history. This is undoubtedly a difficult task for an historian, because by enlarging the scope of the research there is a risk of obfuscating the peculiar characteristics of what is known as 'Italian colonialism'. Therefore, it is crucial for an historian to employ an all-encompassing method through which it is possible to identify the peculiarities that make Italian colonialism 'exceptional' and at the same time detect some common features related to a more general European colonial legacy.

In this perspective the history of Italian colonialism and post-colonialism is perhaps more complex, but it loses its ‘provincial’ character.

1.4 The settlement of the Italian colonies after World War II

The UN Assembly and the American and British diplomacies were determined to initiate a process of gradual decolonization, in particular in the African continent. This was largely an American plan that was proposed to the Allies. The U.S. aim was to create a balanced world order based on the equality of its sovereign members, in order “to secure a comprehensive system of global security” (Macqueen, 1999, p. 9). The UN and the great powers decided to address the postcolonial issues through the creation of a system of international trusteeship guaranteed by the UN, as agreed in San Francisco in 1945 (Macqueen, 1999, p. 10). This new system of trusteeship was acknowledged after World War II as an appropriate means to: I) protect the right to self-determination of the local population; II) support the transition towards democracy. This UN trusteeship system was strongly supported by the American and British diplomacies, while France, Belgium and the Netherlands - anxious of losing their overseas possessions - showed little interest in the scheme proposed by the Anglo-American diplomacies (Thullen, 1964, p. 21).

The trusteeship system was applicable to only three types of territories: (1) the prior League of Nations mandates; (2) the former colonies that Italy and Japan lost in World War II; (3) any territory which a colonial power wanted to transfer intentionally to the Trusteeship Council⁷. The victorious European powers agreed to place under the UN trusteeship eleven African territories⁸ with a total population of 20,000,000 people (McKey, 1957, p. 297). Probably, the most complex political environment in which the UN had to operate was in countries such as Congo, Somalia and Sierra Leone (Chesterman, 2005, p. 83). The members of the UN Council declared that they “recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount and accept as a sacred trust the obligation to

⁷ UN Charter Chapter XII, Art. 77. Retrieved 14 April 2014 from, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter12.shtml>

⁸ Ghana, Togo, Somalia, Cameroon, Tanzania, Western Samoa, Ruanda-Urundi, Papua Nova Guinea, Paulau, Northern Mariana Island, Federated States of Micronesia.

promote to the utmost the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories”⁹. The basic objectives of a trusteeship system, as it is outlined in the UN Charter, are:

a) to foster international peace and security;

b) to promote the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, and as may be provided by the terms of each trusteeship agreement;

c) to encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion, and to encourage recognition of the interdependence of the peoples of the world; and

d) to ensure equal treatment in social, economic, and commercial matters for all Members of the United Nations and their nationals, and also equal treatment for the latter in the administration of justice, without prejudice to the attainment of the foregoing objectives and subject to the provisions of Article 80¹⁰.

These principles are the guidelines for any administrator under a trusteeship system. These are general principles to promote the process of democratization of any former colony. However, they are based on typical Western values - rule of law, property rights, and so forth - which cannot be easily transplanted in countries that have their own system of values.

In this new international atmosphere the negotiations for the future of former Italian colonies were the object of several peace conferences among the great powers. However, the decision about the disposal of the Italian colonies contrasted with different geopolitical interests (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 361). The final decision was based on three main points. Firstly, Italy received the trusteeship of Somalia as a defeated country; secondly, as such Italy

⁹ UN Charter Chapter XI, Art.73. Retrieved 14 April 2014 from, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter11.shtml>

¹⁰ UN Charter Chapter XII, Art. 76. Retrieved 15 April 2014 from, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter12.shtml>

was a non-member of the UN; and thirdly, since no agreement was reached during the peace conference, the UN General Assembly acted as a supreme legislative authority (Rivlin, 1950, p. 1). Great Britain would exercise a crucial role in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Somalia. Although the Horn of Africa was never considered important by Great Britain - it was actually described by Prime Minister Clement Attlee as an 'incubus' - nonetheless it was strategic for the control of trade routes from Britain to India via the Suez Canal (Louis, 1977, p. 49).

After World War II, the role of Great Britain as a superpower diminished in favor of the U.S., which assumed the role of *primus inter pares* in the process of decolonization. The contrast between the British and American diplomacies was on the trusteeship organization and on the role of the Trusteeship Council (Louis, 1977, p. 49). In particular, Great Britain was reluctant to concede self-government to her former colonies because, as Baron Altrincham put it,

“Britain is no longer the equal of the U.S. or Russia in material resources and capacity of war; but she can still be the greatest of all countries in her power for helping the smaller and more backward peoples towards greater abundance and freedom under law in a world at peace” (Altrincham, 1945 quoted in Louis, 1977, p. 51).

However, it had become evident that thereafter all strategically important decisions would have to be agreed also with the U.S. and the Soviet Union. On this point, as noted by Louis, “throughout the world the old basis of strategy and political order was changing to British disadvantage” (Louis, 1977, p. 549). In this new world order the U.S. decided to confer a crucial role to the UN for the transition from occupation to independence and self-government (Louis, 1977, p. 238). The American position appeared clear during the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, when President Truman rejected the possibility of an American trusteeship in the former Italian colonies claiming in the discussions with Churchill and Stalin that “we have enough ‘poor Italians’ to feed in the United States” (Foreign Relations: Conference of Berlin, 1945, quoted in Louis, 1977, p. 555). At that point, Russia proposed to create in Somalia a tripartite trusteeship composed of Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The risk of an interference of the Soviet Union in Eastern Africa caused a shift in the American policy in support to Italy as the trusteeship power in Somalia (Louis, 1977, p. 555).

Nonetheless the British were ready to defend their strategic interests in Somalia as the new Colonial Secretary Ernest Bevin recommended in 1945:

“The flank of our main line of Imperial communication by sea and air to India, Australia and New Zealand through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and provide basis from which Egypt, the Sudan and Kenya could be attacked. We must therefore ensure that they do not come under the control of any State which is potentially hostile or incapable of providing for the maintenance of orderly conditions and for their defence in peace and war” (Memorandum by Bevin and Attlee, 1945 quoted in Louis, 1977, p. 556).

However, Foreign Minister Attlee maintained that “British Somaliland has always been a dead loss and a nuisance to us. We only occupied it as a part of the Scramble for Africa... The French are on the spot in French Somaliland. Why not let them have it if they like?... It would be to our advantage to get rid of this incubus” (Memorandum by Attlee, 1945 quoted in Louis, 1977, p. 558). Indeed, the judgment of Attlee was in contrast with many British officials that retained Somalia and the Red Sea as “a vital link in the chain of Imperial events” (Louis, 1977, p. 558).

The disposal of the Italian colonies was established with the Treaty of Paris signed with Italy in 1947, which reads: “Italy renounces all right and title to the Italian possessions in Africa, i.e. Libya, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland”¹¹. In 1948, it was decided that the former Italian possessions would be run by the four great powers together with the UN. The only Italian colony to be immediately granted independence was Ethiopia in 1947, due to its political, ethnic and social homogeneity. While during the negotiations of the Treaty there was no room for the Italian aspirations, Italy managed nonetheless to convince the UN to nominate a commission with the task of assessing the political and economic conditions of former Italian colonies. The Report was presented by the commission in July 1948. Three different scenarios were suggested: first, immediate independence; second, concession of one or more mandates of trusteeship to Italy; and third, return to Italy of one or more colonies

¹¹ Treaty of Peace with Italy, 1947. Article 23 comma 3. Retrieved 14 April from, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1948/2.html>

(Labanca, 2002, p. 432). The question was finally settled in 1949 with the UN resolution number 289.

The UN first decided upon the future of Eritrea and Libya (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 412). A commission was nominated “to ascertain more fully the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea”¹². With respect to Libya, according to the resolution it would gain sovereignty and independence as soon as possible. As concerns Somalia, it was decided that it shall be placed under the international trusteeship system for a ten-year period with Italy as the administering authority¹³. The aim of the trusteeship was to prepare Somalia with “the institutions designed to ensure the inauguration, development and subsequent establishment of full self-government”¹⁴. Moreover, the Italian administration was advised by a UN Advisory Council composed of three members - a Colombian, an Egyptian and a Filipino - in charge of providing suggestions to the Italian administration (Tripodi, 1999, p. 363). Thus, Italy had lost all its colonies except for Somalia.

Overall, the settlement of the Italian colonies represented a failure for Italian diplomacy. Conversely, it was a success for the U.S. and Great Britain, which secured their interests in Libya and Eritrea leaving to Italy the less favorable colony: Somalia (Calchi Novati, 1994, p. 89). Other powers such as France and Russia tried to play a role in the area with scarce results. In the end, it was clear in particular to the U.S. that the trusteeship of Somalia represented a way to give a small compensation to Italy. Italian diplomacy accepted the decision because its ultimate goal was to be part of the Western block and more importantly to be admitted to the UN Assembly.

Where the Somalis satisfied with this decision taken by the four great powers and by the UN? In other words, what were the Somali feelings towards the Italian trusteeship

¹² United Nations resolution 289, 1949. Section C Art.3. Retrieved 15 March 2014 from, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/051/08/IMG/NR005108.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ United Nations resolution 289, 1949. Section B Art.3. Retrieved 15 March 2014 from, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/051/08/IMG/NR005108.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴ United Nations resolution 289, 1949. Section B Art.6. Retrieved 15 March 2014 from, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/051/08/IMG/NR005108.pdf?OpenElement>

mandate? Initially, the Italian government had to overcome the Somali nationalistic attitude that had been strengthened under the British occupation of Italian Somalia from 1941 to 1948 (Calchi Novati, 1996, p. 90). In fact, during the British occupation the Somali people had developed a project for the creation of a 'Great Somalia' which included parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. As a consequence of these nationalistic forces - supported by the Somali Youth League (SYL) - Somalia did not support the Italian administration, as the 1948 riots in Mogadishu confirmed. Yet, this hostility towards the Italians was not shared by all Somalis. As Calchi Novati points out, "there was among the majority of the population a positive attitude toward the Italians, before and after the concession of the UN mandate" (Calchi Novati, 1996, p. 91).

