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IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL ITALIAN POLICY TOWARDS EUROPEAN UNION?

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Until just about a couple of years ago, writing a paper on "The Finality Debate on the EU and Its Italian Dimensions" would have been a rather easy exercise. Almost no one, either in Italy or abroad, questioned Italy's European policy and our country's traditional loyalty to an "ever closer Union." Italy has always been in the forefront, a veritable "founding father," in supporting the most politically and institutionally advanced proposals to build the EU and the subsequent reforms of its Treaties.

Almost out of the blue, the inauguration of Silvio Berlusconi's second center-right government in June 2001 touched off a heated debate in Italy and abroad on Italy's role in the Union and its political objectives in the institutional reform process slated for 2004, the date of the new reform of the EU Treaties.

Beyond the medium- and long-term objectives centered around the Convention on the Future of Europe, the greatest concerns now involve the daily action of the Italian government in the Community framework, action radically opposed to that of past governments in both style and substance. The use of the veto in the European Council of December 2001 to contest the location of the European Food Agency in Helsinki rather than Parma, as our government would have preferred; the decision, announced by Defence Minister Antonio Martino the 24th of October 2001, to withdraw Italy's participation in the consortium of European enterprises to build the A400M military aircraft; the delay during the second half of the same year in accepting the agreement on the European arrest warrant; the initial opposition at the beginning of 2002 to accepting the proposal to freeze the assets of individuals subject to the European arrest warrant. These are only some of the most outstanding examples of Italy's changed attitude in Europe.

The question on everyone's lips is whether Italy's European finalities are different from those of the past and whether, therefore, Italy's national interest and the current European integration process are no longer closely connected. Or whether this is a simple reaction to the risks of being excluded our country has often experienced in the past, and even more recently. This would offer at least a partial explanation of a center-right government's desire to "count" more and to prove to its partners Italy's decisive role in Europe.

1. Italy's International and European Role: the Fear of Exclusion

The fear of exclusion is no secondary matter. And it is an old matter, which dates back to the times of Alcide De Gasperi, the leading Prime Minister of the newly built Italian Republic. Judging from recent events, we observe that Italy is once more in the

uncomfortable position of being an important but non-essential interlocutor. This fear became quite evident immediately after the 11th of September 2001, when President George W. Bush did not feel it necessary to mention our country among those to be deployed in the front line in a military action against Afghanistan, nor did Mr. Bush feel it necessary to "consult" our government directly, postponing Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's visit to the US by several weeks (1).

Most important in nurturing doubts on Italy's presumed marginal role was the three-way meeting between Messrs Chirac, Blair and Schroeder at the eve of the European Council of Ghent on 19 October 2001. France, the United Kingdom and Germany were the only three European Union's countries Mr. Bush cited in his appeal for a great international coalition against terrorist Osama Bin Laden. And what took place at the threshold of the European Council, which had convened to debate the Union's contribution to the war on terrorism, created for Italy's government and for the other "forgotten" governments of the Union even greater embarrassment than Mr. Bush's initial "forgetfulness" in failing to mention these countries in his appeal (2).

In light of these events we must ask ourselves whether this is an anomalous case due to the exceptional nature of events and American's urgent need to act unfettered by formal constraints to score immediate points in the war against terrorism, or whether Italy is really structurally marginal in a rapidly changing world and European scenario.

Italy's marginalization, as we have just said, is actually an old issue with roots in our country's post-World War II history, in the unbalanced relationship between foreign policy interests (scant) and attention to domestic politics and balances (excessive), and in the precarious national spirit that distinguishes us. Over the years we have witnessed a clear cyclical trend in our foreign policy, with periods of Italy's long absence from a role in the major decisions of the second half of the 20th century, alternating with periods of greater presence and activism that have led Italy to hope for its definitive inclusion among the countries that count.

