The Marshall Plan (1948-1952) and Truman's announcement of Point IV programs at the beginning of 1949 seemed to promise the fulfillment of global visions that Italian (and other European) elites had nurtured for decades. The U.S. could now perhaps be persuaded to engage in "triangular schemes" and provide the capital needed for masses of Italian emigrants to settle in Latin America and Africa, where land was presumably plentiful. Historians of modern Italy have written extensively on how the link between emigration and reconstruction dominated the foreign policy of the centrist postwar governments led by Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi. The desire to promote the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Italians led to bilateral agreements with several countries and informed Italy's attitudes towards multilateral undertakings, including the European Recovery Plan (ERP). Less attention has been devoted to the fact that the Italian political elites were especially obsessed with one particular kind of emigration, the promotion of "rural colonization" through the settlement of Italian peasant farmers. Italy became the recipient of ERP funds to promote projects of rural settlement in Latin America, and Italy's desire to secure international capital for land settlement projects affected the establishment and development of the International Refugee Organization's successor, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), established in December 1951. Land settlement through emigration was a major topic of discussion even in the context of the Atlantic Community negotiations after 1950. Especially in Italy, the possibility of coordinating labor, capital, and land on an international scale exercised a profound and long-lasting appeal.

This paper explores the origins and consequences of this Italian idée fixe in the aftermath of war, an obsession that appears all the more remarkable in light of the meager practical results it produced. The land settlements organized in the early 1950s only led to the emigration of a few thousand people, a trickle within the almost 900,000 Italians who emigrated to Latin America

between 1945 and 1960. The few historians who have touched on these ventures have dismissed these experiences as anachronistic failures. This paper contends that, however unsuccessful on their own terms, these settlement projects shed light on visions and aspirations that had wide international appeal and spoke directly to the reinvention of Italy's "place in the world" in the wake of war and defeat.

The appeal of these schemes for Italy's political elites lay first of all in the opportunity to valorize the legacy of Italy's colonial experience in Africa as its colonial empire was being dissolved. An array of actors saw the rural settlements implemented in Libya in the 1930s as a model that could (indeed should) be exported to other contexts. This vision was in turn founded on the notion that Italians had a particular lesson to teach about settlement and agriculture. The development of entire regions could be achieved through the settlement of family farms devoted to polyculture, an approach to colonization called *appoderamento* that was specifically Italian and that had been carried out in land reclamation projects in the peninsula, especially in the fascist period. Moreover, this form of migration involved the family as its unit, making it both natural and desirable. And although family migration had the unfortunate consequence of limiting remittances, it also made emigration more permanent. Mark Choate has coined the category of "emigrant colonialism" to underscore the continuities many Italians saw between the "colonies" of Italians in the Americas or elsewhere and the Italian colonies in Africa. By promoting forms of emigrant colonialism in a new context, the rural settlement of remote lands promised to uphold national prestige at a moment of profound insecurity in the self-perception of Italians, viewed as less than desirable or exposed to brutal exploitation in a variety of international contexts.

These visions of agricultural colonization also testify to enduring and contradictory forms of

ruralism that long survived the end of the fascist regime, which had made ruralization one of its core ideological principles. The postwar rural masses were regarded as both a threat and a resource, both a form of dead weight that could turn Communist at any time and an entrepreneurial vanguard capable of spreading healthy forms of "Italianness" across the world. Above all, the centrist leaders believed that the longer peasants remained in Italy, the more likely they were to fall to subversive ideas. Ruralist ideology extended in more subtle ways to the notion that agricultural colonization would lead to a self-sustaining form of migration. The unique value-producing capabilities of rural labor would ensure the reproduction of the capital initially invested, creating a stream of mortgage payments that would be reinvested in the settlement of new emigrant farmers, in colonization chains unfolding under the watchful eye of Italian-dominated organizations.

These visions largely dovetailed with the aspirations of many Latin American governments, imbued with their own forms of ruralism and more likely than "Anglo-Saxon" elites to see Italians as racially desirable. The details of the negotiations that led to these experiments also afford a window into the muddled and compromised character of U.S. hegemony at the height of the Cold War, when client states such as Italy tried with some success to exploit the hypocrisy and messiness of U.S. immigration policy to their advantage. As for the anachronism of these agricultural schemes in the nuclear age, they actually reveal how Italy's elites (but also many ordinary Italians) conceived of their country's possible futures. They profoundly underestimated how much Italy was bound to change in the course of the 1950s and how much of that change would be linked to an increasingly integrated Europe.