

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Italian cooperation with Mozambique: explaining the emergence and consolidation of a normative power

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Abstract

Italy has developed a long-dated partnership with Mozambique, where it has emerged as an actor committed to norm promotion in the fields of conflict management, debt relief, and sustainable energy cooperation. This paper challenges the dominant interpretation of such a cooperative relationship that emphasizes ideational motivations and focuses, instead, on the role of Italian investors in the sectors of infrastructure and energy and of the Italian economic diplomacy. A favorable institutional and political climate in Italy has channeled investors' demands in the policy process since the independence of Mozambique. The late institutionalization of Italian development policy, the long gestation of the reform of development policy, and the lack of clear-cut borders between the competences of foreign and development cooperation institutions have empowered business groups that shape the investment strategy of the Italian foreign ministry as actors in development policy-making. Finally, convergence of interests between Italian investors and the NGO Sant'Egidio, which ultimately led to a partnership between these actors, has increased the legitimacy of Italian foreign and development policy toward Mozambique, contributing to consolidating Italy as a norm promoter in the country.

Keywords: Conflict management; development cooperation; Italy; Mozambique; normative power

Introduction

Italy has been typically considered a laggard in development cooperation (Carbone, 2008). Four countries have been among the top 10–15 recipients of Italian aid since the origins of Italian development cooperation, namely Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Mozambique. In this context, it is precisely the special relationship with Mozambique that appears striking. Italy was the first European country that officially acknowledged the independence of the African country, doing so in 1975. Since then, it has been one of its preferential development partners, the key mediator in the Mozambican peace process in the early 1990s when it promoted the so-called 'Italian formula' of conflict resolution, the major contributor to debt relief in the early 2000s and, more recently, advocate of responsible energy cooperation. Given the lack of former colonial ties between Italy and Mozambique and of Mozambique's geostrategic importance for Italy, at least until the past few years, the Italian commitment to development cooperation and norm promotion in the country is even more remarkable.

Several studies have addressed this puzzle by emphasizing the identity motivations behind cooperation between the two countries. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Italian Communist party and the 'red region' of Emilia Romagna supported cooperation with the Mozambican socialist regime. Since the early 1990s, building on ties with the Catholic Church in Mozambique, the Italian NGO Sant'Egidio has been a major player in the peacekeeping process. Marchetti (2013, 2018) synthesizes the ideational basis of this special relationship by defining Italy as a

normative power. The term recalls the well-known concept of ‘Normative power Europe’ originally proposed by Manners (2002), and refers to an actor driven by norms, committed to and able to promote norms internationally; a representation that evidently clashes with the conventional view of Italy as an egoistic donor (Berthélemy, 2006).

On explaining the origins of the special relationship between the two countries, the identity explanation does not fully account for the persistence of such a cooperative relationship for the three decades after the collapse of the Italian First Republic party system and the end of the Mozambican civil war. This paper aims at explaining both the building and longevity of the cooperative relationship and changes in the focus of Italian foreign policy toward Mozambique over time. It integrates constructivist and institutionalist explanations with an analysis of the role of Italian investors in the sectors of infrastructure and energy and of the Italian economic diplomacy in shaping cooperation with the African country. This paper borrows insights from International Political Economy (IPE) studies that have been widely applied to the study of US (Milner and Tingley, 2010) and EU trade and development policies (Poletti and De Bievre, 2014; Poletti and Sicurelli, 2018) and frames this analysis in the specific Italian institutional context.

It argues that a favorable institutional and political climate has channeled investors’ demands in the policy process. The late institutionalization of Italian development policy, the long gestation of the reform of development policy following the crisis of the Italian party system in the late 1980s, and the lack of clear-cut borders between the competences of foreign and development cooperation institutions under the new law of development cooperation (2014) have contributed to empowering private actors in the sectors of energy and infrastructure that shape the investment strategy of the Italian foreign ministry. Italian energy and infrastructure companies profited of the cooperative relationship that the Catholic Church and the Italian Communist party had inaugurated with Mozambique since the last years of Portuguese domination. They evaluated Mozambique as an attractive investment destination and became major sponsors of a special relationship with the country since the 1970s. Finally, the convergence of interests between Italian investors and Sant’Egidio, which ultimately led to a partnership between these actors, has contributed to consolidating Italy as a promoter of conflict management and development norms in the African country.

This article is structured as follows. The first part reviews the literature on the motivations of development donors and proposes a political economy reading of norm diffusion through international cooperation. The second part presents the case study’s methodology. The third part identifies the key actors involved in the shaping of Italian development policy, including government institutions, enterprises, and non-governmental organizations, and traces the institutional reforms of Italian development cooperation. The fourth part focuses on three stages of Italian relations with Mozambique since the 1970s and, more specifically, on the commitment of the Italian government to norm promotion. The conclusions discuss the political economy conditions for the effectiveness of Italy as a normative power in development cooperation and peacebuilding.

Norms and economic interests in development cooperation

The motivations driving international donors and their commitment to norm promotion have attracted wide interest among International Relations analysts. Realist scholars claim that donors prioritize geo-strategic considerations in selecting targets of development aid. According to realists, the geopolitics of oil and gas and, more specifically, competition for energy resources, has increasingly emerged as one of the major drivers of international relations (Raphael and Stokes, 2010). From this perspective, Italian development cooperation has been interpreted as subordinated to foreign and security interests both during (Calandri, 2018) and after the Cold War (Coralluzzo, 2008). This approach sheds light on the impact of the international structure

of power relations on foreign policy decisions. But it does not capture how energy security interests enter and affect the national decision-making process.

