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## EUROPEAN SECURITY IN THE ITALIAN POLITICS

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The 1983 Pershing-2 and cruise missile deployment in accordance with the agreed program has demonstrated the cohesion and the resolve of the Atlantic Alliance. Those who forecasted the eventual defection of a key country (West Germany or Italy) due to mounting domestic opposition have been proved wrong. The demonstrations and the street rallies of increasingly large and vocal anti-nuclear movements were not capable of shaking the firm posture of the European Governments. The Soviet expectations of a break between Washington and its allies on the missile issue were frustrated. The Soviet Union tried before and during the negotiation to capitalize on the differences between the United States and Europe, to influence and direct the European anti-nuclear movements, to take advantage of the domestic political situation in the European countries and to play on the European hopes for a Geneva agreement, portrayed by Moscow as impossible only because of American intransigence. But the Soviet diplomatic effort and the negotiating tactics adopted in Geneva did not succeed in convincing any of the three major deploying countries to delay the missile installation. Even the threat to leave the negotiating table and to start the deployment of new missiles in Eastern Europe if a single Pershing or cruise arrived in the West was not sufficient to convince the NATO countries to adopt a moratorium on the program, just for the sake of a continuing East-West dialogue. In the end, Moscow suffered a very evident diplomatic setback and NATO gave a very much needed show of vitality and consistency.

However, the deployment of the first 32 cruise missiles in Great Britain and Italy and 18 Pershing-2 missiles in West Germany had neither solved the European strategic problems nor deflated the Euro-missile issue in Europe nor made the Euro-American relationship any easier.

In the last five months, the European countries, and Italy in particular, have been affected by what I like to define as the "lost negotiation syndrome". The Europeans seem very anxious to find ways to convince the Soviet Union to return to Geneva and ready to advance new proposals capable of defusing the East-West INF crisis and to break the stalemate.

During his visit to Lisbon in early May and his talks with the Portuguese leader Mario Soares, the Italian premier Bettino Craxi advanced a proposal. NATO should not accept the Soviet ultimatum that the eurostrategic situation be brought back to that existing before the deployment in order to resume the Geneva negotiations (this, in a word, meant the dismantling of the American missiles). However, to facilitate an agreement NATO should state its willingness to consider a bilateral and time-limited moratorium on all deployments after the negotiations have actually been re-opened. The proposal was not a formal one and was soon downplayed to "an expression of a series of ideas", and its meaning and scope were reduced by subsequent declarations obviously aimed at limiting the damage. Furthermore, the American State Department declared that the proposal would not be included in the agenda of the forthcoming NATO ministerial meeting, and the Italian Defense Minister Spadolini strongly confirmed the Italian commitment during his 10-12 May visit

to Paris and his talks with its French colleague Hernu and President Mitterand. However, the Italian move raised suspicion and distrust among the allies. Was Craxi's unexpected initiative mainly the result of the influence of domestic political factors or was the Italian Premier openly expressing the inner feelings of other European leaders? Should the initiative be interpreted as an indication of a new political mood capable of changing the future Italian attitude toward the continuation of the missile deployment? If Italy actually changed its attitude, how would West Germany react? Was the whole missile program thus doomed to failure?

These questions were considered particularly important because, in the same period, Holland postponed its final decision on deployment, while the domestic debate seemed to point more toward a refusal than an acceptance of the cruise missiles. And in Denmark, although it is not taking any missiles, the Parliament adopted a resolution cutting off further Danish economic contribution to the Euro-missile infrastructure program, agreed to in 1979. In fact, Craxi's initiative, precisely because it was extemporaneous, appeared to stem more from domestic political considerations than from a pondered assessment of foreign policy. There was the style of Craxi the politician, his "decisionism" and the image of the Socialists as a "dynamic" Party. There was the desire to reaffirm the supremacy of the prime minister in the conduct of foreign policy so as not to leave Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, a Christian Democrat, with all the credit for diplomatic bridge-building between East and West. (Andreotti had visited Moscow in April). There was the desire to show that Italy, with a Socialist-led government, does not intend to "sit mute" at the NATO table; that while respecting the commitments made, it is capable of taking its own initiatives for renewing the dialogue with the Soviet Union. And there were two upcoming events: the 43rd Socialist Party congress and the European elections and hence the need to propose a security policy capable of gaining maximum consensus inside and outside the party by making it both firm and flexible. But there was also the excessively optimistic feeling that the Soviets were now more willing to resume the talks, there was genuine concern over the rising tensions with the East bloc countries, there was the sensation that the United States was not all that eager to pressure the Soviets into returning to the bargaining table, and there was the conviction that Italy's loyalty to the West should be above all a loyalty to Europe, and hence aimed mainly at furthering European interests.

