Atlanticism and Europeanism in Italian Security

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Introduction

Since May 1994 centre-right and centre-left coalitions have alternated in government in Italy. Each time a new coalition was voted in, political leaders, partisan observers and a few academics sounded the alarm arguing that the new government would bring, among other things, dramatic changes in foreign policy. The most recurring argument has been that centre-right governments would privilege Atlanticism over Europeanism whereas centre-left ones would reverse these priorities.¹ These arguments are somewhat surprising since one does not have to be a full-fledged neo-realist to recognize that in the absence of major changes in the international system, the fundamentals of a state’s foreign policy are more likely to be marked by overall continuity rather than periodical changes.² Since the end of World War II only one major change in the international system has occurred, namely the end of bipolarity in the early 1990s. One should therefore expect any significant change in Italian foreign policy to have occurred soon after the end of the Cold War and to have been primarily a minor adjustment to the passage from bipolarity to unipolarity in the international system.

This paper analyses the relationship between Atlanticism (defined as support for the Atlantic Alliance) and Europeanism (defined as support for the process of European integration) in Italian foreign policy. Its central argument is that Atlanticism and Europeanism are not two alternative and therefore mutually exclusive policies whereby to a strengthening of Atlanticism, for instance, shall necessary correspond an equal weakening of Europeanism, as implicitly

¹ I have reported some of these arguments in my periodical reviews of Italian foreign policy (Croci 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b).
² The neo-realist school (Waltz 1979) regards state behaviour as being primarily constrained, and hence shaped, by the distribution of power in the international system.
assumed by those who expect a tilt one way or the other each time a centre-right government replaces a centre-left one or vice versa. Rather, the two policies are hierarchical or constitute in the terminology of George Tsebelis (1990) a ‘nested game’ with Europeanism being nested, as it were, in Atlanticism. Italian foreign policy choices thus result from a double constraint one of which, Atlanticism, has been and still is more important than the other, Europeanism. More precisely, Italian foreign policy makers have traditionally regarded Europeanism as a policy aimed at reinforcing Atlanticism.

The paper is organized as follows. The first part provides an historic survey of Atlanticism and Europeanism in Italian foreign policy. It begins with an analysis of the birth of Atlanticism and Europeanism in the late 1940s and discusses the original competing visions of their relationship. It characterizes the policy of Atlanticism as one of deference on issues important to the Alliance and of independence on issues peripheral to the Alliance but central to Italy and illustrates the reasons why Atlanticism primes over Europeanism. The paper then analyses the more proactive security policy Italian governments have pursued after the end of the Cold War which has not, however, brought any change in the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism and examines the supposed tilts between Atlanticism and Europeanism of the centre-right and centre-left coalitions focusing in particular on the Iraqi issue and the preparatory work for the Constitutional Treaty and the Reform Treaty. This historical excursus allows the drawing of some generalizations concerning the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism. These generalizations can be used to make some predictions about the future of the relationship between NATO and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The reasons for this is that these generalizations, albeit drawn exclusively from the Italian case, should be able to capture the essence of the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism also in those countries that are members of NATO but not of the EU (Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Canada and the US) as well as in all other EU member states including the ‘neutrals’.
Atlanticism and Europeanism from the end of World War II to today

The search for an American guarantee

The primacy accorded to Atlanticism goes back to the immediate post-World War II period at a time when a very small number of decision-makers, namely President of the Council of Ministers Alcide De Gasperi, Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza and key diplomats such as Secretary General of the MAE Vittorio Zoppi, Ambassadors Alberto Tarchiani, Pietro Quaroni, Manlio Brosio and Tommaso Gallarati Scotti, tackled the task of ‘reconstructing’ Italian foreign policy. Their main objective was to enable Italy to resume playing a significant role both in Europe and the Mediterranean. The first step they took towards its attainment was to regain for Italy a ‘status of parity’ in the international community especially vis-à-vis those European powers, such as France and Great Britain which in the new bipolar system had been relegated to the rank of lesser powers. De Gasperi and Sforza believed that one way to speed up this process was to establish a close relationship with the United States (US). The European Recovery Program (ERP), announced by US Secretary of State George C. Marshall on June 5, 1947, provided them with an opportunity. The Italian government welcomed ERP for two reasons. First, the provision of American aid would be of great help to the parties of the governmental coalition (besides the Christian Democrats, the 4th De Gasperi government also included the Liberals, the Republicans and the Social-Democrats, at the time known as Socialist Workers’ Party) in the electoral struggle with the Communists and Socialists which De Gasperi had dropped from his 3rd government in May 1947. Second, the government recognized in the strong push towards European economic cooperation that the US attached to ERP a political opportunity to regain that much sought after ‘status of parity’ in Europe. In the words of Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza (1947: 9-10)

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3 On this phase of Italian foreign policy, see Varsori (1990: esp. 73-75).
For us Italians this is a historic occasion: famished, impoverished … we are now in a position to regain honour, independence and prosperity if we become heralds of the new law towards which, willingly or reluctantly, the world will inevitably march.