The Italian and Somali priorities were put aside in order to satisfy the geopolitical interests of the four great powers. It was then prerogative of the Italian government to achieve the objectives contained in the UN resolution. Italy had several challenges to face. The poor conditions of Somali economic system and the ethnic divisions of Somali society complicated considerably the mandate. Nevertheless, the mandate represented for Italy an opportunity to be finally considered at the same level of the other European powers. Whereas for the Somali people - who in the first place did not welcome the return under Italian administration - it represented an opportunity to finally reunite all the Somalis under a unified Somali Nation -state (Calchi Novati, 1996, p. 94). Finally, it is worth noting that this decision was significantly determined by the UN that "has thus become morally responsible for its successful implementation" (Rivlin, 1950, p. 63).

Setting the AFIS

The Italian administration began its mission in 1950, under Ambassador Giovanni Fornari. Meanwhile, the UN Advisory Council was established in Mogadishu (Calchi Novati, 1994, p. 375). The general conditions of Somalia were extremely complex. Out of a population of 1,242 million inhabitants, only 20,000 lived in houses made of stones. The rate of illiteracy was 99,4 per cent; moreover, there was one doctor every 60,000 people (Del Boca, p. 30 in Palumbo, 2003). Given these initial conditions, how could it be possible to develop a state with democratic institutions in only ten years? The objectives of the project were summarized by the UN in five main points: (1) creation and development of a regional government organization, (2) economic and financial development, (3) improvement of education, (4) social progress and welfare, and (5) the shifting of power from administration to local government¹⁵. The purposes of the mission seemed to be clearly defined, yet the modalities how to reach them were not precisely outlined; moreover, the socio-economic conditions of the country were not carefully considered.

Initially, the Italians were confronted with a very hostile environment, as showed by the riots organized by the Somali Youth League (SYL) against the Italian administration in 1950 (Morone, 2011, p. 56). It appeared immediately evident that the inclusion of the SYL in the trusteeship system was crucial to the achievement of the AFIS objectives (Morone, 2011, p. 50). The protests were a clear sign of the hostile atmosphere in which the Italian administration had to operate, in particular during the first years of the mandate (Tripodi,

¹⁵ ASMAE, AFIS, *rapport sur la Somalie sous administration italienne*, 3 June-24 June 1952, New York.

1999, p. 46). How was it possible to implement an economic and political reform plan on the one hand without the necessary knowledge of the local community and its tribal divisions, and on the other hand without the necessary trust from the local population, which considered the new administration as a continuation of the old Fascist colonial apparatus?

This was the environment in which Italians had to operate, facing two main challenges. Firstly, they had to create an atmosphere of mutual trust with the political forces that represented the different clans existing in Somalia. Secondly, they needed to develop an agricultural economy, in particular in the southern regions along the Jubba and Shabeelle rivers. In my opinion, these were the most important issues Italy had to face during the first years of the project. Without a self-sufficient agricultural production and an internal market the development of Somalia was almost impossible. In order to achieve these outcomes it was crucial to have a coherent political and economic plan to enforce. This was the initial problem for the Italian administration: the lack of a clear political and economic plan (Calchi Novati, 1994, p. 372).

Somalia's economy was primarily based on agriculture and sheep-farming, with a secondary role for fishery. The industrial sector in 1951 consisted only of: one sugar industry, one distillery and a few tanneries¹⁶. Given these initial conditions, from a practical point of view, it was extremely difficult to create a solid agriculture and a small scale industry. Thus, the initial priorities of the administration in these sectors were the maintenance of what was already there and had been developed during the colonial occupation, and the development of a domestic market. In order to implement the reforms, it was necessary to involve private enterprises that could invest conspicuous amounts of capitals in the agriculture and fishery sectors. Moreover, the possibility to rapidly implement the reforms was affected by the negative consequences of the previous. For instance, the railway had been destroyed and most of the mechanic machines used for agriculture purposes went lost¹⁷. Therefore, the existing internal trade routes were not enough to support the development of a domestic market.

¹⁶ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

¹⁷ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

The reports on Somalia drafted by experts of the Bank of Italy between 1950 and 1951 indicated several challenges. The first problem was the availability of statistic data on the economic and demographic conditions of the Somali population. The second one – impacting in particular on the development of a productive agriculture sector - was more of a psychological nature. The experts maintained that “agriculture was limited to small segments of Somali society. Moreover, agricultural activities were considered by the native population as non-noble in comparison with sheep-farming”¹⁸. This socio-cultural factor diminished the number of workers who could be employed in agriculture. The experts concluded that the transformation of a shepherd in a farmer was very complicated to accept, more for ‘ideological’ and cultural issues than for a lack of available workforce.

The Bank of Italy indicated three general interventions that could be beneficial for Somalia’s agriculture and economy. First, in order to tackle the unemployment issue, a program of public works which foresaw the construction of roads, railways and ports was initiated. Second, in order to increase the average salaries of the Somalis and boost their consumption capacity, the AFIS increased the wages of 25 per cent. Third, the AFIS decided to create a Somali monetary system which could have positive outcomes for the development of an internal market abandoning the pound area¹⁹. In light of these interventions, in 1951 the Italian administration claimed to have achieved substantial results. These consisted of: an increase in the quality of life; an increase in the imports in order to satisfy the internal demand; and the development of the bananas industry and cotton districts. The Italian experts believed they had put the basis for a more liberal Somali internal market and had prepared it to compete on the world market in the upcoming years. These transformations allowed for the stabilization of public order and for the development of the internal trade of goods and services. These were the premises for the development of “specific programs for the economic development of the territories and for international cooperation plans”²⁰. Further, the Italian administration enforced some fiscal measures to increase the investments in the

¹⁸ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

¹⁹ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

²⁰ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

agricultural sector, such as a tax exemption on the new districts under construction. These protectionist measures facilitated the development of the sugar and bananas industries. However, these industries were controlled mostly by Italian companies. Hence, the Bank of Italy allegedly decided to implement protectionist policies in order to facilitate capital investments by Italian enterprises. Unfortunately, in the long run these policies proved to be an obstacle to the development of a Somali independent economy.

Besides these difficulties in the implementation of economic reforms, since its settlement the Italian administration had to face also some internal problems. There was a lack of experts specifically trained for the development of agriculture and most of the administration officers previously occupied positions in the colonial ministry (Aden Sheikh, 2010, p. 27). Furthermore, Italy - that was going through the reconstruction of its own domestic political and economic system in the aftermath of World War II - had few economic and financial resources to invest in Somalia. This is proved by the financial aid Italy received through the Marshall plan (Calchi Novati, 2011, p. 413). Therefore, Italy lacked of economic and financial resources to use in Somalia. A further problem which emerged during the first years of administration was the resurgence of fascist propaganda in Somalia (Morone, 2011, p. 56). Many officials working in Somalia had a fascist approach to their tasks and duties, and often adopted a fascist attitude towards Somali people (Tripodi, 1999, p. 57). This atmosphere complicated the project of self-government supported by Ambassador Fornari, who in 1954 noticed that “they do not want to accept that they are not the masters any longer” (Tripodi, 1999, p. 59).

It is evident that without a serious change of attitude both on the part of the Italian administration and on the part of the SYL, the process of economic and political development was uncertain. On the one hand, Italians had to change their attitude and behave as administrators more than as colonizers. On the other hand, Somalis - especially the SYL - had to find a way to cooperate with the administration in order to move forward in the democratization process (Morone, 2011, p. 66). Without the involvement and training of Somali people, the Italian administration would create a state without institutions. This was one of the biggest dilemma: how to prepare a nation to self-government when it was divided in clans, had no official language and no bureaucratic apparatus? The cultural and geographical complexity of Somalia after World War II is briefly discussed in the next section.

2.1 Somalia: a complex environment

During a recent official visit to Italy, in 2013, the president of the Somali Republic Sheick Mohamud said:

“The message that I’d like to share with Italians is the following: look at us, we are here again, after twenty-two years we are back in Italy asking to the Italians and the government to support us. Nobody is in a better condition and position to help us. This is possible thanks to the cultural and historical ties between Somalia and Italy. Today, Italy can help to rebuild the Somali state, as they have helped to create it sixty years ago. There is a new possibility and we ask to do it, in order to give to the Somali people the chance to recover” (Somalia President Sheick Mohamud, 26 September 2013).

From these words it is evident that the relation between Somalia and Italy created strong historical, political and economic ties which are now officially acknowledged by the Somali government. Yet, initially the path toward a solid cooperation was very difficult, as I try to discuss in this section. The demographic, ethnic and economic complexity of Somali society was one of the main challenges the AFIS mandate had to face. As I.M. Lewis - one of the greatest expert of Somali studies - points out, “it is impossible to reach any understanding of Somali political relations without having some knowledge of the country and of the climatic conditions which limit their economy and of patterns of territorial dispersion” (Lewis, 1999, p. 31). I try to give a brief historical account of Somalia before its occupation, focusing on the influence of ethnicity on demography, political parties and economy.