Liberal institutionalist and constructivist studies, on the contrary, stress the influence of donor institutions such as political parties and civil society organizations, and their interests and ideologies, on the development strategies of Western donors (Lancaster, 2008; Van der Veen, 2011; Lundsgaarde, 2012; Greene and Licht, 2017). Building upon these perspectives, studies of European development cooperation represent the EU as a normative power, that is, an actor that engages in the promotion of norms through development cooperation (Holden, 2016; Orbie *et al.*, 2017). Further elaborating on this tradition, several scholars have proposed an ideational account of Italian cooperation with Mozambique. These studies (Serapiao, 2004; Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009; Haynes, 2009; Maregere, 2011; Marchetti, 2013, 2018; Della Rocca, 2014) emphasize the close ties between the Italian Communist party and the Mozambique government in the 1970–80s and the influence of the Catholic NGO Sant'Egidio on Italian development cooperation in the early 1990s. Marchetti (2013, 2018) claims that the hybrid diplomacy involving official and the NGO unofficial diplomats driving Italian cooperation with Mozambique has ended up by strengthening the normative power of Italy in that country. Sant'Egidio has been able to build such a synergic relationship with the Italian government thanks to the availability of government funds for NGOs, support from the Communist, Socialist, and Demo-Christian political leaders for the Mozambican peace process in the 1980s, and resonance between how the NGO framed its campaign and the mainstream Italian political thought inspired by both Catholic and liberal principles. These empirical studies effectively demonstrate the role of civil society organizations as protagonists of Italian development cooperation. They do not explain, though, the reasons for the persistence of bipartisan support of the Italian political forces for the preferential relationship between Italy and Mozambique three decades after the peace accord.

Studies of Normative Power Europe (Falkner, 2007; Laïdi, 2008; Sicurelli, 2010; Manners, 2015; Martin-Mazé, 2015) recognize that interests and ideational pressures combine in shaping the processes of international norm promotion and that they are not analytically discernible. More specifically, Poletti and Sicurelli (2018) provide an IPE analysis of European trade and development policies. From this perspective, political and economic forces define states' choices (Lairson and Skidmore, 2016). The state acts as the broker and assembler of the positions of non-state actors, especially business interests. The dependence of a country's economy on international trade and investments, in turn, strongly affects the preferences of those interest groups. As regards development cooperation, the distributional consequences of economic aid assume importance in shaping the motivations of aid donors (Milner and Tingley, 2010). According to Milner and Tingley (2010), 'Like other foreign policy tools, such as international trade or economic sanctions, (...), aid creates winners and losers at home'. Winners from international development policy may include exporters (Milner and Tingley, 2010: 200) and investors, especially with an infrastructure and natural resource extraction focus (Bowles, 1987; Urban *et al.*, 2013; Scoones *et al.*, 2016; Shimomura, 2016). From a standard political economy perspective, NGOs are more marginal than business interests in shaping states' development cooperation and peacekeeping policies. Yet, IPE scholars have recognized their role as increasingly important players (Higgott *et al.*, 2000). Their reliance on states' funding fosters mutual influence relationship between their priorities and states' priorities (Brynen, 2000). NGOs' chance to influence policy-makers further increases when they build partnerships with powerful business groups (Mantel *et al.*, 2007; Musgrave, 2015).

The literature on the political economy of international development has largely overlooked the Italian case, given the role typically attributed to the country as a laggard in development aid. An exception in this respect is the analysis of the role of Italian exporters in promoting tied aid (Tajoli, 1999; Berthélemy, 2006). The position of Italy as a major investor in Africa, though, makes it an interesting case for the study of the role of investors in development cooperation.

Methodology

This case study uses the method of process tracing in order to identify the causal mechanisms behind the Italian foreign and development policy toward Mozambique. It unfolds the events that affected cooperation between Italy and the African country in the last five decades and characterizes key steps in the process of Italian cooperation with Mozambique. This method allows me to test the explanatory potential of constructivist and standard political economy hypotheses and trace the interaction between economic interests and civil society pressures in shaping Italian relations with Mozambique. Finally, by tracing the process of preference formation in the Italian relations with Mozambique, this case study aims at generating new hypotheses on the way relations between economic interests and civil society pressures may contribute to the emergence and effectiveness of Italy as a normative power in the cooperation with developing countries.

An analysis of a plurality of sources, both primary and secondary, enables me to furnish a complete picture of the motivations behind Italian cooperation with Mozambique. I draw World Bank data comparing the Italian official development aid flows to Mozambique to Italian aid to Ethiopia, the other African country that has historically dominated the top targets of Italian aid, from the statistics portal Factfish-World Statistics and Data Research. I use data concerning financial aid to specific development and conflict management instruments and the main sectors targeted by Italian development cooperation provided by Italian foreign affairs portals and secondary sources.

I refer to Eurostat data for the measure of energy dependency of Italy in the 2011–2016 years. The main national newspapers (*Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*), journals on Italian and international economy and finance (*Wall street Italia* and *Africa and Affari*), and the international news agency *Reuters* provide useful information to trace the process of engagement of the Italian government in cooperation activities with Mozambique in the time frame considered. Press releases of the main Italian actors (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Parliament, NGOs, ENI) and public discourses of Italian political leaders allow me to investigate the objectives and motivation behind Italian cooperation with the African country. I complement these data with interviews with NGOs (CESVI and Oxfam) and a former member of the staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Italian actors in international development

In the 1950s, Italy lacked institutions explicitly dedicated to development cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Treasury were the main institutions in charge of external relations with African countries. Italian foreign policy in regard to African countries during the Cold War mainly reflected the attention to the so-called ‘Third World’ shared by the Communist, Socialist, and Demo-Christian parties and the most internationalized Italian enterprises (Carbone *et al.*, 2013). In this context, the then state-owned enterprise (SOE) ENI was indisputably a major player, able to foresee and even drive Italian foreign policy. The ‘Mattei formula’ elaborated in 1954 by ENI’s founder Enrico Mattei allowed energy producer countries to obtain a share of 70% of partnership profits (as opposed to the 50% conceded by other international energy companies) if they contributed to the production costs. Thanks to this approach, in the 1950s, by developing its first investments in Northern Africa (Egypt and Morocco), ENI inaugurated the now decades-long ‘friendship with Africa’ (ENI, 2016). Other SOEs that invested in Africa included the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) and the manufacturer and distributor of electricity and gas ENEL.

