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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND EUROPEAN SECURITY: THE ITALIAN DEBATE

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Introduction

As 1993 approaches its end, reporting on the Italian foreign and security policy debate is not an easy task. In fact, it is a debate that is as audible as a whisper. Why is it so?

The first and foremost reason has to be found in the current domestic political crisis. In the realm of politics, crisis is an abused word; especially in Italy where, in the post-war period, it was mentioned anytime a cabinet reshuffle occurred - and it did more than once a year on average.

This time around, however, the term crisis seems to be perfectly appropriate: municipal elections held in November 1993 have shown four of the government coalition parties of the last fifteen years shrink almost to zero, while the fifth - the Christian Democrats, the party that has held the relative majority ever since 1948 - lost about half of its electoral support.

The big winners were, as expected, the Northern League in the North (a political formation that was almost non-existent only a few years ago), the Democratic Party of the Left (*Partito Democratico della Sinistra*, PDS, the former Communists) throughout the country; and, unexpectedly, the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI, the neo-fascists) in Rome and in the South. Together with the Christian Democrats, who still command some 15 percent of the popular vote, these seem to be the only forces that can nowadays compete for power in Italy.

This political realignment is only the culmination of a process begun in the spring of 1992 and known with such terms as *mani pulite* (clean hands) or *tangentopoli* (kickback city), whose practical result has been the prosecution of several prominent politicians, including former

premiers, defense, and foreign affairs ministers.

As a widespread interpretation has it, those sweeping investigations were made possible by the end of the cold war. According to this theory, in fact, the overriding goal of keeping the Communists out of power had before meant the practical invulnerability of the ruling parties, no matter how corrupt some of their practices were. It is interesting to note, then, that if the country is now so introverted this would be ultimately due to an external cause.

Over the same months, two successive governments have struggled to defuse a public debt that in September 1992 - when Italy left the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) of the European Monetary System (EMS) - finally appeared for what it was: a time bomb. It is perhaps worth recalling, in passing, that the current prime minister, Mr. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, is the former governor of the Italian central bank.

Finally, although with much political bickering, the electoral law has been changed: the shift to a majoritarian, first-past-the-post, system (even though one fourth of the parliamentary seats will continue to be attributed on a proportional basis) is indeed meant to push further the ongoing political realignment and make a re-edition of the old multi-party coalition governments difficult, if not impossible.

As can be seen, there have been enough events to keep the country's political élite really focused on the domestic front. But beyond the events there is also a question of mood. The September 1992 monetary quake, for example, suddenly relegated Rome in the second tier of the European Community (EC). Since much of the prestige and international stature gained by Italy during the eighties was due to the dynamism of its economy, this loss of rank undoubtedly contributed to inspire prudence and a lower profile in the conduct of foreign affairs - besides, of course, calling even more attention on domestic, fiscal questions, as was mentioned above.

Italy's foreign policy thus came to be enveloped in a mood of gloom, at least since Emilio Colombo, in August 1992, was named foreign minister - a mood that, coming on the heels of the euphoria and hyper-activism that had characterized Gianni De Michelis' tenure of La Farnesina, was even more evident.

To all this it must be added that in 1992-93 the external environment has not been in great shape either. Attention was concentrated on domestic affairs also elsewhere - think of Germany, or of the dominant issues at stake in the general elections in both France and the U.S. Behind the EMS crisis there was more than Italy's relatively high inflation and bulgeoning public deficits. The march toward the ratification of the treaty on European Union (EU) has hardly been a triumph. The Yugoslav bloody implosion has not shed a bright light on Europe's capability to extend its umbrella of peace and prosperity.

From what precedes, two things follow: first, that in a country with a remarkable post-war record of foreign policy continuity some change is in sight; second, that to predict which form this change will take is at the moment as difficult as predicting who will run the country itself. Add to this what we have been stressing from the beginning, i.e. that the likely candidates to power, obsessed as they were with the domestic situation, have not been talking foreign and security policy much in recent times.

It is true, on the other hand, that a foreign and security policy debate has been growing among experts and intellectuals - perhaps to fill the void of the official retrenchement. Hopefully, this may in time spill over to politicians and parties, and eventually help making of international relations a concrete issue in Italian politics - which, after all, they never really were.

