

'AMERICANIZATION' VERSUS 'EUROPEANIZATION' IN ITALIAN FOREIGN  
POLICY

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## **ABSTRACT**

PATRICK SGUEGLIA: 'Americanization' Versus 'Europeanization' in Italian Foreign Policy  
(Under the direction of Donald Searing)

Italy's foreign policy since the end of the Cold War is routinely characterized as 'inconsistent' and 'weak,' when compared to the foreign policies of its European counterparts. It is in this context that Italy is faced with the ever-present choice of linking its foreign policy to the framework of the European Union or adhering to its traditionally strong relationship with the United States. Critics argue that this division is rather obvious, manifesting itself along ideological lines, with the centre-left in Italy arguing for a more 'Europeanist' direction and the centre-right a more 'Atlanticist' direction in Italian foreign policy. However, my analysis will show that although Italy has been somewhat active in the international arena during this period, domestic political fragmentation and inherent institutional weakness effectively limits Italy from developing a clear and coherent direction in foreign policy and in the end, no clear-cut division really exists at all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Many prominent scholars find it difficult to compare Italian foreign policy with that of any other European nation. Filippo Andreatta points out that “Italy’s status is uncertain and ambivalent between that of the least of the great powers or the largest of the smaller powers” (Andreatta 2008: 169). Throughout the Cold War, Italy’s foreign and security policy was overwhelmingly dependent on the international context, as national security was heavily integrated into the Atlantic and European frameworks. Italy emerged a very weak state after World War II and was highly dependent on the defense and security umbrella offered to it by the United States through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance. When the Soviet Bloc collapsed however, expectations for a more dynamic foreign policy quickly emerged, fueled in part by the rise of new political parties in place of the old elites. Yet, Italian post-Cold War political parties, both centre-left and centre-right, have attempted to keep the country’s security firmly anchored to NATO and the EU because they have continued to offer invaluable guarantees of protection, especially from the instability and conflict that Italy currently faces today in its near abroad (Alcaro 2010: 131).

In my thesis, Italy’s post Cold War foreign policy will be assessed with special attention being placed on the many critiques that routinely characterize Italy as embracing an increasingly ‘Americanophile’ or pro-US position while exhibiting a lack of enthusiasm in European affairs. Much of the literature suggests that when the Italian centre-right is in

power, Italian foreign policy is often criticized as *swinging* in favor of the US, while strengthening Italy's ties with its EU counterparts seems to be the goal of the centre-left. My thesis will challenge this assessment. I will begin with a brief historical background of the Cold War and post-Cold War political climate in Italy. Then, through a series of case studies, I will examine prominent Italian foreign policy decisions made by both left and right governments at crucial moments in the post-Cold War period that will prove my general notion that while pro-US sentiment may increase when the centre-right is in power and pro-European with the centre-left, this is primarily rhetoric and void of any real substance as Italian foreign policy is full of weaknesses and inconsistencies. Any clear-cut division between the left and right in foreign policy matters is routinely blurred due to frequent domestic political fragmentation and inherent institutional weakness in Italy.

This 'Americanization' argument is more of a traditional characteristic of Italian foreign policy, rather than a political strategy championed by one side or the other. It will be made clear that in the post-communist period, Italy is not by any means subservient to one side or the other, but merely acting within the limits of any rational political actor in the international arena, protecting its national interests abroad while trying to assert itself on the world stage. Upon closer examination of this unique relationship that exists between Italy, the United States, and Europe, it is necessary to mention the fact that there is no clear alternative to this debate, as due to her 'medium' size, Italy traditionally tries to 'punch above its weight' (Andreatta 2008: 179), yet has routinely been excluded from being one of the major players in the EU. Nuti describes this early choice that Italy made towards the US when he quotes a speech made by former Italian Ambassador Roberto Ducci in 1963:

“If we have to make do with a mock Europe or with some Anglo-French *pastiche*, then it would be better not to play the game and support the Atlantic Community instead. [With] Italy unable to be independent and Europe unable to proceed with a real integration, than the richest and most distant master is always best” (Nutti 2003: 91).

While Ducci’s speech is rather cynical in his description of the Italian inclination in favor of the Americans during the Cold War, it is generally agreed upon by scholars that “the American card has worked well in Italian politics-foreign as well as domestic- because it has often made it possible to ‘kill a number of birds with a single stone’” (Crocchi 2005: 19-20; Nutti 2003: 92).

