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ABSTRACT

Italy was admitted to the United Nations (UN) in 1955. In a mix of ‘genetic multilateralism’ of Italian society and the ‘institutional multilateralism’ of the Italian Constitution, the UN soon acquired a central position in Italian foreign policy and Italian participation in the UN and its institutions became increasingly active. Italy is the top troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping operations among Western countries. Since the 1960s, Italy has participated in 33 UN Peacekeeping operations. The Italian commitment to the UN faced four main turning points: the launch of the UNOSOM II mission in Somalia (1992), the contribution to the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (1999), the involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq (2001–05), and the engagement with the UNIFIL II mission (2006). By providing an historical overview of Italy’s approach to UN Peacekeeping and explaining the different engagements and disengagements drive through the shift in the foreign policy priorities of the country and the influence of domestic factors; this article aims to answer to the following questions: ‘How much will Italy be willing to contribute to UN Peacekeeping in the future?’ and ‘Does Italy see other multilateral options (EU and NATO) as alternatives to the UN?’

1. Introduction

In 2015, Italy celebrated the 60th anniversary of signing the United Nations (UN) Charter. Italy was admitted to the UN on 14 December 1955, ten years after its foundation.

In 1960 Italy participated in its first peacekeeping mission, the UN Operation in Congo (ONUC). Overall, Italy has participated in 33 UN operations, with around 60,000 personnel deployed in total.

Today, Italy is the top troop contributor to UN Peacekeeping operations from the ‘Western European and Others Group’. As of January 2016, Italy is actively participating in three UN operations, for a total of 1,103 blue helmets. Italy is also ranked seventh among the top ten financial providers to the UN Peacekeeping Operations budget for the period between 2013 and 2015. In 2015, this comprised a total of 113 million US dollars.

Italy is a middle-range power that supports multilateral organizations as arenas where its interests can be best pursued. This *forced multilateralism*¹ should be understood in combination with general support for international organizations coming from Italian society and elites. The *institutional multilateralism* of Italy was already stated by its founding fathers in Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, which expresses the Italian commitment to multilateralism. Therefore, the Italian commitment to the UN, should be seen as the result of the general support that the Italian society traditionally devotes to the UN, but also as the need for a middle-power to increase its visibility and sphere of influence.

The literature on Italian Foreign Policy identifies seven main drivers that rationalize Italian willingness to deploy forces abroad.² First, to minimize threats that could affect Italian national security (*National security*); Second, to protect commercial routes or access to natural resources (like gas and oil supplies), while advancing the interests of national companies (*Economy*); Third, to respond to specific domestic factors, as in the case of Prodi's electoral promises in 2006 (*Domestic Scenario*); Fourth, to gain international recognition (*Prestige*); Fifth, to test and train military assets (*Military Organization*); Sixth, to respond to the 'responsibility to intervene' attitude that characterized Italy (*Culture*); and seventh, to fulfil the commitment to international missions (*Multilateral Institutions*).

Apart from the general support of the public opinion (*Culture*) and the need for political leaders to acquire international recognition (*Prestige*), the main elements that emerge as drivers of the periodical engagement and disengagement of Italy in UN Peacekeeping are the domestic situation (*Domestic Scenario*) link to the national priorities (*National Security*) which were prioritize differently by the different Italian governments (the Mediterranean, the Balkans and the relations with the USA).

Across time the Italian domestic situation (*Domestic Scenario*) and the shift in the national priorities (*National Security*) emerged as drivers of the Italian involvement in UN Peacekeeping and explain the four main historical turning points faced by Italy. The first turning point was in December 1992 with the UNOSOM II mission in Somalia, when Salvatore Andò, the Minister of Defence, asked the Italian Parliament to support the UN's efforts in Somalia, as he said it was time for Italy to stop being a 'security consumer' and start being a 'security provider'. The second turning point was in 1999 as a result of the contribution to the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Italy increased its total contribution to UN forces from an average of less than 100 troops to 156 troops in September 1999 (out of which 57 troops were allocated to UNMIK). The third turning

¹Santoro, *La Politica Estera di una Media Potenza*.

²Coticchia, "A Remarkable Evolution. Italy's Participation in PKOs: Figures and Trends," 12.

point came as a consequence of the Italian involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq (2001–05), which illustrated a progressive decline in contributions, and reduced Italy's rank among all UN contributors to the 58th largest contributor to the UN Peacekeeping Operations. The fourth and final turning point was in September 2006, when Italy, due to the engagement with the UNIFIL II mission supported by the Prodi government, improved its personnel contributions once more to become the 18th largest contributor among country contributors.