This unusually long introduction was meant to somewhat clarify the predicament in which the

main actors (the government, the political forces, the intellectuals) are debating Italy's foreign and security policy. We can now turn our attention to the debate itself, bearing in mind that in the first section of this paper the focus will be on the attitudes and stances of policy-makers and intellectuals, whereas in the second it will shift to the substantive policy issues at stake.

1. Multilateralism in Italy's Foreign and Security Policy Making

Official ideas on the role played by multilateral institutions in Italy's foreign and security policy are unambiguous. According to the current foreign affairs minister, Nino Andreatta: "The end of the Cold War has not caused a revision of the basic choices: Italy's membership to the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance. It has implied, however, the end of rents and free-riding."¹

From the government point of view, then, the collapse of the bipolar system forces upon Rome a more active and responsive role within the existing international institutions. This conclusion stems from both realities - the decline of external guarantees, particularly of American origin - and the perception that Italy should play a more active role in the world. To quote again Mr. Andreatta: "Membership is no longer enough in the new international conditions: one has to qualify oneself through presence and hard work."²

Since this approach combines the traditional, postwar emphasis on multilateralism with a new call for assertiveness in Italy's foreign policy, we might as well dub it "New multilateralism".

According to their proponents, a successful management of the domestic political and economic transition is clearly a pre-condition to carry-out this strategy. It would indeed be difficult for any country to have a high external profile without a minimum of internal stability. Another

pre-condition is the continuing vitality of the international institutions themselves, since a generalized drive to the so-called re-nationalization of policies would immediately hurt Italy, a country that has never been a great power and that is going through a critical domestic transition.

Note that from Rome's point of view there is no shortage of reasons to be apprehensive about its role in the major multilateral fora: the country no longer belongs to the group of core EU countries; it is a member 'adjunct' of the G-7, formerly G-5; it is a NATO ally much less 'crucial' than it used to be; and it sees the growing importance of the United Nations (UN) Security Council with the clear fear of being left out of its eventual enlargement to new members.

Belonging to the club of nations that really count is a long-standing goal of Italy's foreign policy. What is new here, is the perception that to achieve this goal the country can no longer rely on the rent that, during the bloc-to-bloc confrontation, used to accrue from being in the western camp.

Outside the government it is probably fair to say that there is no serious opposition to multilateralism. In fact, its natural counterweight, unilateralism, may make some sense for a country the size, the reach, and the power of the United States, but no one is fool enough to believe it might ever be the stuff of Italy's foreign and security policy. It goes without saying that another approach that has some currency and, what is more important, historical precedent in the U.S - isolationism - is, for any European power, largely a *contradictio in terminis*. Unless, that is, one uses this term outside its original context and applies it to, for example, North-South relations - as in fact will be done below.

All this means that there are no real black and white cleavages between political forces, or

schools of thought, concerning multilateralism as a fact of life of the country's international relations. Rather, there is a continuum whose right extreme represents (predictably) various forms of nationalism, and whose left extreme represents (no less predictably) utopian visions of perpetual and global peace.

Of the four political forces that can realistically aspire to power, the Christian Democrats (or Popular Party, as they seem intentioned to change name into) are clearly those with the best multilateralist credentials. After all, this is the party that since the days of Alcide De Gasperi, in the aftermath of World War 2, presided over the process of Italy's integration in a complex web of international bodies: the UN, the Bretton Wood institutions, the General Agreement on Tarrif and Trade (GATT), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Community (EC), and the Western European Union (WEU). Taking also into account their cultural background, one component of which is certainly their ecumenic vision of the world, there is no reason to expect any fundamental change in attitude.

Although the former Communists were relatively late-comers in their acceptance of Italy's membership to the EC (in the mid-sixties) and NATO (in the mid-seventies), there may be very few doubts that the PDS is now a staunch supporter of Italy's multilateral commitments. When it comes to security in particular, the PDS leadership seems well aware that to make any use of force acceptable to its base some form of multilateral blessing - especially from the UN - is necessary. The party's opposition to Italy's participation in the 1991 Gulf war may have been the last of its genre - at least if the PDS support to the ongoing mission in Somalia is any indication. However, while a potential role for NATO in peace operations in Europe with the UN or CSCE blessing would be easily accepted by this party, the same cannot be said should the Alliance be involved in North-South crisis management.