And yet Craxi's initiative appeared neither opportune nor pondered: the timing was bad, considering the bitter debate going on in Holland; the wrong signals were sent to the Soviet Union (Moscow could think that intransigence pays in the end) and the United States (where is Italy going and how many security policies does NATO have?); the impression was given that the Italian government has a "climatic" conception of détente and has been conditioned psychologically by the rigidity of the Soviet stance; it seemed that the gap between the two missile deployments and the substantial impracticability of any proposal of a moratorium had not been taken into due account (even if Craxi specified that he was not suggesting a unilateral and unconditional NATO suspension or moratorium and even less an Italian suspension).

Actually, the Italian commitment was never in doubt. It was resolutely confirmed during the Brussels spring meeting of NATO's Defense Ministers, where the Italian position was in line with that of the other main European countries directly involved in the missile installation.

Holland notwithstanding, the picture of NATO's firmness has regained a certain shine. But the overall image of the Alliance continues to appear somewhat

blurred. The reason is not the euromissile issue alone. In fact, the ups of resolve of the NATO's spring meeting have not fully masked the downs of an unstable relationship between the United States and Europe. Furthermore, the solidarity expressed by the NATO governments is not reflected at the level of public opinion. In fact, a large part of the Western public opinion seem frightened by the risk of a nuclear war, confused about the long-term implication of NATO's nuclear program and pessimistic about the credibility of Western strategies.

As Albert Wohlstetter as pointed out, "...the apocalyptic character of deterrent threats has been escalating. It seems that to deter we must now literally threaten the end of the world, or at least the end of the northern half of it." This has widened the gap between the perceptions of the people and their governments and between those of the Europeans and the Americans.

But NATO continues to be and to be seen by the European countries as the only valid reference for European security and defense. No country is thinking about leaving the Alliance or adopting a neutralistic policy. As a matter of fact, in the last few years, France has moved closer to NATO.

And NATO, as a military organization, is alive and efficient. Of course, there are problems and shortcomings. Conventional capabilities are still below the required level. Standardization and interoperability is still inadequate. War stocks and logistic support are insufficient and do not meet the requirements. However, integrated NATO commands operate and plan. Military exercises are regularly conducted in accordance with the agreed schedule, with the participation of American and European forces. The training program, though sometimes below the NATO standard, is better than that of the Warsaw Pact. New and more sophisticated weapons systems are acquired. The NATO's NADGE air defense system is on alert 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and employs cross-tell procedures with the French STRIDA system and the Spanish Combat Grande system. The overall image is one of a structure working with dedication and effort to overcome the military problems typical of a multinational alliance.

The NATO malaise is more political than military. It is a malaise stemming from the differences between the United States and Western Europe on the significance of transatlantic cooperation, on the structure of common defense, on the international role of the European countries, in particular vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and on the effects of US economic policy on European economic development.

The Alliance has entered a period in which the fundamental questions about NATO strategy, East West relations, and Western Europe's role in the world would have to be answered afresh. And the answers are complicated not only by the complexity of the issues, but also by the diversified perception that each European country has of those issues.

There is no doubt that the euromissile issue has fueled the debate about the role of nuclear weapons within NATO's strategy.

For the Europeans the scope of the nuclear weapons in Europe is three fold: make the defense of Europe more credible and less costly; "couple" American strategic nuclear forces with the European deterrent; give political and military credibility to NATO's flexible response strategy.