By ‘new law’ Sforza meant the integration, especially economic, of Europe. This suggests that the Italian enthusiasm for European integration, which would eventually become one of the lodestars of Italian foreign policy, was, initially at least, embraced by Italian foreign policy decision-makers because it was perceived as what the US wished for Europe and hence as necessary to develop closer ties with the US.

The instrumental, and hence subordinate, character of Italian enthusiasm for European integration at this time is also demonstrated by the scepticism with which the Italian government reacted to the signing of the Brussels pact (17 March 1948) between Great Britain, France and the Benelux countries. Such scepticism might perhaps have been in part a reaction to the doubts manifested by the five members at the prospect of Italy’s inclusion but had certainly nothing to do with the lure of neutrality. Italian foreign policy decision-makers had already discarded neutrality as a realistic policy option and were thinking about the ways in which rearmament and alignment with the West could be sold to that part of ‘public opinion’, which included not only the Communists and Socialists but also part of the Christian Democratic electorate, still clinging to the idea of neutrality (Vigezzi 1987: 17 and 27). Italian decision-makers were sceptic because they regarded the pact as ambiguous. On the one hand, it appeared aimed at promoting European integration (a process at the time variously called ‘European Union’, ‘European federation’ or ‘permanent European organization’) but they believed that to be credible and viable a ‘European Union’ had to include Germany. If the aim of the pact, as some argued, was the creation of a ‘European Union’, then it would be wiser to work towards this goal through the sixteen states already cooperating economically within the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation.

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4 The Brussels pact expanded the defence pledge between Great Britain and France, signed in 1947 at Dunkirk, to include Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Although it included cultural and social clauses it was primarily a defence pact, officially at least designed to protect its members from the threat of German revanchism.
(OEEC). If, instead, the pact was essentially military i.e. an alliance, formally designed to protect against the danger of German revanchism but in reality directed against the Soviet Union, then it had little credibility since it did not formally involve the US. Italian scepticism was perhaps best summarised by Sforza who caustically remarked that Italy ‘belonged to the Western camp’ and ‘would eventually and inevitably join it’ but only when ‘it would be a serious thing’ and not simply ‘a piece of paper’ and ‘a union of weaknesses’ (quoted in Vigezzi 1985: 676). Speaking in a meeting of the Council of Ministers in 1948, De Gasperi thus characterised the dilemma Italy faced: ‘The choice is not whether to belong to some military pact or not but between having or not having an American guarantee’ (quoted in Vigezzi 1987: 11). Italian security, in other words, could only be attained through a US guarantee.\(^5\) As Marco Rimanelli (1997: xxiii) has argued in his detailed treatment of Italy’s grand strategy from the unification to today, the main reason was geo-strategic:

> Geo-strategic exposure to the sea and to powerful, hostile neighbours made it imperative for Italy’s national security to attain both a permanent peacetime military alliance with the hegemonic European land-power (Germany, France, or NATO to buttress the Alpine border), and a parallel naval one with the Mediterranean’s hegemonic maritime Power (Great Britain, or the United States since 1945) to secure coastal defence.

In the late 1940s, there was no hegemonic European land-power to buttress the Alpine border. The Brussels pact was no substitute for it but NATO could fulfil that role because it included the US. In the Mediterranean of course, the US had replaced Great Britain. Hence the US, which was the indispensable member of NATO, became Italy’s key ally on both fronts. Not surprisingly, Italian foreign policy decision-makers had no doubts about the need to be one of the founding members of the Atlantic pact as soon as the news that such a pact was in the making filtered out.

\(^5\) This opinion was also shared by the French because when after the announcement of the Marshall plan Italian politicians began to think of ways to promote economic integration, the Italian ambassador in Paris, Pietro Quaroni, reported to Rome that it would be useless for Sforza to go to France to speak of European integration since the French ‘could not care less about a European federation: all they want[ed] [wa]s a good European military alliance, guaranteed and financed by the Americans’ (quoted in Vigezzi 1987: 13-14).
The Italian decision to be a founding member of NATO has been usually regarded as having been difficult and suffered for two reasons. The first was the initial hesitation and scepticism of some of the future partners which were reinforced by the propensity of at least some Italian decision-maker to regard membership not only as a means for Italy to regain and consolidate its ‘proper place’ in the world but also to extract some concessions of domestic political significance as a reward for joining. De Gasperi, for instance, hinted more than once that given the magnitude of neutralist feelings at home his government would find it easier to join a military pact if membership brought with it revisions of the peace treaty – particularly those clauses concerning the colonies and the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) – which kept Italy in a position of inferiority relative to the other members. The fact that these demands were eventually abandoned, at least as a precondition for joining - they were of course brought up again, with even more insistence, once Italy was in the club - shows the importance that Italian decision-makers attached to becoming member of a military pact enjoying an American guarantee. The second reason which contributed to make the decision to join the Atlantic pact appear almost hesitant was the fact that De Gasperi confronted opposition within his own party by two distinct and influential leftist factions. The first, led by Giuseppe Dossetti, advocated ‘neutrality’ for Italy; the second, led by Giovanni Gronchi, envisaged the eventual formation of a ‘European federation of neutrals’.