The oldest Italian NGO, the Sant’Egidio Community, was founded in Rome as an association of high school students in 1968 with the purpose of promoting international solidarity. The NGO belongs to the ecumenical movement and aims at spreading the Gospel internationally. In the 1960s, under pressures exerted by the Catholic Church and international organizations, Italy extended development cooperation from Africa to Latin American countries and increased the

amount of Official Development Aid (ODA) allocated to developing countries (Gallizioli, 2009). Sant'Egidio was one of the first organizations in the Roman Catholic Church to develop the Christian precepts of international solidarity in a strategy for promoting peace and reconciliation (Boesenecker and Vinjamuri, 2011). Since its origins, the association has developed close ties with the Italian government and the Vatican (Sengula and Gonçalves, 1998). Its source of funds has comprised both government and private contributions, namely voluntary contributions of its members and business.

In the 1970s, the legal foundation of Italian development cooperation started to take shape within the institutional framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A first law (1222/1971) gave the ministry the task of promoting participation by Italian firms with an interest in developing countries. A second law (38/1979) created a Department for Development Cooperation and an Interministerial Committee for Foreign Economic Policies and also regulated the role of NGOs in development cooperation. The law allowed the avoidance of public tenders by giving the recipient country the right to choose the Italian contractor. Nevertheless, recipient countries had *de facto* little choice in terms of contractors. Thus, the law ended up by supporting the same companies and the same intermediaries, namely those that had links with the Socialist and Christian Democrat parties or members of the Lega delle Cooperative linked to the Communist party.

In the 1980s, law 73/1985 established the Italian Aid Fund (FAI) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an Interministerial Committee specifically devoted to development cooperation and a Special Commission for NGOs. An 'emergency fund' was created with the remit of spending approximately \$1.3 billion on aid in just 18 months (Hanlon, 1991). More than half of the fund mainly covered the provision of economic and social infrastructure in developing countries (Bollini and Reich, 1994). Another law (49/1987) inaugurated the stage of what Isernia (1995) called 'institutionalized cooperation policy'. Article 1 of the law stated that development cooperation was part of Italian foreign policy. Under this law, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs retained development cooperation competences (bilateral aid and contribution to the EU's budget), which caused problems of coordination and even tensions with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, in charge of the Italian contribution to the European development fund and international banks (Carbone, 2007).

In contrast to what was happening in other European countries, in 1989 Italy reached its historical peak of commitment to development aid by providing 0.41 of its GNP to development cooperation. However, the Tangentopoli scandal – which began as a result of investigations carried out by Italian judges into the illegal financing of political parties and exploded in the early 1990s – had a profound impact on the financing of development cooperation and entailed deep cuts to development aid. Tangentopoli especially hit the so-called red cooperatives. According to the prosecutors, they had received quotas of the emergency fund on the basis of preliminary agreements among the PCI, DC, and PSI. ENI and other SOEs were also involved in the scandal. Consequently, in 1995 the complex process of privatization of SOEs was launched. Given the drastic financial cut to the national programs of development cooperation, by the end of the 1990s, Italy fell to the lowest position among OECD donor countries, after the US. In the context of declining government resources for development aid, development NGOs became crucial actors as promoters of private cooperation programs.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, several unsuccessful attempts to reform Italian development cooperation institutions took place. However, domestic divisions between the Italian center-right and center-left parties on the hypothesis of creating an independent development agency slowed down the process of development institutions-building (Carbone and Quartapelle, 2016). After a two-decade long gestation, the 2014 law established the new institutions for the shaping of Italian development policies. In order to tackle those obstacles to policy coherence, the new law transformed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC), created the figure of a Deputy Minister for Development Cooperation,

a National Council of Development Cooperation under the MFAIC, and an independent agency for development cooperation. Moreover, it emphasized the need for public–private partnerships and established a new financial instrument, the so-called *Cassa depositi e prestiti*, funded by the Italians’ postal savings. However, the law did not explicitly address the link between aid, trade, and security policies. Moreover, it did not abolish the figure of the directorate general on development cooperation within the MFAIC, which opened up new venues for inter-institutional competition, and did not clarify the division of competences between this body and the National Council of Development Cooperation. It is too early to assess the effects of the new law because, given the frequent government crises, approval of the implementing decrees is still pending.

The protagonists of Italian development cooperation, however, share the perception of persisting difficulties of Italian development institutions in acting as a coherent system, except when the interests of strategic sectors of the national economy are at stake, and they stress the difficulty of the government in involving partnerships between small and medium enterprises, on the one hand, and NGOs in development cooperation on the other (Interviews, CESVI, June 2018, and Oxfam, May 2018).