As it stands today, Italy is in the group of main European countries supporting UN Peacekeeping. However, the ongoing impact of the financial crisis, as well as emerging threats, such as global terrorism, cybersecurity, and other multidimensional crises, have given rise to the question of how much Italy will be willing to contribute to UN Peacekeeping in the future. Moreover, other multilateral fora, such as the European Union (EU) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO, offer alternatives to UN interventions. Does Italy really see these multilateral options as alternatives? Or are they complementing the Italian efforts to appear as a credible middle-range power?

This article aims to answer these questions by looking at those issues in three sections. The first section starts with an historical overview of Italy's approach to UN Peacekeeping, and explains its main historical turning points mainly in terms of domestic events. The second section argues that, although Italy did not withdraw from UN Peacekeeping, the different engagements and disengagements can be explained by the shift in the foreign policy priorities of the country: the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the *Atlanticism* in terms of Italy-USA cooperation. This section will also touch on the role of other international organizations, mainly the EU and NATO in the Italian approach to peacekeeping, answering the question: 'Are these organisations in competition for Italian contributions to UN Peacekeeping?' The third section tackles the possibilities and obstacles that might lead to a larger Italian involvement in UN Peacekeeping, with a special focus on the Mediterranean as a re-emerging priority area; the Italian involvement in Libya; and its candidacy to become a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council.

2. Historical overview of Italy's approach to UN Peacekeeping and its evolution to the present

Since 1960, Italy participated in 33 missions, with a total of 60,000 troops deployed³ (Table 1).

In 1960 Italy participated for the first time in a UN Peacekeeping mission: the ONUC operation in Congo. Mainly driven by national issues and the need

³Data provided by the Italian Permanent Representation to the UN, New York.

Table 1. Italy's participation in UN Peacekeeping operations and peak contributions.

Mission	Duration of mission	Duration of Italy's participation	Peak contributions by Italy to this mission	Percentage of Italy's peak contribution related to overall mission peak
UNTSO	May '48–present	June '58–February 2015	9 (As at July 1966; several times from 1990 to 2002)	572 (August 1948)
UNMOGIP	January '49–present	January '59–February 2015	9 (March 2010, data before 1990 n.a.)	102 (September 1965)
UNEF I	November '56–June '67	November '56–May '58	Airlifting assistance Capodichino Airport, no troops involved	6,073 (February 1957)
UNOGIL	June–December '58	June–December '58		591 (November 1958)
ONUC	July '60–June '64	July '60–June '64	90 (September 1961)	19,828 (July 1961) 0.45%
UNYOM	July '63–September '64	December '63–March '64		189 (July–November 1963)
UNFICYP	March '64–present	September 2005–February 2015	4 (September 2005–February 2015)	2,798 (December 1976) 0.14%
UNIPOM	September '65–March '66	September '65 (initial phase, seconded from either UNTSO or UNMOGIP)		96 (October 1965)
UNFIL I	March '78–August 2006	July '79–August 2006	66 (August 2000)	6,975 (August 1982) 0.95%
UNIIMOG	August '88–February '91	August '88–February '91	15 (October 1988–March 1990)	Approx. 400 (n.s.) 3.75%
UNTAG	April '89–March '90	April '89–March '90	120 (April 1989, not a peak)	Approx. 6,000 (November 1989)
UNIKOM	April '91–October 2003	April '91–October 2003	8 (November 1993, September–October 1994)	1,187 (February 1994) 0.67%
MINURSO	April '91–to present	September '91–February 2015	6 (September 1991–August 1996)	531 (September 1998) 1.13%
UNAVEM III	February '95–June '97	November '95–November '96	4 (November 1995–November 1996)	7,302 (June 1996) 0.05%
ONUSAL	July '91–April '95	September '91–April '95	12 (September–October 1993)	595 (August 1992) 2.02%
UNTAC	February '92–September '93	August '92–June '93	75 (August 1992–March 1993)	19,630 (June 1993) 0.38%
ONUMOZ	December '92–December '94	January '93–December '94	1,071 (June 1993)	6,843 (March 1994) 15.65%