The ethnic structure of the Somali peninsula represents a unique case in Africa. This is because Somalia is essentially a one-nationality state, whose population share an ethnic identity with three neighbouring states (Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia) (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 3). The creation of a unified ‘Great Somalia’ including Somali minorities living in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya remained the priority for many Somalis. The project of unification under a shared identity and one Nation state was based on the existence of a common language, an Islamic heritage and a pastoral way of life (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 5). However, despite these

shared traditions, Somalia never achieved political stability and unity. These are some of the reasons that contribute to identify Somalia as a '*sui generis*' case study which is worth to investigate.

Somali people claim to be descendents of Arab migrants who arrived in the Horn of Africa in the first millennium (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 7). A Somali common cultural identity was the product of historical forces operating since a very early period and during the colonial occupation. The organization of their society was characterized by a long pastoral tradition and by a 'clan-families' structure of power (Lewis, 2004, p. 490). Somalia territories were divided in a number of ethnic groups, clans and sub-clans. These ethnic groups were organized around lineages that were exclusively cultural products of Somali society (Lewis, 2004, p. 491). However, colonizers failed to recognize and integrate these different clan lineages into modern political parties (Morone, 2011, p. xvi). One of the shortcomings caused by the colonial powers involved in Somalia was "the fusion of local genealogy in one exclusive and coherent genealogy" (Cassanelli, 2009, p. 9). To understand this failure it is necessary to describe Somali society before the arrival of the European powers.

The north territories - British Somaliland - were inhabited by the *Semale* clan, composed of Pre-Hawiye, Hawiye, Dir, Daarood and Ishaq (Lewis, 2004). These clan-families were mostly nomads and were characterized by a high degree of anarchism and a lack of territorial unity. According to Lewis, their composition was the following: 5 per cent were farmers, 5 per cent lived in towns and 90 per cent were fully nomads (Lewis, 1955, p. 244). By contrast, the southern territories - Italian Somalia - were populated by the *Sab*, consisting of the Digil and Rahanweyn clan-families, which were mostly farmers and had a more formalized and hierarchical organization of society. These were composed of: 40 per cent nomads; 30 per cent shepherds practicing some agriculture; 20 per cent farmers and 10 per cent city dwellers (Lewis, 1955, p. 245). The main problem for the colonizers was this pervasive system of divisions within Somali society that was *invisible* to them (Lewis, 2004, p. 490).

Most of the Somali peninsula consisted of semi-arid lowlands with a highly variable rainfall; it is due to these climate conditions that geographical mobility – *nomadism* - represented a common Somali practice. There are scarce fertile areas in Somalia and they are all located in the south, along the Jubba and Shabeelle rivers (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 40). This geographic configuration is also reflected in the different activities carried out by Somali

people: in the arid north there are mostly nomadic clans, whilst the fertile south is inhabited by farmers and nomads. Generally speaking, Somalis are not considered large-scale traders of livestock, since they never raised animals to export to non-pastoral populations. In fact, the pastoral economy of the Horn was “subsistence-oriented and almost self-sufficient” (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 46). The trade between nomads and farmers was not part of their way of life. In fact, as Said Samatar argues “pre-colonial Somalis lived in a world of egalitarian anarchy” except for the dwellers on the coastal towns which pursued many trade activities (Samatar, 1991, p. 6).

Despite the low level of commercialization of the early period, since the nineteenth century Somalis have never been isolated from external trade, as proved by the commercial relations of the coastal town with Arabs, Europeans and Indians (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 146). The nineteenth century represented a period of increasing commerce in the Horn of Africa. Somali traders felt the effects of this new commercial revolution, as both the nomads living in the interior and the traders populating the coast were then involved in trade activities. However, the nature of Somali commerce was fragmented and decentralized (Lewis, 2004). The participation of indigenous traders’ groups was not feasible and the networks of long trade in the most remote areas of the peninsula were dominated only by Somalis. This was one of the main impediments to the development of a large internal market.

The quantity of goods exchanged was usually small and Somali traders never accumulated large fortunes (Cassanelli, 1986, p. 160). Therefore, it appears that Somalia did not develop a unified and connected system of trade and commerce due to the centrality of the pastoral economy (Samatar, 1991, p. 9). The nomadic character of its population and the clan-based relations arrested the creation of a new system of trade and agriculture. In fact, despite the increase in trade activities, the Somali economic system remained intact because “in essence, Somalia is a pastoral republic” (Samatar, 1991, p. 9). This clan and pastoral legacy affected the formation of a Somali middle class, in the modern meaning of the term. It seems that in Somali society there was no need for the development of a middle class because the society was organized and stratified according to a ‘pastoral republic’ model (Costanzo, 1956, p. 5).

The outlook of Somali territories changed during the occupation by three colonial powers - Great Britain in northern Somaliland, France in Djibouti and Italy in southern Somalia – when the native population began to participate in political and commercial

activities (Costanzo, 1956, p. 10). In Italian Somalia an indigenous middle class already existed; it consisted of civil servant, teachers, army officers and members of the police force. However, the areas of business, agriculture, industry and commerce continued to be exercised by non-indigenous people, mostly Europeans, Arabs and Indians (Costanzo, 1956, p. 11). In order to reverse this situation and encourage the creation of an indigenous political elite, it was crucial to pursue policies aimed at increasing the level of education and literacy among the Somalis.

In this way, Somali people could develop the necessary skills to take actively part in the affairs of the country. In other words, prior to the arrival of the colonizing powers, the economic and political organization of Somalia was totally dependent on the clan and pastoral legacy. The creation of a political arena in which all the interests of different Somali ethnic groups were equally represented was fundamental for the progress of the country. Nevertheless, the Somali social system was characterized by the “lack of any stable hierarchy of political units” (Lewis, 1999, p. 196). The Somali party system displayed very clearly the interplay of traditional lineage loyalties. Certainly, one of the main outcomes produced by the colonial powers was the establishment of political parties, as a new *medium* for the expression of traditional political discourses (Lewis, 1999, p. 266). With this I do not mean that the traditional organization of society was supplanted by the new emerging political parties, but rather that these new political channels extended their latitude.

In order to identify the structures of power, it is necessary to go beyond the strictly geographical and cultural boundaries. In a territory whose organization was based on clan lineages, it is extremely difficult to identify which sectors of society integrated into the emerging political organization (Lewis, 2004). Indeed, the presence of a colonial ruler reinforced the idea of the Somali people as one nation with a homogeneous population, one language and most importantly one religion (Morone, 2011, p. xvi). These were the pillars on which Somali society was organized and the shift towards a new system composed of political parties was rather difficult. In other words, was it possible to relocate the ethnic structure within a party system modelled on the Western example? In my view, this process represented one of the main challenges for AFIS administrators.

The development of political parties had to take into consideration the relations between different and competing clan loyalties without altering the balance of power between them. The segments of society that were more easily absorbed in this new system were

traders living in towns and the new young educated elite (Lewis, 1999, p. 274) Actually, as Lewis points out, “all the parties, whether nationalist or otherwise, ultimately depended upon their more passive adherents and supporters and these are very largely canvassed on the basis of lineage and tribal ties” (Lewis, 1999, p. 274). These new Somali parties and associations did not appear until 1945 (Hess, 1966, p. 192). Thus, it is evident that in a so complex and traditionally-oriented environment the forces conducive to self-government had to be developed under the UN supervision during the ten-year Italian trusteeship (1950-1960).

The organization of the economy and distribution of wealth were based on the Somali pastoral and tribal legacy. Moreover, the colonizers had two face two problems. First, most of the territories were not suitable for intensive agricultural production except for some zones in the south. Second, Somali people were against a solely sedentary life due to their nomadic culture (Cassanelli, 1986). These characteristics hampered the development of a clear structure of labour and capital under the aegis of the Western model of economy. Prior to the arrival of the European powers, the economy was mostly organized upon nomadic and pastoral activities (Costanzo, 1956, p. 15). Economic decisions were taken in relation to the distribution of rain and growth of vegetation. Consequently, decisions concerning where and how much to produce were often agreed upon based on the distribution of grazing and water, without any agronomic knowledge and expertise.

The lack of an economic plan in Somalia represented a significant obstacle to the achievement of the AFIS goals. Italian administrators would have to develop not only the political structure but also the economic and productive system of Somalia. The achievement of a result - both in economic and political terms - was sensibly influenced by the traditional clan-ship lineages that affected both the political and economic discourse in the making of a parliamentary democracy in Somalia. This situation needed a ‘revolution’ because, as Alphonso Castagno claimed in 1959,

“the population as a whole was politically immature and illiterate. The territory lacked economic resources, and tribalism constituted the basic element in Somali life. Could a viable, modern, and democratic country be created from this welter of difficulties in a span of ten years?”
(Castagno, 1959, p. 341).

The next sections investigate if a constructive ‘revolution’ in the agricultural, economic, and political fields actually occurred during the Italian trusteeship administration.

2.2 The creation of an agricultural system

The creation of a ‘modern’ agricultural system represented a difficult objective for the Italian administration to reach. According to the Italian agronomic experts, the natural endowments of Somali territories were adverse to the development of the agriculture sector. Moreover, most of the inhabitants pursued pastoral activities, while cultivation activities were considered as ‘non-noble’. Another factor that impacted negatively on the administration attempts to modernize the agricultural production was represented by the Somali seasons. The latter were divided in: ‘Gu’ with heavy rains from April to June; ‘Hagai’ fresh with rains from July to September; ‘Der’ small rains from October to December; ‘Gilal’ dry and warm from January to March²¹. Thus, the organization of a more productive system of irrigation and exploitation of the available plots of land had to overcome difficulties related to geographic and climate factors.