In the numerous analyses of the oscillating trend of Italian foreign policy, there is a more or less general consensus in considering the Fifties and Sixties as the decades guided by the "principle of [Italy's] non-exclusion" from the new international and/or regional system being shaped (3). The two key foreign policy choices, piloted by Alcide de Gasperi in the first half of the 1950s -- Italy's membership in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and subsequently in NATO -- both had to do with the need to reinsert Italy in the Western scenario.

For a defeated nation, anchoring itself to and participating in the major Western initiatives represented a guarantee and a card to be played on the foreign policy front. De Gasperi also sought to achieve other objectives: to block the debate in Italy pitting the proponents of nationalism against the supporters of neutrality; to erect an insurmountable ideological and political obstacle against the Communist opposition to quash any hope it might have to gain a foothold in the government; to devote his energy exclusively to the country's civil and economic reconstruction without being influenced by the turbulence of foreign policy questions (4). So Italy in those years was seated among those who counted, with no need to adjust its position to changing international

conditions and balances on a daily basis. Moreover, its convinced membership in NATO and, above all, in the European Community created around Italy the perception of a faithful ally and a full-fledged founding father to be relied on without question in the transitions toward higher levels of integration and common action.

Given this perception of Italy as an essential partner ready to support every advance in multilateralism, a certain Italian structural "deviance," in practical terms and in terms of its ability to act, went virtually unnoticed in the early period of the integration process. If we look to the European Community, the Treaty of Rome expressly established derogations for our country (5). It took little time to recognize Italy's inability to exploit Community resources to the utmost and to adopt Community directives, which for decades placed Italy near the bottom in the special Community classification. This "deviance" became manifest in all the European monetary issues, from the first experiment with the European "snake" in the Seventies (Italy quickly withdrew from the exchange system) to Italy being granted the widest margins of fluctuation (6%) in the European Monetary System, from which we were expelled in 1992 in the wake of one of the most traumatic economic and credibility crises in our history.

From the practical side, therefore, the policy of non-exclusion, of remaining at the same level with the others, was more a requirement of domestic policy than a real ability to promote Italian interests abroad. Weighing heavily against Italy was its "structural deviance" factor, which soon became apparent to our partners and partially nullified our efforts to participate in the most important groups and initiatives.

The rest of Italy's Community and international policy history is studded with a host of similar episodes, which testify to our objective difficulties in making ourselves accepted on the basis of our presumed status as a medium power.

In the mid-1970s the first alarm sounded on the true perception our partners had of us: the failure to be invited to the nascent economic summit of the Seven in Guadalupe in 1975, then still a group of Five (6). This was followed by other similar incidents along the way: the exclusion (then self-exclusion) from Eurocorps in the late 1980s, the initial absence in participating in the Schengen border agreements in 1993, our absence from the table of the "Contact Group" on Bosnia in 1994, down to the most recent episodes mentioned above (7).

To counter these less than flattering episodes for our country, we should point out Italy's great commitment on other occasions, beginning with the crucial decision during the Cold War to accept the deployment of Euromissiles in 1981. The result was a new European solidarity against the Soviet SS20 missiles and the starting point for reversing the policy of confrontation between East and West with the subsequent opening of disarmament talks. Our commitment in the Mediterranean must also be remembered: from the defense treaty with Malta (1980) to our participation in the two successive Gulf Wars (1987 and 1991), to the minesweeping operations in the Red Sea and the presence of our troops in Sinai and Lebanon. Italian foreign policy in the 1980s has been defined as a period of its "emerging profile" (8). But this was followed, as just described, by the dramatic period of exclusion in the early 1990s until the 1997

European Council of Amsterdam, when Italy "miraculously" succeeded in participating in the Euro.