## CHAPTER 2

### ITALY'S GEOGRAPHICAL & GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Geopolitically, Italy has always played an important role since the Italian peninsula is in a geostrategic location in the Mediterranean Sea between continental Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. “Italy’s ambivalent geographical position is described as a sort of centaur, with its head well stuck into Europe and hooves reaching down into the Mediterranean” (Coralluzzo 2008: 115). As a result of this unique geographic position, Italy is undoubtedly more exposed and vulnerable than other countries to any critical developments in the political and economic sector of this area, so it is understandable that the entire region occupies an increasingly important position in Italian foreign policy. Croci points out that because of its geographical position, Italy is on the ‘front line’ when dealing with the new threats that Europe faces in today’s changed environment. “The Italian peninsula represents, in fact, the closest and most porous, and hence the favorite, point of access to Europe by economic migrants, people claiming to be political refugees, and Islamic terrorists” (Croci 2007: 125). However, Coralluzzo makes an interesting point regarding Italy’s location in the Mediterranean and how its allies can benefit. He argues that its geographical position should never be considered a barrier to Atlanticism or Europeanism, but rather as a geopolitical ‘blessing’ to be used to improve the country’s position within the Euro-Atlantic community. In essence, this consists of making Italy’s Mediterraneanism and advantage to the US and Western interests as well as national ones (Coralluzzo 2008: 116).



## CHAPTER 3

### ITALIAN POLITICAL HISTORY: POST-WORLD WAR II & COLD WAR

At the end of the Second World War, Italy was a weak and vulnerable country defeated and destroyed during the War. With the drawing of new political and ideological boundaries in the immediate aftermath, Italy found itself on the 'front line' of this new ideological battle between the democratic West and the communist East as, "located on the edge of the anti-Soviet bloc, Italy's territory was a valuable asset for the US and NATO" (Alcaro 2010: 132). Even more so, "the presence of the largest Communist party outside the Soviet bloc gave an internal as well as external flavor to the Cold War in Italy" (Andreatta 2008: 170). The Italian government in the late 1940s realized this and opted for a policy of active support for the US, and integration at both the transatlantic and European levels. In 1949, Italy became a founding member of NATO and is still to this day an active member in the Atlantic Alliance, with several major NATO bases and installations still present on Italian soil. Rimanelli argues "geostrategic exposure to the sea and to powerful, hostile neighbors made it imperative for Italy's national security to attain both a permanent peacetime military alliance with the hegemonic European land-power, and a parallel naval one with the Mediterranean's hegemonic maritime Power [US or NATO] to secure coastal defense" (Rimanelli 1997: XXIII). NATO and the USA have both been Italy's key allies on all fronts. Italy's membership in the Alliance has permitted the country to benefit by securing defense at a relatively low cost, yet becoming a valuable key geostrategic player for NATO.

During the 1950s, Italy stood out as being a strong advocate of European integration, with Atlanticism and Europeanism becoming the “Iodestars” of Italian foreign and security policy (Croci 2007: 121). Whenever these two pillars tended to diverge, successive Italian governments have always tried to bring them back to the original course. “If this attempt failed and the Italian government was called upon making a choice between following some (usually French) attempt to establish Europe as a third force, they always shied away from following such passing chimeras and privileged the transatlantic link” (Croci 2005: 18). This unwavering support for the United States was in effect an effort to counter balance the aspirations of France, Germany and/or the United Kingdom. As time went by, successive Italian governments managed to organize foreign policy in such a way as to reduce the constraints coming from these polarized and ideological political systems that were then dividing the international system. Italy was always a strong advocate of the development of a joint European security identity and later European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) “as long as there were conceived, clearly and uncompromisingly, as complementary, and not alternatives to the strengthening of NATO” (Croci 2005: 18). This has been the Italian stance all along: a strong advocate for the development of any type of communal European defense entity, but always in a framework that purely complements NATO, not hinders it. As former Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema put it, “the Italian government is convinced that developing a European defense identity would strengthen inter-Atlantic relations, not least because it would move towards overcoming a division of labor among allies that is obsolete thereby allowing for more effective management of current world crises” (Croci 2005: 19).

Italy's historical relationship with the USA, is considerably more complex than one based exclusively on geopolitical considerations, being characterized by Nuti as "an almost structural inclination" (Nuti 2003: 101). Even today, many Italians express a strong affinity for the US as not only does a quite large Italian Diaspora exist in the US, but also the US military was the primary force involved in the liberation of the Italian peninsula during WWII. Nuti further points out that in the immediate post-War period it became clear that strong relations with the United States was the only "lever Italian diplomacy could use to regain some of its previous standing, because not only did the US not regard Italy as a traditional enemy, but the warm feelings of the Italo-American community for its old homeland were a precious asset for Italian foreign policy, which American politicians could not afford to neglect" (Nuti 2003: 93).