A further problem for the development of the agricultural sector was the lack of workforce. This issue was tackled by the Italian experts, on the one hand, through a program of massive mechanization of production, on the other hand, through the increase of the cultivable surfaces by means of large irrigation works. Italian administrators decided that these new surfaces had to be controlled by cooperatives of Somali people with the technical assistance of the AFIS²². On top of this, the Italian administration launched a number of works for the construction of water wells, in order to create more productive areas for agricultural production. However, it is difficult to assess the initial results of these policies without first explaining how the sector was organized and which were the actors involved in this transformation.

²¹ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 257.

²² ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

The organization of the agricultural production was divided between Somalis and Europeans and sometimes it included partnerships between the two. On the one hand, the Somalis lacked the expertise and the workforce, because agricultural activities were generally considered as degrading and apt for lower classes only. As Donatella Strangio points out, “about 70 per cent of the population was engaged in activities strictly aimed at subsistence and contributed little or nothing to the general economy and to the public income of the country, whilst the remaining 30 per cent enjoyed a still very modest standard of living” (Strangio, 2009, p. 43). Thus, Somalis aimed at satisfying only the internal consumption without considering long-run production possibilities. The most common products cultivated in the first years of the mandate were: sesame, corn, peanuts and few vegetables²³. On the other hand, the Europeans decided to use their technological superiority to plunder the most fertile areas near the Gemale and Giubba territories by cultivating mostly cotton, sugar and bananas.

The production which experienced a significant increase and a high participation of Italian investments was that of bananas. Bananas were cultivated by Italians since the 1930s in the fertile areas in southern Somalia. After World War II bananas became the most cultivated crop in Somalia. In 1950 the total amount of bananas produced were 28,000 tons on a surface of only 2,800 hectares. The production increased in 1954, due to a partial mechanization of production (Strangio, 2009, p. 61). The production was organized through concessions - in total 233, most of whom were owned by Italians while some by mixed cooperatives. Yet, the overall cycle of production was controlled and organized by the Italian *Azienda Monopolio Banane* (A.M.B.). The price of bananas set by A.M.B was on average 15–17 lire per kg higher than the average price on the international market (Strangio, 2009, p. 63). A.M.B. argued that the reason for that price was related to the higher costs of bananas production in Somalia. These higher costs were due to the packing and transportation, that were complicated by the lack of seaports. Bananas had to be loaded on small boats and then transhipped to a larger ship waiting beyond the coralline barrier. According to the Bank of Italy experts, these conditions increased the final price of Somali bananas (Strangio, 2009, p. 65).

²³ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

The decision of the AFIS to concentrate most of its efforts on the production of bananas proved to be a myopic decision for two reasons. First, due to the higher price imposed on Somali bananas, they were only absorbed by the Italian market because they were not competitive on international markets. Moreover, the A.M.B.'s monopolistic position created imbalances in the balance of payments of Somalia after the independence, because bananas were the most important item on the balance of payments (Strangio, 2009, p. 66). Second, the cultivation of bananas needed many factors of production - fuel, fertilizers and skilled workforce - that were scarce in Somalia. By contrast, the factors of production that were more abundant - land without irrigation and unskilled urban workforce - were not absorbed by the bananas production. On the 'banana issue' the experts of the Bank of Italy claimed that "several benefits were brought by the cultivation of bananas, yet some people complain that those benefits are exclusively for the Italian producers"²⁴. Hence, it seems that the effort to create a solid system of production for bananas was done once again in the sole interest of Italian companies.

During the AFIS other crops increased their production under the organization and control of the *Società Agricola Italo-Somala* (S.A.I.S), a state agency created before World War II. Thanks to the favorable economic atmosphere created by the AFIS, the S.A.I.S initiated a number of projects for the cultivation of other crops. The aim was to diversify the agricultural production, which was often accused of being a monoculture based on the cultivation of bananas (Strangio, 2009, p. 84). The most intensively cultivated crops – besides bananas - became: cotton, sugar cane and maize (Strangio, 2009, p. 87). In order to support and implement these new projects, many new workers were employed, in particular in the southern regions of Somalia. Nonetheless, the lack of specialized workers together with the adverse climate decreased the possibilities of a long-run production. Table 1. shows the most cultivate crops and their annual production during the period from 1952 to 1956. This table proves that, independently from the type of crop cultivated, its yield was clearly influenced by the lack of workforce and by the adverse Somali arid climate.

²⁴ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 257.

Crop output in tons	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
Maize	280,000	80,000	200,000	540,000	500,600
Beans	6,000	1,500	6,500	6,500	5,200
Peanuts	1,500	9,500	5,000	8,800	12,810
Bananas	400,000	600,000	550,000	734,000	750,000
Sugar	51,602	40,180	83,612	104,000	107,807
Cotton	23,000	1,800	2,500	8,7000	4,400
Tobacco	/	/	/	300	1,100

Table 1. Source: adapted from ASBI, Banca d'Italia. pratt. n. 258.

In their conclusions the experts of the Bank of Italy argued that, “in light of the reforms, the possibilities are potentially enormous. However, without a serious regulation of the two large rivers and subsequent important works, the possibilities for improvements are scarce. Especially, due to the lack of public and private investments in the territories, the possibilities of development are scarce”²⁵. It seems that the agricultural reforms pursued in the first two years of the trusteeship were modest and often protected the Italian economic interests. Since the very beginning the private investors’ aims were to settle in the most fertile areas and exploit them, with the support of the protectionist policies enforced by the Italian administration. Too often the only aspect that the Bank of Italy reports adduced as the most prominent problem was the lack of workforce related to the Somali attitude towards agriculture. The results achieved by the Italian administration until 1952 were limited. The AFIS was missing first a coherent plan, and most importantly, its actions were primarily oriented to the protection of Italian national interests in Somalia.

²⁵ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

From 1953 to 1956 several attempts were made to boost the agricultural production and to achieve self-sufficiency. Yet, the main success was that of Italian enterprises in the bananas and cotton cultures. Nonetheless, again the increase in production during those years was artificial because it was protected by a system of tariffs that increased the total profit of Italian companies²⁶. Moreover, the AFIS contributed through financial aid to maintain the Somali balance of payments on equilibrium. Hence, it can be said that the project for the development of an agriculture system in Somalia presents both positive and negative aspects. The positive ones are two. First, in ten years the cultivable surface increased extensively. Second, with the mechanization of many processes of production the Somali would have a rather 'modern' system that could solve the problem of the lack of workforce. By contrast, the negative ones are: the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of few large Italian companies; and the creation of an agriculture that was highly dependent on the financial aid offered by the Italian government. However, due to the above-mentioned mix of factors, the way to self-sufficiency and the shift to a Western type of production were far away. In the future, Somalia would have to rely on international financial support.

2.3 The development of the economic sector

The economic situation of Somalia in 1950 was a 'disaster' or an 'incubus', as the British Foreign Minister Clement Attlee described it. It was clear that the reconstruction of the Somali economy after World War II needed an extensive and continuous financial support from abroad. Thus, an entire project that relied on the support of Italy and on minor donations from other countries was not promising. In fact, during the first years of Italian administration less attention was devoted to the economy than to agriculture and education. Nonetheless, the AFIS had to meet the guidelines outlined by the UN in particular as regards the development of an external and internal market. The internal Somali market in 1950 was not developed. This consisted mostly of a small-size trade between the Somali and Arab communities based on local products such as butter, cereals, livestock and legumes. Most of the transactions were done in small bazaars in the markets of Mogadishu, Merka and Kismayo²⁷. Moreover, the transportation of goods was done on roads, while only a small part was done via sea.

²⁶ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

²⁷ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

In order to sustain the internal demand for other products, it was necessary to import a number of goods. These included: cotton, coffee, spices, oil and household tools²⁸. According to the House of Commerce, in 1951 the main partners in terms of quantity of imported goods were: Italy (24 per cent), Aden (12 per cent), Arabia (1.80 per cent), Eritrea (1.06 per cent), Ethiopia (1.76 per cent), Djibouti (1.38 per cent), Kenya (5.43 per cent) and Zanzibar (3.35 per cent)²⁹. As concerns the export, this was mainly done through the port of Mogadishu and it was mostly directed to the Italian market (64 per cent). How was it possible to develop an internal market when most of the products were imported from abroad?

Unfortunately, the problem of a deficit in the balance of payments between the exports and imports remained also in the following years an obstacle to the economic development of the country. According to the figures of the Bank of Italy, in 1953 Somalia was still vastly dependent on imports from abroad. Products imported included: rice (Italy, Aden), wheat (Kenya), pasta (Italy), coffee and tea (Kenya) and sugar (Belgium)³⁰. The reason for this high dependency on imports is explained by Strangio, who claims that “about 70 per cent of the population was engaged in activities strictly aimed at subsistence and contributed little or nothing to the general economy and to the public income of the country, whilst the remaining 30 per cent enjoyed a still very modest standard of living” (Strangio, 2009, p. 43). This situation reduced the possibility of transforming an embryonic economy in an economy capable of competing on international markets.

Given this purpose, the main challenge for Somalia was to create the premises for a self-sufficient economy. Yet, this was not feasible for a number of reasons. First, Somali attitude towards cultivation was hostile, hence a scarce workforce was employable in agriculture. Second, investments were mostly made by Italians, were modest in numbers and were mostly oriented towards the protection or creation of Italian possessions overseas. Third, small markets and in particular trade of precious materials such as gold, ivory and

²⁸ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

²⁹ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 256.

³⁰ ASBI, Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 258.

silver were controlled by foreigners (Arabs, Europeans and Indians). Fourth, the creation of cooperatives of Somali people was not successful, because, according to the documents, “these were often hindered by clan rivalries”³¹. In this environment the first two years of Italian administration achieved few results. In that period the priority was the development of an agricultural and economic infrastructure that could pave the way to economic growth, that could be reached in the following years of the mandate.

