



ITALY'S ATLANTICISM BETWEEN FOREIGN AND INTERNAL POLITICS

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Abstract:

In spite of being a defeated country in the Second World War, Italy was a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance, because the USA highly valued her strategic importance and wished to assure her political stability. After 1955, Italy tried to advocate the Alliance's role in the Near East and in Mediterranean Africa. The Suez crisis offered Italy the opportunity to forge closer ties with Washington at the same time appearing progressive and friendly to the Arabs in the Mediterranean, where she tried to be a protagonist vis a vis the so called neo-Atlanticism. This link with Washington was also instrumental to neutralize General De Gaulle's ambitions of an Anglo-French-American directorate. The main issues of Italy's Atlantic policy in the first years of "centre-left" coalitions, between 1962 and 1968, were the removal of the Jupiter missiles from Italy as a result of the Cuban missile crisis, French policy towards NATO and the EEC, Multilateral [nuclear] Force [MLF] and the revision of the Alliance' strategy from "massive retaliation" to "flexible response". On all these issues the Italian government was consonant with the United States. After the period of the late Sixties and Seventies when political instability, terrorism and high inflation undermined the Italian role in international relations, the decision in 1979 to accept the Euromissiles was a landmark in the history of Italian participation to NATO. After the Cold War, Atlanticism emerged stronger than ever and in the last 15 years the participation of the Italian Armed Forces to military missions abroad has been a primary factor in enhancing the Italian status in international relations. For example two Italian Admirals have been elected Chairmen of NATO Military Committee, in 1999 and in 2008. There is no doubt that during the Cold War the importance of Atlanticism was paramount, as Italy boasted her friendship with the United States, hoping to obtain advantages from it. Italian governments valued the Atlantic Alliance not only for its fundamental military purpose, but also for its importance for the internal political stability. In spite of all her limits and considering both the strictly military and the political aspects, Italy more than other Mediterranean allies, was a sure pillar of NATO.

Keywords: NATO, US-Italian relations, Mediterranean, Communism.

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**Resumen:**

A pesar de tratarse de un país derrotado en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Italia fue un miembro fundador de la Alianza Atlántica, porque los EEUU valoraban su importancia estratégica y deseaban preservar su estabilidad estratégica. Después de 1955 Italia intentó abogar por un papel de la Alianza en Oriente Próximo y en la África Mediterránea, para lo cual la Crisis de Suez le proporcionó la oportunidad tanto de forjar unos lazos más próximos con los EEUU como mostrarse como un país progresista y amigo de los países árabes en el Mediterráneo, donde intentó ser un protagonista del así llamado neo-Atlantismo. Tal conexión con Washington resultaba igualmente instrumental para contrarrestar las ambiciones del General De Gaulle de establecer un directorio Anglo-Francés. Los principales asuntos en la Política Atlántica italiana en los primeros años de las coaliciones de "centro-izquierda" entre 1962 y 1968, eran la retirada de los misiles Júpiter de Italia como resultado de la Crisis de Cuba, la política francesa hacia la OTAN y la CEE, la Fuerza (nuclear) Multilateral (MLF) y la revisión de la estrategia de la Alianza desde la doctrina de la "Represalia Masiva" hacia la de "Respuesta Flexible". En todos estos asuntos el gobierno estuvo en consonancia con los EEUU. Tras el periodo a finales de los años 60 y principios de los 70 cuando la inestabilidad política, el terrorismo y la elevada inflación dañaron el rol italiano en la escena internacional, al decisión de 1979 de aceptar los Euromisiles fue un hito en la historia de la participación italiana en la OTAN. Tras la Guerra Fría, el Atlantismo emergió con mayor fuerza que nunca y en los últimos 15 años la participación de las Fuerzas Armadas Italianas en misiones militares en el extranjero se ha convertido en un factor esencial en el refuerzo del estatus internacional de Italia. Por ejemplo dos almirantes italianos han sido elegidos en el Comité Militar de la OTAN, en 1999 y en el 2008. No hay duda que durante la Guerra Fría la importancia del Atlantismo era esencial: Italia presumía de su amistad con los EEUU, deseando así obtener ventajas de ello. Los gobiernos italianos valoraban no solo su propósito militar, sino también su importancia para la estabilidad política interna. A pesar de todos sus límites y considerando tanto los aspectos estrictamente militares como los políticos, Italia, más que cualquier otro de los aliados del Mediterráneo, era un pilar seguro de la OTAN.

Palabras clave: OTAN, relaciones EEUU-Italia, Mediterráneo, Comunismo.

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1. Italy's Difficult Accession to the Atlantic Pact

On 15th December 1947, Italy recovered formally her full sovereignty when the last Anglo-American occupation troops left the Italian territory, as envisaged by the peace treaty signed on the previous 10th February. On 1st January 1948 the new republican constitution came into force. The same weeks saw the beginning of the process which about 16 months later brought to the formation of the Atlantic Alliance, of which Italy was a founding member.

Italy was on the Western side of the iron curtain: she had been conquered by the Anglo-Americans, the Communist party (and its fellow travellers the Socialists) had left the government coalition on 31st May 1947, just in time to allow Rome's acceptance of the Marshall plan, the general elections of 18th April 1948 will see a great victory of the moderate and pro-Western parties. Notwithstanding, the road to the Atlantic Alliance's membership was by no means easy, for external and internal reasons. This article will concentrate on the former² and mention just very briefly the latter.

The Italian constitution, as a reaction to Fascism, reflected a political culture which was largely dominated by internationalism and by the rejection of power politics, political realism and the use of military force as an instrument of diplomacy. Art. 11 stated: «Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedoms of others peoples and as a means for settling international controversies; it agrees, on conditions of equality with other states, to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among Nations; it promotes and encourages international organizations having such ends in view»³. The majority party, the Christian Democracy [DC], could not be described as pacifist, but was particularly attentive to the Catholic doctrine with required a number of conditions to fight a war (the doctrine of «just war») and to the Church's teaching, which was inclined to consider military force more the source than the solution of problems. In August 1917 Pope Benedict XV had described the First World War as the «useless massacre». Pius XII on 24th August 1939 had proclaimed: «nothing is lost with peace; everything can be lost with war». Catholics believed in the value of international ethic and international right in settling international disputes. However, with the progress of the Cold War, the Pope fully supported the Western determination to defend itself. In his radio message for Christmas 1948 Pius XII described in religious terms the concept of deterrence: «Defence against unjust aggression is absolutely legitimate. To this defence must be committed also the solidarity of the nations, which has the duty of not abandoning the people attacked. The certainty that this duty will be accomplished, will be useful to discourage the aggressor and therefore to avoid war, or, at least, in the worst case, to abbreviate its sufferings»⁴.

² On the negotiations leading to the Italian membership see Barié, Ottavio: «Gli Stati Uniti, l'Unione Occidentale e l'inserimento dell'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica», in Barié, Ottavio (ed.) (1988): *L'alleanza occidentale. Nascita e sviluppi di un sistema di sicurezza collettivo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 115-207; Barié, Ottavio: «The Final Stage of Negotiations: December 1948 to April 1949», in Di Nolfo, Ennio (ed.) (1991), *The Atlantic Pact Forty Years Later. A Historical Reappraisal*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, pp. 41-57; Varsori, Antonio: «The First Stage of Negotiations: December 1947 to June 1948», *Ibid.*, pp. 19-40; Varsori, Antonio: «La scelta occidentale dell'Italia (1948-1949)», *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, vol. 1 no. 1 (1985), pp. 95-160 and no. 2, pp. 303-368; Pastorelli, Pietro: «L'adesione dell'Italia al Patto Atlantico», *Storia Contemporanea*, vol. 14, no. 6 (1983), pp. 1015-1030.

³ The Italian Constitution includes 15 specific articles (over 139) on foreign relations. See de Leonardis, Massimo: «Costituzione, politica estera italiana e scenario internazionale», in Poli, Luigi (ed.) (1997), *Costituzione e difesa*, Roma, Istrid, pp. 65-78.

⁴ Text in

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/speeches/1948/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19481224_un-tempo_it.html (Author's translation).



In view of the departure of the Anglo-American troops and fearing a Communist *coup* supported by Yugoslavia, the Italian government requested from the United States a guarantee of intervention if the country's territory or its democracy were threatened. On 13th December the White House confined itself to recall that in the case «freedom and independence of Italy ... are being threatened directly or indirectly, the United States, as a signatory of the peace treaty and as a member of the United Nations, will be obliged to consider what measures would be appropriate»⁵. On 22nd January 1948, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, describing at the House of Commons his project of *Western Union*, stretched his hand to Italy: «We shall have to consider the question of associating other historic members of European civilisation, including the new Italy, in this great conception. Their eventual participation is of course no less important than that of countries with which, if only for geographical reasons, we must deal first»⁶. But the Italian government didn't like the military character of the proposed Union; moreover in the previous days a crisis had exploded in the Anglo-Italian relations⁷ when in Mogadishu Somali bands killed 54 Italians and injured are 55, without the intervention of British forces. Rome suspected the instigation of the British, who wished to boycott any prospect of giving back that colony to Italy.

In the first half of March, the *coup* of Prague and the Soviet threats to Norway hastened the process leading to the *Western Union* and paved the way to the negotiations for the Atlantic Alliance. On 11th March Bevin proposed to American Secretary of State George Marshall besides the «United Kingdom-France-Benelux system with United States backing» and «a scheme of Atlantic security with which the United States would be even more closely concerned», «a Mediterranean security system, which could particularly affect Italy»⁸.