Consequently, throughout the Cold War, Italy not only aligned itself with America on security matters, but there was a high level of American intervention in its domestic affairs as well, with successive US Ambassadors routinely speaking out against the Italian Communist Party (the largest in the Western world at the time) and providing a sort of an international legitimization by actively supporting the centrist Christian Democrats (DC) and later the Socialist Party (PSI). In turn, the DC and PSI frequently worked to magnify the Communist threat knowing perfectly well that the Americans, quite sensitive to such a threat, would be willing to do almost anything to prevent Communist electoral gains. As part of this, Italian governments routinely accepted American choices in security and defense issues "without much of a struggle" (Croci 2005: 20). It is important to note here however, that this does not mean, as often argued, that for a period of 50 years Italy did not have a foreign and security policy. In fact, quite to the contrary, as although Italy may have accepted these choices,

numerous “attempts were made to ply the relationship with Washington to pursue what was perceived as the country’s national interest, and friction arose when the search for a more autonomous role clashed-or threatened to clash-with US interests, in particular in the Mediterranean and the Middle East” (Nuti 2003: 94). A more in-depth analysis of Italy’s engagements in these regions that raised eyebrows in Washington will be conducted in later sections. However, it is important to note here that even early on during the Cold War period, when Italy accepted this reliance on the Americans for foreign and security policy, deviations did occur. Like most rational actors, Italy began asserting her influence in regions of national interests in its near abroad, even if it was in direct contradiction to US policy at the time. It is subtle cases like this that foreshadow the weakness and inconsistencies that are present in Italian foreign policy today.

## CHAPTER 4

### ITALIAN ADAPTATION TO THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Since the end of the Cold War however, Italy has had to seriously rethink its security arrangement. “The end of the superpower rivalry changed the international system, with deep repercussions for Italy” (Andreatta 2008: 173). If, on the one hand, the strategic landscape appeared less threatening, on the other hand threats have been more diffuse and fragmented, and responses less coordinated. This raised fears of Italian isolation in front of concrete dangers in South Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean, as its traditional partners preferred *ad hoc* coalitions and arrangements rather than seeking institutional involvement” (Andreatta 2008: 173). In this new environment, Italian security is no longer guaranteed by simple membership in the Alliance and therefore, “Italy has had to revise its traditional role as a ‘security-consuming’ country and embark on an effort to become also a ‘security-producing’ country” (Crocì 2003: 267).

Thus, since the early 1990s, Italian governments have pursued a number of policies aimed at reinforcing and functionally linking different multilateral organizations of which the country is a member (UN/NATO/EU) in such a way as to enable them, individually and/or collectively, to meet the new type of threat to which Italy is particularly exposed given its proximity to two turbulent regions: the Balkans and the southern shore of the Mediterranean (Crocì 2003: 267). Commenting on the Italian situation, Salvo Ando, former Italian Minister of Defense in 1992 stated: “we have until recently been a security-consuming country. We

have consumed the security produced and offered to us by our allies. This has implied a freely chosen renunciation of part of our sovereignty as well as some of its costs. This has also led to an unwillingness, if not inability, on the part of politicians and the country in general, to think fully about our security, military means, their preparation and their possible use. In the future it is overwhelmingly evident that we will have to increasingly become a security-producing country” (Croci 2003: 268-269). It is within this framework that the stage is set for Italy’s foreign policy today, not just in security matters, but also in the ever-present debate between the US and the EU’s role in Italian foreign policy.

The change of the international landscape in the early 1990s was accompanied by an equally major change domestically in Italy. New parties moved from the fringes to the center of the political stage after the tectonic *mani pulite* scandal rocked Italy, sweeping aside the old Christian Democrat and Socialist elite and ushering in a new period for the country, which unofficially brought about the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. “Unlike the ‘old system,’ in which a pro-Western coalition continuously controlled the government against a Communist-led opposition, the ‘new system’ envisaged a more ‘normal’ situation in which centre-right and centre-left coalitions competed for power with equal chances and with an equally pro-Western stance” (Andreatta 2008: 173). However with regards to foreign policy, Alcaro, points out the fact that, “these new or relatively new forces came from very different cultural backgrounds, and not all of them felt a special commitment to Italy’s foreign policy tradition” (Alcaro 2010: 133). Thus, since 1994, centre-left and centre-right governments have alternated in power. Although a high level of fractiousness and instability routinely characterizes the ruling coalitions, this newly emerged bipolar system has nonetheless

presented the electorate with a wider range of foreign and security policy options than in the past.

NATO also witnessed a partial transformation during the 1990s. Changes were made to involve expansion to the east, and a new mandate to deal with the security challenges and risks in the post-Cold War environment. According to a recent NATO 'Strategic Concept,' the Alliance retains its traditional task of repelling an armed attack against the territory of any of its members, and keeping an eye on the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and their means of delivery. The Alliance must be ready to respond to 'new' threats such as acts of terrorism, sabotage, and organized crime, as well as be able to quickly respond to any disruption of the flow of vital resources as well as 'uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area' (Croci 2003: 271). Italy never opposed NATO's eastern enlargement, but would liked to have seen the process progress a little slower, in order to give the EU time for its own enlargement. In other words, Italy would have preferred the two enlargements to proceed harmoniously in order to avoid any widening of the gap in membership between the two organizations. This would risk complicating the already difficult relationship between NATO and the EU in the security field (Croci 2003: 271).