Being deeply pro-EU, this party also favours the creation of a strong European pillar within the

Atlantic Alliance. The party agrees with the current government on the risks of isolating Moscow - even though it is critical of the strong official support for President Boris Yeltsin due to his alleged authoritarian domestic rule - if NATO enlarges to the Visegrad countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). The emphasis, with a likely excess of optimism, is on the CSCE as a pan-European security framework, to be used in particular for potential peace-keeping operations in Europe.

In this case as well there is a peculiar cultural dimension which favors a multilateralist approach to foreign affairs: a mix of the heritage of the Communist internationalism and of Catholic universalism that critics used to call, pejoratively, *catto-comunismo*.

In sum, and taking into account their own distinctive backgrounds, both the Christian Democrats and the PDS represent the forces of continuity in Italy's foreign and security policy. The same cannot be said, at least to the same extent, of the other two parties that now appear in the ascendant: the MSI and the Northern League.

Although the former, in the unlikely event it should go to power, would hardly withdraw Italy from any major multilateral body, there is no doubt that it does harbor a number of serious second thoughts and resentments. For example, the party has voted against Italy's ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union. Also, the MSI campaign for the mayoral elections in Trieste openly called for a revision of the borders with Slovenia and Croatia. Furthermore, the end of the cold war has removed from the Atlantic Alliance the very feature the MSI wholeheartedly appreciated: anti-communism; laying thus bare a U.S. hegemony that the self-proclaimed heirs of fascism inevitably resent. With the MSI one touches, in other words, the right, nationalist extreme of the Italian political spectrum. It may be more moderate than either the *Republikaner* in Germany or the *Front National* in France, but it is nonetheless the party that positions itself the farthest away from the multilateralist tenets of this post-war era.

Having several decades of political activity behind them, the Christian Democratic Party, the PDS, and the MSI, all have a more or less discernible foreign policy platform. It is decidedly not the same with the Northern League, which leaves the observer with an extremely fragmented record of statements and remarks made by its leaders only when the circumstances force them to.

The crucial question indeed is: has the League any interest, let alone expertise, in foreign policy? And the answer, quite possibly, is no, it has not. Two or three very broad inferences can nevertheless be drawn. First, while advocating the transformation of Italy into a federation of three states (respectively in the North, Center, and South of the Peninsula), the League emphasizes the European vocation of the Northern Italian "state" they seek to rule. It is not so much a clear pro-EU stance, as rather the symptom of a strong attraction for what is sometimes called Mitteleuropa.

Second, this attraction is probably stronger than the attention paid to the trans-Atlantic ties. In other words, one would guess that in the minds of the League's leaders Germany comes before the U.S. and - but this is a far wilder guess - the WEU comes before NATO. Third, within this "Mitteleuropean" framework the League shows its own brand of isolationism: it is the idea that the rich North should not be dragged into the South problems. Here the terms North and South refer to the hemispheres, rather than to portions of the Italian territory. But evidently the philosophy is just the same, whether it applies to economic subsidies for *il Mezzogiorno*, to African immigrants in Italian cities, or to Italy's participation in the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) - which the League has been opposing since the inception.

Obviously the four parties mentioned so far do not exhaust all the currents and undercurrents of the Italian political life. For example *Rifondazione Comunista*, a PDS splinter group of

Communists die-hard that commands roughly the same support as the PCF in France, has a strong anti-NATO and pro-UN rhetoric, even though it is highly critical of the use of Italian troops abroad, including the current UNOSOM experience. Italy is also the cradle of the "transnational" Radical Party, a group that, for want of a better term, one is tempted to call multilateralist fundamentalist. This party simply claims that the national level is no longer appropriate for politics and focuses its efforts on building up a network of members and sympathizers throughout the world for the pursuit of global goals such as the abolition of the death penalty, the legalization of drugs, and the creation of a permanent international criminal court.

Openly inspired to the French Geopolitical school, a group of intellectuals is advocating that Italy's foreign and security policy be based on a hard-headed definition of the country's national interests.³ The proponents of this approach are persuaded that the re-nazionalization of security policies after the end of the cold war is more than a mere possibility: Italy should therefore be quick to re-nationalize its own on the basis of its geopolitical goals.