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6 Such a propensity, which I have defined as ‘leverage syndrome’ (Croci 1991: 123-124), was based in no small part on what political psychologists call the ‘centrality bias’, i.e. the tendency to regard oneself as being more important in the eyes of others than one actually is. Examples of the ‘leverage syndrome’ can be found in Catti De Gasperi 1969: 17), Toscano (1963), FRUS (1948: 260-262, 267 and 809-811) and Acheson (1962: 572).

7 The FTT was supposed to be a self-governing statelet which would reunite that part of the region of Venetia-Julia the Peace Treaty had not definitively assigned to either Italy or Yugoslavia. Because the United Nations Security Council was not able to agree on the appointment of a Governor and thus could not set the founding process in motion, the FTT was never set up and the area remained divided in two zones: Zone A under a provisional Anglo-American administration and Zone B under Yugoslav administration.

8 This was particularly true in the case of the return of Zone A of the FTT to Italy. Ambassador Brosio, for instance, would say years later: ‘We were NATO allies; we were committed … We believed that being … seriously convinced of the necessity of remaining loyal allies of the former enemies of our country we were entitled to preferential consideration over Yugoslavia … We felt that we deserved the support of the US and the UK because of a community of ideology, of systems, and of the alliance’ (quoted in Campbell 1976: 119).

9 On the NATO debate within the Christian Democratic Party, see Capperucci (2003).
Once the Atlantic choice was made, ‘neutrality’ ceased to be an option even for the two factions that had opposed Atlanticism and they adopted the rallying cry of Europeanism, albeit each with its own different understanding of it. The faction led by Gronchi would look at the development of Europeanism as an alternative to Atlanticism. In its view, a united Europe was supposed to become a third and equidistant force between the US and the USSR. The faction led by Dossetti, instead, took what could be defined as a ‘Canadian turn’ and began looking at Europeanism as a force that would add a social and economic dimension to Atlanticism and thus eventually transform NATO from a military pact into a true ‘Atlantic community’ (Capperucci 2003: 83-85). For De Gasperi and the rest of the party, instead, the process of European integration could now move forward under the security guarantee of the Atlantic Alliance. Not only, but after the institutional structure and range of competences of the Council of Europe fell short of the hopes of the European federalists, De Gasperi also realized that real European integration would need the continuous encouragement of the US administration which, for its part, was convinced that its efforts to reconstruct Europe in the economic and defence areas would have long-lasting results only if Western Europe would integrate itself.10

The relationship between Europeanism and Atlanticism in Italian foreign policy was thus well defined by the early 1950s and can be briefly summarised as follows: Italian governments would regard support for the Atlantic Alliance and the process of European integration as the two lodestars of the country’s foreign policy. Whenever they began to diverge, often because of some French initiative, Italian governments would try to bring them back on the same course. If such an effort failed and they were obliged to make a choice, they would always follow the transatlantic path or, as Leopoldo Nuti (2003: 94) put it, they always showed ‘a clear reluctance to follow the French lead and an inclination to take a slightly more Atlanticist posture’. In the early 1950s, moreover, as Ennio Di Nolfo (1992: 711) has pointed out, ‘it became imperative to

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10 On the Europeanism of De Gasperi and the mainstream of the Christian Democratic Party, see Pastorelli (1987:...
maintain a solid link with the US, and even strengthen it, both within NATO and outside it’ because, ‘even if this created growing difficulties for the government on the domestic political front’ by providing the Communist and Socialist opposition with an easy target of criticism, ‘it represented nevertheless a means to mitigate Anglo-French hegemony in Europe’. Thus the Italian foreign ministry looked at the European Defence Community (EDC) as reinforcing NATO but worried that the concomitant European Political Community (EPC) would expose Italy to the power of France and Germany by weakening its ties with the US and Great Britain and suggested that the government try moving toward a wider European grouping that would include Great Britain (reported in Sforza 1952: 300). When France eventually defeated the EDC, a newspaper close to government circles commented that ‘France ha[d] not hesitated to stab Western Europe by weakening its Atlantic policy’ (quoted in Willis 1971: 50). After the rapprochement between France and Germany following the signing of the 1963 Elysée treaty, the link with NATO and the US became also a means to mitigate Franco-German hegemony not only in Europe but also within the European Economic Community (EEC).

Atlanticism and Europeanism from 1949 to the end of the Cold War and beyond

Italian Atlanticism during the Cold War can be briefly synthesized as follows: Italian government were accommodating, even zealously so, on issues that were important to the Alliance and US global interest; they were instead very assertive on issues that had important domestic political salience but were at best peripheral to the Alliance or US global interests. To explain this type of interaction11 one needs to look beyond the security dimension and examine also the role that the relationship with the US played on the domestic political front. Italian

45-208 and 233-257).