Italy has accepted the fact that, in this new post-Cold War era, 'out-of-area' missions must be undertaken in the Alliance's near abroad. It has made it clear, however, that such initiatives should not be taken unilaterally, but should instead receive some kind of legitimization from the UN. In fact, Article 11 of the Italian constitution emphasizes the fact that war may only be used in a defensive situation. It does, however, commit Italy to abide by its duty as a member of the UN and other international organizations in order to play a part

“in repelling challenges and attacks to the peaceful coexistence between states and peoples” (Crocì 2007: 128). The Italian government does embrace the fact that human rights must be protected and the fact that “interventions by regional organizations or coalitions of the willing should, however, be preceded by the development of clear and realistic criteria of intervention” (Crocì 2003: 272). Increasingly, Italy has played a leading role in NATO as a mediator by reconciling, or ‘smoothing out’ the differences among the different Alliance members on the meaning of security, the type and the severity of threats, and the means of intervention. It goes without saying that the differences that exist usually divide the USA on the one side and many European countries on the other, with Italy often playing the middleman.

With regards to Italy’s European aspirations during the Cold War, this European dimension contributed significantly to the government’s balancing act domestically in Italy. The Italian Communist Party routinely accused governments of being too subservient to the USA. They accepted Italy’s membership in the European Community well before accepting its position in NATO, because “even though the EC was considered a ‘Western’ institution it was clearly one not led by the USA” (Andreatta 2008: 172). And as economic cooperation within the region began to ‘spill over’ during the 1970s and European Political Cooperation (EPC) gradually began to develop, Italy was a strong supporter of the initiative. Andreatta argues that EPC was seen as the first effort on Europe’s part to take a position distinct from that of the USA (Andreatta 2008: 172). Italy’s most visible effort in the 1990s was the determination with which it pursued a series of drastic domestic reforms that were necessary to qualify it for entry into the euro zone. During this same period, Italian governments actively participated in the development of the EU wide Common Foreign and Security



Policy (CFSP) framework. “Italy has fully supported the development of the CFSP and ESDP” (Crocì 2003: 273). However, as mentioned previously, Italy regards the development of the ESDP clearly and unpromisingly as complementary, and not an alternative to the strengthening of NATO. According to former Italian Prime Minister D’Alema, “management of the new crises calls for integrated instruments: political, economic, and military” (Crocì 2003: 273) and Italy has actively used all of these instruments in the many crisis situations it has been confronted within its near abroad, throughout the last decade.

## CHAPTER 5

### CASE STUDY: ITALIAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE BALKANS (1990s)

Nothing could illustrate this better than the active role that Italy has played in the promotion of peace and stability in the Balkans, a region in which Italy has been engaged since the early 1990s. “Throughout the 1990s, Italy played a largely constructive role in attempting to stabilize the region through political and diplomatic means” (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 169) The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the crisis of the nascent Albanian democracy, presented Italy with some of its most difficult challenges to date, right at the Italian borders. At the same time, this ever-evolving challenge across the Adriatic offered Italy a great opportunity to raise its international profile by engaging in multilateral operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, and then by assuming a leading political, military, and humanitarian role in Albania (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 169-170). During the Yugoslav dissolution, Italy immediately engaged in what Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca call an ‘equidistant’ approach to encourage peace and stability through mediation, diplomacy, humanitarian and developmental support, never ‘assigning blame’ or taking sides. The Italian government was active in finding a solution to the violence through engagement with the main international organizations involved such as the United Nations (UN), the Contact Group, NATO, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Throughout the decade, Italy invested around EUR 1 billion in the western Balkans aiming to “consolidate democratic institutions, foster cooperation between different

national communities and develop local economies” (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 172).

During the Bosnian War, Italy actively condemned human rights violations among all parties and worked diplomatically in an attempt to foster mediation and negotiations. However, due to the domestic political instability Italy was facing during this period, it was initially left out of the Contact Group (USA, Russia, France, and Germany). The Group was initially tasked with devising and implementing a coherent international policy towards the crisis. Many scholars saw this as “the low point” of Italy’s influence in Europe (Romano 2009: 9). In retrospect, Europe’s engagement in this crisis was also seen as a failure with the situation only being resolved after US-led NATO air-strikes convinced the parties to agree to a peace deal, the so called Dayton Peace Agreement, which subsequently ended the conflict. Italy eventually contributed 2,549 military personnel to IFOR (NATO Implementation Force), to monitor the implementation of the Agreement, and was eventually invited into the Group as a full time member (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 176).

With regards to Kosovo, Europe again presented a divided front; however Italy this time, was much better prepared because its domestic political crisis had somewhat stabilized. Italy was initially critical of the war and worked to avoid it, once again asserting its policy of ‘equidistance.’ However, when it was made evident that that Italian participation in the war was necessary to keep Italy “firmly aligned with the West” the country quickly responded to fulfill its Euro-Atlantic commitments, contributing bases and military contingents to the NATO led KFOR (Kosovo Force) (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 179).