Hence the mentioning of special Italian interests in the Balkans - interests, that is, that are distinct from the goals of peace, prosperity, and stability shared by the international community for this as for any other area of the world, and that evidently amount to the presumption of an Italian sphere of influence there. Hence also the calls for reopening the discussions with Slovenia and Croatia on some of the provisions of the Osimo Treaty - this, signed in 1975, settled the issue of the border between Italy and the former Yugoslavia.

The limits of this approach have been deftly highlighted by Roberto Aliboni, who wrote that Italy's foreign policy should not be defined according to the defense of national interests, but rather in terms of its ability "to contribute to a more cooperative world in which the Italian interests could normally be reconciled with those of the others."⁴ Whatever one may think of

their respective merits, the existence of competing theses is doubtlessly the sign of a renewed attention to the country's international relations.

The geopolitical approach, however, seems to have made some inroads beyond the level of intellectual speculation. One example comes from the experience of UNOSOM I and II. Right from the beginning, in December 1992, the Italian contingent has attempted to carve out a special role for itself. Quarrels with other contingents, and especially with the U.S. one, about the operation's command structure, about the wisdom of disarming one particular Somali faction, and about some of the tactics employed led the UN Secretary General, in July 1993, to ask Rome to recall the Army General who headed the Italian troops - a diplomatic incident later patched up.

Even though further developments vindicated the substance of the Italian approach, the fact remains that this search for a high national profile has to do with the idea that Italy has its own sphere of influence to defend and promote in the Horn of Africa. Curiously enough, what seems to have suggested the pursuit of a high profile - Rome's colonial past in Somalia and, more recently, its support of the dictatorship of Siad Barre - would once have inspired the opposite course of action, i.e. a cautious approach. The fact that the government was so concentrated on the domestic crisis as to let the military largely run the operation may also explain this new Italian assertiveness.⁵

This is not say that the Italian military are necessarily the spokesmen of the country's new nationalism. To the contrary, more than four decades of multilateral experience in NATO should have molded the majority of the Italian soldiers. Similar considerations may be made with regard to Italy's diplomatic ranks. In both cases, though, and despite some differences in emphasis, the observer can detect an acute attention for the opportunities opened by the end of the cold war to play a national role - within as well as without a multilateral context. A tune

often heard among foreign policy bureaucrats goes as follows: "If others play nationally, cultivate their own spheres of influence, we should do the same." But quite apart from the problem of whether Rome has the means to pursue a similar course, the inherent risk is that misperceptions may feed misperceptions, and that worst case assumptions may turn into self-fulfilling prophecies.

2. The policy issues

Official, post-1989 security perceptions depict Italy as more vulnerable than before, given the tensions coming from both the Balkans and the Mediterranean. On the other hand, concrete risks have yet to materialize: Serbian threats of missile strikes against the Italian territory were rightly shrugged off as duds; the flow of refugees from the former Yugoslavia has been contained through a very restrictive immigration policy; in the Mediterranean NATO has never enjoyed a clearer superiority, the Israeli-Palestinian accord should lower the general level of tensions, whereas Islamic fundamentalism, despite being on the rise on the North-African coast, is still perceived in Rome as a rather remote threat.

If this is true, then Italy's main security problems lay in helping the democratic transition in Central-Eastern Europe, and in stemming the spread of the Balkan conflict. The role of the international institutions to which Italy belongs is crucial on both counts. Hence Rome's interest in the institutional architecture - an interest shared by both De Michelis and Andreatta.

In this respect, a problem acutely felt in Italy is how to avoid being in the lower gear of a two-speed Europe. Marginalization from the march of Economic and Monetary Union is feared not only for reasons of status: the fact is that the European dimension has always been the crucial vehicle of Italy's international integration. Rome's fears of being excluded from the EU

informal directorate are also compounded by the Northward and Eastward shift in the Union's center of gravity which is likely to follow from the accession of several European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries.

Against this difficult background, the current foreign minister has put forward his own variation on the theme of a two-speed Europe, calling it a "wedding cake" concept. Accordingly, Italy would be a member of the EU hard core of founding countries which, together with Spain, should negotiate a federal treaty providing for, among other things, a European currency and a European army. Pushed out of the group of EU leading countries because of economic reasons, Rome thus tries to re-enter through political will, i.e. by floating the idea that a federal Europe smaller than the current Union and that leaves outside countries which, as Britain and Denmark, have no intention of going beyond the Maastricht treaty first phase can be built.