Scrutinizing these events, we can identify some of the reasons behind the cyclical swings in our foreign policy commitment. Our difficulties and the "low" points of our international participation almost always coincide with domestic economic and political problems. In the mid-Seventies we were grappling with the effects of terrorism and the pressure exerted by the labor unions, which temporarily weakened the economic boom of the previous decade. This coincided with the attempt to exclude Italy from the group of major Western economic and industrial powers represented in the G-7. The diffidence toward including Italy in European and international initiatives in the early Nineties coincided with the kickback scandals, the progressive disappearance of our traditional political parties and the economic difficulties caused by the enormous public debt and by inflation.

Today, with an economy that is certainly no worse than that of our most important partners and with a theoretically stable political situation, it would seem more difficult to justify the diffidence toward us and give a meaning to the "exclusions" we are experiencing. The reservations of our European and international allies grow out of an evaluation of a political situation that is deemed unsettled because of the sudden, repeated changes in the Prime Minister in the previous legislature (Prodi 1996, d'Alema 1998, Amato 2000) and because of the novelty of the new Berlusconi government, composed of members largely unknown on the international stage and whose capacity for action still remains to be proven. So these reservations would seem contingent and provisional. In fact, Italy has not succeeded in giving the impression that it is an "accomplished" democracy, in which the alternating governments are not tied to precarious political balances within the ruling coalition, always too vast and variegated to be considered abroad a credible, stable interlocutor with a clear foreign policy.

2. A Less European Italy? The Advent of the Berlusconi Government

The foreign press has also magnified the impression of an Italy deviating from its traditional pro-European track. During the election campaign in the spring of 2001 it targeted center-right candidate Silvio Berlusconi for a series of reasons that had little to do with his attitude toward Europe and much to do with his "conflicts of interest" and his pending judicial problems at home. This negative inclination also had its counterpart in the government's European actions, especially because of the presence in the ruling coalition of Umberto Bossi's Northern League, an openly anti-European party. To offset these suspicions in the first months of the government's rule, Renato Ruggiero, an internationally respected technocrat and clear proponent of a strong Europe who clearly supported Italy's traditional objectives, was nominated Foreign Minister. Mr. Ruggiero's resignation in December 2001, after a dispute with Mr. Bossi's party, and Prime Minister Berlusconi's decision to act as interim Foreign Minister rekindled the media's negative opinions on Italy's European future. For months on end, *The Economist, Le Monde, Sueddeutsche Zeitung* and *El Pais* heaped criticism and "caveats" on the Italian government. This "Forth Power," the foreign press, actively entered the debate on Italy's finalities in the Union and partially

contributed to exasperating the domestic political situation and reinforcing the country's extremist political fringes.

The domestic debate in Italy on the finalities of the Union is actually anything but settled. There are profound differences between the government, political and social forces, public opinion and the media. To simplify our analysis to the utmost, we can affirm there is today a deep dichotomy between attitudes and opinions on Europe in the government and, in particular, those held by some of its exponents and the declarations and positions of Parliament and the social forces (9). In other words, there is no single policy on the Union but a series of differentiated positions far more evident now than some years ago.

The most interesting (and perhaps the most disturbing) part of Italy's new attitude on the Union lies within the Berlusconi government. The Prime minister has sought to stress the differences between his and the previous center-left government, defining the European position of the latter as "uncritical," "dogmatic" and "born-again believers in their support for Brussels" (interview with the *Financial Times*). It is noteworthy that in cultivating this attitude the Italian government is trying to align itself with Messrs Blair and Aznar, with whom it seems easier to achieve the best compromise between the Community method and the intergovernmental method to govern the Union. In particular Tony Blair and Josè Maria Aznar are both strong advocates of a politically light and economically liberal Europe, a model which is very close to Berlusconi's thinking. "Between me, Aznar and Blair there is a clear understanding" Mr Berlusconi says. "I want a Europe that is liberal, democratic, pluralistic, one that doesn't feel like the Brussels bureaucracy, which intervenes in too many areas. If Europe can better manage a common currency, foreign and defense policy, then it should. But other things must stay in the hands of the nation states" (10). This interpretation is shared by Mr. Giulio Tremonti, the influential Treasury Minister who is close to the Northern League. Mr. Tremonti has spoken of the end of the romantic idea of Europe. "Too much legislation is today operating in Europe that did not originate in national parliaments. If you want to create a constitution you must have the highest level of democracy. Technocrats can built the Euro, but they cannot built the constitution of Europe" (11).