Interestingly enough, the crisis in Kosovo came during the centre-left coalition of Massimo D’Alema, the first Italian government to be led by a former leader of the Italian

Communist Party (PCI). Italian participation in the conflict was seen by many as a test of its full commitment and complete reliability as a NATO member and US ally, however, Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini made it clear when he stated in July of 1998 that the position of D'Alema and his government was that "an intervention by NATO in Kosovo without a UNSC mandate [was] absolutely impossible" (Croci 2005: 20). It was evident that there were doubts in Washington about the sincerity of the D'Alema government's international alignments, and more importantly about Italy's capacity to play a significant role at a time of international crisis. However, in the end, D'Alema bowed to what Croci coins "the traditional guiding principles of Italian foreign policy" (2007: 127), when he decided to seek approval for full Italian involvement in the conflict confirming Italy's commitment as a reliable Atlantic partner.

The conflict in Kosovo is a perfect example of the weaknesses and inconsistencies that manifest themselves, time and time again, in Italian foreign policy. In this case, it is the issue of rhetoric versus reality, in that while initially D'Alema's centre-left government was opposed to intervention, as FM Dini expressed through his rather callous statement on the matter, when it came down to decision time, Italy quickly adhered to tradition by joining the US led NATO intervention force. Ironically enough, due to Italy's geographical position and experience in the region, the Italian contribution was considered to be essential, "especially in the logistics of NATO's Operation Allied Force" (Croci 2005: 20). In hindsight, D'Alema later explained in his memoirs that he decided to seek involvement in the war not only because he considered intervention justified by Belgrade's atrocious behavior toward the Kosovar population, but because he felt he needed "to prove to the US his own personal credibility as a legitimate partner and his full reliability as a member of a definitely pro-

Western, moderate left” (Nuti 2003: 99). He explained this ‘conversion’ when he pointed out “my biggest problem was relations with the US, how the Americans would evaluate me” (D’Alema 1999: 3).

The situation in Albania, was an entirely different ‘animal.’ Throughout most of the decade “European partners and institutions delegated to Italy, the task of limiting potentially negative cross-border implications of the Albanian transition” (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 181). Even though this role was never confirmed by any political decision, Italy’s role became effective with the Albanian financial crisis in 1996, which resulted in as many as “70% of Albanian families losing all or part of their savings” (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 181). This financial scam, which ruined tens of thousands eventually, led to an armed rebellion in March 1997. Due to Albania’s close proximity to the Italian mainland, it was largely considered an ‘Italian area of responsibility.’ Italy saw the crisis as a national emergency and immediately set up a naval blockade around Albanian shores. This soon led to the UN authorized Italian-led ‘Operation Alba,’ which was deployed to protect international monitors and the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Italy took the lead among EU member states, and it is generally agreed that “this military mission, the first one entirely planned and headed by Italians, positively contributed to stabilizing the political situation and stemming the flow of refugees” (Belloni and Morozzo della Rocca 2008: 182). The Italian-led response to the crisis also illustrates the fact that Italy is able to maneuver between its two spheres of influence, take up initiatives upon its own in traditional Italian manner (with UN backing), and lead a successful assistance mission. Andreatta points out that Italy’s crisis assistance mission during the Albanian financial crisis was nothing short of a “remarkable demonstration of its ability to defend its national interest on its own if need

be” (Andreatta 2008: 174). Many scholars considered this to be one of the ‘cornerstones’ of the centre-left government’s foreign policy agenda at the time, reiterating Italy’s unique position not only in EU and US circles of influence, but in the Mediterranean as well.

## CHAPTER 6

### CASE STUDY: ITALIAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA (1990-2008)

Now that Italy's significance in its southern sphere of influence has been established, its time we turn to examine in further depth this rather troubled but politically important region on Italy's southern borders. The Middle East and North Africa are areas that many argue present not just Italy, but the international arena as a whole, with some of its most current pressing security concerns, especially with the current popular uprisings in the region. Since the Treaty of Rome, successive Italian governments have tried to strengthen the southern reaches of the EU by attempting to connect the EU to the Mediterranean. Italy has consistently worked to move the greater Mediterranean to the center of its and the EU's external policies from the 1970s (EPC) until the present day, and currently enjoys strong relations with many Maghreb and Mashreq countries. Italy has been active in the EU's policies towards the Mediterranean since the initial *ad hoc* economic agreements offered to the region through the European Development Fund (EDF). With the launch of EPC in the 1970s, the Global Mediterranean Policy was initiated and spearheaded largely by the efforts of France and Italy (Carbone 2008: 158). The end of the Cold War opened up new opportunities for Italy to play a more assertive role in the international arena, and particularly, in the Mediterranean. In the early 1990s, Italy proposed the idea of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), in effort to comprehensively engage the region by "integrating economic, political, and military aspects into a global

cooperative strategy.” However citing rejection by Germany, the UK, and to a lesser extent France, and not even counting the general pessimistic attitude of the US, Italy decided to withdraw its proposal (Carbone 2008: 159).