Due to the increase of Soviet nuclear forces to a level of strategic parity with the US, the American Administrations were forced to review the US strategy. The American nuclear doctrine moved gradually away from the MAD concept (which has never been the real core of the American strategy even though it has been always kept in the background) toward a strategy (intrawar deterrence, Schlesinger, 1974, Carter's PD-59, 1980, Reagan's NSC Memorandum

10, 1982) in which the nuclear weapons were assigned the role of deterring and also fighting a limited nuclear war. This was meant to give to the American President a wider range of nuclear options in case of an East-West crisis. However, the change in the US strategy was seen by in Italy more as a development making a limited nuclear war a viable possibility than as a strengthening of nuclear deterrence. And this impression was fueled by some uncautious declarations of ranking officials of the American Administration and of President Reagan himself.

The Italians were worried by the prospect that nuclear weapons might eventually be viewed and considered warfighting weapons instead of remaining mainly instruments of deterrence. And one of the main reasons for the refusal of the Enhanced Radiation Munitions (the so-called N-Bomb) was based on the perception that it lowered the nuclear threshold in Europe to a dangerous level, and increased the probability of an early use of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, the nuclear debate prompted by the Pershing and cruise deployment has highlighted two other factors: first, it would be very difficult in the future to further modernize NATO's nuclear forces, due to strong domestic opposition. Second, the shared perception that to break the nuclear impasse, NATO should rely less and less on nuclear weapons for its defense. Today, it is widely felt that the level of the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe is far too high, and that NATO's program to withdraw 1400 warheads over the next five years (over and above the 1000 withdrawn in 1980-81) is just a modest and insufficient step in the right direction.

The goal of relying less on nuclear weapons is logically connected with the feasibility of a stronger conventional defense and with the level of credibility of a strictly conventional deterrence.

There seems to be a wide consensus on the need to improve NATO's conventional capabilities. And the conceptual and technical framework within which this improvement should take place -- so consistently outlined by Gen. Rogers - is widely considered in Italy as acceptable and the only one capable of moving the NATO strategy toward a "no-early use" of nuclear weapons.

But there were also a number of significant reservations. Some consider the hypothesis of a conventional war in Europe just as, if not more, disastrous than that of a nuclear war, because it is apparently "more likely". The enhanced precision of conventional weapons systems and their qualitative evolution are viewed both positively (as a possible substitute for tactical nuclear arms) and negatively (because, according to critics, they could increase the destructiveness of a conventional war). It should be clear that technological developments, especially in the field of accuracy and command and control, rather than increase the tendency toward indiscriminate mass destruction, should instead diminish it, at least theoretically. However, the general perception is the exact opposite.

There is a certain concern, particularly in West Germany, that Gen. Rogers' plan might eventually lead to an implicit rejection of the forward defense element within NATO's flexible response doctrine. And West Germany cannot lightly consider a maneuvering war, fought on its territory, as a pre-planned feature of a new strategy.

There is also a wide-spread feeling of subtle distrust for the real effectiveness of the high technology weapons in a real battle situation, which would be different from the environment of the test ranges. Some outline the danger of expecting too much from the emerging technologies (ET) and of planning too extensively on their utilization to redress the conventional balance. Others, considering a pure conventional defense of Europe unfeasible, fear that too much emphasis on conventional ET weapons will eventually weaken

the deterrent role of nuclear weapons, to an unacceptable level. And there are experts and military men who favor the improvement of the technological capabilities of tactical nuclear arms and their better integration with conventional forces to the point of abolishing the concept of nuclear threshold.

But there are other problems. High technology conventional weapons are costly. Many point out that it would be very difficult to strengthen European conventional forces to the level felt indispensable to constitute a credible deterrence, due to the limits on the European military budgets. Thus, it is often underlined that hardly any European countries are presently meeting the goal of an annual 3% increase in real terms established in 1978.