This position consequently leads to a different way of being part of Europe. In Mr. Berlusconi's opinion, Italy will act to protect the national interest on a footing equal to the common interest in achieving swift and effective integration at Union's level. This objective could be shared if Mr. Berlusconi did not add expressions such as "Italy will take orders from no one" or will act on "a level of absolute parity with its European and world partners" (12). A majority of the government agrees with Mr. Berlusconi and supports him on this mode of participating in the Union (with the exception of ex-Minister Ruggiero) in regard to a more muscular policy toward Brussels. The fear of exclusion, that the above-mentioned facts have reinforced, seems to be re-emerging.

The Italian government's more assertive position has led Mr. Berlusconi to propose himself as a "broker" on the issues of institutional reform, with a view toward Italy's semester of Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2003. This position may be motivated by domestic factors, too. He admits there are "diverse sensibilities" on Europe in his government. By protecting himself as 2003 Intergovernmental Conference

(IGC) chairman, probably due to reform the EU Treaties, he neatly avoids inflaming the debate between Europhobes such as Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League, and pro-Europeans on the center of the government.

Actually, it is far more difficult to single out a clear European position on the type of Europe the government will support in reforming the Treaties. Mr. Bossi, as just said, has taken an extreme position. He defines the current Union as "forcolandia" ("land of the gallows," land of the violation of rights), Stalinist, a super-state, and Jacobin Europe, and opposes any form of institutional progress in the current Union's structure. But the majority of the government supports the French definition of the "Federation of Nation States" (12). This model will be able to assure the necessary cohesion of the Union and simultaneously safeguard national identities.

Clearly, the crux of the problem emerges when the issue of national sovereignty is touched on. While in the past cessions of sovereignty were never a source of dispute and division, the current government majority has far less traditional ideas. Mr. Tremonti, the Treasury Minister, in the above mentioned interview with the *Financial Times*, proposes to lead the ranks of those who do not intend to transfer sovereignty and broad powers to Brussels, but only a few functions. Mr. Bossi, leader of the Northern League, follows him on this point and even proposes amending the Italian Constitution to obstruct the passage of powers to the Union. Mr. Berlusconi is more cautious in this regard and has voiced the possibility of ceding some state sovereignty in the interest of a superior identity, so long as this process has a "consensus" (14). Mr. Gianfranco Fini, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of *Alleanza Nazionale* (Italy's right-wing party) has also followed Mr. Berlusconi's line, speaking of "collegial management" of sovereignty on issues in which Union action is more effective (15). But at the same time, Mr. Fini does not exclude the use of the qualified majority vote even on more "sensitive" subjects such as common foreign policy and security. There is total agreement on this view by the coalition's center parties, but not by the League or the other fringes within the majority, who maintain that national sovereignty must be defended by retaining the right of veto.

These distinct positions within the government are not as evident within Parliament. On the eve of the European Council of Laeken in December 2001, the Chamber and Senate approved extremely traditional resolutions hardly distinguishable in content from those adopted by the previous legislature. The interesting aspect is that the vote was almost unanimous. Parliament's pro-European convictions are supported by the speakers of both houses, who hold that the drafting of a European Constitution offers the way to at last define "a doctrine of limited sovereignty freely and genuinely shared" (Mr. Casini, Chamber of Deputies) and the solution to the Union's problems in the "return to the old [Community] Monnet method" (Mr. Pera, Senate) (16).