It became apparent that to be successful, any type of policy would require reinforcement of the EU’s foreign and security policy. Italy immediately ‘jumped on board’ by supporting the nascent CFSP and the subsequent Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which were agreed at the Barcelona European Council in November 1995 (Carbone 2008: 161). Italy’s policy in the Mediterranean during this period was almost completely delegated to the EU, since “the EMP provided Italy with a multilateral framework within which it can conduct a Mediterranean policy more significantly than it could otherwise do even in cooperation with the other Southern European nations” (Aliboni 1999: 92). The Italians immediately wanted to take the lead and, to that end, proposed a Charter for Peace and Stability. After the proposal was met with resistance from various northern EU Member States, Italy dropped it. As Carbone describes “in sum in an area where the Italians had hoped to take the lead they were once again frustrated by the lack of willingness of other European states to engage in concrete activities” (Carbone 2008: 161).

Despite the initial enthusiasm for EMP, it is now widely agreed among scholars and policy makers that EMP fell short of its stated goals; and it is considered by many commentators to be a failure. The negotiation and adoption of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in June and December 2003 “was meant to strengthen the bilateral links between the EU and its neighbors in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean” (Carbone 2008: 162).



ENP, even to this day, is considered a successful feature of the CFSP. However in regards to the Mediterranean aspects, ENP lacked an overarching framework for regular meetings, and was actually built upon existing Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements. This in practice, really only developed a framework for which to bring in EMP under the CFSP umbrella. The most recent development in the framework of EU-Mediterranean relations is Nicolas Sarkozy's French-led Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (BPUfM), in which Italy has taken an active role. BPUfM's effectiveness has yet to be assessed; but after being launched in 2007, the initiative has thus far been judged a success, with the program actively addressing many of EMP's shortfalls. Italy found BPUfM very attractive, since it offered the further possibility of dealing with the economic and social problems of the Mediterranean regions. As these issues directly and indirectly affect Italy it was immediately a proponent of the proposal (Carbone 2008: 164).

Italy's direct engagements in the region have been quite numerous, as the country has numerous political and economic bilateral initiatives with different states in the region. It was an Italian NGO that found a solution to the infamous 1995 Algerian crisis, with the present period seeing Italy enjoying strong relations with the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Also, throughout the 1980s and 90s, it was Libya rather than Algeria that became the Maghrebi country on which Italy subsequently focused much of its attention and diplomatic initiatives (Coralluzzo 2008: 121). Italy had always been an advocate of engaging Tripoli and the 'delusional Colonel,' even against US wishes, which had long favored a policy of isolation. After Ghaddafi's cooperation with the UN requests in April of 1999, Italy was one of the first countries to which the Libyan regime opened up. The Italian energy giant ENI SpA, present in Libya since the 1950s, is now one of that country's leading western

enterprises; and Libya today is Italy's largest supplier of oil and its third largest supplier of natural gas (Varvelli 2010: 117). "The Americans continue to follow closely, step by step, the Italian policy of opening towards its arch enemies [Iran and Libya], suggesting prudence but still believing it useful that a NATO allied country should keep an open channel of communication with them" (Coralluzzo 2008: 122). In addition to these economic relations, which are enough on their own in explaining Libya's importance for Italy, there is also a significant role that Libya plays in the security of the greater Mediterranean. With the new Treaty of Friendship signed in 2008, the two countries are actively engaged in discussing pressing current issues, such as curbing the number of illegal immigrants that reach Italian shores in boats from Libya, and increasing commercial relations. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi even traveled to Sirte on 2 March 2009 to publicly apologize for the former colonization of Libya by the Italian State, the first western country to apologize to a former colony (Varvelli 2010: 120).

Probably the most significant of these engagements in the region is the rather good relations Italy enjoys with the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose re-integration into the international community has been supported by Italy since the 1990s. The 'rogue state' status that the US and Western powers use to characterize Iran is no secret, nor is the Iranians purported interest in obtaining nuclear technology. It is interesting to note that Italy was one of the first countries to benefit from Iran's improved political relations with the West in the late nineties, and is currently Iran's most important trading partner in Europe, and fourth most important trading partner in the world (Croci 2007: 129). Italy's strong economic and political ties with Iran mean that Italian interests have been in direct opposition with US foreign policy, and this is seen by some as an ally's direct challenge to the foreign policy of the

United States. During the West's initial negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program in 2003, Tehran specifically requested that Italy be included at the table, but the country was nevertheless left out of the negotiations (Zanon 2007: 564).