11 Such an interaction resembles the one between a ‘patron’ and a ‘client’. I hesitate to define it as a ‘patron-client relationship’ because the latter, having been developed in anthropology, refers to a relationship between two individuals. Although the term has often been used, suggestively, to describe the relationship between two states, to
governments accepted American decisions on security and defence issues without making difficulties. This attitude generated trust and, more importantly, bought Italian governments a ‘margin of independent manoeuvre’, even if limitedly to issues peripheral to Alliance and US interests but of importance to Italy. This margin of independent manoeuvre served to allay internal political opposition, primarily the strong Communist party, which was always eager to accuse the government of being too servile vis-à-vis the American ally. A few examples will suffice to make the point.

In July 1958, under the second Fanfani government (a coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats), Italy was the first NATO country to accept the deployment of the new Jupiter nuclear Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles. In 1979, Craxi’s socialists provided parliamentary support to the Cossiga government’s (a centre left coalition of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Social-Democrats) decision to accept the deployment of the Pershing II missiles. In 1983, the Craxi-led government (a center left coalitions comprising Socialists, Christian Democrats, Liberals, Republicans and Social Democrats) readily accepted the deployment of Cruise missiles (Nuti 2003: 95-97). Even more interesting was the behaviour of the government led by former Communist party secretary Massimo D’Alema during NATO’s intervention in Kosovo in 1999. The original position of his government, as clearly stated by Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, was that ‘an intervention by NATO in Kosovo without a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) mandate [was] absolutely impossible’ (Flores D’Arcais and Nigro 1998). Yet, from March 23 to June 9, 1999, Italy played a central role in the logistics of NATO’s Operation Allied Force. Such a conversion was even more intriguing since the largest member of the governmental coalition, the Democratici di Sinistra (DS), was, except in name, the same party that had taken a strongly critical stance against the Gulf war (Donovan 1992). NATO’s military intervention against Serbia, moreover, unlike the one aiming at expelling Iraq
from Kuwait, did not have the authorization of the UNSC and rested therefore on a very shaky legal ground. D'Alema later explained his ‘conversion’ by pointing out that, in assuming power, he, as well as his DS colleagues, felt that as former communists they had to prove their reliability as Atlantic partners: ‘My biggest problem was relations with the US, how the Americans would evaluate me’ (D’Alema 1999: 3).

Having shown their Atlantic loyalty, Italian governments could ‘open to the Left’, enjoy diplomatic and commercial relations with Soviet bloc countries including Cuba, have a ‘constructive dialogue’ with ‘rogue states’ (e.g. Libya and Iran) and promote the cause of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, just to mention a few episodes. The Craxi government could even go as far as staging a confrontation with US troops at the Sigonella basis in Sicily, following the hijacking of the Achille Lauro liner by Palestinian terrorists in 1985 (Piason 1986; Silj 1998).

This margin of independent manoeuvre, however, could not go as far as reinterpreting, or even appearing to call into question, the Alliance itself. Politicians who would dare go that far would find obstacles within the government majority as well as the diplomatic corps. The most important episode of this kind was the emergence after 1956 of what came to be known as ‘neo-Atlanticism’ and was identified with politicians and public figures who belonged to the left-wing of Christian Democratic party, e.g. President of the Republic Giovanni Gronchi, President of the Council of Ministers Amintore Fanfani, the major of Florence Giorgio La Pira, and the President of the state-owned oil company ENI, Enrico Mattei. The neo-Atlanticists essentially maintained that national interests should prime over the constraints resulting from Atlantic solidarity. More specifically, their ambitions were cultivating privileged relations with some Middle-eastern regimes in an effort to support the oil policy of ENI and establishing Italy as the ‘bridge’ between the West and the Arab world and thus carving out an independent role for Italy in the

applied to two states or more precisely to two complex organizations has yet to be explored.
Mediterranean region. Because neo-Atlanticism was not a single episode but was, or was perceived to be, a programme that through a reinterpretation of the Atlantic Alliance risked to redirect Italian foreign policy in a neutralist direction, it split the government majority and met with stern resistance from high ranking diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in the end sealed its fate.  

The primacy of Atlanticism over Europeanism rested, and continues to rest, on two considerations. First, as long as Europe, meaning the European Union (EU), is not able or willing to assure its own security and defence, there is little choice but to continue relying on the Atlantic Alliance. Second, Italian governments have always feared being excluded from a French-German-British ‘security directoire’ likely to emerge if the EU would emancipate itself from NATO. For Italy, in other words, the Atlantic Alliance was, and still is, a guarantee that it will be at the table when issues in as crucial a field as European security and defence are discussed. Even when asserting Italy’s Europeanist credentials, Italian politicians would not forget to remind their audience of the nature of the relationship they saw Europe having with its transatlantic ally as shown, for instance, in this passage from a speech by Aldo Moro delivered soon after he had formed the first post-war Italian Center-Left government:

Europe is a reality as a moral, cultural and even political patrimony … She is from our point of view, a big power, connected with but equal to, its natural ally beyond the Atlantic. Because of this, she is a guarantee of equilibrium, responsibility and peace … The theme of Europe is not of course for us separable from that of the Atlantic Alliance (Moro 1965)

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12 For an in-depth analysis of neo-Atlanticism, see Grassi Orsini (2003).
13 Some episodes portending such a danger have been the initial exclusion of Italy from the Contact Group on former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s (Italy was eventually included thanks to the US), the so-called ‘Ghent mini-summit’ of October 2001 between France, Germany, and Great Britain held to discuss the war in Afghanistan and the non-inclusion in the European Contact Group with Iran.
14 This position was well articulated by Italian ambassador to London Roberto Ducci in a letter to Foreign Minister Attilio Piccioni dated 4 February 1963. Commenting on French President Charles De Gaulle’s veto of the first British application to join the European Community, Ducci wrote: ‘If we have to make do with a mock Europe … or … with some Anglo-French pastiche, then it would be better not to play the game and support the Atlantic Community instead. … [With] Italy unable to be independent and Europe unable to proceed with a real integration, then the richest and most distant master is always the best’ (quoted in Nuti 2003: 91).
The end of the Cold War led Italian-decision-makers to adjust, but not to alter in any substantial way, their perception of the relationship between Europeanism and Atlanticism.

*Atlanticism and Europeanism after the end of the Cold War*

The end of the bipolar system changed Europe’s, and hence also Italy’s, position in the Western system of collective security. Europe was central in terms of the threat represented by the Soviet Union but ceased to be so with respect to the main threats facing the West after the end of the Cold War (e.g. Islamic terrorism, nuclear proliferation, collapsed states). With the Soviet Union gone, the major threat to European countries came to be represented by local crises in neighbouring regions that could develop into military conflicts and cause large and uncontrollable migratory inflows of people (Croci 2003; Kirchner and Sperling 2007). During the Cold War, the European members of the Atlantic Alliance could afford to have, in part at least, a free security ride. After the fall of the Berlin wall, however, they were obliged to review their approach to security. One of the changes was the development of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) which, while not emancipating the EU from the US, betrayed awareness of a changed security environment requiring a more pro-active approach and concentrated on finding adequate ways and means to meet the new type of threats Europe now faced (Howorth 2007).

Because of its geographical location, Italy is particularly vulnerable to some of the new post-Cold War threats. The Italian peninsula represents, in fact, the closest and most porous, and hence the favourite, point of access to Europe by economic migrants, political refuge claimants, and Islamic terrorists. Thus, in the early 1990s, Italian post-war foreign and security policy came to be characterised by a ‘new activism’. A comment by Salvo Andò (Minister of Defence in the 1992-1993 Amato government) concisely but effectively illustrates this change. He justified the Italian decision to participate in the UN mission to Somalia in 1992-93, as follows:
We have until recently been a security consuming country. We have consumed the security produced and offered to us by our allies. This has implied a freely chosen renunciation of part of our sovereignty as well as some of its costs. This has also led to the unwillingness, if not inability, on the part of politicians and the country in general, to think fully about our security, military means, their preparation, and their possible use. In the future, and Somalia is one of the first choices made on this new road, we will have increasingly to become a security producing country.\footnote{Andò is quoted in Nigro (1993). His argument would be reiterated in exactly the same terms a few years later by the centre-left government (Fassino 1998: 31).}

Italian governments’ more proactive attitude toward security resulted in two different types of initiatives. On the one hand, Italy became more willing to participate in multilateral peace-supporting operations and because of problems encountered during the mission in Somalia, it argued that a restructuring of the planning and decision-making mechanisms in international peace operations was necessary in order to give more voice to the governments who contributed troops (Croci 1995; Greco and Ronzitti, 1996). On the other, Italy did not hesitate to take initiatives on its own. Thus, when in the spring of 1997, the Albanian state collapsed in the wake of a large financial scandal and thousands of Albanians crossed the Adriatic in search of better fortune, the Italian government dealt with the emergency by taking the lead in forming a ‘coalition of the willing’ and putting together a military-humanitarian mission, codenamed Operazione Alba, which was sanctioned ex post facto by the UNSC (Sciortino 1998; De Guttry and Pagano 1999).

At the European level, in line with its traditional view of Europeanism and Atlanticism, Italy has supported the development of ESDP as long as it is conceived, clearly and uncompromisingly, as complementary, and not alternative, to the strengthening of NATO, and this has been true for both centre-left and centre-right coalitions. In 1996, for instance, the first Prodi-led Ulivo government refused to support a French proposal aimed at giving command of Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH ) based in Naples to a French (or European) officer. The underlying logic of this choice was that Italian governments see no advantage in plans that
loosen, or appear to be loosening, transatlantic ties without at the same time offering any concrete gain in terms of the defence of Europe (Dassù and Menotti 1997: 16).