And there is the problem of the development and production of technologically advanced weapons systems. Taking into consideration the American lead in the ET field, Italy fears that the strengthening of NATO's conventional forces will result in a new round of "buy American". The Italians want to be sure, before fully accepting the ET philosophy, that their defense industries will participate in the production of the new weapons systems, either directly or through Euro-american joint ventures.

The overall picture is made more complicated - as I said before - by the differing appraisal of the present situation, by the diverging national interests, and by the various perceptions about the best solution to adopt. France is worried by West Germany's political trends. The "Europeanization of Europe", a catchy phrase coined by Willy Brandt, was widely interpreted in France, in a somewhat emotional and dramatic way, as a sign both of a neutralistic tendency within German policy and of a new drive toward re-unification. This trend together with the emerging of a new nationalistic spirit, quite evident even in the anti-nuclear movements, was enough to raise concern. As William Pfaff has written in the International Herald Tribune, the French fear a revival of German political romanticism - a version of that taste for imprecise perspectives and unrealistic hopes which before in German history led to stupid and dangerous gambles.

Thus, in the recent past, Paris has strongly supported the euro-missile deployment (President Mitterand's speech at the Bundestag in January 1983) and intensified the traditional annual intergovernmental talks on security and defense matters already given greater substance by Chancellor Schmidt and President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The opposition leader Jacques Chirac went even further hinting, during a visit in West Germany in October 1983 that there might be ways to associate Bonn more closely to an independent European nuclear defense.

Furthermore, France is in process of creating a Force d'Action Rapide with the specific mission of supporting conventional defense on the European front in case of war.

However, the French cannot extend to West Germany the nuclear umbrella of their Force de Frappe without radically changing their nuclear posture and strategy in a politically unacceptable way.

On the other hand, while a Franco-British nuclear force is a very distant and uncertain prospect, even British cooperation with France in providing West Germany with a sort of nuclear guarantee is, at present, a political dream. Apart from sharing with France the concept of the nuclear force as a national and independent last resort instrument for the defense of the country, Britain has always been keen to maintain a special relationship with the United States. A break in the fabric of the European defense would push London to look even more toward Washington.

Furthermore it is doubtful that West Germany would accept a Franco-British nuclear guarantee because of its lack of strategic credibility and because it would implicitly signify a separation of the American deterrent from the European theatre. And this would be just the opposite of that continuity in the nuclear deterrence spectrum which the euromissile deployment was intended to restore.

West Germany appears to be the key country in any conceptual and practical framework of a European defense. Divided, faced by a country which it considers both as a potential enemy and as a logical extension of its territory, haunted by the ghost of an incumbent Soviet threat and by the dream of an impossible re-unification, possessing the best armed forces among the European NATO nations, West Germany feels, more than any other European country, the effects of any variation in the climate of East-West relations, and needs, more than any other European country, the American commitment for its security and American support for its defense.

West Germany feels that, in case of a war in Europe, no doctrine or strategy will save its territory from destruction and even a "conventional weapons only" conflict will be more terrible than War World 2. For the Germans what really counts is a credible and strong deterrent, capable of preventing all war. And this credible and strong deterrent can be provided, at the present, only by the American nuclear umbrella and by the American forces in Europe.

This does not mean that West Germany is not willing and ready to cooperate for a better "European" defense effort in terms of armed forces integration, joint production of new weapons systems, more diffuse interoperability and standardization, and revival of European organization, such as the Western European Union.

But this effort can be conceived by West Germany only in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance and then within the context of a firm relationship with the United States.

How does Italy fit in this picture ? No matter which coalition is governing and notwithstanding the political weight of the Communist Party, it would be very hard to imagine Italian policy outside the Atlantic and the European context. I do not think the concern of our allies is then fully justified.

NATO and the European Community will continue to be the firm and indispensable cornerstone of Italian foreign and security policy. As I said before, Italy is sharing many of the concerns of its European partners on the subject of European security and it is favorable to a deeper European integration in the field of defense. However, there are peculiar features which I think should be outlined.