While the Italian political elite was striving to agree on a shared reform project, Italy intensified economic cooperation with Africa, especially in the energy sector. In 2006, approximately 50% of the hydrocarbon reserves owned by ENI were located in Africa (Renda and Ricciuti, 2010). In 2011, Italy ranked fifth in terms of energy dependency rate out of the 28 EU member states (Eurostat, 2017). This ranking made foreign investments in this sector a crucial concern for Italian foreign policy. In 2011, after a stage of investments in Tunisia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Libya, ENI extended its interests to Angola, Ghana, and Mozambique. More generally, Italy became one of the largest foreign investors in Africa and, since 2016, it has been the major EU member state investing in the continent.

Italian cooperation with Mozambique and norm promotion

Development cooperation and the Italian formula for conflict resolution (1975–1992)

The longstanding cooperation between the Italian Communist party and the Catholic Church with Mozambican political and religious leaders created a friendly diplomatic climate between Italy and Mozambique, which attracted Italian energy and infrastructure companies interested in protecting their investments in the African continent. These firms shared with Sant Egidio the interest in pushing for the end of the Mozambican civil war. Due to the alliance of these forces, Italy became a key development partner of the African country after its independence in 1975 and played a leading role in the peace process, where it successfully promoted a distinct Italian model of conflict resolution in the early 1990s.

The last 5 years of Portuguese ruling of Mozambique mobilized heterogeneous actors in Italy. After the first diplomatic contacts with the independence movement carried out by the Vatican, the Italian Communist Party and national companies in the energy and infrastructure sector started building relations with the country. On 1 July 1970, Pope Paul VI hosted in Rome the main leaders of the independence movement, despite the fact that Portuguese rulers considered such a visit as a threat to their colonial rule (interview, Former member of the staff of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, October 2018). On 23–25 March 1973, the Solidarity conference against colonialism and imperialism and for freedom and independence of Angola, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique took place in Reggio Emilia, one of the Italian cities which at that time were considered the electoral basin of the Communist Party. African leaders took part in the conference, including Samora Machel, who would later become president of Mozambique. On the energy front, in 1974 ENI, under the management of the Socialist-sponsored Giorgio Mazzanti, started promoting triangular cooperation among Italy, Egypt, and Mozambique, two African countries where the Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli (AGIP), owned by ENI itself, was operating and

where Iran had already directed its economic interests. ENI's plan was to promote cooperation with the National Iranian Oil Company in the two countries (Milano, 2014). In 1974 and 1975, the Italian SA/Sadelmi and ENEL constructed two parallel powerlines (Cabora Bassa – Zambesi) from Mozambique to South Africa. In the political climate created by the openness of the Pope and the Italian Communist party to the anti-colonial movement, Italy was the first European country to recognize the independence of Mozambique in 1975. Between 1975 and 1985, it joined the socialist block and North European countries in supporting the socialist leadership of Mozambique (Hofmann, 2013). In 1976, Sant'Egidio started to promote dialogue with the Christian churches in the country. The Italian Communist Party especially built a close relationship with Mozambique and even supported its government financially, using the so-called 'solidarity ship' initiative that attracted high media attention. The foreign minister De Michelis allegedly commented that by that time Somalia belonged to the Italian Socialist Party, as Mozambique did to the Italian Communist Party and Ethiopia to the Christian Democrats (La Repubblica, 1993). According to a former member of the staff of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, instead, while cooperation with the Horn of Africa was a divisive issue, Mozambique attracted the support of all the main Italian parties (Interview, 2 October 2018), which documents the lack of a univocal ideological motor in the Italian foreign policy toward the country.

In 1977, the conflict between Frelimo (the single ruling party in the Afro-Marxist regime) and Renamo (the armed resistance) hit Mozambique and had tangible repercussions for Italian investors. In that year, ENI was forced to suspend its projects to explore energy sources in the country. The socialist financier Ferdinando Mach offered ENI logistic support in Mozambique in order to help the company in its attempt to penetrate the country. ENI's management, however, did not support his offer. In 1980, Ferdinando Mach explained the reasons for the long-lasting and unsuccessful negotiation with ENI by pointing to the fact that the conflict hitting Mozambique had created a hostile climate to international investments (Camera dei Deputati, 1980).

During the 1980s, the Italian government responded to concerns of Italian investors and of Sant'Egidio for instability in the country to promote cooperation with Mozambique by increasing diplomatic relations with the government and providing financial support to conflict management (Figure 1). In 1981, a step in the direction of renewed cooperation between Italy and Mozambique occurred when President of the Italian republic Sandro Pertini received in Rome President Samora Machel. In the same year, the Italian Inter-ministry Committee for Foreign Economic Policy identified two priority geographical areas in aid cooperation. The first one included Somalia, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Angola, Tanzania, and Peru (Bollini and Reich, 1994). In 1982, the Banco de Mozambique reached a financial agreement with the Italian Mediocredito bank for a \$13 billion loan for construction of the Corumana dam. The meeting between the foreign minister Andreotti and the Mozambique minister for economic affairs Jacinto Veloso in 1983 further documented the Italian government's attention to economic partnership with the African country (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1983). Construction of the dam, however, was not completed until 1989 because of the civil war. In 1989, Sant'Egidio launched the initiative of mediation in the Mozambican conflict. In the same year, the Italian enterprise Aquater (ENI group) supported a program for geological and mining research of the National Institute of Geology (De Muti, 2014), a focal sector of university cooperation between Italy and Mozambique since 1977 (Bussotti and De Muti, 2012).