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Mission	Duration of mission	Duration of Italy's participation	Peak contributions by Italy to this mission	Percentage of Italy's peak contribution related to overall mission peak
UNOSOM II	March '93–March '95	May '93–February '94; May '94–January '95	3,160 (August 1993)	29,209 (November 1993) 10.82%
UNMIBH	December '95–December 2002	May '97–November 2002	24 (June 2000)	2,047 (November 1997) 1.17%
MINUGUA	January '97–December 2004	January–April '97; August '99–April 2002	10 (January–April 1997)	201 (February 1997) 4.98%
UNMIK	June '99–present	June '99–present	74 (July 2002)	4,769 (February 2002) 1.55%
MONUC	December '99–June 2010	December '99–March 2000; April 2001–August 2003; October–November 2008	4 (October 2001–June 2002)	22,016 (December 2008) 0.02%
UNMEE	July 2000–July 2008	August 2000–November 2005	208 (January 2002)	4,154 (May 2002) 5%
UNMIL	September 2003–present	March 2009–July 2009	1 (March 2009–July 2009)	16,112 (December 2005) 0.006%
MINUSTAH	June 2004–present	March 2008–December 2010	128 (May–June 2010)	12,552 (October 2011) 1.02%
UNMIS	April 2005–July 2011	April 2005–December 2007	217 (September 2005)	10,519 (January 2011) 2.06%
UNMIT	August 2006–December 2012	June–November 2009	1 (June–November 2009)	1,674 (April 2007) 0.06%
UNIFIL II	August 2006–present	August 2006–present	2,845 (April 2009)	13,539 (July 2007) 21.01%
UNAMID	August 2007–present	June 2008–December 2013	4 (October 2008)	23,466 (May 2012) 0.02%
MINURCAT	September 2007–December 2010	May 2009	87	3,814 (February 2010) 2.28%
UNMISS	July 2011–present	April 2012–November 2013	1 (April 2012–November 2013)	13,035 (December 2015) 0.008%
UNSMIS	April–August 2012	May–July 2012	5 (May 2012)	278 (June 2012) 1.80%
MINUSMA	April 2013–present	July 2013–present	3 (November 2015)	11,870 (January 2016) 0.03%

to get support from the African countries on the General Assembly vote on the status of the German-speaking minority in Alto Adige (South Tyrol),⁴ Italy sent ten C-119s and counted 22 losses. Among those, 13 aviators were killed in the so-called Kindu massacre conducted by the Congolese soldiers.⁵

⁴See Peterlini and Cardinal, *The South-Tyrol autonomy in Italy*.

⁵See Bona and Tosi, *L'Italia e la sicurezza collettiva*, 200; Chandra, *International Conflicts and Peace Making Process*, 218.

Despite the casualties, Italy remained committed to UN Peacekeeping, and between July 1963 and September 1964 contributed to the UNYOM mission in Yemen and to the UNIPOM mission in Pakistan.

Italy's contribution to UN Peacekeeping was not particularly significant in the early 1990s. Italy was not involved in the UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia. In September 1992, Italy was excluded by the peacekeeping operation because its common borders with the former Yugoslavia and the military experience during the Second World War made Italy not the ideal partner. The decision taken by the UN and supported by the Yugoslav side, was a relief for the Italian Ministry of Defence and the Italian Armed Forces, who were already worried about the danger of the mission and the contemporary commitment of Italy in Somalia.⁶

The UNOSOM II mission in Somalia marked a turning point in the Italian Foreign Policy. The Minister of Defence at the time, Salvatore Andò, during his speech at the Parliament explained the need for Italy to change from being a 'security consumer' to a 'security provider'⁷ and to support the UN efforts in Somalia. Following this speech, the Italian Parliament approved an initial deployment of 2,150 troops in December 1992 to support the take over from UNOSOM I.⁸ Between May 1993 and February 1994, the contribution from Rome increased due to the Italian involvement in the UNOSOM II mission in Somalia and the ONUMOZ missions in Mozambique. During these 12 months, the total number of blue helmets deployed by Italy increased from a total of 192 in February 1993 to a total of 1,101 in March 1993, reaching a peak of 4,277 deployments in August 1993.