On 17th March the Brussels Pact (United Kingdom, France, and Benelux) was signed. After some hesitation, Bevin had proposed also to Italy to join the Pact, but Italian Prime Minister De Gasperi refused any commitment with the impeccable motivation that he could not take major decisions of foreign policy on the eve of general elections due on 18th April. The British reacted negatively to this refusal of what they considered a generous offer to a weak former enemy and saw it as an expression of the Italian wish to steer a middle course avoiding a precise choice of ends. De Gasperi also refused an American offer of military equipments in order not to give the left a good argument for its propaganda; this refusal was badly received by the U. S. government.

After winning the elections, De Gasperi in a public interview and in a conversation with the British ambassador, mentioned that Italy was in a position inferior to the other members of the Brussels Pact owing to the military articles of her peace treaty. The Premier left to understand that amending the peace treaty was a pre-condition for joining the Pact, a position later openly taken by Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Vittorio Zoppi. Bevin reacted strongly, talking at the House of Commons of «big obstacles» to be removed before clarifying Italy's position in the post-war world. Rome was told that her membership of the Pact would be a liability for the other members and an advantage for Italy, which therefore could pose no condition for her access. The British internal diplomatic correspondence labelled the Italian attitude as blackmail. On 27th April, in a meeting of

⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States-Diplomatic Papers* (FRUS), 1948, Vol. III: *Western Europe* (1974), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 749.

⁶ Text in http://www.ena.lu/address_given_ernest_bevin_house_commons_22_january_1948-2-9439.pdf.

⁷ See Varsori (1981): «*Il diverso declino di due potenze coloniali. Gli eventi di Mogadiscio del gennaio 1948 e i rapporti anglo-italiani*», Quaderni della FIAP no. 40, Roma, Edizioni FIAP.

⁸ «Bevin to Lord Inverchapel» [British Ambassador to Washington], *The National Archives-London* [NA], *Prime Minister's Papers* [PREM], 8/788. (11 March 1948).



Secretary of State Marshall with the leaders of the Republican Party, which controlled the Senate: «All felt that the inclusion of Italy, unless it had theretofore become a member of the Brussels Pact, would be a mistake because it would destroy the natural geographic base of the North Atlantic area»⁹.

Within Italy the summer 1948 saw a debate among the Foreign Minister, the main diplomats and the military on the strategic choice to be made. Sforza and Zoppi believed that Italy could negotiate her accession to the Atlantic Pact asking for the revision of some articles of the Peace Treaty. The Italian ambassadors in the main Western capitals, Alberto Tarchiani in Washington, Duke Tommaso Gallarati Scotti in London and Pietro Quaroni in Paris, stressed the impossibility of that: Italy had to hope for the admission but it was out of question to pose “conditions”. A peculiar position was taken by the ambassador to Moscow, Manlio Brosio¹⁰, a future Secretary General of NATO (1963-1971), who stressed two points. Italy had some important problems, Trieste, the revision of the peace treaty’s military articles and the admission to the UNO, the favourable solution of which depended as much from Moscow as from Washington; therefore joining an anti-Soviet military alliance would mean to lose definitely any Russian benevolence. Secondly he raised the strategic issue: since Western military plans didn’t consider the defence of the Italian territory (and even the defence of the French territory was a mere wishful think), he argued the opportunity to explore the possibility of an armed neutrality of Italy, supported by American supplies of weapons and equipment. This same argument was advanced by the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Claudio Trezzani, in his memorandum of 30th July. This solution, which was also easier from the internal point of view, was explored by the government, but met an American *fin de non recevoir*.

Most of the seven countries negotiating the Atlantic Pact (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France and Benelux) were opposed to the Italian membership. Besides her background punitive attitude towards Italy, London thought Rome’s membership valueless owing to her military weakness and the neutralist attitude of her public opinion. Moreover accepting Italy would arouse the problem of admitting also Greece and Turkey. Therefore London proposed to add to the Pact a statement expressing the members’ interest to the security of Italy, Greece, Turkey and Iran. The British position was supported by the other countries with the exception of France.

Paris was rather in favour of Italy’s membership¹¹, since it would redress towards continental Europe the balance of the Pact, which looked too “Atlantic”. But French support would weaken if the Pact guaranteed the defence of the line of the Rhine and include Algeria. Moreover France was opposed to include Italy in the Brussels Pact not to be committed to the defence of the Italian peninsula without an American guarantee.

Washington was doubtful and inclined to leave the decision to the European countries of the Brussels Pact. The issue remained undecided when in December the negotiations came

⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation by the Undersecretary of State (Lovett)”, (27 April 1948), *FRUS, 1948, Vol. III: Western Europe* (1974), Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 104-108.

¹⁰ See de Leonardis, Massimo: “Manlio Brosio a Mosca e la scelta occidentale dell’Italia”, in Di Nolfo, Ennio; Rainero, Romain H. and Vigezzi, Brunello (eds.) (1988): *L’Italia e la politica di potenza in Europa (1945-50)*, Milano, Marzorati, pp. 123-52.

¹¹ See Bagnato, Bruna: “France and the Origins of the Atlantic Pact”, in Di Nolfo, “The Atlantic Pact Forty Years Later...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-110.



to a conclusion¹². In the same month, the Chief of Staff of the Italian Army General Efisio Marras undertook a long exploratory mission to Washington, where he ascertained the American attitude. It's very revealing a memorandum by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared on the occasion of Marras' mission, which is a clear indication that Italy was looking for a direct relation with the United States: «Talking frankly, we should let understand that, for the requirements of bases and support for the defensive organization in North Africa, we certainly would be allies much more comfortable than the English». However Marras received a final clear indication that Washington was not prepared to underwrite bilateral obligations with Italy: «the US government could not consider any request for military supplies because it was setting up a coordinated program of assistance for the Western European countries as a whole ... – he was told by one of his counterparts – so long as the Italian foreign policy was somewhat ambiguous, no coordination of operational plans was feasible»¹³.

In January 1949 Italy gave to Washington a fairly clear indication of her interest in the Pact. Since the admission of Norway, subjected to renewed pressures by the Soviet Union, appeared now quite likely, then France conditioned her approval to the inclusion of Italy. On 2nd March Secretary of State Acheson submitted to President Truman one list of 8 «Arguments against the inclusion of Italy in the North Atlantic Pact» and another list of 14 «Arguments for ...». Here we shall focus only on few of them. Some arguments were in both lists in an opposite perspective. For example: «The arms limitation clauses of the Peace Treaty strictly limit the size of Italy's military establishment» versus «Even under the limitations of the Peace Treaty, Italy has the third largest Navy in Western Europe, an authorized army of 12 combat divisions ..., an air force of 350 planes including 200 fighter planes, and one of the largest merchant navies in Europe»¹⁴. From the political point of view it was stressed that Italy was «by race, history, and civilization a natural member of the Western European community» and that «a rebuff would increase Communist influence in Italy».

One of the arguments in favour quoted a document by the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff according to which «in terms of land warfare in Western Europe, Italy is strategically important. In terms of sea warfare, there is no question as to her critical strategic potentiality with respect to control of the Mediterranean». But it added another consideration: «It is of great importance to deny an enemy the use of Italy as a base for sea and air domination of the Central Mediterranean, as well the use of Italy's industrial complex and manpower». A very similar consideration had been made on 31st December 1948 by the British General Sir William Morgan, who remarked that the problem was to find the best and most inexpensive way to encourage Italy to deny her territory to the enemy. It has correctly been pointed out that in the years after the Second World War «from the military point of view the common perception of Italy was that of a strategic theatre not of an actor in the strategic field»¹⁵.

¹² See the «Report of the International Working Group to the Ambassadors' Committee» (24 December 1948), in *FRUS 1948, Vol. III: Western Europe, op. cit.*, pp. 333-4.

¹³ See Nuti, Leopoldo (1989): *L' Esercito italiano nel secondo dopo guerra, 1945-1950: la sua ricostruzione e l'assistenza militare alleata*, Roma, Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, pp. 197-204.

¹⁴ *FRUS, 1949, Vol. IV: Western Europe (1975)*, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 141-44. The reference to the Navy and to the merchant fleet was the main new element added to the similar list of arguments in favour of Italy's admission attached to the *Report* cited at footnote 11.

¹⁵ Sebesta, Lorenza: "Politica di sicurezza italiana e innovazioni strategiche nell'Europa degli anni cinquanta", in Di Nolfo, Rainero and Vigezzi (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 674. On the importance of the Italian territory as location of naval and air bases see the *Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)* report of April 1948 in Brogi, Alessandro (1996): *L'Italia e l'egemonia americana nel Mediterraneo*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, p. 47.



Acheson recorded that President Truman, «would have preferred, certainly at this time, a pact without Italy» but accepted his advice that in the current circumstances and considering the French position she had to be accepted in the Pact. So Italy became a founding member of the Atlantic Pact, the text of which she had to accept without any possibility of discussion.

2. In Defence of National Interest

Joining the Atlantic Alliance, Italy had guaranteed her primary national security, but at the same time had also shot ahead towards her full inclusion in the new international system. As a member of the Alliance, Italy hoped to enhance her international rank and to promote her national interests, first of all obtaining a favourable solution of the problems still opened after her defeat in the Second World War: Trieste, the admission to the UNO and the abolition of the military articles of the peace treaty. She was successful when her interests coincided with those of the Alliance, but unsuccessful when they didn't.