Parliament's position can be partly explained by the ongoing support of Europe in Italian public opinion. Despite the years in which trust in Europe was declining, a trend that became manifest in 1998 (then at the level of 75%) after the fall of the Prodi government and assessment of the great sacrifices necessary to participate in the European Monetary System, and continued until 2001 (53%), the introduction of the Euro boosted the Italian public's confidence in the Union (64%). Pro-Union support

reaches 80% on the drafting of a European Constitution, the highest percentage among European states. On specific issues, such as common European defense and foreign policy, the consensus is even higher among the center-right (79%) than among the center-left (71%). And this despite the clear divisions within the government and the emergence of more consistent Euroskepticism than ever before (17).

Finally, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of the Republic, energetically backs a position of total confidence in a supranational and politically more integrated Europe. In regard to our Union's partners Mr. Ciampi has become a factor in guaranteeing Italy's ongoing support for greater European integration and further cessions of sovereignty, also in common foreign policy and defense (18). The labor unions and major industrial associations are likewise in favor, although among the industrial groups the front is more varied because of the presence in the Italian system of many small- and medium-size businesses, which had significantly benefited from the devaluations of the lira and state assistance. Today, part of this segment of small entrepreneurs has taken up sides with the Northern League (19).

Despite a certainly more complex situation than in the past, we must also recognize that the government, perhaps as a response to the criticism leveled against it, has nominated outstanding representatives to the European Convention. In addition to former Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, who is part of the Presidency, Italy's representatives include current Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini, former Prime Minister Lamberto Dini and Mr. Marco Follini, president of a small ex-Christian Democratic party who is very close to the current Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. The mix is certainly interesting and a leadership group on European integration issues could coalesce within the Convention.

3. The Policy of Alliances in Europe

Undeniably, a great part of the match on the finalities of the Union will continue to be played within the Italian government. The issue of alliances with the other major partners of the Union is by no means secondary. Most recently, with an Italian government less inclined to follow the traditional lines of our European policy, we have witnessed a cooling off in relations with the governments of France and Germany, normally Italy's principal interlocutors on European issues. In particular, the suspicions of Berlin against Rome have grown quite explicit. In the last bilateral meeting (April 2002) Chancellor Schroeder deemed it inopportune to sign a joint declaration with our government. Instead, a joint declaration was carefully drafted during the prior meeting, on the 15th of February 2002, with Mr. Tony Blair, leading us to foresee, as said above, a new alliance with the United Kingdom and, may be, with Spain.

Nonetheless, retracing past history, ever since the inception of the Community the problem for our country has been represented by the Franco-German alliance, which for political and historical reasons has traditionally been considered the motor of European integration. And Italy's attempts to "break it up" or to wedge its way in have almost always been frustrated. We need only recall the Genscher-Colombo plan (1981), which proposed bringing the nascent European foreign policy (CFP) within the Community

(20). Because of the opposition of France, which had been excluded from the initial talks, the proposal finished as a vague solemn declaration during the European Council of Stuttgart (1983).

Analogous efforts to weaken the Franco-German axis were later attempted through alliances with the United Kingdom, with the drafting of the regional funds in the early 1970s and in the field of security on the eve of the Intergovernmental Conference of Maastricht (1991), with the drafting of an Italo-English declaration, on initiative of Italian foreign minister Gianni De Michelis, concurrent to the Kohl-Mitterrand letter of intention on the place of the future defense policy in the Treaty (21). The Franco-German project called for inserting the WEU within the Union, while Italy and the United Kingdom championed a bridge position for the WEU between NATO and the EU. In the end, both positions were reflected in the Treaty, but this gave Italy no advantage because France and Germany had won official recognition for the Eurocorps (the future nucleus of what is today known as the Rapid Intervention Force), which Italy did not join.

In perspective we can observe that the alliances with the United Kingdom, as a moderating force against the powerful Franco-German alliance, have never gone beyond the point of contingent interest. The philosophies of the two countries on European integration were and continue to be too far apart. Even an old Europeanist like Altiero Spinelli, who worked tirelessly on behalf of England's membership in the EC to create a counterweight to the Paris-Bonn axis, was forced to modify his position on the feasibility of an Italo-English alliance.