Initially, the Italian involvement in Somalia, a former colony, was badly perceived by the local population. The Italian contingent, led by General Bruno Loi, changed this perception due to a less confrontational approach and their preference for negotiations with the local population. However this approach created tensions between the Italian contingent commander and the UNOSOM II force commander, who accused the Italians of favouring military actions against local militias instead of proactively supporting a political solution of the crisis.⁹ In July 1993 Italy accused the UN of supporting the escalation of the conflict and for changing the initial humanitarian objective of the mission to a more military approach.¹⁰ Rome asked to be involved in the decision-making of UNOSOM II, but the negative answer from the UN and the USA, created even more tensions. The Italian contingent started reporting and taking orders directly from Rome, creating serious problem in the command and control structure of the mission. Overall, 3 Italian

⁶Sobel et al., *International Public Opinion and the Bosnia Crisis*.

⁷Andò, 7781.

⁸See Bona and Tosi. *L'Italia e la sicurezza collettiva*.

⁹See Williams, "UN Operation in Somalia II."

¹⁰La Repubblica, "L'ONU è Sotto Accusa."

soldiers died and 20 were wounded in Somalia during the so-called Check-point Pasta battle between the Italian troops and Somali militias that took place on 2 July 1993 in Mogadishu.

If the Italian participation to UNOSOM II mission in Somalia was a bad experience, the parallel Italian involvement in ONUMOZ mission in Mozambique was much more positive. Italy was not only involved in the Peace Agreement signed in Rome that envisaged the central role for the UN, but it was also the first provider of an infantry battalion to the ONUMOZ mission in 1993 and the major contributor to the Renamo trust fund. Overall, the UN operation in Mozambique from 1992 to 1994 continues to be viewed as a UN success story.¹¹ As noted by Ajello,¹² Italian UN SRSG in the region at that time, the absence of a national influence of a single power created favourable circumstances for a more positive approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Unfortunately, the positive experience of UN Peacekeeping in Mozambique was overshadowed by the failures in Somalia and Bosnia. Although, the Italian experience in the ONUMOZ mission is considered positively – contrary to UNOSOM II – the Italian contingent returned early to Italy in March 1994, officially for budgetary issues, but under the suspicion of being involved in the abuse of young girls.¹³

Between April 1993 and March 1994 Italy contributions increased considerably, but in April 1994, Italian contributions to UN Peacekeeping decreased again to a total of 298 troops, due to the disengagement from the UNOSOM II mission in Somalia and the ONUMOZ mission in Mozambique.

The following years marked a general disengagement from UN Peacekeeping, partially due to the peacekeeping disaster in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, but mainly because of the domestic situation in Italy. The effects of the *Tangentopoli* ('bribe city') scandal; the following *Mani Pulite* ('clean hands') investigation that led to the end of the '*Prima Repubblica*'; and the consequent rise of Silvio Berlusconi in the March 1994 elections, diverted the attention from the international to the national political sphere. One example of this was the absence of Italian participation in the UNAMIR mission in Rwanda.¹⁴

Only with the launch of the UNMIK mission in Kosovo in June 1999, did Italy start a partial re-engagement to UN Peacekeeping. In September 1999, UNMIK became the most important mission in terms of Italian contribution, followed by UNIFIL. In July 2002, the Italian contribution to UNMIK reached its highest number yet with a total of 74 blue helmets.

Interestingly enough, 1,100 out of 1,103 blue helmets currently deployed by Italy are supporting the UNIFIL II mission in Southern Lebanon, where Italy

¹¹Berdal, "UN Operation in Mozambique."

¹²Ajello and Wittmann, "Mozambique."

¹³Synge, *Mozambique*.

¹⁴Walston, "Italian Foreign Policy in the 'Second Republic'."

is the top contributor among the 40 countries, providing so far a total of 10,494 contingent troops. Moreover, Italy received the leadership of UNIFIL II in January 2012 and has provided three out of four Force Commanders since 2007. It is rare at the UN that the leadership of a mission is repeatedly assigned to officials of the same nationality.

The Italian commitment in Southern Lebanon should also be read within the framework of Italy's strategic interest in the Mediterranean. Although Italy has been involved in the mission since the beginning in 1978, it was Romano Prodi in 2006 who was the main promoter of the largest commitment in terms of both troops and diplomatic efforts. His political initiative to re-engage Italy in Lebanon, and within the UN was due not only to Italy's strategic interest in the Mediterranean, but also to the promise he made during the 2006 election campaign¹⁵ regarding the new and strong international role he wanted Italy to take on (especially after the decision to withdraw from Iraq for internal political reasons).¹⁶ In response to the July 2006 crisis in Lebanon, Romano Prodi co-chaired a peace conference with the UN in Rome, during which he expressed the need for establishing an ad-hoc peacekeeping mission, while also implying that Italy was ready to send its troops to Lebanon.¹⁷