Italy tried to have an important rank inside the Alliance and to safeguard her strategic interests. Since the unification, Italy had always been concerned about her rank in the international arena. Now the government asked to have Italy as a fourth member, alongside United States, United Kingdom and France, of the *Standing Group*, the Alliance's military directorate. The request was highly unrealistic and was rejected¹⁶. Italy also requested to be admitted in two of the five regional strategic groups of the Alliance's military structure before the creation, after the outbreak of the Korean War, of SHAPE and of the other integrated commands. Italy had been admitted in the *Mediterranean* group and wished to be a member also of the *Western Europe* group (the three others being *Canada-United States*, *North-Atlantic Ocean* and *Northern Europe*). Italy wanted to stress the link between the Mediterranean and Continental Europe theatres, including her entire territory in the Alliance's defensive plans. More in general Rome wanted to emphasize her Atlantic and European posture and to avoid being relegated in the Mediterranean¹⁷.

Since Britain wished to limit the participation to the *Western Europe* group only to the members of the Brussels pact, Italy obtained only a partial satisfaction: her group was renamed *Southern Europe-Western Mediterranean* and she obtained to be consulted by the *Western Europe* group when her strategic interests were at stake. Moreover the *Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning*¹⁸, prepared on 1st March 1950 by the *Standing Group* stressed that «the three European Regions [*Western Europe*, *Southern Europe-Western Mediterranean* and *Northern European*] must be considered as a whole». In 1951 the exercise *Lago di Garda*, in the context of NATO exercise *Grand Slam*, tried for the first time the defence of the Isonzo line, at the North-Eastern border of Italy.

Atlantic rearmament following the outbreak of the Korean War prompted the revision

¹⁶ Actually when in summer 1949 the American *Joint Chiefs of Staff* met their European counterparts, the Italian Ambassador in Paris, Pietro Quaroni, remarked that: "While the conversations with the minor allies, included ourselves, took about one hour, those with the French and the British lasted one day and half" (quoted in Varsori: "Il ruolo internazionale dell'Italia negli anni del centrismo (1947-1958)", in De Lucia, Franco, et al.: (1990): *1947/1958. L'Italia negli anni del centrismo*, Roma, Acropoli, p. 218, n. 55).

¹⁷ Brogi, *op. cit.*, p. 345; cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 50-51, 63-65.

¹⁸ Published in Pedlow, Gregory W. (ed.) (1997): *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, Bruxelles, NATO Office of Information and Press, pp. 91-105.



of the military articles of the Italian Peace treaty¹⁹. It was decided to revise it according to international practise and with the justification of the «developments unforeseen during the negotiations» for its preparation. On 26th September 1951, United States, United Kingdom and France expressed their favour to the revision, in a joint statement underwritten in December by 11 other treaty's signatories, while the Soviet Union and its satellites subordinated their assent to Italy's retreat from NATO. The procedure was completed in May 1955, when, at the Atlantic Council, United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, Belgium, Netherlands and Greece, i. e. the signatories which were NATO members, formally declared superfluous the discriminatory articles of the Italian peace treaty

NATO membership didn't favour, indeed was an obstacle, to Italy's membership of UNO²⁰. Neither it was of much help in the issue of Trieste, which opposed Italy to Yugoslavia. This problem, the most important for Italy²¹, provoked a serious crisis in the relations between Rome on one side and London and Washington on the other, because, after Moscow's excommunication of Tito in June 1948, the Yugoslav dictator was considered by the Anglo-Americans a potential ally to be wooed in every possible way, while Italy was taken for granted and did not require concessions²². In 1950 foreign minister Carlo Sforza had explained to the Cabinet why Italy was unable to exploit her NATO membership for national goals: «The Italian government had wished to join the Atlantic Pact where we were not welcomed»²³. As in the XIX century the membership of the Triple Alliance guaranteed Italy against isolation but did not allow the attainment of her colonial ambitions, now NATO membership did not favour her claims in the Trieste issue.

Between 1952 and 1954 Yugoslavia came very close to NATO; Beograd received economic and military supplies, had military conversations with the British and American General Staffs and concluded a political and military alliance with Athens and Ankara, which however remained a dead letter. Italy had favoured the admission to NATO of Greece and Turkey, hoping to exercise a sort of leadership in the Southern front and now was margined in that same area²⁴. Faced with Italian protests against the American "betrayal", president Eisenhower, overestimating the incoming detente, in July 1954 wrote: «I do not feel that bases in Italy are vital at all and ... the importance of having them there diminishes every day»²⁵.

More than any other country Italy would have benefited of a strong Yugoslavia ready to resist a Soviet bloc's invasion, but she had to oppose Beograd's integration in the Western security system pending a satisfactory settlement of the Trieste issue. It was a position similar to that of France, suspicious and reluctant towards the German rearmament of which she would be the first beneficiary. In August-September 1953, in response to Tito's threats, Italy

¹⁹ Cfr. Smith, E. Timothy: "From Disarmament to Rearmament: The United States and the Revision of the Italian Peace Treaty of 1947", *Diplomatic History*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 369-71.

²⁰ See Tosi's article in this same issue.

²¹ The issue of Trieste was an «omnivorous presence» in the Italian foreign policy, according to Di Nolfo, Ennio: *La «politica di potenza» e le formule della politica di potenza. Il caso italiano (1952-1956)*, in Di Nolfo, Rainero and Vigezzi (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 713.

²² The American explained brutally to Egidio Ortona, Italian Counsellor in Washington: "We take you for granted!" [in English in the original] ... *You are not Communists to be wooed*.

²³ Minute di verbali del Consiglio dei ministri, 1950, b. 10, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato - Roma [ACS]*. On the impact of the issue of Trieste on NATO policies see de Leonardis, Massimo (1992): *La "diplomazia atlantica" e la soluzione del problema di Trieste (1952-1954)*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane.

²⁴ de Leonardis, "La diplomazia atlantica...", *op. cit.*, cap. II, § 3, cap. III, § 2, cap. V, § 3.

²⁵ "Memorandum by the President" (09 July 1954), in *FRUS: 1952-1954, Vol. VIII: Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union* (1988), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 471.



had to mobilize her Armed Forces at the frontier with Yugoslavia and SACEUR General Alfred Gruenther did not object, admitting that Trieste was a top priority for the Italians²⁶.

According to the Italian Minister of Defence Paolo Emilio Taviani, the problem of Trieste could «affect the Atlantic Alliance», since it «poisoned» Italy's relations with Washington and London²⁷. As a matter of fact, although seriously annoyed, Rome could not go beyond what Ambassador Quaroni termed the «Atlantic punt». «For many reasons – this very smart diplomat wrote in September 1953²⁸ – we came to conclude that, in internal and social matters, we could find an agreement with Nenni's Socialists and even almost with the Communists and that only foreign policy divides us. If then, albeit for tactical reasons, we slacken our Atlantic policy» how can we avoid to «appoint Togliatti [the Communist leader] President of the Council [of Ministers]»²⁹. Two years later American ambassador Clare Boothe Luce will remark that if the Christian Democratic Party did not found his policy on international issues, focusing instead on economic and internal problems, was unable to keep his position in front of the left»³⁰.

In the end Italy's resentment convinced Washington and London to work hard to obtain a solution of the Trieste issue acceptable to Rome. This happened in October 1954; next year Moscow reconciled herself with Tito and a new phase of Italian foreign policy also began.

3. The First Détente and Italian neo-Atlantism

The year 1955 marked the beginning of a new phase of Italian foreign policy, for internal and international reasons. After recovering Trieste, Italy joined the Western European Union (i. e. the Brussels Pact, enlarged also to Western Germany), was allowed to consider obsolete the military clauses of the Peace Treaty and was admitted to the UNO, solving all the problems inherited from the defeat in the war. In June 1955 the leftist Christian Democrat Giovanni Gronchi was elected President of the Republic³¹, to the annoyance of the President of the Council Mario Scelba, belonging to the right wing of the same party, who stressed the negative effects of his election on the NATO allies³². In 1949 Gronchi had opposed Italian

²⁶ His Deputy British Field-Marshal Montgomery, criticized the Italian move, but was silenced by the British government.

²⁷ Taviani, Paolo Emilio (1998): *I giorni di Trieste. Diario 1953-1954*, Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 28.

²⁸

“Quaroni a Pella” (22 September 1953), *Archivio Storico-Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri - Roma [ASMAE] Direzione Generale Affari Politici [DGAP]*, Trieste, 1953, b. 625. For similar comments by Quaroni and by other diplomats on the importance of foreign policy as the only real discriminant issue between the government and the leftwing opposition see Quaroni a Martino (11 November 1955), *ASMAE, Ambasciata a Parigi*, b. 55, published in Quaroni, Pietro (1973): *Collana di Testi Diplomatici, Riservato*, 1, Roma, Ministero degli Affari Esteri - Servizio Storico e Documentazione, pp. 63-8.

²⁹ “Quaroni a Zoppi” [Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], (09 June 1954), *Archivio Manlio Brosio* [the Brosio archive was seen while in his home; now it is held by the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, Torino].

³⁰ 17 October 1955, cited in Nuti, Leopoldo (1999): *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, p. 44.

³¹ Gronchi managed to defeat the DC official candidate, Cesare Merzagora, obtaining, in the final vote, the support of most of his fellow party members and of both oppositions, left and right (including Communists and ex-Fascists).