Andreatta's version of a Europe *à géométrie variable* can also be read as an attempt to solve the old dilemma of Europe's deepening versus widening. If, in fact, the founders of the former Community would commit themselves to a new federal treaty, the EU could open the door to North and Central Europe by establishing a confederal form of relationship. In the eyes of its proponents, such solution would serve the crucial security objective of fostering the democratic transition in the Visegrad countries.

But the main goal of the Italian diplomacy is, in the circumstances, to balance Europe's next round of enlargement toward North and East with a federalist deepening of key EU countries. If the former, in fact, potentially goes to Italy's detriment by moving north-eastward the EU focus, Rome is convinced that the answer lies in its collective management rather than in the re-nationalization of European foreign policies. According to this thesis, then, Italian security interests are better served in a multilateral framework of European security than through competition - a thesis criticized by the neo-nationalist intellectuals, who simply do not believe

in the chances of the federalist approach. The solution also allows Rome to occupy a middle ground - if not to play a mediating role, which is the recurrent ambition of Italian foreign policy - between London's preference for a great free trade area in the European continent and Bonn's official penchant for balancing this with a further impulse toward a federal Europe.

Beyond the EU, the CSCE is seen as the larger framework of the European security architecture - a framework that, while having the clear virtue of keeping both the US and Russia linked to the old continent, needs to be strengthened to be able to represent the ultimate guarantee of a pan-European order. Italy is not the only country that often pays lip service to the security potentials of the CSCE. So far, though, ideas such as using NATO and Russian troops in peacekeeping operations in Europe under a CSCE mandate, have remained at the level of pure talk.

In principle, Rome is also committed to make of the CSCE a regional organization under the UN charter, as well as to try and re-launch the De Michelis' proposal of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). It will be interesting to see whether the Italian diplomacy will take up these ideas now that, since December 1st, it has the presidency of the CSCE and what audience it may eventually find as the country's domestic crisis still unfolds.

The Central European Initiative, a regional cooperation forum championed by De Michelis in 1989 with the aim of both avoiding the EC enlargement and balancing the German influence in the region, has seen its relevance decrease rapidly, due to the Yugoslav civil war on the one hand, and to Italy's inability to provide adequate financial incentives on the other.⁶

The government approach to the EU enlargement and, more generally, the main lines of its vision of Europe's institutional architecture have, on balance, a high degree of domestic

consensus. On the former issue, however, the Democratic Party of the Left supports a faster political integration of the Visegrad countries, while the Northern League advocates a yet to be defined "Europe of regions" that bears little resemblance to the real world institutions.

Italy continues to see NATO as the milestone of international stability, while at the same time agreeing on the opportunity of some adaptations to the new international environment. But NATO's short-term enlargement toward the East is not seen with favor in Rome, for a variety of reasons ranging from Russian concerns, to a reluctance to extend concrete defense commitments, to the precedence accorded to the EU and the CSCE as vehicles for political and economic cooperation. Therefore it should not come as a surprise if the Italian diplomacy finds President Bill Clinton's "Partnership for Peace" a good compromise solution to the thorny problem of NATO's relations with its eastern neighbors.

Interesting enough, Andreatta, an economics professor when not involved in politics, has also proposed a new Atlantic Chart "to spell out the rules of law for the resolution of economic conflicts."⁷

According to the foreign minister, "Italy is interested in participating in the collective actions of the international community: since there is a lesser need for defense at national level, Italy has a great interest in NATO taking up out-of-area missions."⁸ But for NATO to be involved in crisis management, both inside and outside Europe, a clear UN endorsement is considered a necessary condition.

On the other hand, the Yugoslav crisis highlighted the inherent difficulties of Andreatta's approach of pursuing a high national profile in the context of multilateral diplomacy. Being a country just across the border from the conflict, the UN rules have kept Italy from participating to the peacekeeping operations - Rome has since proposed, unsuccessfully, to change these

rules. At the same time, however, Italy has provided the main logistic base for NATO peace-enforcing.