The centre-left coalition led by Prodi also pushed for a peacekeeping initiative in Lebanon to balance Berlusconi's *Atlanticism* and the partial opt-out represented by the Italian *Antica Babilonia* mission in Iraq. After 2001, and during Berlusconi's second mandate (2001–06), Italy's traditional loyalty to the UN and Europe subsided as it supported the US intervention in Iraq and supported a decision opposed to the rules and principles of the UN Charter.¹⁸

The costs of the Italian partial opt-out were perceived to be too high in terms of international prestige and marginalization of Italy within the EU, and therefore the Italian elite supported the foreign policy line taken by the second Prodi government. The Italian Parliament, also with the consensus of the Italian Communist Party, approved the immediate dispatch of 2,300 men to Beirut. This policy led to the election of Italy as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the period 2007–08 with one of the largest majorities ever received in the General Assembly (187 in favour out of 193).¹⁹

The re-election of Berlusconi (2008–11) coincided with the spread of protests in the Arab world. The crisis in Libya (February 2011) captured the

¹⁵See 'Noi e gli altri. Per il bene dell'Italia. Programma di Governo 2006–2011'.

¹⁶La Repubblica, "Prodi ai lettori di Repubblica: L'Italia torna tra i grandi."

¹⁷See, Co-Chairmen Statement, International Conference for Lebanon. Rome, July 26. Accessible at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/98981.pdf>.

¹⁸See Romano, "Berlusconi's Foreign Policy"; Foïs and Pagani, "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?"; Calculi, Rome's role within UNIFIL II.

¹⁹La Repubblica, "L'Italia nel Consiglio di sicurezza Onu."

debate in Italy: Berlusconi's opposition argued that as Libya was an historical key partner, Italy should have taken the lead in condemning the violence and mobilized its resources for humanitarian assistance. Against its multilateral tradition, Italy played the role of an outsider. It first went against the other European countries when the issue was discussed within the EU, and then opted out from NATO-led intervention when the UN Security Council approved the no-fly zone over Libya. This first non-reaction was due to two reasons. Firstly, the non-aggression clause agreed upon by Berlusconi's government with Tripoli in 2008, which was suspended on 28 February 2011. Secondly, the fear of losing a key commercial partner for Italy.²⁰ Since the Berlusconi re-election in 2008, the contribution to UN Peacekeeping has diminished constantly. In May 2008, there were a total of 2,864 Italian blue helmets; by November 2011, however, deployments had dropped by more than 50 per cent, comprising a total of 1,233 Italian soldiers on the ground.

In November 2011, as a result of international pressures of the International Monetary Fund and European partners, Berlusconi resigned as Prime Minister of Italy. The new government led by the economist Mario Monti (November 2011–April 2013) mainly focused on the internal economic situation in Italy, while the discussion on Italy's role in multilateral fora was limited to the financial aspects. During Monti's government, the Italian contributions to UN Peacekeeping remained stable, although the resources devoted to the Italian Ministry of Defence faced budget cuts due to newly introduced austerity measures.

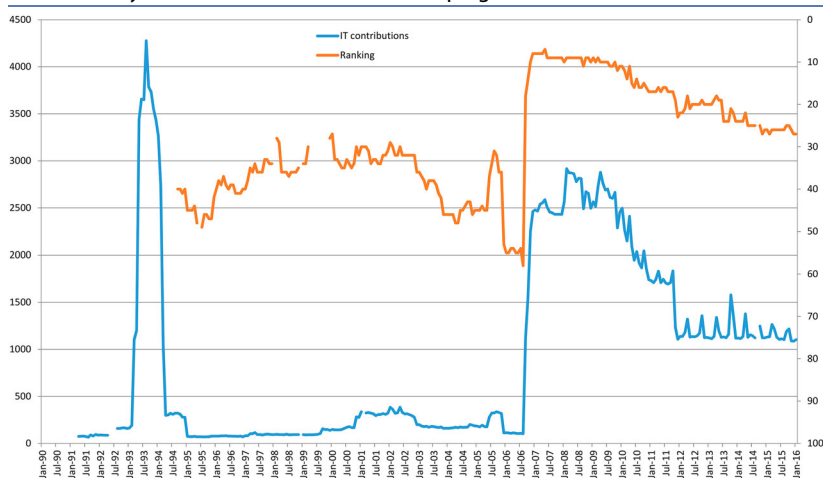
Furthermore, with the following government led by Letta (April 2013–February 2014), notwithstanding an increase in the defence budget (+0.7 per cent compared to 2011), the number of Italian blue helmets remained the same.