Development and economic cooperation between Italy and Mozambique increased throughout the 1980s (Figure 1). Between 1983 and 1985, the Italian government provided Mozambique with about \$30 million a year (Figure 1), and was involved in debt relief programs with the country. In 1985, Machel returned to Rome and was received by Pope John Paul II. In the mid-1980s, Italy was the earliest Western supporter of Frelimo and the largest creditor and trading partner of Mozambique (Howard, 2008). Following the creation of the emergency fund

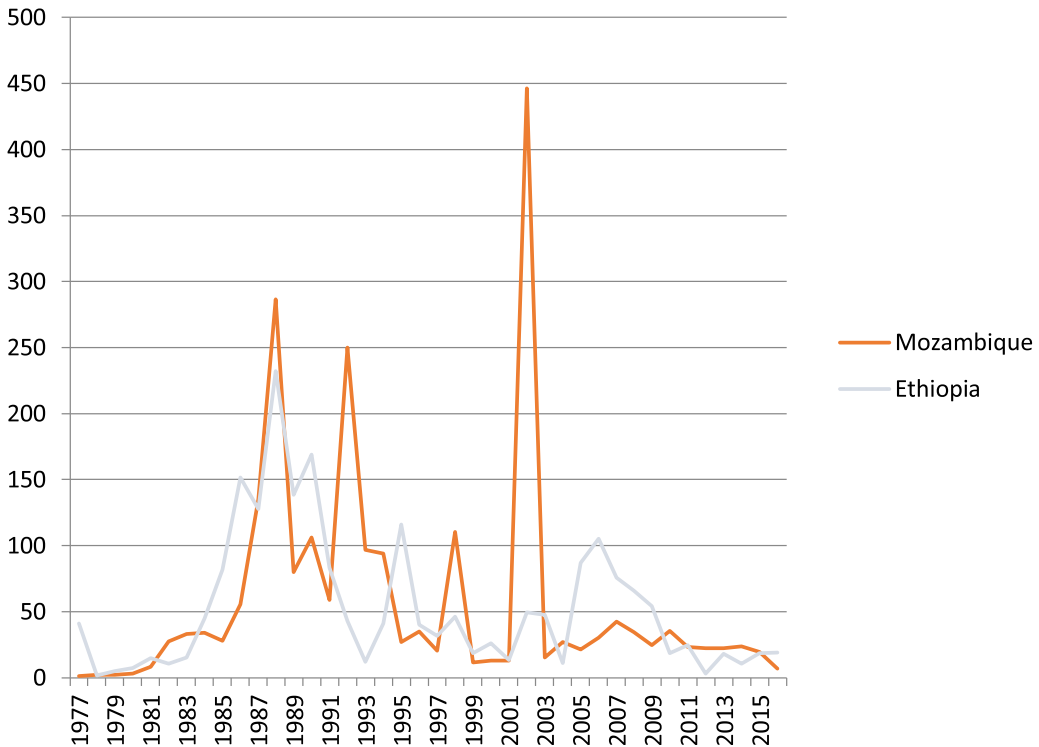


Figure 1. Italian aid (in USD) to Ethiopia and Mozambique (1977–2016). Source: my elaboration of World Bank data available at <http://www.factfish.com/statistic-country/mozambique/net+bilateral+aid+flows+from+italy>; <http://www.factfish.com/statistic-country/Ethiopia/net+bilateral+aid+flows+from+italy>.

in 1985, the Italian government treated many aid projects in Mozambique as urgent and extraordinary, and therefore eligible for payments from the emergency fund. In the mid-1980s, ENI started exploring oil and gas in Mozambique (Tembe and Xu, 2012). In 1986, Italy pledged \$68 million for oil exploration in the country through ENI. Mozambique, however, was mainly attractive for Italy as a source of coal. Thus, the company took steps to develop a coal terminal at Beira port and to purchase 700,000 tons of coal annually (Azevedo, 1991).

In 1987–1988, Italy became the first partner of Mozambique in terms of investment flows and backed the presence of national investors in the country by becoming Mozambique's largest donor of development aid (Hanlon, 1991). In 1988, a joint Ministerial commission agreed to support the funding and construction of the Pequenos Libombos dam near Maputo. Considered an urgent and extraordinary intervention, the contracts were granted without a public tender to Snam Progetti, part of ENI, and Bonifica, part of IRI, had to supervise the works, which were to be carried out by the cooperation of bricklayers and cement workers, CMC Ravenna. According to the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2000), these investments were an integral part of the development cooperation strategy of the Italian government, which, throughout the 1980s, focused on the sector of infrastructure rebuilding (Openaid Italia, 2019).

Building upon such an intense political and economic cooperation between the two countries, the Italian government proposed its support for the peace process. In 1989, the Italian President Francesco Cossiga visited Mozambique accompanied by his chancellor Giulio Andreotti for a meeting with President Chissano to discuss the domestic crisis. In the same year, Italian diplomats and Sant'Egidio launched the mediation process. It was the first time that an international conflict management process involved a non-governmental actor in

carrying out talks with the parties (Giro, 1998). The NGO was selected as a key mediator due to the relationship of trust and credibility it had gained with Renamo due to its development activities and its working presence in zones controlled by the rebels (Jackson, 2005). The Italian government backed the mediation efforts with financial cooperation. When groups of both sides of the conflicts aimed at obtaining significant economic gains, the Italian government understood that aid and other financial incentives were needed to push forward the peace process (Armon *et al.*, 1998).

The Mozambican civil war ended with the peace accord of 4 October 1992. The accord was acclaimed by the Italian press and international observers as an Italian success. According to the journalist Veronese (1992), the success of the peace process was mainly due to Matteo Zuppi, the Catholic priest leader of Sant'Egidio, Mario Raffaelli, Socialist deputy and Manfredi Incisa di Camerana, Italian ambassador in Maputo. The end of the Cold War and the decreasing interest of major powers in local African conflicts had set conditions favorable for such a result. Based on this success, Sant'Egidio was dubbed 'the UN of Trastevere' (Holmes, 2007).