According to the Bank of Italy’s reports, the main challenge of Somali industry system was “of a productive character. Without a sustainable economic system it is hard to support the development of schools, hospitals and public works”³². In particular, the lack of a decent system of roads hindered the development of an efficient internal market. Similar problems affected sea commerce, due to the lack of ports and the existing obstacles to their construction. It was extremely difficult to build up an entire economic system given that both factors of production -capital and workforce - were scarce. Somalia’s deficiencies in many aspects that are crucial to the transformation of an economy were evident. The Italian administration approached this issue with the following considerations: “we want to put the basis for the development of a civic sense and of administrative responsibilities. This is one of the conditions for the following development of an autonomous Somalia”³³. Those prerequisites were crucial to afterwards control and administer the various elements that form a Nation state: schools, hospitals and public administration, just to cite a few. Nevertheless, did the AFIS pursue an accurate path towards the economic development of Somalia?

New projects to put Somalia on the way towards economic development were adopted by Italy. In 1957 a new agency was created - the Agency for the Development of Somalia - whose aims were: “the study, elaboration, financing and execution of particular projects, interesting for the economic development of Somalia”³⁴. The agency activities focused

³¹ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

³² ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 258.

³³ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 256.

³⁴ ASBI, Banca d’Italia, pratt. n. 1004, fasc. 3.

mostly on agriculture and on the strengthening of the infrastructures and communications system. However, the impact of these activities was extremely modest compared to the actual Somali economic situation. It is worth to note that *ad hoc* agencies created to boost the economy failed in the majority of cases. Two problems persisted during those years: the lack of economic resources and the adverse Somali environment. The establishment of agencies of this kind mirrored the lack of a coherent national plan for Somalia; it may actually be argued that these agencies were often created only to satisfy the interests of political and economic Italian elites.

Several studies on the economic divergence between countries identify three hypotheses for long-run development: a geographic one, a cultural one and an institutional one. According to the first hypothesis, a country shall have favourable geographic conditions that allow for the exploitation of available natural resources. The importance of geography is stressed by Jared Diamond, who claims: “the striking differences between the long-term histories of peoples of the different continents have been due not to innate differences in the peoples themselves but to differences in their environments” (Diamond, 1998, p. 381). The second hypothesis emphasizes the importance of culture, meaning for instance a population’s work ethic. This idea is clarified by the work of Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba (1963). Their analysis suggests that political and economic development are possible only if there is a shared civic culture which entails the power and capacities to correctly organize and combine modern institutions with traditional ones. Hence, in order to experience economic development and positive institutional performance it is crucial for a country to have a strong civic culture and civic involvement. With regard to the third hypothesis, Somalia lacked a set of institutions which are considered as fundamental preconditions for economic development. These include property rights, rule of law and a broad cross-section of society that participate in the economic activities.

If we accept that economic development is influenced by one of the three hypotheses briefly mentioned above, we then might understand why Somalia experienced such a slow development. As I have suggested, Somalia was first of all affected by adverse geographical conditions that reduced the possibilities for the development of a productive agriculture system. Second, there was an evident lack of ‘economic civic culture’ because the organization of society was of a non-economic and nomadic character. Third, there was a widespread attitude of adversity towards Western institutions such as property rights and

broad cross-participation in economic activities. Hence, policies pursued by the AFIS had to take carefully into consideration these specific factors. Despite the Italian efforts, there were actually limited possibilities for development. Yet, it shall be pointed out that Italian efforts often did not take into consideration the factors mentioned above. In particular during the first years, the AFIS operated with the aim to favour Italian private companies more than with the aim to transform Somali society. Nevertheless, in my view, within a time span of ten years only and given the initial adverse geographical, cultural and institutional conditions of Somalia, Italy could not transform the country in a functioning self-governing democracy.

As reported by the Bank of Italy, all experts and visitors in Somalia agreed that - despite the Italian efforts - the territory could not reach economic independence in 1961³⁵. Somalia would have to depend from a consistent external aid for a period of fifteen-twenty years after the mandate. According to the Bank of Italy's experts, "if this does not happen Somalia will experience a drastic reduction in the administrative system developed so far and in the efficiency of civic and social services, thus losing any hope for the achievement of a better life in the future"³⁶. Unfortunately, this is basically what happened after the independence, when Somalia was left alone without the international economic support that could contribute to the reconstruction of its economy.

2.4 The education system

Education is considered to be one of the most important pillar for the creation of a middle class and for the development of a country. Also in this field challenges were enormous, because the level of illiteracy was 99.4 per cent and most importantly a written Somali language was not developed yet (Del Boca, p. 30 in Palumbo, 2003). Thus, the formation of pupils was initially done in Italian and Arabic but this certainly postponed the creation of proper schools where it was possible to obtain a decent education in Somali language. The

³⁵ ASBI. Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 987, fasc. 8.

³⁶ ASBI. Banca d'Italia, pratt. n. 987, fasc. 8.

UN Advisory Council clearly pointed out that the development of a system of education was crucial for the following development of Somalia³⁷.

However, instruments to implement a program for the creation of a proper education system were missing. It is complicated to assess the role of the UN in the development of the education system. The UN supported the project with financial aid, but they did not develop effective solutions to the two biggest issues: the lack of teachers and the lack of infrastructures. Furthermore, the UN represented the ‘watchdog’ of the entire project, but they never implemented specific education programs in Somalia. Thus, in my opinion, the UN acted with a myopic attitude, ignoring the real conditions of Somalia. How could they expect that Italy - a country that was going itself through massive education reforms - would have been ready to achieve the priorities set by the UN resolution?

It shall be noted that the role of education in Somalia was discussed already before the colonial occupation. As suggested by Cassanelli and Abdikadir, “the History of Somalia involved competition for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local population between advocates of two distinct educational models, the Islamic and the Western. The struggle over how best to educate the local population is thus not simply a recent phenomenon” (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008, p. 93). This dichotomy between Islamic and Western education was evident prior to World War II. At first, some Islamic schools were supported by the British government in 1928, but later on the Somaliland National Society began adopting programs taught in English (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008, p. 94). This new attitude contributed to the creation of primary schools in the British protectorate. Conversely, in the southern territories occupied by the Italians education under the fascist regime remained distinguished for the Somali and Italian pupils (Calchi Novati, 2011). Thus, both the British and Italian reforms in the education field were characterized by an elitist approach, in particular during the first years of colonial occupation. However, from the 1950s onwards the Somali hostility towards Western education decreased paving the way for the development of a Western-based education system.

³⁷ ASMAE, AFIS, *rapport sur la Somalie sous administration italienne*, 3 June-24 June 1952, New York.

When Italy received the mandate in 1950, it decided to adopt a five-year plan for the development of the education system with the cooperation of the UN Advisory Council of Somalia (Unacs) and the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) (Morone, 2011, p. 166). The adopted plan was based on three principles: (I) to grant to the highest number of Somali children primary education; (II) to offer to the small Somali elites already educated the instruments to complete their education; and (III) to form a highly specialized elite that could afterwards run the country (Costanzo, 1960, p. 140). The initial conditions were against the Italian plan. In 1950 there were only twenty-nine primary schools for approximately 2,850 pupils and no secondary schools at all. Besides these primary schools, there were Islamic schools that educated 400 pupils, yet the education offered was mostly of a religious kind. Italian administrators tried to implement a process of 'somalization' of the population, but this was complicated by the lack of a common Somali language. Moreover, in particular in the rural areas, schooling was complicated by the traditional way of life of nomadic populations. Thus, given these initial conditions, how were the three principles pursued?

As concerns the first and probably most difficult one, they achieved the following results. In 1952 Somalia had 77 primary schools, 13 secondary schools and 62 teachers that were sent around in remote areas of Somalia. During the first two years of the AFIS, the number of students increased from 6,000 to 10,000, and 15 new schools and 2 colleges were built. It appears that the first bricks for the development of an education system were in place, as the 1958-1959 figures on education demonstrate. In Somalia there were then 160 primary schools, in which 15,972 pupils were enrolled (Costanzo, 1960, p. 141). Furthermore, 146 primary schools for adult education had been established and were educating 18,156 adults (Costanzo, 1960, p. 142). Yet, a problem was difficult to solve: the education of nomad people, who in 1959 represented the 43 per cent of the population and whose level of drop out was acute.

The second aim of the plan was the development of professional schools for the education of Somali elites. Several schools were in fact developed by the AFIS administration with the aim to create a number of specialized and trained Somalis. Schools for caregivers had 243 students; industrial schools had 301 students; agrarian schools 75 students; fishery schools 75 students; commercial schools 40 students and artisan schools 60 students. These figures refer to the period 1958-1959, thus it can be argued that the Italian

administration achieved a satisfactory result for what concerned principle two. Moreover, the AFIS managed to increase the total number of teachers from 160 (71 Italians, 62 Somalis and 37 Arabs) in 1951 to 578 (104 Italians and 474 Somalis) in 1959 (Costanzo, 1960, p. 143). These figures were encouraging for the functioning of the education system also after the independence of Somalia. On the contrary, as regards the third principle difficulties were more evident. Indeed, what was still missing in Somali education system was the secondary and higher education.