On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that in the future Europe will be able to do without the Franco-German alliance. And when the issue of "reinforced cooperation" comes to the fore, the nucleus to achieve resolution can only revolve around these two countries (22). The past shows no exceptions to this principle. From the Euro to Schengen, the presence of France and Germany has been essential, but not the presence of the United Kingdom. In the prospect of broadening this special form of cooperation to the field of security and defense policy, we agree that the United Kingdom must participate, but such cooperation cannot be achieved without the presence of France and Germany.

4. The Key Issue: European Defense

Italy has most feared (and suffered) for its national interests and the risks of exclusion precisely in the field of European defense. The signals become clear in reviewing the recent history of the WEU and its revitalization in 1984 under the direction of Giovanni Spadolini. The then Italian Defense Minister, in a memorandum to the government, expressed his fears over a Franco-German-British "directorate" for arms cooperation and proposed to relaunch the WEU to provide an institutional container for that external trilateral initiative.

The same occurred three years later, in 1987, after the Franco-German decision to activate an old clause in the Elysée Treaty (1963) on military cooperation between the

two countries. Out of this grew the famous Franco-German Brigade, the forerunner of the Eurogroup. Italy worked to formulate the "Common Platform" of the WEU, once again in the hope of bringing both countries within an appropriate institutional framework.

Despite the subsequent offers of France and Germany to allow Italy to join, first the Brigade, and then the Eurogroup, Italy held fast to its decision to consider these initiatives extraneous to Community logic. Nonetheless, in the early Nineties the Italian government promoted Eurofor and Euromar, sorts of affiliates of Eurocorps. This reveals another side of Italian foreign policy that is apparently contradictory to the principle of non-exclusion: Italy's refusal to join ad hoc groups of which it has not been a promoter (as it was the case for Alba Operation in 1997, when Italy took the lead of a coalition of countries in Albania).

This is the old and new story that recently re-emerged, as we have already mentioned in our preface, with the Airbus project. Italy had kept itself out of the project from its inception, and after years of reconsideration, on the eve of its possible backdoor entry with the start of cooperation with its other partners on the military version of the A400M, it decided not to participate. The reasons behind this recent refusal may be both technical and economic, but the political significance is inexplicable, since the exclusion of our country is becoming the genuine risk of a defense policy conducted autonomously and ever less frequently within the institutional framework by our major European allies. If the project for a common European defense is to be accelerated, then every effort must be made to bring ad hoc initiatives within the Community framework. And this could be better achieved if Italy were to act within the occasional groups rather than exclude itself, having, therefore, no real possibility of pushing for their "communitarization."

5. What Are Italy's Alternatives?

The Italian government (at least some of its members) does not completely comprehend this political need. Italy can certainly enlarge its spectrum of European allies. For example it is probably more worthwhile for our government to make strong alliances with the United Kingdom and Spain on the questions of liberalizing the internal market and advance the domestic process of economic privatization. But on institutional matters it is difficult to turn away from a strong coalition with France and Germany, unless Italy wishes to completely undo the role of founding father it is particularly proud of. At the Barcelona European Council, March 18, 2002, prime minister Berlusconi himself did declare, with a certain emphasis, his proudness "we remain the most pro European of Countries, with a turnouts for European Parliament elections of over 80 per cent. Europeanism is in Italy's blood, it goes back to the Roman Empire"! But in reality to reinforce the process of European integration it is still a matter of basic national interest.

Simplifying to the utmost the options before Italy in the face of a radically changing international system, we should first specify that Italian interests in the system of international relations, and European relations in particular, largely coincide with its

general interests as they have taken shape since the post-war period, and both multilateralism and integration have been constructed on these systems of relations. Accepting the fact that cooperation among states is the bottom line of our foreign policy, the issue involves the procedures most appropriate to achieve this objective.