Atlanticism and Europeanism under centre-right and centre-left governments

Not long after the inception of the second Berlusconi government (12 June 2001 - 17 May 2006)\(^{16}\), a few academics and journalists began to argue that the new government was intent on strengthening Atlanticism to the detriment of Europeanism.\(^{17}\) Their claim seemed to be supported, *prima facie* at least, by the Berlusconi’s government verbal backing of the US-led intervention against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.\(^{18}\) A detailed analysis of the events however yields a rather different conclusion.

There is hardly any doubt that the Berlusconi government looked at the Iraqi issue much like the US government did.\(^{19}\) Both felt that after 9/11, the international community and the Western world in particular could no longer ignore Iraq’s repeated failures to comply with

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\(^{16}\) Technically speaking there were two Berlusconi governments during this period: Berlusconi II, which lasted from 11 June 2001 to 23 April 2005 and Berlusconi III from 23 April 2005 to 17 May 2006. Berlusconi I lasted from May 1994 to January 1995 while Berlusconi IV began its mandate on 8 May 2008. For a more detailed treatment of the foreign policy of the second Berlusconi government see Croci (2005).

\(^{17}\) This perception might have been, at least in part, the result of the Berlusconi government’s attempt to distinguish itself from its predecessors which led some ministers to make public pronouncements emphasizing change over continuity in Italian foreign policy. For instance, all the politicians interviewed or invited to contribute to a 2002 special issue of *Ideazione* (a review close to the centre-right coalition), entirely devoted to Italian foreign policy, stressed the changes they had supposedly wrought, whereas diplomatic officials and a most of the academics emphasized continuity with previous governments. The opening piece, which was an interview with Berlusconi, was entitled ‘Così ho cambiato la politica estera’ (This is how I changed foreign policy). In the interview, however, Berlusconi mentioned only one change which, moreover, concerned only the style of his foreign policy. He claimed to have adopted ‘a new modus operandi deriving from [his] long experience in the private sector, a world in which personal relationships and the respect for engagements entered into, even if only verbally, [were] the foundation of credibility and success’. For what concerns the substance of his foreign policy, and particularly Atlanticism and Europeanism, Berlusconi admitted that there was nothing new except his determination to strengthen them both, which, as shown above, was also the objective of all previous postwar Italian governments (Mennitti 2002: 12-14). Later, Foreign Minister, Franco Frattini, published a book entitled *Cambiamo rotta: la nuova politica estera dell’Italia* (Let’s change course: the new foreign policy of Italy) in which he argued, in a rather Byzantine manner, that the changes envisaged by his government were ‘in the mark of continuity’ or ‘grafted onto a long tradition of continuity’. The only true novelty, he affirmed, was the government’s ‘new activism’ (Frattini 2004a: 13, 15).

\(^{18}\) For a more exhaustive treatment of the Berlusconi government’s policy towards the intervention in Iraq, see Croci (2004), on which this section is based.

\(^{19}\) In his speech to the Chamber of Deputies on September 25, 2002, for instance, Berlusconi described the Iraqi issue in terms closer to those used in Washington than in other European capitals and offered what was probably the most sympathetic endorsement of the American position that was heard in Europe, especially since it explicitly recognised that the US responsibility for maintaining international security.
UNSC resolutions which required Baghdad to provide proof of its disarmament. To convince Saddam Hussein to comply with the resolutions without having to resort to military force required cooperation between the US and Europe. A peaceful outcome, in other words, depended on Saddam’s realization that yet another failure to comply would trigger a military intervention. If the use of force were to prove necessary, then the Italian government, in line with traditional Italian foreign policy, felt that it should be done with the authorization of the UNSC, NATO, or another multilateral organization. Germany and France having defected from this strategy, the Italian government, in line with traditional Italian foreign policy, first tried to mediate between the two opposing camps. When such an effort failed, the government continued to behave according to the traditional guiding principles of Italian foreign policy. Thus, in the absence of a clear mandate from a multilateral organization, it did not provide any military contribution and limited itself to express solidarity with the US-led intervention.

Such a choice was not even an example of the traditional Italian behaviour of preferring Atlanticism to Europeanism when the two diverge since on this issue Europe was very much divided and what was passed off as the ‘European position’ was nothing but the position of France and Germany. Some critics argued that the Italian government should, nevertheless, have aligned itself with French President Chirac and German Chancellor Schröder. Such a choice, however, would have represented a dramatic departure from traditional Italian foreign policy principles and interests. First, it could have easily been interpreted as acquiescing to a Franco-German directoire in the EU, and to Chirac’s apparent desire to have the EU bolster France’s ambitions to mount a challenge to US hegemony in the world, something all Italian governments, including centre-left ones, have traditionally eschewed. Second, it would have further isolated and alienated Great Britain from its major continental partners, widened the rift across the Atlantic, and made progress towards an effective ESDP even more difficult. To conclude, the

20 The most thorough presentation of the Italian position was articulated by Foreign Minister Franco Frattini in a
Berlusconi government preferred to restate its allegiance to the US rather than joining the Franco-German couple in mounting a futile challenge to the US decision on Iraq. Such a challenge, in fact, would have further weakened Europe’s ties to the US without advancing its security. The choice of the Berlusconi government was hardly new because previous Italian governments, regardless of their ideological leanings or composition, acted in the same way when confronted with a similar dilemma. As Frattini put it very clearly in a speech given at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 21 June 2004:

> Italy strongly supports the process of European integration, at the same time endeavouring to safeguard and strengthen the Euro-Atlantic partnership. For us, the twin prospects of a closer European Union and of a stronger trans-Atlantic Alliance are not alternative propositions (Frattini 2004b).