First, there is the particular Italian geo-strategic position. Italy does not fear a surprise land attack from the East. However hypothetical, this is a possibility along the north-central European front, where the category 1 Soviet divisions in East Germany have the capacity to launch one, but not along the Italian north-eastern front, thanks to the existence of a considerable "buffer zone" constituted by the territory of Austria and Yugoslavia. Italy does not share borders with Warsaw Pact countries and hence even in the case of a surprise attack in Central Europe it would have a certain amount of time to organize its defense if (as appears certain today) Yugoslavia defended its territorial integrity, opposing the passage of Soviet and Hungarian forces. The territory's orography, with the exception of the Gorizia gap, makes the use of armored divisions difficult and favors forward defense.

Second, Italy has shown in the last few years to be willing to assume a more prominent Mediterranean role. In fact, the Italian foreign and security policy

in the Mediterranean area have been more active and responsible. Let me give you few examples: the treaty with Malta with the commitment to safeguard the neutrality of the island; the participation in the Sinai peace force; the participation with a 2000 men strong contingent in the multinational force in Lebanon; the readiness to fulfill some of the naval missions left open by the reduction of the American Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean from to one carrier battle group; the strengthening of the military forces and infrastructures in the Southern part of the country, thus strengthening NATO's defense from the Southern threats.

Third, a more evident nationalistic approach in addressing and evaluating the Italian security problems. Former socialist Defense Minister Lelio Lagorio has said very clearly: NATO is not fulfilling anymore all the Italian defense needs and requirements. But this new approach, which is closely connected with the elaboration of a so-called "new model of defense", is still unclear in its full implications (the new model foresees also a rapid deployment force).

The fact is that in the Mediterranean area the potential situations of crisis can be found either within NATO (a confrontation between Greece and Turkey) or outside NATO's area of responsibility (in the Middle East, in the Balkans, in the Maghreb). Thus they do not involve (at least directly) NATO-Warsaw Pact relations.

Italy is very concerned about the endemic instability of the Mediterranean region, and feels that in case of a bilateral confrontation with one of the North African countries (Libya for example) NATO's mechanisms of reciprocal support might operate too late.

Italy has demonstrated in the Sinai and Lebanon that she is ready to participate to a concerted Euro-American effort aimed at defusing the crises. But it would be very unlikely that this policy could be applied outside the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, even in the Mediterranean, this policy is limited by stringent political constraints. These constraints will appear more evident if the military intervention could not be viewed by the political parties and the public opinion as a "peace operation". Even though, it is widely recognized that Italy has, like other European countries, vital interests in the Gulf, it would be politically very difficult deciding to join a multinational military force for the defense of those interests in that region.

Fourth, the weight of the Communist Party within the Italian political scene. I said that Italy's foreign and security policy will keep NATO and the EC as firm reference points. In fact, the Communist Party does not question anymore the Atlantic Alliance, or Italy's defense requirements or the importance of and the need for balance in the military field.

During the 1979 parliamentary debate the Communist Party's opposition to the Euro-missile deployment was "soft". And there were good reasons to be that way. But after June 1983 general elections and the formation of a five party coalition Government led by the Secretary of the Socialist Party Bettino Craxi, the opposition became stronger and more vocal and it cannot be now underestimated. The Communist Party has refrained in the past to "ride the tiger" of the anti-nuclear movements. However, in line with its "new" type of opposition, now appears more willing to commit its powerful organizational machine to the cause.

On the other hand, the Socialist Party cannot forget its ideology and its tradition of disarmament without risking the loss of the support of a part of its constituency. If the socialists want to gain on the center and on the left, they have to show a political position which is both firm in defending the

Italian security needs and flexible enough on the search for arms control agreements.

In summary, the domestic political factors will continue to play, as it has been the case in the Euro missile issue, a very important role also in the future.

Nuclear matters, for the emotion they stir within the public opinion, will be dealt in a very cautious way. However, European defense cooperation and conventional forces as a means to defuse the nuclear issue will be supported by almost all parties, Communist Party included.

Thus maybe the domestic politics which have traditionally played an illogically important role in the foreign policy and security decisions because of the peculiarity of the Italian political situation will find fewer possibilities and opportunities to affect the foreign and defense policy lines.



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