The Italian position soon became even more ambivalent when Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition entered into government in 2006. Foreign Minister D'Alema and Prodi met with their Iranian counterparts frequently throughout the year, with D'Alema painting a clear picture of Italy's position at the time when he stated that "any economic sanctions on Iran would hit the countries that have the strongest economic ties with it hardest, and in Europe, Italy is Iran's strongest trading partner" (Zanon 2007: 564). He also made it clear that Italy was being put at an unfair advantage, and compared the situation to 'taxation without representation' in the sense that Italian interests were being harmed by sanctions that Italy was not able to control. In the end, when resolutions against Iran were voted in the UN Security Council and the EU Council, Italy, which actually held a non-permanent seat in the UNSC at the time, aligned itself with its Western partners and most importantly the US, by voting in favor of the sanctions. It is quite evident in this case, that in regards to Iran, we were presented with a situation in which Italy was asserting herself in defense of national interests, through this rather hyped-up pro-Iranian rhetoric. However, when it came down to the substantive side of Italy's position, and the time to make a decision came, Italy immediately aligned itself with the position of the Americans, and supported the subsequent sanctions against the Islamic régime.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY

With this historical analysis, and more importantly, these recent case studies in hindsight, I would like to shed some light on why we are faced with these inconsistencies, time and time again, in Italian foreign policy. This is something Croci coins “continuity and change” in Italian foreign policy (Croci 2007: 118). It is important here to note here the strong influence domestic politics plays in shaping Italian foreign policy, with some scholars going as far to say that domestic politics in Italy “dominates” Italian foreign policy (Andreatta 2008: 177). More importantly, it is widely agreed upon that Italy’s domestic political system is considered weak and fragmented when compared to the systems of most other modern democracies. This has been obvious throughout this analysis, and it goes without saying that it is quite difficult to maintain course when governments are frequently changing in Italy. Andreatta goes on to argue that it is the “inferior durability of Italian governments” that has considerably weakened prospects for strong and coherent international action to be taken by her. Consecutive Italian governments in the post-Cold War era are generally known for being rather short-lived, with many lasting a span of only five years at most. This is obviously quite unfavorable when in comparison to other major democracies, in which eight, ten, or twelve years are not unusual (Andreatta 2008: 177). Furthermore, it can be said that due to the fragmented nature of the post-Cold War Italian political system, the influence of internal politics may have even, to a certain extent, increased its impact on the

conduct of Italian foreign relations. This is undoubtedly due to the changed international system, as Andreatta points out that the post-Cold War world is much more “mutable and ambiguous” allowing for more “freedom of choice” in foreign policy. However, it has also created room for more extemporaneous decisions by leading policy makers, especially when influenced by short-term internal political calculations. It is undeniable that this more permissive international environment has allowed Italy to develop a more “flexible” foreign policy. However, this has at many times clashed with the characteristics of its domestic politics (Andreatta 2008: 177), therefore contributing to these weaknesses and inconsistencies that manifest themselves in the Italian foreign policy of today.

In the future we should not expect to see any major Italian assertions, in any of its traditional spheres of influence. Andreatta argues that this inherent fragmentation of the Italian party system, which was ironically enhanced by a 2005 electoral reform, means, “Italy is less capable of projecting its power and influence abroad, especially in the medium and long term” (Andreatta 2008: 178). This ‘bipolarism’ that is evident in the Italian political system will therefore not only condemn Italy to “less effective international action than its major partners” but it will also make sure that Italy’s “punch will remain below its weight for the foreseeable future” (Andreatta 2008: 179). More alarming is that there is no bipartisan consensus in sight as the two main coalitions have very different views and the differences are, according to Andreatta, “becoming more acute” (Andreatta 2008: 179). The centre-right, dominated by the current Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, puts at the center of its policies first and foremost the relationship with the United States, as well as the numerous unique bilateral relationships that Italy enjoys with a wide range of countries, mostly realized through the ‘close personal’ relationships that Berlusconi boasts with the respective heads of

state of these countries. The centre-left on the other hand, in addition to putting the traditional relationship with the US at the forefront, routinely tries to balance Italy's Atlantic postures with its European ones as well. As a result, we see these erratic inconsistencies in Italian foreign policy. However, as there are no foreseeable alternatives to not only the internal debate, but the external one (EU/US) as well, it is unlikely that we should see any drastic changes anytime soon.

Croci argues that Italy is "constrained" by both domestic and international elements and it is for this reason that Italy's foreign policy will continue to remain inconsistent, unless, a "domestic consensus can be reached." He also points out that because of these constraints, it is unlikely that "new governments can always embark on a new foreign policy" and it is for this reason that we do see occasional continuity (such as through the traditional relationship with the US) (Croci 2007: 118). Consequently, with Italy's recent history of government coalitions holding brief terms in power before the government fails, it makes sense that we see remnants of the former government's policies, as well as any new directions that the present government may be trying to pursue. Noted scholar Christopher Hill writes, "foreign policy exists always on the cusp between choice and constraint" (Hill 2003: 294), a statement, which I believe, relates rather well to the Italian case. Italy is constrained in the international arena when her traditional allegiance to the US comes in direct conflict with her pursuit of national interests with rogue states unfriendly to the US. It faces constraints domestically, due to this instability of the Italian political system as well as to the institutional makeup of the Italian foreign policy system.