The establishment of a system of higher education was not required by the UN. Nevertheless, in the mid-fifties the Italian administration started to establish several semi-professional institutes in order to prepare a middle-class bureaucracy (Dawson, 1964, p. 204). The Teaching Training Institute was established in 1953 to train Somali teachers in a three year program. Yet, according to Dawson, this school produced only half of the expected teachers - forty per year instead of one hundred (Dawson, 1964, p. 205). The School of Islamic Studies offered a four year curriculum to train future judges who would administer Islamic law. The School of Politics and Administration was established in 1950. By 1958, this institute had attained its initial aim: the preparation of a number of technicians to fill the middle-level districts of bureaucracy. The school offered a two year curriculum which included: public finance, history, civil law, Arabic, Italian and mathematics. In addition students could spend 18 months in Italy to complete their studies (Dawson, 1964, p. 206).

Despite the difficulties encountered by the AFIS administration in pursuing the development of an education system as agreed with the UN, some positive results were reached. The number of students increased throughout the AFIS mandate. However, during the first years in particular, the AFIS supported traineeship programs for experts to be placed in the bureaucracy. This attitude postponed the development of mass education which was extremely difficult to enforce in rural areas. Therefore, in the most populated and urban parts of the territories primary and secondary schools - both Italian and Islamic – were actually established. Whilst in the low populated and remote parts of Somalia primary education was characterized by a high level of drop out and the level of illiteracy was still high (Morone, 2011, p. 167).

When assessing the development of Somali education system, the overall role and position of the UN in this project is to be questioned. How is it possible to develop mass

education in a country where there are two different education systems? From 1950 to 1960 Somalia was divided between British Somaliland and Italian Somalia, with two separate administrations that adopted two different types of education policies. Would not it be more responsible on the part of the UN to give the trusteeship mandate to Italy for the entire Somalia? Yet this was not the case.

However, it is important to note that during the ten years of the AFIS mandate both the number of students and teachers increased extensively. Thus, in a country that in 1950 had a level of illiteracy equal to 99.4 per cent, the Italian and Somali efforts to create a proper education system had undoubtedly led to some positive results. The primary schools increased from 29 in 1950 to 160 in 1959. Also the secondary schools increased from 3 in 1950 to 51 in 1959 (Morone, 2011, p. 167). Thus, in light of these figures it can be maintained that in the education field the AFIS achieved “one of the most significant results” (Castagno, 1957, p. 372). Overall the AFIS achieved important outcomes also in the training of bureaucracy, thanks to the scholarships offered by the Italian government, which allowed a number of students to spend a period in several Italian universities, in particular in Rome and Padua (Morone, 2011, p. 166).

2.5 The creation of a multiparty system in a pastoral democracy

Before the creation of the colonial state, Somalia was a nation without a state. Most of the important instruments and institutions of a state - from a state bureaucracy to political parties - were absent. There was no political tradition in Somalia since the society was organized and divided on ethnic- and clan-bases. Thus, the development of political parties in Somalia had to be based on the existing regional and national clans. According to the UN Advisory Council the priority for Italy was the development of a regional and local government in Somalia (Tripodi, 1999). However, the institutions and the rule that have governed Somalia for many years appeared to the AFIS experts as ‘archaic’ and unsuitable for the challenges of a modern state (Tripodi, 1999, p. 379). The idea of the AFIS experts was to model a form of government that could combine old Somali institutions with modern democratic practices (Morone, 2011, p. 144). In I. M. Lewis’ opinion, the most difficult challenge was the following: “the real struggle is between the ideal of national unity as opposed to the reality of the values of clanship and sectional kinship interests in the lineage system” (Lewis, 1958, p.

251). Thus, if this was the environment in which the AFIS had to operate to develop a political arena, the latter had necessarily to be linked to the clanship lineage system.

According to Lewis, the Somali political parties could be divided in clan parties, national parties and regional/tribal parties (Lewis, 1958, p. 253). Clan parties are founded on clanship affiliation and pursue the very particular interests of their specific group. These types of organization are prominent in the southern regions. In contrast, national parties support the creation of a Great Somalia and the ideals of Somali nationalism. In order to create a 'modern' political arena, one of their priorities is the destruction of clanship and clan lineages (Lewis, 1958, p. 257). Lastly, the regional/tribal groups represent territorial rather than clan interests. These are less powerful because they are smaller, they are mostly based in the southern regions and they do not participate in the political competitions (Lewis, 1958, p. 259).

Before the advent of the AFIS, the only organized political party in Somalia was the Somali Youth League (SYL). This party was mostly composed of Darood, supported the idea of a Great Somalia and shared an anti-Italian spirit (Tripodi, 1999, p. 51). At the beginning of the AFIS mandate, they claimed to have 150,000 members based in Mijertina, Lower Juba and Ogaden. By contrast, the Italian administration declared that the league had no more than 12,000 members³⁸. In the first years of the administration the political tensions between the two were significant. In particular, the Italian administration was accused by the international public opinion of enforcing policies against the SYL – including the arrest of its members - in order to favor the pro-Italian political parties that were united in the '*Conferenza Somala*'³⁹ (Morone, 2011, p. 63).

Among the latter, there were eight national parties based on clan divisions, and several parties with a regional dimension. In the southern territories there was a strong affiliation of the Digil and Mirifle people in the Hisbia Digil-Mirifle (HDM). According to

³⁸ ASMAE, AFIS, *rapport sur la Somalie sous administration italienne*, 3 June-24 June 1952, New York.

³⁹ In 1950 the parties included in the Conference were: Comitato del progresso Somalo (CPS); Unione patriottica di beneficenza (Upb); Gioventù Abgal (Ga); Hibizia digil mirifle somali (Hdms); Unione africani della Somalia (Uas); Associazione scidle mobilen (Asm); and Lega progressista somala (Lps), (Morone, 2011, p. 62).

the AFIS administration, this party had 45 branches in the country (Tripodi, 1999, p. 53). Its political aims were the independence of Somalia and creation of a federal state. Differently from the SYL, the HDM represented two main clans that occupied the same regions. This homogeneity was mirrored in their request to create a separate and autonomous Digil Mirifle state in southern Somalia (Tripodi, 1999, p. 54). By contrast, the Somali Progressive League (SPL) had 14 branches and was supportive of the Italian administration. The SPL, together with the Somali African Union, was in favor of the economic policies of the AFIS; moreover, they were in favor of maintaining intact the clan system because it represented the only system of organization known by the Somali people (Tripodi, 1999, p. 56). The remaining parties had less political power and represented smaller groups of people.

In the Somali political or clanship arena there was a large number of political groups. This was due to the influence of the tribal organization system that created the political locus for most of them (Lewis, 1999, p. 272). Yet, there were some common features applicable to many of the Somali parties. Often only few leaders were full-time politicians in the Western sense. Usually, the political initiative came from the new elites and from traders living permanently in towns. In particular, nationalist assemblies and protests were organized by the new educated elites (Lewis, 1999, p. 274). However, all parties had also to depend on passive adherents, which were largely organized on the basis of tribal lineages. In this perspective, a crucial role was played by local branches of political parties, that worked to create a sense of belonging and affiliation in the community. For instance, the SYL was based in Mogadishu and its organization included a President, a Deputy-president, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Comptroller, and other fourteen members (Lewis, 1999, p. 274). Yet, the SYL was the only Somali political party that had also a solid and participative organization based both on clan and non-clan affiliation (Morone, 2011, p. 83).

How were these parties financed? The Italian administration did not participate directly in their financing. However, often it did it indirectly through donations to the pro-Italian parties (Morone, 2011, p. 66). More in general, all the parties levied membership fees and small monthly contributions in order to support their political projects. What was missing at the beginning of the development of a political arena was a structure composed of a number of democratic institutions. This was created by the Italian administrator Giovanni Fornari in 1950 (Morone, 2011, p. 75). The Somali territories were divided in 28 ‘districts’

and the AFIS into 17 administrative departments. The local population was for the first time involved in public life in 1950, when the Territorial Council was established under Fornari (Tripodi, 1999, p. 58). The Territorial Council consisted of 35 councilors, 28 of whom were Somalis; it was “a consultative and representative central body with responsibilities for all government activities, with the exception of foreign policy and policy” (Tripodi, 1999, p. 58).

At the beginning, the Council’s tasks were the development of an internal statute and the creation of municipal councils across Somalia. The other challenges for the Council were: the adoption of an official language, the company control regulations, and the guarantee that all clans and traditions were equally represented in the Council. It is important to underline that until 1955 members of the Council were appointed by the Italian Administrator. For the development of economic activities, the Territorial Council was supported by the Economic Council, which contributed to the draft of plan and regulations. A significant contribution to the expansion of economic activities was given by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture which included 393 firms (278 European, 58 Somali, 30 Indo-Pakistani and 27 Arab) and by the Association of Traders of Somalia (Costanzo, 1955, p. 9). These institutions represented the connection between investors, civil society and the administration. They had a fundamental role in adopting and implementing policies aimed to the economic development of all sectors of Somali economy.

The administrative election in 1954 represented the first political event between the AFIS mandate and the Somali political movements (Tripodi, 2003, p. 66). This was the first opportunity to test the overall participation of Somali political parties. The AFIS conducted an effective campaign to invite all Somali citizens to participate in the elections. The Italian and Somali efforts were awarded by the high percentage of registered voters - over 75 per cent of the population (Tripodi, 2003, p. 67). The results awarded - as predictable - the Somali Youth League (SYL), which obtained 47.7 per cent of votes. This significant victory gave to the SYL the control of 141 out of 281 counsellors. The other party that polled most votes was the Hisbia Digil-Mirifle which obtained 57 counsellors (Tripodi, 2003, p. 66). The remaining seats were divided between the other main political organizations. The crucial role of SYL in Somalia was thus confirmed by the elections results and was made clear to the AFIS administration. The SYL could thereafter present itself as the most important representative of the interests of Somali people.