Following the conclusion of the conflict, in December 1992, the Italian government sent Italian soldiers to Mozambique to monitor the peace accord. The fruitful cooperation between governmental and non-governmental forces such as the Catholic Church and the NGO Sant'Egidio in the peace process obtained support from the Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros-Ghali (1993), who acclaimed the unique 'Italian formula' of peace building based on public and secret talks and on official and unofficial diplomatic action. Above all, what distinguished the Italian approach to conflict management, according to Boutros-Ghali, was the 'unique combination of government work and non-governmental peace efforts' (*ibid.*).

As Boutros-Ghali's comment demonstrates, the active role of Sant'Egidio in the peace process has added international legitimacy to local support to the mediation effort coordinated by the Italian government and promoted by Italian business sectors interested in investing in a peaceful country.

Peacebuilding and economic cooperation (1992–2010)

The conclusion of the peace accord in the early 1990s reinvigorated the interests of Italian investors and government institutions in Mozambique. In the new climate of openness of Mozambique to international investments, the Italian government became its major partner in peacebuilding and sponsor of debt relief.

Following the end of the conflict, the Italian government further increased its aid to the country. In 1992–93, Mozambique continued to be the first target of Italian aid, followed by Tanzania and China, and Italy was the first donor of the African country (Openaid Italia, 2019). In the 1990s, Italian aid primarily provided institutional support to foster the post-war recovery and peacebuilding (Openaid Italia, 2019). In 1993, Italy made the largest contribution, over \$11 million, to the innovative instrument of peace building, the Renamo trust fund, established to assist the former rebel group, followed by the US and the EU (Manning and Malbrough, 2010). The innovative aspect of this fund is that it made clear that the Italian government and other donors believed it was important to back the Mozambican government peacebuilding efforts by promoting RENAMO's full participation in the Mozambican political process (Gentili, 2013).

In the second half of 1990s, Mozambique was still the main target of Italian aid, followed by Ethiopia, which was in second place, and Eritrea in eighth place (Venturi, 2018). At the same time, it negotiated with the African country a bilateral investment treaty which was signed in 1998 under the Romano Prodi government.

By the end of 1990s, Sant'Egidio realized that a new war was hitting the African country, the so-called 'HIV war'. In 1998, the NGO launched a program financed by the Italian government aimed at improving the Mozambican health system and the introduction of antiretroviral drugs targeted mainly on pregnant women, mothers, and children. The program laid the bases for the

DREAM (Drug Resources Enhancement against AIDS and Malnutrition) project launched by Sant'Egidio in Mozambique 3 years later.

The year 2000 also marked a new stage in energy cooperation between the two countries, that is, an alliance between ENI and the Portuguese Electricity Company (EDP). In that year, the Portuguese Petrocontrol, active in Mozambique, sold its shares to EDP, ENI, and the Portuguese Amorim Energy (Martins, 2018). Furthermore, after the approval of the Mozambican investment code in 2002, mega acquisition projects were approved in the country, including the offshore natural gas blocks of the Rovuma basin in concession to Anadarko, Statoil, and ENI (Pérez Niño and Le Billon, 2013).

Following approval of the investment code, Italian development cooperation registered a peak in 2002–2003, when it provided \$461 million to the country (Figure 1), which further demonstrated the mutual support between Italian development and economic policies. While in the 1997/98 time frame, Mozambique had ranked second among destinations of Italian aid, in 2002/03, it regained the first place, followed by the Republic of Congo and Tanzania. Moreover, during the meeting between the Italian and Mozambican Presidents, Berlusconi and Chissano, Italy announced the cancellation of \$524 million of debt, which amounted to 100% of the debt with the Italian government (Corriere della Sera, 2002). During the same meeting, Chissano expressed interest in the Italian funds to build the Zambesi bridge, which would ease connections between the north and the south of the country. In 2005, the Italian General Direction for Development Cooperation approved a €200-million fund for construction of the bridge. The Italian society Trevi obtained a contract to build the foundations of the bridge.

Trade relations between Italy and Mozambique also increased in the following years. In 2008, Italy confirmed its position as the main destination of Mozambican products (mainly aluminum), while Italian investors in the country included The Moncada Energy group and AVIA producing biofuel, the SFIR sugar industry, the Nardi group of agriculture machinery, the Rossi Catelli and Simest groups in the food processing sectors. In 2008, ENI had also completed the preliminary tests for drilling operations at the Rovuma basin.

In 2009, the Italian government followed the OECD/DAC Peer Review 2004 recommendations to concentrate its development aid on the sub-Saharan African countries and on those in post-conflict situations. These recommendations gave Italy the justification to maintain Mozambique among its priority targets for development cooperation. The response of the Italian government to the OECD Peer Review was that of concentrating aid flows primarily on sub-Saharan African countries and, more specifically, on those on post-conflict situations. In this category, the Italian government classified countries in two different priority levels and assigned Mozambique to priority level 1 (Bussotti and De Muti, 2012).

In 2009, the African country was also one of the first developing countries to benefit from Italian direct budget support and, along with Vietnam, the target country for twinning business (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 2009). In the same year, the bridge over the Zambesi river was inaugurated and the Italian Minister for Economic Development, Claudio Scajola, visited the Maputo international fair, which further documented the interest of the Italian government in promoting trade and investment cooperation with the country. In 2010, Mozambique was the largest recipient of Italian aid, followed by Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

The commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to norm promotion in the sectors of peacebuilding and economic cooperation in Mozambique since the end of the conflict has demonstrated that the joined pressures of energy and infrastructure companies and Sant'Egidio have affected the decision-making process in the Italian government and its relationship with the African country.