Interestingly enough, upon examining the actual institutional makeup of the main foreign policy making institution in Italy (i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), it is rather

surprising to note that “in contrast to what happens in some other countries, in Italy new governments do not replace the top echelons of the civil service with political friends or allies, which undoubtedly reinforces the role of career civil servants” (Crocì 2007: 119). This makes for an interesting point as Mennitti argues that in 2001, when Silvio Berlusconi’s centre-right coalition won the mandate to govern for the second time, Berlusconi was constantly boasting of the drastic changes his government planned to make to the course of Italian foreign policy, whereas Italian diplomatic officials were emphasizing realitive continuity (Mennitti 2002: 11-18). The separation that exists between Italy’s principal foreign policy making institution and the governing coalition, in theory, was meant to be a positive aspect due to the frequent changes in government that is inherent in Italy. However, as is evident through Mennitti’s example, increasingly this disconnectedness only leads to more inconsistencies and flaws in the conduct of Italian foreign relations. Crocì concludes by mentioning that, “one has to be careful, therefore no to equate public statements on foreign policy with the substance of foreign policy especially since politicians, unlike diplomats, have a propensity to emphasize change over continuity in order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors” (Crocì 2007: 119) a theme that presents itself consistently in this analysis. It goes without saying that Italy must seek a balance between this rhetoric and reality in foreign policy, not just to be considered a serious player in the international arena, but to ‘hold its weight’ in line with most other modern democracies of the world.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

In all, it is evident that for a country that was devastated during the Second World War, and remained totally subservient and reliant upon the US security umbrella during the Cold War, Italy has emerged a somewhat significant player on the world stage. Nevertheless, Italy constantly tries to ‘punch above its weight’ while balancing both US and European aspirations in its conduct of foreign relations. Alcaro is on the mark when he states “the emergence of new threats, most notably those related to conflict in Italy’s neighborhood, has compelled the government in Rome to develop a more dynamic security policy which also contemplates military operations abroad” (Alcaro 2010: 143). Yet, Waltson points out, that the end of the Cold War and the subsequent changes in US policy forced everyone, including Italy, to make tough security choices in order to protect their own interests (Waltson 2007: 102). I think this can explain to a large extent the inconsistencies and weaknesses between rhetoric and substance that frequently manifest themselves in Italian foreign policy during the post-Cold War period. While it is evident that Italy makes an asserted effort to distance herself from the US in some decisions, due to the country’s exclusion from the ‘EU-3,’ it generally returns to its traditional postures by quickly falling in line with the US when Italy is asked to make firm decisions on a sensitive security issue facing the country. Croci sums up the debate nicely when he points out a speech given in 2004 by current centre-right Foreign Minister (and former EU Commissioner) Franco Frattini on Italy’s ever present choice



between the US and EU:

“In this world we do not need less America. We need more Europe. But we need Europe as a loyal partner, not as a rival of the US. We do not need a multi-polar world of competing global powers, where the US is counter-balanced by Europe. America and Europe need to work together to establish an effective multilateralism, starting from the United Nations” (Croci 2008: 148).

Italy also needs to mitigate these domestic political constraints that have a negative affect on Italian foreign policy. Most of Italy’s counterparts have found ways to conduct nascent foreign relations without facing discrepancies due to domestic political weakness. However, no rational reform can be proposed, unless the fragmented and bipolar nature of Italy’s political system can be rectified. While it is a rather positive career aspect for the numerous Italian diplomats and civil servants that the ‘political appointee’ system does not exist in Italy, the negative aspect of this is that Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is frequently out of touch with the ruling coalitions in government, and at times has even promoted conflicting standpoints on policy. If Italy ever wants to develop a more clear and coherent foreign policy, all these discrepancies need to be addressed. Although, there may not be many alternatives for Italy in the US/EU debate, institutions and political systems can be reformed.

Nevertheless, this Italian ‘constitutional’ view of joint multilateral efforts in concert with international organizations (instead of choosing between one side or the other) is something Italy would like to increasingly see more of, a point that Frattini reiterates in his speech. However, as long as the US remains the premier hegemonic power in the world, this is a rather null point of view, and in my opinion Italian governments, regardless of their ideological leanings or composition will continue to rely on traditional US support as is necessary. With regards to security, it is undisputable that connecting Italy to NATO has in

many respects, remained the best choice, as it furthers national interests while enhancing the country's prestige abroad. While sometimes Italy may seek to counter-balance the British-French-German influence on CFSP and EU institutions by taking a more pro-US stance, Italy is a country that cherishes its historical ties with great powers, yet values its strategic position in the ever-evolving international arena, especially in its near abroad and beyond.

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