Once we have excluded an "autarchic" solution, totally unfeasible because of both economic and financial globalization and growing interdependence in the field of security, two principal solutions remain.

The first is the "balance of power," a difficult hypothesis because of the lack of a real equilibrium among the powers and because such a scenario could lead to an accentuated re-nationalization of economic and defense policies as the prerequisite to achieving a balance. This could be quite risky in the transition toward a balance and, in any case, it would be very costly in the short and medium term. In order to match these political and economic costs, Italy might be tempted to build up a special relationship with United States, along the line of the "British model". Actually, both prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and defense minister Antonio Martino have tried, in some cases, to privilege a Rome-Washington axis. This attempt was particularly evident on the issue of a possible new Gulf war against Irak. The initial move of the Italian government, during the Summer of 2002, was of a clear, strong support to US President's willingness to pass a single resolution at the UN Security Council, linking inspections to automatic military intervention in case of Irak's refusal to fulfill UN requests. Due to a radically different Franco-German position, backed by a similar Russian attitude, at the end the Italian government felt necessary to realign with its European main partners. Once more, the "European political cover" proved to be a prevailing factor for Italian international policy. The temptation to act more freely, even into the direction of a stronger tie with Washington, shows certain objective limits: on essential matters it doesn't represent a practicable alternative to a European common position.

The second solution involves a form of multilateralism targeting specific forms of integration. This hypothesis is actually being adopted in certain regionalization processes, the most outstanding of which in dimensions and importance is the European integration process. In the framework of the European Union this further integration is taking the form of a balance between economic and political objectives and institutions. The development of the integration process cannot stop with the single currency, first because the single currency entails political "governance" of the economy and second because Europe is inevitably being led by the international changes now taking place to create for itself a defense structure that will enable it to become an international political actor in the same terms and with the same effectiveness it today possesses as an international economic entity.

At the present time, the development of greater political integration at the European level best represents Italian interests in the revision of the Nice Treaty. If this line is decided on, the offshoot must be evaluation guidelines which will help establish priorities for the country's political action in the process to readjust the international relations system in the "post-'89" and "post-September 11" period. First and foremost, Italy must decide how to address the temptations, always present among our partners, to develop scenarios alternative to integration (the "directoires").

The interpretation is simple: any tendency toward the "directoires" must be avoided because, in one way or another, they will weaken the integration process. Any modification of the European system in this direction would be extremely perilous for Italy.

We must add that participation in a more integrated European system does not exempt Italy from:

- *assuming a more active leadership role in the transformation process taking place*. Mr. Nino Andreatta, Foreign Affairs Minister in 1993, used to repeat: "the end of the Cold War has in no way determined a change in the fundamental options of Italy's membership in the European Community and Atlantic Alliance. It has, in fact, brought to an end all advantages deriving automatically from its geostrategic position. In the new international situation belonging is not enough: [Italy] must act, prove and qualify itself with its presence and its role" (23). In particular, efforts in the European Union must be directed toward strengthening the defense pillar, a particularly significant element for a border country between East and South such as today's Italy. To achieve this end Italy's traditional mission is "communitarization" of the Franco-German alliance (with the addition of the United Kingdom and other countries on certain occasions). This role has traditionally distinguished the "high" points of our European policy. Only in this way can Italy avoid the risk of the formation of directorates that will exclude it;
- *establishing in the coming months a clear government policy on the institutional reform of the Treaties*. If our Prime Minister truly wishes to assume the role of broker with a view to the Italian Presidency of the EU in the second half of 2003, all doubts on the credibility of his leadership capacity must be quashed as soon as possible. Paradoxically, Italy must be better prepared and more solid than its partners, because the role of broker implies a profound knowledge of the issues and a crystalline idea of the finalities toward which the negotiations must be directed;
- *dispelling all doubts within Italy on the matching of national and European interests*. The history of our participation in the Union has amply demonstrated the importance of the bond with Brussels for the modernization of Italy (24). When the Berlusconi government today tries to justify to the trade unions its plans for the reform of the social security system and the flexibility of the labor market it always cites EU policies and directives to substantiate them. It is clearly impossible to appeal to Brussels, on one hand, without having, on the other, a precise strategy on the future of Europe.