³² See Di Capua, Giovanni (1971): *Le chiavi del Quirinale. Da De Nicola a Saragat, la strategia del potere in Italia*, Milano, Feltrinelli, p. 128; Ortona, Egidio (1986): *Anni d'America. La diplomazia 1953-1961*, Bologna, Il Mulino, p. 129; Wollemborg, Leo J. (1983): *Stelle, strisce e tricolore. Trent'anni di vicende politiche fra Roma e*



participation to the Atlantic Alliance and now supported the «opening to the left», i.e. including the Socialists in the government. He had great ambitions; according to his diplomatic adviser, Mario Lucioli, who later resigned in disagreement with him, he «dreamed Italy entering a directorate of the Great Powers, playing a mediation role in the Near East, gaining prestige, obtaining recognition»³³.

The evolution of the international situation seemed to provide room to realize these ambitions. During the Stalinist period the rigid confrontation between the two blocs didn't allow any autonomous initiative by the minor powers; now detente and the incoming decolonization appeared to offer Italy the opportunity to enhance her role primarily in the Mediterranean. Most Italian politicians thought that their country could be again a "Great Power", whatever this could mean in a bipolar system. They diverged on the link between foreign and internal politics: the moderates wished to preserve a centre coalition and a strong alignment with West, while progressive wished to move towards the left, soften the Cold War confrontation and open to the Third World.

Career diplomats were more sceptical about Italy's ambitions and warned against «any attenuation of the efficiency of the Western defence system which cost so many efforts and so much time»³⁴. Ambassador Quaroni denounced the «risks of detente» and the «frenzy of letting be cheated ... by the first Moscow's smiles»³⁵. But even the magazine of the semi-official *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, certainly above suspicion in its Atlanticism, described «an Alliance ... in crisis» and stressed the necessity of acknowledging that «the original purpose of the Atlantic Pact no longer conform to international realities»: «the Russians had destalinization, we need deatlantification»³⁶.

Italy tried to stress the political role of NATO instead of the military one, asking to implement art. 2 of the Pact in the point which said «they [the Parties] will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them». She was supported particularly by Canada and certainly it was not by chance that «the three wise men» charged to prepare the report on «Non-Military Cooperation in NATO», were the Italian Gaetano Martino, the Canadian Lester Pearson and the Norwegian Halvard Lange. On the implementation of article 2 American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was sceptical: «All of our allies are willing to follow the Italian lead and have NATO turned into an economic organization which can probably extract a little more money out of the United States; but when it comes to develop Western European unity or any real cohesion with respect to policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, then there is very marked evasiveness»³⁷. Actually NATO never was a vehicle for economic collaboration

Washington, Milano, Mondadori, pp. 31-4; Id.: "Il presidente Gronchi e i rapporti con gli Stati Uniti", *Civitas*, Vol. 38, no. 3 (May-June 1987), pp. 62-3; Vezzosi, Elisabetta: "La sinistra democristiana tra neutralismo e Patto Atlantico (1947-1949)", in Di Nolfo et al., "L'Italia e la politica di potenza in Europa (1945-50)..." *op. cit.*, p. 219; Bedeschi Magrini, Anna: "Spunti revisionistici nella politica estera di Giovanni Gronchi presidente della repubblica", in Di Nolfo et al., "L'Italia e la politica di potenza in Europa (1945-50)..." *op. cit.*, pp. 59-73.

³³ Lucioli, Mario: "Diciotto mesi al Quirinale con il presidente Giovanni Gronchi", in Serra, Enrico (ed.) (1988): *Professione: diplomatico*, Milano, Franco Angeli, p. 117.

³⁴ "Memorandum" without date, title and signature, probably prepared on the occasion of the vote of confidence in Parliament on the first Segni government, *ASMAE, Ambasciata a Parigi*, (1955), b. 56.

³⁵ Quaroni a Martino, (11 November 1955), *ASMAE, Ambasciata a Parigi*, b. 55, published in Quaroni, "Collana di Testi Diplomatici, Riservato, 1...", *op. cit.*, pp. 63-8.

³⁶ E. G. [signed only with initials]: "Crisi atlantica e coesistenza pacifica", *Relazioni Internazionali*, vol. 20, no. 19 (12 May 1956), pp. 555-6; cfr. Id.: "L'Alleanza Atlantica ed i saggi", *Ibid.*, vol. 20, no. 26 (30 June 1956), pp. 783-4.

³⁷ Dulles ad Eisenhower, (05 May 1956), *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. IV*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.



among its members and the European Economic Community provided the means to attain that among Europeans.

While trying to stress the political role of NATO, in any case «the Italian Government and the parties supporting it were greatly relieved by the failure of the Geneva conference», as noted an American report³⁸. Foreign Minister Martino on 4th May 1956 at the Atlantic Council «raised question whether closer East-West contacts were good for states with strong Communist parties»³⁹. A similar concern will express in 1964 the President of the Republic Antonio Segni: peaceful coexistence could make more difficult to fight Communism in Italy⁴⁰. The repression of the revolt in Hungary dissipated the illusions on Soviet foreign policy⁴¹. Having a good hand to embarrass the leftwing opposition, the Italian government presented at the UNO a resolution much stronger than the American one; it was deemed not «constructive» by the United States, unwilling to endanger détente.

The Suez crisis offered Italy the opportunity to forge closer ties with Washington at the same time appearing progressive and friendly to the Arabs in the Mediterranean⁴², the region where she tried to be a protagonist with the so called neo-Atlanticism [*neo-Atlantismo*]. Italian politics are particularly tortuous; the expression was invented in April 1957 by rightist Christian Democrat Giuseppe Pella, while that kind of policy was already supported by the left wing of the same party. The American embassy in Rome remarked that Pella's nationalism could match the ambitions of Gronchi⁴³; the common ground was Italy's desire to be a protagonist in the Mediterranean and to become the United States' "privileged partner"⁴⁴ in the region, taking advantage of the colonial powers' difficulties. The divergence was in internal politics: leftists wished to open the government to Socialists, while moderates were opposed. Actually Pella himself in September 1957 disowned the word neo-Atlanticism, stating in New York that the issue at stake «was not to revise the [Atlantic] Pact to tone it down, but instead to strengthen it, expanding its tasks and reach»⁴⁵. As a consequence since the second half of the '50s foreign policy aroused some bitter polemics and sometimes appeared to waver. However in the end, in those years Italy was aligned with the United States on all the major issues of Atlantic policy⁴⁶.

Between 1958 and 1968 the personality dominating Italian foreign policy was Amintore Fanfani, various times Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He belonged to the left wing of DC, had been mildly critical of Italy's accession to the Atlantic Pact in 1949 and was a supporter of the "opening to the left". After the elections of May 1958,

³⁸ "Progress Report on United States policy Toward Italy", (04 January 1956), in *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVII: Western Europe and Canada* (1992), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 320.

³⁹ *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. IV*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁰ *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XII: Western Europe* (2001), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 2.

⁴¹ Presenting in December the report of the three "wise men", Martino remarked the worsening of the international situation since the previous Spring (*FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. IV*, op. cit., p. 138).

⁴² As it's well known, Washington condemned the Anglo-French attack to Egypt.

⁴³ Nuti, "Gli Stati Uniti...", op. cit., p. 140.

⁴⁴ On this subject see de Leonardis, Massimo: "L'Italia 'alleato privilegiato' degli Stati Uniti nel Mediterraneo?", in Id. (ed.) (2003): *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana del secondo dopoguerra*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 61-93.

⁴⁵ Re, Giulio Cesare (1971): *Fine di una politica: momenti drammatici della democrazia italiana*, Bologna, Cappelli, p. 347; Ortona remarked the «strong Atlanticism» of Pella ("Anni d'America. La diplomazia...", op. cit., p. 253, diary entry of 20 September 1957).

⁴⁶ In spite of the initiatives of Enrico Mattei's ENI [the state company] in the oil producing countries which annoyed the "seven sisters", between 1956 and 1962, Italy «became the closest collaborator of the United States' Mediterranean policy» (Di Nolfo: "Italia e Stati Uniti: un'alleanza diseguale", *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1990), p. 27).



Fanfani formed a government which appeared a true expression of neo-Atlanticism. Exercising a strong leadership unusual in the Italian political system, Fanfani cumulated the offices of President of the Council, Minister of foreign affairs and Secretary of DC. “Orthodox” Atlanticists like Scelba, Pella and Taviani were excluded by the Government, mainly for reasons of internal politics, but certainly this appeared to mark a shift also in foreign policy. Fanfani stressed the necessity to conciliate the Western and the Mediterranean soul of Italy and of her full parity with the allies, to be obtained through a reciprocal and permanent consultation but also Italian autonomous initiatives in the Mediterranean. Towards the United States Fanfani tried «to conciliate the maximum of loyalty with the maximum of independence»⁴⁷. This link with Washington was also instrumental to neutralize General De Gaulle’s ambitions of an Anglo-French-American directorate, against which Fanfani protested strongly⁴⁸, being soon reassured by Dulles that «the directorate of the three cannot be made»⁴⁹.

Fanfani didn’t share the uncritical and aprioristic admiration for the United States so common among Italian moderate politicians. On the contrary in 1961 he expressed to NATO Secretary General Dirk Stikker an opposite opinion: «Christopher Columbus discovered America but was unable to take to the new Continent the wisdom and the experience of the Europeans ... to NATO the United States provide strength, the Europeans experience»⁵⁰. In any case Fanfani had no doubt that the Atlantic Alliance was the main pillar of Italian foreign policy. He wished to «make more effective the Italian role» in NATO, advocating an Alliance’s role in the Near East and in Mediterranean Africa: «We must preserve our political friendships and alliances and, at the same time, restrain the estrangement from the West which had taken place or could further on take place by countries which have other obligations»⁵¹. To the American ambassador to Rome David Zellerbach Fanfani said: «The West must do nothing to appear or to be an enemy of the Arabs, in order not to foster their sliding towards the USSR»⁵² and later with Admiral Ephraim P. Holmes, NATO Supreme Commander he claimed: «We have been the first to care about avoiding the Mediterranean becoming an extension of the Black Sea»⁵³.