Sustainable energy cooperation (2011)

ENI's gas discovery in 2011 represented a watershed in the Italian relations with Mozambique. Besides increasing its investments in the country, following the discovery ENI embraced a normative approach to energy cooperation by supporting Sant'Egidio health programs in the country. The Italian government considered the project as coherent with the priority area of health cooperation with Mozambique and further increased its diplomatic presence in the country.

Following the acquisition of the Rovuma offshore block, in 2011, ENI made its greatest gas discovery ever. In October 2011, it declared a gas discovery in Mozambique which increased its world reserve by 20% in one fell swoop (Rendina, 2011). This discovery allowed Italy to cover its need for gas for a period of 30 years and was essential to decrease its energy dependency on traditional partners, especially Russia. From a major source of coal, Mozambique became a significant global gas producer. According to World Bank statistics (Baretta, 2015), due to its formidable liquefied natural gas (LNG) reserves, Mozambique has developed the potential to become the third major LNG exporter worldwide, and international investments in this field would allow the country to grow much faster than the average African state.

The privileged relationship between Italy and Mozambique found further confirmation in the decision of the Monti government to appoint the founder of Sant'Egidio, Andrea Riccardi, who participated in the Mozambican peace mediation process, for the first position of Minister for International Cooperation in November 2011.

In October 2012, for the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Mozambican peace process, the Italian foreign minister Terzi declared the crucial importance of the country for Italian foreign policy and stressed the interconnections among peace, development, and energy cooperation. He reiterated the importance of peace for the economic growth of Mozambique and for its transformation into an equal partner of Italy and, more specifically, as a country 'which is managing the discovery of major natural resources in a responsible manner' (Farnesina, 2012). In the same year, former minister for foreign affairs and development cooperation Andrea Riccardi further elaborated on the nexus between development and energy cooperation. He noted that 'a great welfare is approaching' in the country due to 'the presence of the Italian oil company (ENI)' in the Rovuma basin (DW, 2012). From a business perspective, ENI CEO Paolo Scaroni described development cooperation as a crucial part of the company's business strategy (ENI, 2012). Further stressing the centrality of the Mozambique connection in Italian external relations, Mario Giro, in charge of the Sant'Egidio Community's international relations since 1998, was appointed Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation on 3 May 2013.

In 2014, under the Renzi government, ENI issued an investment plan of \$50 billion in Mozambique as part of an international consortium led by the Texas-based Anadarko, the largest private investment ever made in the African country (Vecchiarino, 2017). Vice Minister for Development Calenda said that the government aimed at making Mozambique the key test for penetrating African markets and intended to make this objective the focus of its activity (Africa e Affari, 2014). In the same year, shortly after taking office as President of the Council, Matteo Renzi commented that 'ENI today is a fundamental piece of our energy policy, our foreign policy and our intelligence policy' (Politi, 2016). Consistently with this acknowledgment of the mutual interests of Italy and the energy company, Renzi visited Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, and Angola with the mission of bolstering trade with the African countries in a trip that involved a delegation of big Italian industries including ENI CEO Claudio Descalzi. This was the first visit of an Italian President of the Council in sub-Saharan Africa with the exception of the visit of Romano Prodi to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa in 2006.

Following the visit, the president of Mozambique Armando Emilio Guebuza asked the Italian government to support the country in a second mediation process in order to respond to the new tensions that had erupted between Renamo and Frelimo in 2013. A new conflict did not seem

likely, but the tensions appeared to be an obstacle for international investors and, therefore, for economic growth. In order to tackle tensions between Renamo and Frelimo, the Mozambican president asked Italy to facilitate the return of Renamo leader Dhlakama, who had led the guerrilla campaign against Frelimo from 1975 to 1992, back to Maputo from the mountain region Gorongosa, where he was hiding. The Italian state and the private diplomatic system immediately responded and organized a meeting with Dhlakama with the participation of Italian minister for economic development Carlo Calenda, Italian ambassador Roberto Vellano, and Sant'Egidio's leader Matteo Zuppi. The meeting led to a new peace accord on 5 October 2014. Italian military staff also participated in a small international monitoring peace mission that followed the peace accord. The peace accord led to a new stability stage in Mozambique, with the participation of all the political forces in the democratic peace.

In June 2015, with a controversial choice which demonstrates the powerful connections between the Italian political system and the national energy group, former vice-foreign minister Lapo Pistelli opted to work for ENI. Pistelli justified his choice by claiming that he shared with ENI's CEO Descalzi a focus on Africa, 'the continent where ENI has absolute competences' (*Corriere della sera*, 2015). The focus of the energy company on the energy-development nexus in Africa emerged once again in the same year in the implementation of ENI's 'Water Wells Project' in Mozambique. Throughout this project, ENI aimed at increased access to potable water for the local population, guaranteeing the supply of 20 liters per person per day to 4000 Mozambican families. In order to make the process sustainable and promote public participation, ENI involved major local authorities, community leaders, and members in committees for the management of water aimed at guaranteeing maintenance and financial management of the system (*Wall Street Italia*, 2017).

Another Italian delegation intended to promote dialogue between Frelimo and Renamo leaders in December 2015 emphasized the interest of the Italian government in promoting development cooperation through ENI's investments. On that occasion, the member of the Italian Parliament Lia Quartapelle (2015) stressed that Italy should exert 'its economic weight, and especially that of ENI', since Mozambique needed responsible investments. In 2016, Giulio Sapelli, professor of economic history at the University of Milan, commented on the synergic relationship between ENI and the Italian government, observing that 'ENI has not had such a close relationship with the government since the days of [Enrico] Mattei' (*Politi*, 2016).