In another speech given at the American University in Rome on 8 November 2004, he pointed out how those principles had shaped his government’s behaviour on the Iraqi issue:

> In this world we do not need less America. We need more Europe. But we need Europe as a loyal partner, not as a rival of the US. We do not need a multipolar world of competing global powers, where the US is counter-balanced by Europe. America and Europe need to work together to establish an effective multilateralism, starting from the United Nations (quoted in Walston 2004: 125).

During the Cold War, whenever the Communists would accuse the governments of being too subservient to the US they would play the nationalist card and call for the adoption by Italy of neutralism. Concerning Iraq, the centre-left coalition made the same accusation but instead of playing the card of Italian nationalism played that of European nationalism.21 It did so, however, in a very restrained and responsible way. In April 2003, that is about a month before the initiative was sanctioned by UNSC Resolution 1483 of 22 May 2003, the Berlusconi government decided to make a contribution to the reconstruction and stabilisation of Iraq which included, as requested by Bush and Blair, a contingent of carabinieri with policing and police-training tasks.

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21 The centre-left of course conveniently ignored the fact that on the Iraqi issue what it called the ‘European position’ was only a temporary coming together of French usual ambitions to speak on behalf of all of Europe and of German electoral politics which came to have international repercussions.
The centre-left publicly argued that Italy should not send a single carabiniere to Iraq but when Parliament was called to approve the mission, only its fringe components, i.e. the Greens, Rifondazione Comunista (RC) and the Partito dei Comunisti d’Italia (PCdI) voted against. The major parties not only abstained on the vote but also carefully distanced themselves from the strident anti-American choruses of the extreme left. Such a cautious approach continued after the centre-left coalition returned to government. For instance, the second Prodi government could have presented the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq as the mere implementation of a decision taken by its predecessor. Alternatively, it could have emphasized the fact that, technically speaking at least, the mission had been successfully completed in September 2006 when the responsibility for security in the region assigned to Italian troops was transferred to the Iraqi provincial authorities. The government instead carefully presented the withdrawal of troops as the passage from a military to a political and humanitarian phase. Minister of Defence Arturo Parisi emphasized that withdrawing troops was not the same thing as abandoning Iraq to its destiny. Italy would continue to provide humanitarian aid as well as support the process of political reconstruction (Mattone 2006).

In the case of Afghanistan, far from considering withdrawing the troops, the Prodi government made a sustained effort to convince the extremist fringes within the political coalition which supported it in Parliament (Greens, RF, PCdI) that the Italian military presence there was consistent with the government’s professed values and principles. Thus, it consistently reiterated that ‘the government’s pacifist vocation [was] not in question’ because the ‘Afghan mission [was] one of peace’, and that Italy was being faithful to the principle of multilateralism because the presence of Italian troops was part of Italy’s ‘duty as a NATO member’ and that NATO forces were in Afghanistan because of a request of the UNSC on which Italy had a seat. Both the government and President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano also underlined the fact

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22 The second Prodi government lasted from 17 May 2006 to 6 May 2008. For an analysis of its foreign policy, see
that Italy’s presence was in line with Art. 11 of the Italian constitution (which the extremists understood as a repudiation of war sic et simpliciter) because that article underlines Italy’s duty as a member of international organizations and the UN in particular, ‘to play its part … in repelling challenges and attacks to the peaceful coexistence between states and peoples’.

D’Alema also added that ‘multilateralism d[id] not mean the abdication of national responsibilities but require[d] unrelenting engagement by all member states in the absence of which international organizations, and hence multilateralism, would be ineffective’. The didactic efforts of Prodi, D’Alema, and Napolitano were not totally successful since at least some members of the fringe parties continued to insist that this government’s foreign policy had to show some ‘discontinuity’ from that of its predecessor. Thus, when it came to approving the refinancing of the Afghan mission for one additional year - the government did however mention the need for a much longer term commitment - D’Alema threatened that unless the refinancing bill would receive a majority without having to resort to the votes of the opposition, ‘everyone would be going home’ (Luzi 2007; see also D’Alema 2007). Finally, the Prodi government also took the lead and played a central role in the setting up of a new UN peace-keeping mission to Lebanon. The government presented the mission as an instance of Italy acting in the name of Europeanism, Atlanticism, and UN multilateralism. It also added a hint of pro-Arabism which served to convince the extremist fringes supporting the government coalition not to oppose the mission in the name of pacifism.