During his visit to Washington, Fanfani immediately expressed to President Eisenhower his agreement to the allocation in Italy of the intermediate range missiles, formally requested by SACEUR General Lauris Norstad on 26th July⁵⁴. Besides Turkey, Italy was the only country of continental Europe to accept the missiles⁵⁵, for a number of reasons: to gain credit as the most important Mediterranean ally, to partially satisfy her nuclear

⁴⁷ Romano, Sergio (1993): *Guida alla politica estera italiana*, Milano, Rizzoli, p. 99, who adds: «Italy was the smallest and the weakest of the Great Powers, but could exploit the others’s strenght and share results which enhanced her role ... That of Fanfani was the updated and voluntarist version of the policy of “determinant weight” put into practice by his country during most of his unitary history» (*ibid.*, p. 98).

⁴⁸ See Ortona, *op. cit.*, p. 322 (diary of 01 October 1958); Nuti, “Gli Stati Uniti...”, *op. cit.*, p. 180; “Diario Fanfani”, 01 October 1958, *Archivio Fanfani, Senato della Repubblica*, Roma [AF].

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (16 December 1958).

⁵⁰ Meetings in Rome with Stikker (09-10-1961), *AF, Sez. 1, Serie 1, Busta 14, Fasc. 17*.

⁵¹ *AF, Sez. 1, Serie 1, Busta 34, Fasc. 1*

⁵² “Diario Fanfani” (16 July 1958).

⁵³ Meeting of 13 October 1967, *AF, Sez. 1, Serie 5, Busta 40, Fasc. 31*.

⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation (30 July 1958), in *FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. VII*, *op. cit.*, n. 217, p. 2. On Norstad’s satisfaction see “Diario Fanfani”, (08 August 1958). Already the previous government had given its preliminary assent.

⁵⁵ See Nuti: “Dall’operazione Deep Rock all’operazione Pot Pie: una storia documentata dei missili SM 78 Jupiter in Italia”, *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1996), pp. 95-140 and vol. 12, no. 2 (1997), pp. 105-149; *Id.* (2007): *La sfida nucleare. La politica estera italiana e le armi atomiche 1945-1991*, Bologna, Il Mulino, cap. V; Brogi, “L’Italia e l’egemonia americana...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 292 e 315.



ambitions and to give Washington a proof of loyalty while the “opening to the left” was being discussed. At the same time, just to avoid internal polemics, Fanfani invited Washington to keep a low profile on his decision.

The United States were lavish with oral recognitions and some formal gestures to satisfy the ambitions of Italy, but deemed that she overestimated her influence in the Middle East and lacked the economic means to support an effective mediation⁵⁶. Quite likely American regards towards Italian self-esteem were less a sign of appreciation of Rome’s Mediterranean policy than recognition and an incentive for the free availability of her territory guaranteed to NATO; Washington was also careful to strengthen the weak and unstable Italian governments.

Fanfani resigned his three offices on 26th January 1959, being attacked mainly for reasons of internal politics, but also for his foreign policy. The following government, chaired by Segni and with Pella as foreign minister, lasted about one year and stressed a staunch Atlanticism and Europeanism and toned down Mediterranean policy, meeting a strong opposition by the Socialists and the Communists⁵⁷.

After an interim government chaired by Fernando Tambroni⁵⁸, Fanfani was again Prime Minister between March 1960 and June 1963; Segni was foreign minister until May 1962, when he was elected President of the republic and was replaced (after a short interim of Fanfani), by Attilio Piccioni, a rather unsuitable choice for this office. These two Fanfani governments paved the way to the “opening to the left”; foreign policy was a key issue in this transition and Fanfani needed to reassure Washington on Italy’s Atlanticism. The author of the most authoritative book on the American attitude towards the new political formula writes correctly that «in every discussion on the foreign policy of a future centre-left government the central issue ... was always the same: which attitude would a centre-left government take towards the Atlantic Alliance?»⁵⁹. The programme of internal reforms of the future coalition didn’t worry at all the Americans; on the contrary it appeared fully consonant with the progressive tendencies of the Kennedy administration. A sign of the great caution required in dealing with international issues was that in January 1962 Aldo Moro, secretary of DC and a supporter of the “centre left”, devoted to foreign policy a rather limited part of his seven hour speech opening the VIIIth party congress.

Most Italian politicians, with the partial exception of Fanfani, loathed General de Gaulle whom they considered too authoritarian, almost a “fascist”, and this attitude pleased the Americans⁶⁰. On the necessity of coordinating Atlantic policies “out of area” Fanfani

⁵⁶ See the “Staff Study Prepared in the Department of State, Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Near East” (30-10-1957), in *FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XII: Near East Region; Iran; Iraq* (1991), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 643. Pella himself later admitted that «it was well to be in making proposals in order not to raise too many illusions» (cfr. “Memorandum of Conversation with the Secretary of State Herter” (12 July 1959), in *FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. VII, Part 2: Western Europe* (1993), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 536).

⁵⁷ Re, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

⁵⁸ Tambroni was close to the President of the Republic Gronchi, but his government was supported by the extreme right.

⁵⁹ Nuti, “Gli Stati Uniti...”, *op. cit.*, who describes the centre-left «a political formula ... definitely preferable, from the American perspective, to all the available alternatives» (p. 665).

⁶⁰ Romano, Sergio (1995): *Lo scambio ineguale: Italia e Stati Uniti da Wilson a Clinton*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, p. 44.



agreed with de Gaulle, even looking at him as a competitor⁶¹. In his speech at the Atlantic Council on 11th May 1965 Fanfani plainly said that ignoring the problem could bring «to a creeping shattering of our Alliance»⁶².

The main issues of Atlantic policy in the first years of “centre-left” coalitions between 1962 and 1968⁶³, were the removal of the *Jupiter* missiles from Italy (and Turkey), as a result of the Cuban crisis, the French policy towards NATO and the EEC, the Multilateral [nuclear] Force [MLF] and the revision of the Alliance’ strategy from “massive retaliation” to “flexible response”. Italy favoured Great Britain’s admission to the EEC and in any case viewed European integration «in the spirit of Atlantic partnership as outlined by President Kennedy»⁶⁴. On all the issues the Italian government created no problems to the United States, on the contrary was consonant with them. However it doesn’t seem that the position of Italy had much importance for the Americans, concerned primarily about the triangle of the relations between Great Britain, France and Germany and the necessity to re-orient their position on the MLF, which the Kennedy administration came to consider useless and even dangerous. The start of “great détente” could have marked a particular harmony between Rome and Washington, which however was hampered by various factors, as the relative neglect of President Johnson, engaged in Vietnam, for Europe and Moro governments emphasis on internal politics⁶⁵.

On one hand the Italian government was relieved by the removal of the obsolete and vulnerable *Jupiter* missiles, which made Italy a primary target of a Soviet attack; on the other hand Rome didn’t want to admit their uselessness and feared a weakening of her bilateral relations with Washington. The Fanfani government discussed the opportunity to announce the removal before the elections of April 1963⁶⁶ and the American ambassador in Rome advised to stress Italy’s role as a great power at the moment of the announcement⁶⁷. Later, on the occasion of Moro’s visit to Washington in April 1965, Johnson’s Special Assistant advised the President to «show great warmth and affection for Moro and Italy in some visible way», to strengthen his political position and because «the Italians are quite sensitive about their position in the European power structure. ... Like any human or nation that once tasted great glory and then settled into a decline, the Italians thirst for recognition as a nation to be reckoned with in the affairs of the world»⁶⁸.

Italy’s nuclear ambitions were placed on the MLF, of which she was a supporter, but expressing reservations on its technical realization. Rome hoped for an atomic partnership

⁶¹ Cfr. *FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol. VII, Part II: Western Europe* (1993), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 105. On the contrary the Socialist leader Nenni stressed the Alliance’s geographic limits (Grassi Orsini, Fabio: "La ‘svolta diplomatica’ del secondo governo Fanfani", in Craveri, Piero and Quagliariello, Gaetano (eds.) (2003): *Atlantismo ed europeismo*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, p. 340).

⁶² *Sez. 1, Serie 5, Busta 37, Fasc. 1.*

⁶³ In this period Italy had five government, the first chaired by Fanfani, one caretaker chaired by Giovanni Leone and three by Moro.

⁶⁴ So spoke on 14th January 1964 foreign minister Saragat to secretary of state Rusk (*FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XIII: Western Europe Region, n. 2* (1995), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 3).

⁶⁵ See Kissinger, Henry (1980): *Gli anni della Casa Bianca*, Milano, SugarCo, pp. 93;730. According to Varsori (Varsori, Antonio (1998): *L’Italia nelle relazioni internazionali del 1943 al 1992*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, p. 156) between 1964 and 1968 Italy Italian foreign policy kept a low profile.

⁶⁶ “Diario Fanfani”, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21 January 1963.

⁶⁷ See Nuti, "Dall’operazione Deep Rock all’operazione Pot Pie", *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 122, 130-3, 139-41; Id. (2007): *La sfida nucleare: la politica estera italiana e le armi atomiche, 1945-1991*, Bologna, Il Mulino, pp. 248-62, which gives a complete picture of the Italian attitude towards the MLF.