Also the synergy between Sant'Egidio and government institutions has continued in recent years. In 2015 and 2016, more than half of Sant'Egidio's budget came from the Italian state (*Open cooperazione*, 2017). In June 2016, the Italian government and the other EU member states asked Sant'Egidio's Mario Raffaelli to intervene in another mediation process in Mozambique which would last 3 or 4 months. The mediation process prepared the ground for the Mozambican general elections, which took place on 15 October 2016. As a result of the elections, Filipe Nyusi, candidate of the ruling Frelimo, was elected President. Renamo leader Dhlakama, however, contested irregularities in the elections and considered the latter crucial for the stability of the country as it prepared for investments by US oil major Anadarko Petroleum Corp and Italy's ENI (*Reuters*, 2014).

The year 2016 was a difficult year for Mozambique, since both the FMI and the main 14 donors had to suspend direct support to the country due to the disclosure of its hidden debt. Yet, ENI's investments in the country did not stop. Moreover, the trilateral cooperation among the state, the energy industry, and the Catholic lobby represented by Sant'Egidio has continued in recent years and has become more explicit. In 2017, the President of the Council Paolo Gentiloni visited Africa. Gentiloni stressed that in 2016, Italy had become the first European (and third international) investor in Africa, with €12 billion of investments. He also declared that ENI 'is the engine of Italian strategic interests in the world' (*Negri*, 2017). At the same time, ENI increased its efforts to promote development cooperation with the country. In March 2017, ENI pledged '350 M tax to Mozambique', a relief for Mozambique's budget

which has been severely affected by donors' decision to halt foreign aid (Mapote, 2017). In October 2017, ENI and Sant'Egidio signed a partnership agreement to implement development cooperation projects in the war against HIV. Sant'Egidio's leadership explained the partnership with ENI (2018) claiming that 'We are grateful to ENI for its know-how, and its fundamental financial support for aid' and for 'saving the life and bringing a future to many Mozambican women and children'. ENI framed its support to Sant'Egidio as consistent with its sustainable energy program (ENI, 2017).

On the governmental side, the strategic document issued by the ministry of foreign affairs for the 2016–2018 period aimed at strengthening cooperation with the Minister of Economic Development to promote economic cooperation with priority countries, such as Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Cuba (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione, 2016). In January 2018, once again Mozambique featured among the priority destinations of Italian development aid. The project that obtained more funds in Italian cooperation to sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 is the ENI-supported and Sant'Egidio administered DREAM program, with € 2.631.900 funds (Openaid Italia, 2019). In the same year, Sant'Egidio was one of the few NGOs funded by the newly established agency for development cooperation.

In a speech that effectively synthesized the close relationship between the Italian investment strategy and the model of development that Italy aims at projecting internationally, deputy Minister of Economy and Finance Laura Castelli (AISE, 2019) commented that in the near future not only Mozambique 'will represent one of the major exporters of mining resources, gas and petrol, but also a model of cooperation' which integrates the economic and social aspects of development. 'We are working, in a synergic way, with the operators that work in typically distant sectors such as oil&gas and cooperation, that have been working for the last years in that territory'.

Conclusions

The main contributions of this study of Italian cooperation with Mozambique are the following. Firstly, it tests the IPE hypotheses that have been widely applied to US and EU trade and development policies and applies them to the specific Italian political and institutional context. Second, by integrating ideological accounts of Italian development policy with an analysis of the role of investors in the policy process, it provides insights for the conditions for the emergence and consolidation of Italy as a normative power through development cooperation and peacebuilding.

The case study has demonstrated that the centralization of powers in the foreign affairs ministry until 2014 and the persisting lack of clear-cut division of competence between the government institutions involved in development policy-making have contributed to the strengthening of the informal diplomacy of Italian investors in strategic sectors as actors in the cooperation with Mozambique. Furthermore, the ideological proximity between the Italian communist and socialist leaders with the Mozambican socialist government in the mid-1970s and 80s created a favorable political context for the influence of economic business groups interested in promoting cooperative relations between Italy and the African country. The pressures of Italian infrastructure and energy companies, in turn, have oriented the decision of the Italian government to prioritize Mozambique as a destination of development aid over the past five decades. Finally, the alliance, firstly implicit and then formalized, between Italian investors and Sant'Egidio, has enabled the government to preserve its normative leadership in different stages of Mozambican history, namely the civil war, post-war reconstruction, and the democracy era. The government has reacted to these changing contexts by changing its foreign policy strategy toward Mozambique. It successfully emerged first as the promoter of a distinct model of conflict management, then of the norm of debt relief, and, finally, of sustainable energy cooperation.

In light of these findings, one can speculate on the prospects for Italian development policy and expect that two factors will affect the ability to emerge as a normative power through

development cooperation. Since Italy is the main European investor in Africa and the fourth most energy-dependent EU member state, this case suggests that Italy will more likely succeed as a development and normative leader in those cases when civil society interests are coherent with foreign investment interests, especially in the crucial sector of energy. While pressures of companies interested in protecting their investments internationally represent an indispensable condition for triggering and sustaining cooperative relations with developing countries, mobilization civil society organizations able to build a trust relationship with local actors in the target state will increase the legitimacy and the likelihood of success of Italy as a norm promoter through development cooperation.

At present, partnerships between NGOs and small and medium enterprises in Italian development cooperation are at an embryonic stage. Future developments in the application of the national development law, and especially the decrees implementing the new law, will affect the ability of Italy to act as a systemic actor in its relations with developing countries and involve partnerships between more diversified actors interested in the promotion of development programs.

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