After the Somali experience, Italy has also insisted on the necessity of giving the countries that contribute peacekeeping troops both a role in the field operations' command structure, and a say in the UN Security Council decision-making. This concern is reflected in the more encompassing proposal for the reform of the Security Council, whereby 20 "semi-permanent" members - chosen according to economic, demographic, cultural, and peace-keeping contribution criteria - would rotationally occupy 7-8 seats. The total number of seats in the body would thus reach 21-22. The scheme represents a departure from De Michelis' idea of creating a European permanent seat from the merge of the French and the British ones - an idea still supported by the PDS.

When it comes to the prospects of European defense integration, the Italian official attitude has always been characterized by a good deal of skepticism. The reason is relatively straightforward: from Rome's point of view a European defense built around the axis Bonn-Paris would automatically mean a second rank status, whereas the trans-Atlantic link acts more as an equalizer of European ambitions. In other words, Italy has always feared that an integrated European defense, especially if coupled with a reduction of the U.S. presence in the Mediterranean, would add a strategic dimension to a two-speed Europe.⁹

Coherent with this approach was, for example, the October 1991 joint British-Italian position paper on European security, whereby the development of a European defense identity through the WEU was presented as strengthening NATO. By the same token, the creation of a WEU rapid reaction force was presented as capable of providing NATO with more flexibility for out-of-area contingencies.¹⁰ The Italian perception in the circumstances was to have acted as Europe's (and NATO's) broker, by bringing Britain (and through Britain the U.S. as well) to

accept the prospect of a common European defense policy before the Maastricht summit - note the recurring ambition to play the mediator.

But the ambition was rapidly frustrated, though, by the Franco-German position paper on European defense.¹¹ Its main concrete result was the announced creation of the Eurocorps, whose very existence was enough to characterize it as the alternative to the British-Italian initiative. Needless to say, neither Britain nor Italy have shown much short-term interest in the Eurocorps. The same aversion to any Euro-directorate probably contributes to explain Rome's dislike for a European nuclear deterrent based on the British and French arsenals.

As seen two years after, however, the clearest limit of the British-Italian document (and, incidentally, of *il modello di difesa*, the government blueprint on Italy's defense) lies in the emphasis attributed to a potential WEU role for operations in NATO out-of-area regions - a solution now overtaken by the de facto cancellation of NATO geographical boundaries implied by the June and December 1992 decisions to offer troops to, respectively, the CSCE and the UN for peace operations.

Within the WEU, Rome has recently shown a certain propensity to take the lead. An Italian general is heading, for example, the WEU planning cell. The aeromaritime cooperation concept was promoted by Rome, Paris, and Madrid before being adopted by the Union in September 1992. Italy is currently advocating the creation of a pre-planned, on-call European Multinational Force - a proposal so far supported by France and Spain.

At the level of the political debate, a division between those, pro-German, who privilege continental Europe, and those, pro-American, who give precedence to the Mediterranean is still possible. The latter attitude was typical of the military through the seventies and the eighties, but it has been somewhat damaged by the quarrels in Somalia. Should the deterioration go

further and extend to the next generation of political leadership, then the future of the American bases in Italy may become less bright than it appears now.

Summing up, if Italy's central foreign and security policy goal is remaining in the club of western nations that really count - and even raising its profile inside it - then the question of whether Rome has means adequate to the goal becomes crucial.

In this regard, the first problem to be solved is the country's defense posture. The debate on it is so stale now as to make a mockery of the term used to indicate it: *il nuovo modello di difesa*, new defense model. While the military struggle to keep the maximum level of forces allowed by a stagnating defense budget - an attitude which is understandable but not terribly effective - the few novelties have come from the opposition parties, namely the Northern League and the PDS, which have at least put forward their ideas as to the resources and force levels they would assign to the country's defense. It is interesting to note a good degree of convergence in these two proposals, for example insofar the recourse to professional soldiers is concerned.

On their part, the neo-nationalist intellectuals are persuaded that, being the era of quasi-automatic U.S. security guarantees definitely over, Italy's foreign policy must count on a strong defense.¹² In the present phase they are thus on the side of the chiefs of staff, calling for a sharp increase of defense expenditures - an increase that evidently clashes with the overriding objective of re-entering from the public budget deficit.

The problem here is not a lack of discussion; rather it is an excess of it in light of a decision that never comes on the missions, structure, and composition of the armed forces. Obviously, as long as this is not done, the military have reasons to lament a state of perennial incertitude, that cannot but damage the conduct of foreign affairs. However, the earliest date at which this or, more likely, a next parliament can begin to examine the matter is mid-1994.