The administrative elections changed the relationship between the AFIS administration and the SYL. They both decided to cooperate in order to maintain a political equilibrium in the Somali territories (Tripodi, 2003, p. 72). In the following years, the relation between the Italian administration and the SYL evolved in a more constructive way. Nonetheless, on many significant issues their respective positions remained distant (Del Boca, 1993, p. 67). In the following years, the so-called ‘Somalization’ reached a substantial level. There were no more than 5,000 officials, 4,380 of whom were Somalis and only 621 Italians (Del Boca, 1984, p. 121). These figures were encouraging for the future development of a legislative assembly, that was promulgated in 1955 by Ambassador Anzilotti. The first article of the electoral decree stated:

“The Territorial Council is elected with male suffrage: from people living outside municipal districts with second degree elections, through the *shir* and the electoral representatives, and from people living inside the municipal districts with direct elections. The preference of electoral representatives and of voters resident in the municipal district is direct, free and secret, and it goes according to the lists of candidates in competition. The representation is proportional” (Tripodi, 2003, p. 78).

According to the AFIS administration, a mixed electoral system had to be introduced due to the difficulties that they had in organizing a census of nomadic populations. Yet, the AFIS decision was conducive to a more fragmented Somali political scene and to a more direct control on members of clans and sub-clans. Indeed, the idea of transplanting a Western electoral system was not promising in the long-run. This new system reinforced clan-based relationships in particular in the rural areas, where the system was based on the *shir*, the traditional assembly (Morone, 2011, p. 145). The *shir* was a fundamental self-governing institution that guaranteed the unity of the clan and took decisions on the most significant matters of the community (Lewis, 1999, p. 235). Hence, for the AFIS administrators the *shir* represented the only way to give representation to the people living in the rural areas, and meanwhile to maintain intact the clan order (Morone, 2011, p. 149). Nevertheless, the SYL opposed this decision and claimed that it was time to cancel all the old structures of power based on clans. According to SYL, the only possible representation was the one based on modern political parties, without any reference to the clan traditions (Morone, 2011, p. 149).

Despite the SYL opposition, the AFIS reform of the system of representation based on the *shir* continued (Morone, 2011, p. 151). The first elections for the Legislative Assembly were held in 1956. The first Somali Legislative Assembly was composed of 70 seats: 60 for the Somalis, 4 for the Italians, 4 for the Arabs, one for the Indians and one for the Pakistanis. The most representative political movements participating in the elections included four parties - SYL, HDM, SDP, Young Benadir - and six ethnic coalitions (Lewis, 1958, p. 352). The results registered the significant victory of SYL, which obtained 43 out of the 60 seats. The second party was the HDM taking 13 seats, while the pro-Italian SDP obtained only 3 seats (Tripodi, 2003, p. 80). Nonetheless, when the parliamentary groups were formed the SDP and others joined the SYL, leaving the opposition solely to the HDM party. The following step for the new parliamentary majority was the formation of the first Somali government. This was comprised of five ministries: Domestic Affairs, Social Affairs, Economic Affairs, Financial Affairs and General Affairs (Tripodi, 2003, p. 81).

The new structure of power altered the relations and the balance of powers between the Somali government and the Italian administrator. The next issue for the new government was the drafting of a new constitution. In September 1957, Ambassador Anizilotti created a Political Committee and a Technical Committee with the purpose of adopting the constitution. These two Committees were composed by Italian experts, because the AFIS held that even the best trained Somalis did not have enough qualification to perform this task (Costanzo, 1963, p. 20). In this way the Italian influence on the Committees was overwhelming. The main model for the Somali constitution became the Italian constitution, even though in the following months several different constitutions were studied by the Committees⁴⁰. Nevertheless, at the end of this process, the main model the Somali constitution was based on was the Italian Republican Constitution (Morone, 2011, p. 176). However, the Italian constitution did not possess any feature that could maintain the existing clan balance. Thus, the main Italian mistake at that time was represented by the idea that clan lineages had to be eradicated and no representation was to be given to them in the new political system.

⁴⁰ They examined in particular: the French 1946 Constitution and the German 1949 Constitution. Among the others: the Libyan 1951 Constitution; the Egyptian 1956 Constitution; the Syrian 1953 Constitution; the Lebanese 1926 Constitution and the Iraqi 1925 Constitution (M. D'Antonio (1962) *La Costituzione Somala. Precedenti Storici e Costituzionali*. Roma).

The 1960 Constitution represented the culmination of the Italianization of Somali political arena. Despite the charter was celebrated by Italian jurists, it contained several elements that were adverse to the traditional political organization of Somali society. Moreover, the unification of Italian Somalia and British Somaliland brought in the legal system many elements of common law. Therefore, along with the political difficulties of the unification of the two Somalilands, there were the shortcomings of the merging of two different legal systems (Morone, 2011, p. 179). It is evident that Italian experts did not understand the distance between “the intention and the implementation of the Constitutional project” (Castagno, 1957, p. 361). Thereby, the constitution and the new institutions remained superstructures distant from Somali society. In the end, the AFIS failed to understand the Somali political and cultural complexity.

2.6 From independence to Siyad Barre regime

The second Somali government established in Mogadishu in March 1959 began to press Italy and the UN in order to obtain independence as soon as possible. The Italian administration was in favor of independence because in this way its commitments and responsibilities could be over. Despite doubts concerning the reliability of the 1959 general elections, the UN accepted Somali requests and granted independence on 1 July 1960 (Tripodi, 2003, p. 99).

The new independent Somalia was a country with an extremely weak economy and highly reliant on international aid. Moreover, the main economic and social activities were still retained by the Italian community (Del Boca, 1984, p. 344). The Italian efforts for the development of medium and large cities proved to be mere disenchantments. The capital Mogadishu did not possess any feature of a proper capital city and lacked even a system of communication and transportation. Certainly, from the moment of independence onwards, without the economic support of Italy, the future did not look promising. According to Tripodi, Somalia “had the lowest per capita revenue in the world and an economy based essentially on agriculture and bananas” (Tripodi, 2003, p. 107).

The overall AFIS project for the creation of a political arena proved to be erroneous. The fact that the new political parties were actually the representatives of old tribal alliances led to an unbalanced political system where more than 89 political lists were present (Tripodi,

2003, p. 105). The political arena thus failed to become dominated by a small number of organized and representative members. In fact, in order to obtain a majority within the Parliamentary Assembly, large parties had to rely on tribal-based movements. Thus, the AFIS clearly failed to develop a political system free from the influence of tribal affiliations. Anyway, notwithstanding this tense atmosphere, the British and Italian parts of Somalia became independent and merged in the United Republic of Somalia, with Aden Abdullah Osman Daar as the first President (Aden Sheikh, 1994, p. 122). Somalia was finally an independent and sovereign state, but its economic and political difficulties were evident and worsened in the near future.

The political atmosphere in the first months of independence was tense. The political parties that opposed the SYL were put in a minority position. These ten years of trusteeship should have prepared Somalia for a transition to independence and democracy, but the facts proved that this was not the case. In the aftermath of the independence there were significant internal divisions. The first problem was the configuration of the borders between Somalia and Ethiopia that was still unresolved. The second problem was related to the unification of Somalia with the ex-British Somaliland. The northern and southern territories of Somalia were culturally different. These differences were mirrored in the configuration of the new political balances which was still influenced by the strong role of clans. The most representative national party - the SYL - attempted many times in this first years of after the independence to marginalize the Hawiye in the center and the Isaaq in the north of the country. In doing so, the SYL intended to take control of Mogadishu and of the financial aid coming from outside the country (Tripodi, 2003, p. 108).

In the midst of a situation where regional clan rivalries were increasing between Somaliland and the central government, a new anti-SYL party was established. In May 1963, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal founded the Somali National Congress (SNC), with the aim to oppose the SYL political discourse. Nevertheless, the results of the general elections held in 1964 reinforced the SYL, which obtained 69 seats out of the 123 of the Somali National Assembly (Tripodi, 2003, 109). This significant majority allowed the SYL to control the assembly, despite the increasing opposition of the SNC and other small parties. After independence, the priorities of the SYL - opposition to 'clanism' and creation of a Great Somalia - were put aside in order to consolidate its power with little consideration of the opposition (Tripodi, 2003, p. 110). Hence, the system of government left by the Italian

administration was already showing its limits. According to Hussein Adam, the political system “did not take into account the pastoral democratic traditions based on power sharing concepts. These top-down imposed ‘democratic’ mechanism pushed competition to the point of conflict and inflamed clan and sub-clan rivalries” (quoted in Tripodi, 2003, p. 110).

However, during the nine years after independence, Somali people achieved some positive results in the development of a democratic civil rule. Said. S. Samatar claims that from 1960 to 1969 Somalis experienced “unprecedented political and civil liberties, a vigorous participatory democracy with fiercely and freely contested elections, a lively free press, and a government under complete civilian control. Somalia becomes a model of democracy in Africa” (Samatar, 1995, p. 16). Despite this atmosphere of participation of the civil society in the public and political activities of the Somali government, the country was not entirely united. The new Somali flag was indeed composed of five-pointed stars, that symbolize the dream of a Great Somalia which includes the territories inhabited by Somalis in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. The final goal was merging these territories with the new republic and to do so a campaign of ‘pan-somalism’ was fomented throughout the country. So-called ‘liberation groups’ tried to accomplish the unification of Great Somalia by means of raids in Ethiopian and Kenyan territories. Yet, with these actions the government was losing sight of the basic needs of Somali people, posing two issues to the young state.