To conclude, the centre-left government’s approach to the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism did not differ in any substantial way from that of its predecessor. In the words of Minister of Foreign Affairs D’Alema: ‘Europe will continue to be united only if we have a common vision of its relationship with the US’. Italy while promoting ‘the growth of Europe as an autonomous international actor’ should also make sure that Europe remains ‘solidly

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Croci (2008a) on which this section is partly based.
linked to the US through the Atlantic Alliance’ because ‘Italian foreign policy works at its best when Atlanticism and Europeanism are not in contradiction but reinforce each other’ (D’Alema 2006)

Concerning support of the process of European integration the centre-right and centre-left governments can be compared with respect to the positions they took during the negotiations for the Constitutional Treaty, the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) that followed it, and the Reform Treaty. According to Lucia Quaglia (2007: 6-12; see also Greco and Matarazzo 2003) during the early phase of the convention that yielded the Constitutional Treaty Gianfranco Fini, the Berlusconi government’s official representative, proposed some amendments which could be regarded as being in line with his ideological preferences (e.g. avoiding use of the word ‘federal’ and preferring the term ‘citizens of the Union’ to that of ‘persons’ in the article concerning freedom of movement in the EU). Quaglia labels Fini’s behaviour during this phase as reflecting a ‘mild Euro-scepticism’. This is perhaps a bit unfair since Fini also supported the strengthening of the mechanisms to elaborate a common foreign, security and defence policy. Always according to Quaglia, the positions of Fini and the Italian government in general became however more ‘pro-European’ as the work of the convention progressed and in the subsequent IGC when there was ‘a stronger influence exerted by advisers from the (traditionally) pro-European Foreign Ministry’.

Things did not change dramatically during the negotiations leading to the Reform Treaty; or, as Quaglia (2007: 23) puts it, most of the Prodi government’s preferences ‘had been articulated by the Berlusconi government during the negotiations of the Constitutional treaty’. This is also true for issues not tackled in the Treaty such as that of Turkey’s accession. The Prodi government, in fact, did not renege on the support that its predecessor had expressed in favour of Turkey’s admission to the EU. Even the reasons behind the support did not appear to have changed much, namely the expectation that a liberal-democratic Turkey would project peace and
prosperity in at least parts of the Islamic world (Bildt and D’Alema 2007). The main difference Quaglia has identified in the behaviour of the two governments is one of style and not of substance, namely that ‘the Prodi government was much more vocal and determined than its predecessor had been’. To conclude, it is interesting to note that to those who pointed out that the Prodi government followed in the footsteps of its predecessor, D’Alema replied that it was Berlusconi who followed in the footsteps of the government he headed (Bonanni 2006). The point of course is that regardless of who is following whom, the diatribe suggests that the two governments have behaved in the same manner.

In a two-party system or two-coalition system such as the one currently existing in Italy, political language takes on a strident and confrontational tone even if the policies undertaken by the two coalitions when in government might not be very different (Croci 2001). Indeed, it would appear that the more similar the policies - and foreign policy is very similar because of rarely changing external constraints governments face - the more strident and confrontational the political language becomes. It is as if the two coalitions need to construct differences that do not exist in substance in order to retain their own identity which almost disappears when one focuses on their policy outputs.

Conclusions
This paper has shown that post-war Italian governments have conceived the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism in substantially the same manner and have pursued similar policies even if they have sold them to coalition partners and the public differently. At the same time they have attacked each other as if both were pursuing drastically different policies. Thus, while the centre-left attacked the Berlusconi government for having abandoned Europeanism in favour of a personal relationship with President Bush, the centre-right has attacked the Prodi government for pursuing an anti-American policy (Guerzoni 2007). When it comes to voting in Parliament,
however, bipartisanship prevails more often than not. Traditional national interests and not ideology, in other words, guide the foreign policy of centre-left governments as it guides those of the centre-right. Italy is unable to provide for its own security hence it must work towards maintaining the Atlantic Alliance (where it does not run the risk of being overlooked by a European security directoire) as well as reinforcing its effectiveness through closer European cooperation on defence, which is also the only way in which ‘Europe’ can have more saying in the conduct of Atlantic business.

These general propositions (which could be developed into a more formal model) drawn from the Italian case suggests that it is highly unlikely that ESDP will ever develop into an autonomous regional security organization that would replace NATO. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that EU member states are not willing to spend what it would take to provide the EU with the kind of protection from ‘global’ threats that NATO provides. On the other hand, however, I would argue that this is also true because the general propositions derived from the Italian case most likely apply also not only (and obviously) to those countries that are members of NATO but not of the EU (Norway, Turkey, Iceland, Canada and the US) but also to all other EU member states including the ‘neutrals’. Hence the next stage of this research is to develop a more formal model of the relationship between Atlanticism and Europeanism and then apply it to the case of other EU and NATO members.
References