⁶⁸ *Memorandum From the President’s Special Assistant (Valenti) to President Johnson* (16 April 1965), in *FRUS 1964-1968 vol. XII, op. cit.*, n. 109.



with Washington and considered the MLF an instrument to weaken the French-German axis, seen as an expression of a “reactionary” policy, opposed to the “centre-left”⁶⁹. Initially the Socialists were perplexed on the project, but, also in opposition to de Gaulle, accepted Italian participation during the negotiations to form the second Moro government in July 1964⁷⁰. However already in April 1964 secretary of state Rusk had advised to drop MLF, indicating among the reasons that of avoiding further tensions to the Italian government which had been weakened by the electoral results; but this, indicated as an additional motivation, sounds rather as a pretext. Later Ambassador Fenoaltea stressed that «if and when the U.S. changes course on a major issue, it is extremely important that the Italian Government be informed in advance. When a change is made (for example the MLF) the best friends of the United States are left out on a limb, having fought a tough political battle at home»⁷¹.

In June 1966, in Brussels, Fanfani painted to Secretary of state Dean Rusk a rosy picture of how dislike of Gaullist France had strengthened Atlanticism in Italy: «before committees of Italian Chamber of Deputies and Senate, larger majority supporting Italian sharing in material burdens arising from France-NATO crisis than usually supported government on other issues. ... no members of committees had objected when informed Italy prepared accept NATO Defense College in Rome if asked», «no serious opposition» in the Cabinet when «he had estimated possible cost to Italy of France-NATO problems at 60 billion lire», «his statement that Vicenza depots might have to be enlarged evoked no protest ... As by-product of France-NATO crisis, Fanfani said Italian Socialist Party now aware of positive benefits of NATO integration». However «on political right, within Christian-Democratic, Social-Democratic and Liberal Parties, Fanfani said there was preoccupation with strategic isolation of Italy as result France-NATO crisis. These elements felt maximum links with France had to be maintained to facilitate France’s future reassociation»⁷². The Socialists preferred to stress the political aspects of NATO and in 1966 and 1967 the Atlantic Council «handled routinely» a «Fanfani initiative»⁷³ for a “Marshall plan” aimed to reduce the technological gap between United States and Europe.

The war in Vietnam caused little turbulence in Italian-American relations. Prime Minister Moro more than once expressed his «understanding ... for the motivations of the United States’ action in Viet Nam»⁷⁴. Foreign minister Fanfani was more critical. In December 1965 talking to Rusk about the American role as superpower he said: «the fact exists ... that while being a faithful ally of the United States, Italy cherishes the liberty to disagree. ... It is possible that in two or three months the United States may find itself in the position of bearing great burdens and of not having the full support of its friends and allies. This is a tragedy but it is also a fact»⁷⁵. Just owing to Vietnam at the end of 1965 Fanfani had to leave for a few months the ministry of foreign affairs⁷⁶. Back in office he reiterated his criticism of American commitment in Indochina⁷⁷.

⁶⁹ Nuti stresses the MLF’s importance as «a kind of yard-stick» for «the United States attitude towards the opening to the left» in Italy (“Gli Stati Uniti...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 574-583, 614-619, 639-655, 658-659).

⁷⁰ *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII*, *op. cit.*, n. 87, pp. 171-3; Nuti, “Gli Stati Uniti...”, *op. cit.*, p. 578.

⁷¹ *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII*, *op. cit.*, n. 122.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vol. XII, n. 123.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. XIII, n. 258, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. XII, n. 115.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XII, n. 121.

⁷⁶ His close friend Giorgio La Pira had met Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi and given to a right wing journalist an interview arranged by Fanfani’s wife.

⁷⁷ *AF, Sez. 1, Serie 5, Busta 39, Fasc. 16.*



In any case President Johnson, visiting Italy in December 1967 stated to Saragat, Moro and Fanfani that «he almost always found his own views in harmony with those of the Italian government»⁷⁸. In the previous September, President of the republic Saragat visiting the United States «warned against any delusion that the USSR no longer wished to establish hegemony in Europe. Although the Russians had perhaps renounced their former means of achieving their goal, their basic aims had not changed»⁷⁹. However in spite of all these reassuring Italian positions on 11th December 1967 Rusk bluntly asked Fanfani if «doubts will arise on the possibility of Italy leaving the Alliance in 1969», receiving an obvious and sharp denial⁸⁰.

It is worth mentioning that in 1964 the Italian Brosio (a liberal politician turned diplomat since 1947) was appointed NATO Secretary General, after that British Sir Harold Acacia renounced his candidature. On the occasion of his first visit to Washington, the Americans commented that «Mr. Brosio sees his role as that of the honest broker. Although he gave the impression that he does not wish to take sides publicly on issues which are divisive, he appears personally to support most of our policies»⁸¹. Actually in his previous appointment as Ambassador to Paris, Brosio had been rather critical of the United States and not prejudicially opposed, unlike most Italians, to General De Gaulle⁸². As Secretary General he contributed well to ferry NATO beyond French abandonment of the Alliance's military structure.

4. Aspects of the Italian Military Performance in NATO

Also for the unavailability of domestic archival sources, few studies deal with the military performance of Italy in the Atlantic Alliance. In NATO military structures Italy obtained three major commands: the *5th Allied Tactical Air Force*, the *Allied Land Forces Southern Europe*⁸³ and the *Allied Forces Central Mediterranean*; when this was abolished in 1967, an Italian Admiral became *Commander Allied Naval Forces Southern Europe*, based in Malta and since 1971 near Naples.

Italy favoured German rearmament, but didn't press France on the issue. The Italian military were very sceptical about the European Community of Defence, preferring the sound reality of NATO to a dream which is still unfulfilled 60 years later⁸⁴. The government signed the treaty but, sheltering behind the French hesitations, did not ratify it as a pressure for achieving a settlement on Trieste.

In the Korean War, Italy kept a low profile, just sending there a military hospital. At the same time, with much internal debate on the allocation of her scant economic resources

⁷⁸ *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII, op. cit., n. 137.*

⁷⁹ "Memorandum of Conversation" (18 September 1967), *ibid.*, vol. XIII, n. 265.

⁸⁰ *AF, Sez. 1, Serie 5, Busta 40, Fasc. 40, Fasc. 35; "Diario Fanfani"*, 11 December 1967.

⁸¹ "Circular Airgram From the Department of State to Certain Missions" (08 October 1964), *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XIII, op. cit., n. 39.*

⁸² See Brosio, Manlio (2009): *Diari di Parigi: 1961-1964*, edited by Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, Bologna, Il Mulino.

⁸³ Greece and Turkey refused to place their Armies under the Italian General Commanding LANDSOUTH, and obtained a separate Command, LANDSOUTHEAST, given to an American, since neither Athens nor Ankara obviously accepted a General from the other nation.

⁸⁴ See Caviglia, Daniele and Gionfrida, Alessandro (2009): *Un'occasione da perdere: le forze armate italiane e la Comunità europea di difesa (1950-1954)*, Roma, Apes.



either to the Armed Forces or to the welfare state, Italy carried out a considerable effort of rearmament. According to a *Central Intelligence Agency's* report, in reaching the goals of conventional rearmament fixed by NATO following the Korean War, among the smaller allies «only Italy demonstrated a strong determination to carry out the maximum effort»⁸⁵. At the end of her mission to Rome, Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce, certainly to stress the success of his work, wrote to Secretary of State Dulles that Italy had become «the main support of NATO in Europe, from the moral, political and – even if this may sound unbelievable – military point of view»⁸⁶, albeit remarking that the force levels assigned to Italy were too ambitious to be attained after the end in 1958 of the military assistance programme. Other documents confirm her opinion.

At the beginning of 1956, the Americans noted that the programme of military assistance «generally met its objective in counteracting military deficiencies in the past year. Italy still accepts NATO force goals but its military budget is insufficient to permit attainment of these goals. There will be shortfalls in all three services in relation to 1954 annual review of force goals. The most serious weaknesses are in the air control and warning system, anti-submarine warfare, and deficiencies in the whole field of logistics. Although the effectiveness of the Italian defense forces has increased, deficiencies remain outstanding among all three services»⁸⁷. In February 1956, at a meeting of the *National Security Council*, Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the *Joint Chiefs of Staff*, reported that General Giuseppe Mancinelli, Chief of the Defence Staff had informed him «that unless the United States provided support for the Italian armed forces at the rate of about \$ 250 million a year, the Italian Government would have to reduce the level of its armed forces»; the Admiral «charged that the Italians not only expect us to give them new weapons; they also want our financial help to support the existing force levels. It was tantamount to blackmail». Secretary to the Treasury added: «that we were everywhere going to be faced with the proposition that either we help support the armed forces of our allies or else they would quit being allies»⁸⁸.

At the beginning of 1957, it was remarked that «the Suez crisis makes it less likely that Italy will in the near future reduce the gap between the financial requirements of her force goals and of the Italian defense expenditure ... Italy may in the near future exert pressure to secure a reduction of its NATO force goals to a level more realistically within its willingness and/or capability to support ... The Italian defense picture is further complicated by Italy's desires, military and political, to shift from conventional to advanced weapons and to obtain U.S. technical plans and contracts for the manufacture of missiles»⁸⁹. These estimates were confirmed in September, noting that «U.S. progress toward its objectives in Italy is presently proceeding at a slower pace than previously, except in the field of the military where progress is more marked», but «overall Italian military effectiveness remains relatively low when compared to U.S. combat effectiveness standards»⁹⁰. The first comment is significant, the second rather naïve and obvious and probably was applicable to most NATO allies.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Smith, E. Timothy (1985): *The United States, Italy and NATO: American Policy Toward Italy, 1948-1952*, Ann Arbor, University Microfilm International, p. 188.