A second prominent foreign policy tool for a country with Italy's ambition is the availability of financial resources. Here the current budgetary austerity is striking ever more violently than in the case of defense. A law approved in 1992, for example, foresaw the allocation of Lire 900 billion over the first three years to support the transition in Central and Eastern Europe. For the triennium 1994-96, the government is now proposing to allocate Lire 344 billion, a sum which include some money appropriated in 1992 and 1993 and not yet spent. Italy's Official Development Aid (ODA), planned at Lire 1.2 trillion in 1994, will be able to count on Lire 200 billion and Lire 2.5 trillion less than, respectively, 1993 and 1992. Thus, a country that only a couple of years ago was the third ODA donor in the EU (after France and Germany) is now fallen well behind Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, and at the absolute level of countries, such Norway and Denmark, which have a far smaller economy in absolute terms.¹³ There is little doubt that, from the point of view of the potential recipients East and South, the present cuts will entail a sharp reduction of Italy's influence and prestige - i.e. the very features so dear to those neo-nationalists who are advocating an increase in military spending.

Unfortunately, the restoration of higher levels of aid has been made politically difficult by a series of financial scandals involved in the use of ODA funds. Since these are administered by the foreign affairs ministry, the scandals have also had the further perversity of tainting the reputation of the Italian diplomacy - probably the sector of the Italian bureaucracy with the best managerial reputation.

Conclusions

For Italy to play a more active role within the international institutions according to Andreatta's New Multilateralism at least two preconditions have to be met. First, the domestic political

crisis has to be overcome, so as to reconstitute the internal component of the international credibility enjoyed in the eighties. Second, the fiscal crisis has to be overcome, so as to both strengthen the image and prestige of the country, and to make again available the economic resources needed to support the key foreign policy choices. Within a framework of more financial certitude, the question of finding the most appropriate defense posture can also be solved.

The competition between multilateralists and nationalists will be acute as never in the past, but more at the intellectual than at the political level. As far as the latter is concerned, since 1948 it has never been as difficult as now to make meaningful predictions about who will be running the country. But thanks also to the continuity that the foreign policy bureaucracy is capable to grant, chances are that multilateralism will continue to prevail over nationalism.

The real challenge, then, will be how and to what extent Italy will be able to play a role within the web of multilateral institutions. Striking a balance between the national interests and the international commitments will be the foreign policy dilemma of the years to come.

NOTES

1 Nino Andreatta, "Una politica estera per l'Italia," *Il Mulino*, november-december, 1993.

2 *Ibid.*

3 As examples of this school of thought, see Carlo M. Santoro (ed.), *L'elmo di Scipio* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993) and the journal *Limes, rivista italiana di geopolitica*, whose first issue came out in March 1993. The group assembled by *Limes* comprises (traditionally) conservative thinkers as well as (traditionally) progressive ones.

4 Istituto Affari Internazionali, *L'Italia nella politica internazionale*, edizione 1993 (Roma: Editore SIPI, 1993).

5 More realistically, once the Italian contingent returns home, together with the rest of the UN forces, not much will remain of Italy's special role. The same could be said of the long-term results of the much

vaunted *Operazione Pellicano* in Albania.

⁶The forum was set up in 1989 by Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Yugoslavia. It later became known as the *Pentagonale* and *Easgonale*. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the break-up of Czechoslovakia, it now comprises ten countries.

7 "Una politica politica estera per l'Italia," *cit.*

8 See the round table "Progetti per un continente," in *Limes*, No. 4, 1993.

9 On these lines, see C. Jean, "Difesa Comune? Teniamoci la NATO," *Limes*, No. 4, 1993.

10 For the text of the joint paper see British Embassy in Rome, "Note di Documentazione," No. 17, October 10, 1991.

11 The text is in *Nouvelles Atlantiques*, October 18, 1991.

12 See A. Panebianco, "Il paese disarmato," *Il Mulino*, No. 5, 1993.

13 See José Luis Rhi-Sausi (ed), *Rapporto CeSPI sulla Cooperazione allo Sviluppo dell'Italia 1992-1993* (Roma: Edizioni Associate, forthcoming)