Firstly, in order to sustain the activities of the Somali ‘freedom fighters’ the government diverted much of the resources that were needed to finance the central government. Somalia did not have the economic and military capacity to, on the one hand, complete the economic development of the country, and on the other hand, sustain a conflict against the powerful neighbors Ethiopia and Kenya (Samatar, 1995, p. 16). Secondly, in the midst of this situation the central government of Mogadishu neglected the economic situation of its inner territories. In particular, the northern territories observed a return to a primitive economy, due to the lack of investments in infrastructure and communications. Thus, it seems that in those years the Somali government put aside the agenda that could create the conditions for the consolidation of democracy.

The Somali government had lost the compass. The only way to maintain order was the return to the old system of power based on clan lineages. Nevertheless, the traditional clan organization represented the old equilibrium that had then to compete with the new civilian administration. The clash between two different ideas of what Somalia had to be was

displayed in the March 1969 parliamentary elections. The elections involved 64 parties in a country with a population of less than four million (Samatar, 1995, p. 17). The 64 parties reflected the most significant lineages and sub-lineages in the Somali genealogical system. The consequences were widespread sentiments of opposition to the electoral process and to its leaders. Citizens became adverse to the parliamentary system, which was perceived as a way to manipulate the power for the political leaders to pursue their own interests. Thus, the malcontent of a large segment of society created a climate of political and moral instability throughout the country.

In the midst of a situation of political paralysis, General Siyad Barre, “a man of average intelligence and no formal schooling” (Samatar, 1995, p. 17) trained in the ranks of the Italian colonial police, took over the Parliament with a military *coup d'état* on 21 October 1969. All democratic institutions were dismantled. The new institution in Somalia was the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), a body composed of 25 military and police officers. The SRC was later supported by highly-trained civilians that operated as a sort of ministers (Tripodi, 1999, p. 113). At the beginning of the revolution it was difficult to identify the causes that contributed to the collapse of the Somali state. In fact, in its initial phases the population and many intellectuals expressed enthusiasm for the new regime and the so-called ‘scientific socialism’.

Although this goes beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worth making two final considerations. Firstly, Siyad Barre was able to control the country due to the instability of the political arena. The clashes between politicians and clan leaders created a state that was paralyzed by inefficiency and corruption. Secondly, Italy was the only country to recognize the new regime. In doing so, Italy admitted indirectly that the ten years the AFIS spent to reconstruct Somalia and prepare it to democracy have been a substantial failure. Therefore, without judging the period under Siyad Barre, it should be noted that once again Italian diplomacy had clear responsibilities on Somali events. In my opinion, this represents one of the evidences that the AFIS venture was detrimental to the future of Somalia.

Conclusion

The Italian colonial and post-colonial period was not studied as much as other colonial experiences in Africa. Only recently there has been a growing interest in this historical phenomenon, which for the first time was not biased by political ideology. This thesis draws upon this new stream of research in an attempt to reconsider Italian colonialism beyond propaganda and in a European perspective. It does so by analysing one of the first Western post-colonial interventions in Africa under the UN trusteeship system.

Most of the studies on European colonialism do not acknowledge the significance of this period of Italian history. Italian colonial enterprises were often described as ‘provincial’ and limited in time and space. Indeed, these statements are true if we compare the Italian experience with the far more well-known and researched British or French colonial ventures. Yet, there are a number of elements in the Italian experience that allow us to consider Italy as one of the European colonial powers that participated in the ‘Scramble for Africa’. The Italian colonial project was modelled on the instances of the more powerful and expert colonizing countries. Initially, Italy lacked a clear model to follow and developed only later on a so-called ‘mixed model’ of colonialism. On the one hand, Italy pursued a British type of indirect rule based on the maintenance of customary institutions and avoided dismantling the local political and judiciary structures - as it was done, for example, in Ethiopia. On the other hand, following the French model, Italy developed a system of direct rule, transplanting several motherland institutions. In this perspective, the Italian case becomes particularly interesting because of its unique and hybrid nature.

In the aftermath of World War II, the entire system of power that used to rule the world went through a great transformation. The leading role of the old European colonial powers was gradually reduced. The world witnessed a change in the balance of power, which moved from Europe to the U.S. and Soviet Union. The new order set the conditions for a process of gradual decolonization across the world. The old European powers did not welcome this transformation, but had to accept it in order to maintain a significant role in the

new global scenario. In this context the role of peace-keeper was assigned to the UN. Thus, the process of decolonization became regulated by a system of trusteeship mandates.

In this new scenario, Italy was a defeated country with an under-developed economic and democratic system which did not have an active role in the international arena. Moreover, its relations with its former colonies were radically changing. After World War II Ethiopia and Libya required their independence immediately. Eritrea was granted autonomy and was federated with Ethiopia. Conversely, Italy obtained the control of Somalia under a ten-year UN trusteeship. The future of Italy and its former colonies was agreed by the four great powers (the U.S., the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France) under the UN supervision. This decision was somehow unusual, for three main reasons. Firstly, Italy received the trusteeship of Somalia as a defeated country. Secondly, Italy was not member of the UN. Thirdly, this was the only occasion in which the UN General Assembly acted as a supreme legislative authority; after that no agreement was reached during the peace conferences. The Italian diplomacy had limited power to effectively influence the UN decision. However, the reasons for this decision were mostly geopolitical and were related to the need to maintain the interests of the U.S, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France interwoven. Thus, in order to safeguard the balance of powers in a strategic *locus* as the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, they agreed to assign to Italy - a young democracy - the control over the Somali territories.

As concerns Somalia, this country was characterized by a '*sui generis*' past. Somalia was a unique case of a pastoral democracy and a state without a nation. The way of life of its population was significantly influenced by the tribal organization of its society. During the Italian occupation this feature of Somali society remained for many years invisible at the Italian administrators, causing many difficulties and misunderstandings. Despite these problems the history of these two countries has been interwoven for a long time. Unfortunately, this relation was not exclusively positive, in particular for Somalia. Indeed, Italy did not possess all the capacities needed to achieve the UN priorities in such a short timeframe. Italy was a poor country, with scarce financial resources available to support the reconstruction of Somalia. In addition, the economic and cultural characteristics of Somali people contributed to complicate the AFIS project.

During the ten years - from 1950 to 1960 - of Italian administration in Somalia many efforts were made by both parts to prepare Somalia for independence. The UN resolution indicated several objectives that had to be met before 1960. Italy, with its modest economic

possibilities, carried out a number of projects in the agricultural, economic, infrastructural, civic and political fields. In the first years of the AFIS many projects were implemented with the aim to develop a more modern system of cultivation. Yet, these projects were hindered by the fact that most Somalis were nomads and considered agriculture as a non-noble activity. This situation was complicated by the arid and desert climate which characterizes most of Somalia. Therefore, the results obtained in this field were limited. The AFIS did concentrate its efforts on the production of bananas and cotton. Both sectors were mostly controlled by Italian large companies without the active participation of Somali people. Small results were achieved in the mechanization of the agricultural system which could have been beneficial to the economy of Somalia after its independence.

Two were the main problems that the AFIS had to face in pursuing its difficult task. On the one hand, the AFIS administration did not have at its disposal large economic resources to meet the needs of Somalia. On the other hand, the Somali outlook was not in favour of the type of market economy that was supported by the UN Advisory Council. In fact, only a small part of the indigenous population participated in economic activities. Again, the causes of this hostility towards market economy are related to the very nature of an economic system which was mostly based on subsistence farming and was highly dependent on imports. Hence, in order to sustain change and modernization a very conspicuous amount of financial aid should have been invested by the international community.

Some positive outcomes, however, were accomplished in the field of education, despite the high rates of illiteracy and the lack of a written Somali language until 1950. The major results were attained in the secondary level of education; this contributed to prepare young diplomats and create a modern bureaucracy. The development of a system of education became beneficial to Somali people under Siyad Barre regime. In fact, in those years the process of Somalization and education was carried out by teachers, professors and civil servants who had been educated during the AFIS. Moreover, these improvements in the field of education increased the level of participation of Somali citizens in the political and economic affairs of the country. Nevertheless, these improvements, in particular in the field of political participation, were often slowed by the traditional pastoral and tribal organization of Somali society.

The creation of a multi-party political system in Somalia was a clear challenge for Italy. In a country characterized by a tribal system based on clan and sub-clan affiliations, the

new setting had to integrate this traditional clan system with a Western model of participatory democracy. At the beginning of the AFIS mandate new parties were created to counter-act the clan-based division of power, yet in practice these parties were still strongly influenced by clan affiliations. Therefore, when the first Parliamentary Assembly was formed, the landscape was dominated by a clan-based balance of powers that was invisible to the foreigner's eyes but very clear to Somali people. In the end, the AFIS did not succeed in achieving one of the most crucial goals set by the UN: the creation of a participatory democracy. Nonetheless, it shall be clear that transforming the political, cultural and civic architecture of a country that had no direct experience of Western institutions in only ten years, was frankly an impossible mission, even more so for a new and inexperienced democracy such as Italy was in the aftermath of World War II.

Ultimately, the UN trusteeship in Somalia did not lead to the gradual process of decolonization and to the improvement of the economic and political conditions of the population that should have followed. The approach and the system proposed had not considered carefully enough neither the conditions of Somalia nor the conditions of Italy. The great powers and in particular the U.S. Foreign Office thought that a simple supervision by the UN could be capable of promoting democracy and economic growth. Yet, this presumption proved to be ill-fated. To assign to the UN Advisory Council the role of 'watch-dog' was clearly not enough. The AFIS administration lasted ten years and proved to be very costly to both Italy and Somalia in human and economic terms. The role of the UN in those ten years was limited to some advice of a general nature and a few visits of UN inspectors in the country. The trusteeship system created for Somalia's post-colonial transition to independence was more an organ of control than an active instrument for the reconstruction of the country.

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