⁸⁶ «Luce to Dulles» (10 October 1956), *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII*, op. cit., pp. 389, 396, quoted in Nuti, «Gli Stati Uniti...», op. cit., p. 104.

⁸⁷ «Progress Report on United States Policy toward Italy» (04 January 1956), *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII*, p. 321.

⁸⁸ *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XIX: National Security Policy* (1986), Washington, U. S. Government Printing Office, p. 212.

⁸⁹ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, 13-3, *Ibid.*, p. 403.

⁹⁰ Report Prepared by the Operations Coordinating Board, 3-9, *Ibid.*, p. 422.



A confirmation of the Italian fairly good military performance was given by famous British military historian and strategist Sir Basil Liddell Hart, who in 1960 wrote that Italy was the only member of NATO in continental Europe which had met the goals in the number of troops⁹¹. Certainly we may ask if the number of draftees was matched by the level of their operational capacity, but again this question could be posed for most NATO members. Certainly at the end of the '50s Italian Armed Forces were at the top of their power both in numbers and quality⁹². NATO membership was obviously a factor of strong modernization and strengthening of the Italian Armed Forces. «The Navy was soon the Service more integrated in the Allied organization»⁹³. In the '50s the Italian Navy tried in vain to exploit its excellent relations with the *U. S. Navy* to obtain its own naval aviation, a goal reached only in 1989⁹⁴. The rebirth of the Air Force and of the Aviation industry received a great impulse from Italian membership of NATO; in 1958 the first operational jet plane built in Italy won the NATO competition for a light tactical fighter (even if it was purchased only by Italy herself and by the German *Luftwaffe*, which later sold some of them to Portugal).

According to the Americans, in the '50s Italy's geostrategic importance was to be the «Southern buttress of the Central front and, together with Yugoslavia, the bastion of the Western flank of the Alliance's Southern land forces», the territory of naval and air basis and the location of defence industries⁹⁵. After the Suez crisis in 1956 the Segni government and the General Staff repeatedly offered to strengthen the bilateral military collaboration with the United States and increase the number of American troops in Italy, both in response to the increased Soviet influence in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean and for the internal reason of reducing the risks of the «opening to the left»⁹⁶. It appears that in 1964 President Segni opposed reductions of American forces in Italy, fearing a strengthening of neutralist attitudes⁹⁷.

In March 1964, NATO Secretary General Stikker remarked that «when the imminence of the military threat decreased, it was natural that there should be less concern for the strength of an Alliance. ... the Germans too had kept up their guard, but this was no longer true in Belgium. It was hard to make a judgment about Norway and Denmark (the Secretary commented that Foreign Minister Lange had realistically remarked that we had not yet reached the promised land); the UK was concerned with internal problems but had somewhat increased its defense budget; and in Italy, Segni, Saragat and Andreotti had kept the Italians in a good position»⁹⁸. In 1968, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, at a meeting of the *National Security Council*, the representative of the *Joint Chiefs of Staff* commented: «a. The

⁹¹ Liddell Hart, Basil Henry (1962) [english edition 1960]: *La prossima guerra*, Milano, Edizioni del «Borghese», p. 228.

⁹² Cfr. Ilari, Virgilio (1994): *Storia militare della prima repubblica 1943-1993*, Ancona, Nuove ricerche; de Leonardis: "L'Aeronautica Militare Italiana dalla ricostituzione postbellica alla fine della guerra fredda", in Bozzo, Luciano (ed.) (1999): *Dal futurismo al minimalismo. Aeronautica e "potere aereo" nella politica internazionale tra XX e XXI secolo*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, pp. 71-84; de Leonardis: "The Italian Navy in NATO during the Cold War", in *Maritime Power and National Force in the 20th Century*, Proceedings of the 3rd Pelagic Meeting (2001), Athens, Hellenic Navy-Naval Academy and National Defence Minister's Staff, pp. 161-166.

⁹³ Jean, Carlo: "La politica di sicurezza e la concezione difensiva italiana dal 1945 al 1975", in Id. (ed.) (1994): *Storia delle Forze Armate italiane 1945-1975. Aspetti ordinativi e sociologici*, Milano, Franco Angeli, p. 38.

⁹⁴ See Swartz, Peter M.: "The U.S. Navy's Relations with the West European Navies in the First Cold War Decade: The Italian and German Cases", paper presented to the *11th Naval History Symposium United States Naval Academy*, Annapolis (MA), (22 October 1993), pp. 14-20.

⁹⁵ See the documents of 1954 quoted by Sebesta, *op. cit.*, p. 683.

⁹⁶ See Nuti, "Gli Stati Uniti...", *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

⁹⁷ *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII*, *op. cit.*, n. 88.

⁹⁸ "Memorandum of Conversation" (18 March 1964), *Ibid.*, vol. XIII, n. 12.



Germans, the Italians and the Dutch have the resources needed to build up their military forces. The question is whether they have the will do so. b. Possibly the Norwegians and the Danes would do more. c. The British attitude is uncertain because their current military power is being reduced». President Johnson concluded: «We should have our Ambassadors go to the Germans, the Italians and the Dutch to find out specifically what they are willing to do now to strengthen NATO»⁹⁹.

5. Crisis and Recovery of Italian Foreign Policy

Only a brief summary of later events will be presented here, also because detailed researches are still in progress. After the elections of 1968, Italy saw a period of political unrest which generated the spread of leftwing and rightwing terrorism, culminating in May 1978 with the kidnapping and assassination of Moro, leader of the DC, by the Red Brigades. Governments changed rapidly and at the political elections in June 1976 the Communists polled 34.4% of the votes. In those years other countries members of NATO or linked to the United States by military agreements undertook profound political changes. After the end of rightwing dictatorships in Portugal, Greece and Spain Secretary of State Henry Kissinger feared a «Mediterranean crisis» involving the countries of NATO's Southern flank and watched with pessimism the sliding to the left of the Portuguese political situation¹⁰⁰.

Political instability, terrorism and high inflation undermined the Italian role in international relations. The Communist party became a member of the governing coalitions described as «national solidarity» or «historic compromise» and Washington warned against its full participation to the government; Communists accepted the membership of NATO, but Italian foreign policy lost effectiveness. At the end of the '70s, while détente vanished, the Communist party withdrew its support to the government and voted against the deployment in Italy of the new short range missiles *Pershing* and *Cruise* (opposing also the Italian participation to the European Monetary System). The decision to receive the missiles was a landmark in the history of Italian participation to NATO and was of fundamental importance for the Alliance, since Germany had subordinated her own acceptance to that of at least another continental member of NATO. The new five-parties (*pentapartito*) coalitions, DC, Socialists, Social Democrats, Republicans and Liberals, defeated terrorism and assured a decade of political stability; for the first time since 1947 Christian Democrats lost the premiership in favour of the Republican Giovanni Spadolini and then of the Socialist Bettino Craxi, who remained Prime Minister (in two successive governments) between August 1983 and April 1987, a long period according to Italian standard. In internal politics Craxi had the ambition to break the DC hegemony and also to make the Socialists stronger than the Communists he greatly disliked.

His governments and in general those of the '80s tried to enhance the role of Italy as a medium regional power in the Mediterranean¹⁰¹. In September 1980 Italy guaranteed the

⁹⁹ "Summary Notes of the 590th Meeting of the National Security Council" (04 September 1968), *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, n. 324.

¹⁰⁰ On the events of 1974-76 see Teixeira, Nuno Severiano: "O 25 de Abril e a Política Externa Portuguesa", *Relações Internacionais* (Março 2004), pp. 5-12; Moreira de Sá, Tiago: "Os Estados Unidos da America e a transição para a democracia em Portugal", *Politica Internacional* (Autumn-Winter 2002), pp. 117-59.

¹⁰¹ See Cremasco, Maurizio: "Italy: A New Role in the Mediterranean?", in Chipman, John (ed.) (1988): *NATO's Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges*, London-New York, Routledge, pp. 195-235 and in general Di Nolfo, Ennio (ed.) (2007): *La politica estera italiana negli anni ottanta*, Padova, Marsilio.



neutrality of Malta, to counteract Libya's influence, in 1982 accepted the transfer from Spain of the F 15 American fighters, Italian armed forces inaugurated their peacekeeping missions abroad, most notably in Lebanon and started to discuss a «new model of defence policy», paying attention to the «risks from the South», beyond the borders of NATO and outside the context of the Cold War.

In October 1985 a rather astonishing episode took place at the air base of Sigonella in Sicily. The *Carabinieri* (military police) and the guards of the Italian Air Force prevented the American *Delta Force* from capturing four Palestinian terrorists after their plane had been compelled by the American aircrafts to land, while President Reagan and Prime Minister Craxi exchanged excited phone calls. The terrorists had attacked the Italian liner *Achille Lauro* killing a disabled American citizen of Jewish religion. We cannot describe here the complex negotiations which followed; it's sufficient to say that from the legal point of view the Italian government was right, but certainly it appeared weak with the terrorists and traditionally biased in favour of the Palestinians¹⁰². The crisis was quickly overcome but certainly it appeared quite significant that for the first time Italy refused the United States the free use of her territory.

The end of the Cold War provoked the fall of the traditional party system in Italy. Democratic parties were swept away when the judiciary decided that the international situation no longer prevented the prosecution of the widespread corruption existing to finance political activities. The Communists were spared by the investigations, but had to change their name. They had also taken advantage of their local power but had been financed primarily by the Soviet Union. The neo-fascist party (*Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale*), which was immune by corruption, also because held no political power, changed also its name, shelved nostalgic ideas and was allowed to enter the government area.