In conclusion, while the government has not reached complete consensus on the finalities of the Union, a significant part of the political forces and, above all, of public opinion continues to see in the EU a positive element of advancement for our country. If this spirit persists, in the coming months the government's position may possibly be clarified. Consequently, Italy's place in the Treaty revision process will also become clearer to our European partners.

Notes

1. At the end, the meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi took place the 15th of October, long after the visit of the European "Big Three".

2. The concern for a newly emerging European "Directoires" was among the main reasons for an open Italian protest against the "Three Big".

3. On the "principle of non-exclusion" see Iai Report 1992, *The Dual Crisis*, "The International Spectator", no. 1/1993, pp 5-30

4. See D. Sassoon, "The making of Italian foreign Policy", in W. Wallace and W. E. Paterson (eds), *Foreign Policy Making in Western Europe: a comparative approach*, Westmead, Saxon House, 1978, pp. 83-105

5. See A. Missiroli "Italy", in Jan Manners and Richard G. Whitman (Eds), *The Foreign Policies of EU Member States*, Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 87-104

6. See G. Garavoglia, From "Rambouillet to Williamsburg: an Historical Assessment", in C. Merlini (ed*), Economic Summits and Western Decision-Making*, Croom Helm, London, 1984, pp. 1-42

7. See G. Bonvicini, "Italy and the Weu", in C. Lankowski and S. Serfaty (eds), *Europeanizing Security*, Washington, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1999, pp. 86-99

8. See R. Aliboni, *Italy and the New International Context: an Emerging Profile*, "The International Spectator", no. 1/1985, pp. 1-18

9. See Lucia S. Rossi, *Italy's view(s) of the Future of the European Union*, "The International Spectator", no. 1/2002, pp. 97-106

10. *Europe's Broker*, "Financial Times", 18/01/2002, p. 10

11. *Italy's Finance Minister Takes Central Role in Europe Debate*, "Financial Times", 10/01/2002, p. 16

12. Speech by Italian Prime Minister, Chamber of Deputies, 14/01/2002

13. See L. S. Rossi, op. cit.

14. Interview to Italian Prime Minister, "The Times" 14/01/2002

15. *Italy's Fini gains more respectability in Europe's corridors of power*, "Financial Times", 25/02/2002, p. 4

16. Speech by Senato's President Marcello Pera, at the Chamber of Deputies, 30/11/2001

17. See Ilvo Diamanti and Fabio Bordignon, *Gli Italiani si riscoprono euroentusiasti*, "Limes", no. 1/2002, pp. 53-61

18. For an extensive comment on the European action of Italian Republic President, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, see: A. Quadrio Curzio, *L'Italia e l'Europa che verrà*, "il Mulino", no. 6/2001, pp. 1083-1092

19. On the loss of competitive advantages due to the introduction of the Euro, see: Marco Follini, *L'Europa mondiale*,"Limes", no. 1/2002, pp. 69-72

20. G. Bonvicini "Regional Reassertion: the dilemmas of Italy", in C. Hill (ed), *The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy*, Routledge, London, 1996, pp. 90-107

21. See: G. Bonvicini "Italy and the WEU", op. cit.

22. On the issue of "reinforced co-operation" and the Franco-German "nucleus", see Alessandro Cavalli, *In vista della Convenzione*, "il Mulino", no. 1/2002, pp. 33-39

23. B. Andreatta, *Una politica estera per l'Italia*, "il Mulino", no. 5/1993, pp. 881-891

24. On this issue see: G. Bonvicini et alia (eds*), Italia senza Europa? Il costo della non partecipazione alle politiche dell'Unione*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1997