Keeping to the subject of this article, it must be remarked that Atlanticism emerged stronger than ever. The first post-Communist Prime Minister, Massimo D'Alema, in 1999 staunchly supported the Kosovo war. The leader of the centre-right Silvio Berlusconi, who dominates Italian politics since 1994, in 2003 took sides with George Bush Jr. on Iraq; he skilfully managed to be considered by the President a close ally while at the same time not taking part to the invasion of Iraq, since he was aware of the public opinion's feelings and of the obstacles posed by art. 11 of the Constitution.

Actually in the last 15 years the participation of the Italian Armed Forces to military missions abroad has been a primary factor in enhancing the Italian status in international relations. A leading editorial writer has remarked the «new and now permanent factor of the Italian foreign policy in the recent years. The fact that Armed Forces have become the central instrument of this policy»¹⁰³. On the whole it may be said that Italy is the third largest contributor to NATO missions. Certainly it not by chance that, beyond holding the office of NATO Deputy Secretary General without interruption since 1971¹⁰⁴, in the last ten years two

¹⁰² Silj, Alessandro (ed.) (1998): *L'alleato scomodo. I rapporti fra Roma e Washington nel Mediterraneo: Sigonella e Gheddafi*, Milano, Corbaccio; Ronzitti, Natalino (ed.) (1990): *Maritime Terrorism and International Law*, Dordrecht-Boston-London, Martinus Nijhoff.

¹⁰³ Venturini, Franco: "Mass media, forze armate e operazioni militari", in de Leonardis and Pastori, Gianluca (eds.) (2007): *Le nuove sfide per la forza militare e la diplomazia. Il ruolo della NATO*, Bologna, Monduzzi, pp. 97-98. On the subject see de Leonardis: "Le Forze Armate nella strategia e nella politica estera della Repubblica", *Informazioni della Difesa*, no. 6 (2006), pp. 6-11 and Professor Pastori's article in this issue.

¹⁰⁴ Two Italians filled the post between 1958 and 1964, when Brosio was elected Secretary General. Former minister of foreign affairs and defence Antonio Martino in 2003 was in the front line to succeed Lord Robertson of Port Ellen as Secretary General but declined the candidature.



Italians have been elected as Chairmen of the Military Committee: Admiral Guido Venturoni (1999-2002) and Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola (since June 2008).

6. Conclusion

The two pillars of Italian foreign policy since the middle of the XX century have been Atlanticism and Europeanism. There is no doubt that during the Cold War the importance of Atlanticism was paramount. First of all for the reason mentioned in February 1963 by the diplomat Roberto Ducci to the Foreign Minister Attilio Piccioni: «Since Italy cannot be independent staying alone and Europe is unable to progress towards a real integration then the richer and farther master is always the best»¹⁰⁵. Also because the near allies were by no means disposed to give satisfaction to Italy's long standing ambition to be accepted in the Great Powers' club: «For France and for the Great Britain, Italy was far from being an equal. – wrote Milward¹⁰⁶ – It was only instrumental to their policy ambitions, to be picked up or abandoned ...». Italy's diplomatic correspondence is full of protests and appeals to Washington against perspectives of “directorates” inside NATO excluding her; for example in 1957 Foreign Minister Martino expressed to Secretary of State Dulles his concern for the possible development of a «political standing group»¹⁰⁷ among France, the United Kingdom and the United States. In the mid-Sixties Ambassador to Washington Fenoaltea protested many times in strong terms against a possible “directorates” among Germany, United Kingdom and United States¹⁰⁸. It is significant that Fenoaltea's main argument against these “offending directorates” was their negative effect in internal politics: the weakening of the moderates and the strengthening of extreme left and extreme right¹⁰⁹.

Being refused admission to the club of European “Great Powers”, Italy boasted her friendship with the United States, hoping to obtain advantages from it. This quest for a “privileged relation” with Washington was a *leit motiv* of Italian Atlantic policy, the real only card to be played, being at the same time a point of strength but also a sign of weakness.

We have ample documentary evidence of the primacy of Atlanticism over Europeanism in Italian foreign policy during the Cold War. A few months before the signature of the treaties of Rome, at the Atlantic Council ambassador Cattani stated that Italy was «extremely interested in FTA [*Free Trade Association*]» and «thought economic cooperation between NATO countries and other areas should be stressed»¹¹⁰, an opinion not exactly consonant with the founding principles of the European Common Market. In 1965 ambassador Fenoaltea «reverted to one of his chronic themes that the US cannot and must not leave the Europeans to make important decisions alone. US influence and leadership is needed»¹¹¹, not precisely a statement of faith in European integration.

In September 1957, Foreign Minister Pella described precisely to Dulles the hierarchy of priorities of Italian foreign policy: «Friendship between the U. S. and Italy is a basic fact of

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Nuti, “Gli Stati Uniti...”, *op. cit.*, p. 577, n. 115.

¹⁰⁶ Milward, Alan: “Foreign Light on Italy's Foreign Policy”, *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali*, vol. 13 (1998/2) - 14 (1999/1), p. 377.

¹⁰⁷ *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. IV, op. cit.*, p. 585.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII*, n. 122 and 126, *vol. XIII, op. cit.*, n. 123.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XII, n. 122 and 126, *vol. XIII, n. 123*.

¹¹⁰ *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. IV, op. cit.*, p. 252.

¹¹¹ *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XII, op. cit.*, n. 105.



Italian political life and the foundation of its foreign policy. The second important basis of Italian foreign policy is the NATO alliance ... Italy maintains her faith in the “European idea”¹¹². As much clear was Social Democrat foreign minister Giuseppe Saragat in May 1964: «NATO was more important and necessary than ever. In fact, NATO was more important to Italy than the Common Market. Without the latter Italy could pull through; without NATO it was doubtful that Italy could survive. ... He had told de Gaulle that if Moro and the Italian Government were to follow the same policy as he, we would “in six months have handed Italy over to the Communists”».¹¹³ As President of the Republic, in September 1967, Saragat confirmed to President Johnson: «The mainstay of Italian foreign policy is the Atlantic Alliance ... Italy ... is equally convinced that without the Alliance, there would be little hope of solving Europe's problems ... In France there exists a government that is both conservative and nationalistic. Even if de Gaulle were to disappear from the scene, little change could be expected in French policy. Unlike the situation which exists in Italy, de Gaulle and his policies are supported both by the forces of nationalism on the right and by communism on the left, for other, but obvious, reasons. ... The Italian Government remains firmly convinced of the necessity of NATO not only for military purposes, but also as a vital instrument to secure the existing bonds between the US and Europe»¹¹⁴.

It is evident that Italian governments valued the Atlantic Alliance not only for its fundamental military purpose, but also because it was the institution linking the United States to the European countries and this link was particularly important for Italy's internal political stability¹¹⁵. The second and the third reason marked the difference between Italy and the other European countries, which had no problems of internal political stability. But, as remarked by Saragat and all moderate politicians, the Italian situation was also different from that of France, the other nation with a strong Communist party and an unstable political situation until de Gaulle stabilized his power. In the Vth French republic a position critical of the United States and defiladed towards NATO strengthened the government and clipped the wings to Communist opposition; in Italy a weakening of Atlantic orthodoxy would cause the decay of the government coalitions. Since nationalism in Italy was dead after the Second World War, if Atlanticism slackened, foreign policy would be characterized by a neutralism sympathetic to the third world, that the Communist party would have been happy to support. This strong link between Atlanticism and internal politics was the real Italian peculiarity, not the issue on Italy's uncritical loyalty to the United States (e. g. the slogan labelling the country as the «Bulgaria of NATO») or the opposite view on the ambiguity of Italian foreign policy, both recurring in unscholarly publications.

To stress that for many Italian politicians (but with notable exceptions as for example Taviani, Cossiga and others) viewed NATO primarily from the political point of view than from the military one, does not allow an underestimation of Italy's commitment to common defence. We still lack detailed and scholarly studies on the importance of Italy as a “strategic player” and not only as a “strategic theatre” in the Mediterranean; the latter cannot be denied, even if this region was for NATO a minor front, particularly until 1968. However if we compare the Italian role to that of the other allies bordering the Mediterranean, some of which

¹¹² “Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State”, (25 September 1957), in *FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. XXVII*, op. cit., pp. 430-31.

¹¹³ See the memorandum of conversation between Saragat and Rusk at the Atlantic Council of The Hague (12-14 May 1964), in *FRUS, 1964-1968, vol. XIII*, op. cit., n. 24.

¹¹⁴ Memorandum of Conversation (18 September 1967), op. cit.

¹¹⁵ During the Cold War, Atlanticism, or better the relation with Washington, was much more important than Europeanism for internal political evolution, but this doesn't mean to share «the myth of the omnipotence of the America presence in Italy» (Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti*, op. cit., p. 676).



during the Cold War in different periods were not members of the Alliance (Greece, Turkey and Spain) or of its integrated military structures (France, Greece and Spain) or were ruled by dictatorship which caused embarrassment (Greece and Turkey), we may conclude that, in spite of all her limits and considering both the strictly military and the political aspects, Italy was, more than the others, a sure pillar of NATO¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁶ Raimondo Luraghi ("L'Italia nel fronte sud della NATO", in de Leonardis, "Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana...", *op. cit.*, pp. 225-36) strongly underlines Italy's role as «pillar of the Alliance's Southern front» in the second half of the XXth century.