Overall, this historical overview shows how the Italian changes in the domestic situation and the consequent shifts in the national priorities have driven the Italian involvement in UN Peacekeeping and its ups and downs. The four main historical turning points are explained by changes in the Italian governments rather than by other factors like to test and train military assets or to fulfil the commitment to allies within the UN.

3. Not a 'withdrawal', but reasons for engagements and disengagements

As was explained in the previous section, Italy did not withdraw from UN Peacekeeping as a consequence of the events of the 1990s. Italy's intermittent approach to UN Peacekeeping has been characterized by periodic engagements and disengagements, mainly driven by changes in foreign policy

²⁰Balossi-Restelli, "Italian Foreign and Security Policy in a State of Reliability Crisis?"

Table 2. Italy's contribution to UN Peacekeeping.

Notes: This table is based on UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country, 31 January 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>; UN Peacekeeping, Troop and police contributors archive (1990–2014), http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml.

priorities (National Security) link to internal political issues (Domestic Element) (Table 2).

In terms of national security elements, the focus on the Mediterranean and on the Balkans as geographical foreign policy priorities for reasons of proximity, clashes with the *Atlanticism* and the unconditional support to the USA. Historically, Italy's policy towards the Mediterranean and the Balkans remains the geographical priority of the centre-left governments; whereas the relations with the USA have always been prioritized, to the detriment of the other two, by the centre-right governments.

3.1. The Mediterranean

Since the end of the Cold War the Mediterranean is a national priority for Italy. The economic interests, the need to secure energy supplies and control migration are the main reasons of Italy's relations with the Mediterranean countries. Moreover, the preferential relations with the Mediterranean countries, have granted Italy the role of natural interlocutor and driver of European policy towards the Mediterranean region.

After the end of the 'Prima Repubblica' and the partial stabilization of the crisis in the Balkans, the Prodi government shifted the Italian contribution to UN Peacekeeping back to the Mediterranean with the involvement in Lebanon with the UNIFIL II mission. Moreover, with a coastline of 5,000

miles, Italy is highly exposed to the current instability in the Mediterranean -and the situation in Libya in particular-, that is why the Mediterranean is again listed among the key priority for Renzi's current government.²¹

3.2. The Balkans

The Western Balkan countries also represent a strategic priority of the Italian foreign policy. Italy's contribution to the security of the region was not significant in the first part of the 1990s. Italy was not part of the UNPROFOR mission in Bosnia and a reengagement started with the conflict in Kosovo (February 1998–June 1999). Italy took part in the NATO bombing campaign (March–June 1999). The Italian provision of aircraft to NATO, without an authorization from the UN Security Council, was perceived as a violation of the Article 11 of the Italian Constitution,²² but as Lucio Caracciolo said 'The Balkans have become our top foreign-policy priority. Older Italian concerns – North Africa, the Middle East, Somalia – have taken a back seat. The Balkans are just too close and too troublesome not to have Italy's full attention'.²³

After the Italian-led preventive deployment of Operation ALBA (1997) in Albania, from June 1999, Italy was involved in both KFOR and UNMIK missions. The aim of the NATO-led KFOR mission, in accordance with Resolution 1244, was to support the UN-led operation UNMIK. Italy contingent to KFOR was initially composed of 6,246 troops, and counted seven Italian Commanders (out of 20), whereas Italy never deployed more than 74 blue helmets and Lamberto Zannier as Head of Mission.²⁴

After the crisis in the late 1990s, Italy supported the strengthening of the Western Balkan region both in terms of trade and investments and in terms of regional stabilization and security. Italy's international missions operating in the Western Balkans were developed in the framework of NATO, EU and UN. In 2015, Italy was one of the main contributors to the NATO KFOR mission in Kosovo with about 550 units on the field, a contribution that was initially composed of 6,246 soldiers (June 1999). Between 2003 and 2011 Italy participated in the EU Police Mission EUPM Bosnia, the first mission under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). In December 2004, following the decision to close the NATO SFOR operation, the Italian contribution to SFOR (around 1,000 troops) moved to the newly created military operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

²¹See Gentiloni, "Pivot to the Mediterranean"; Holmes, "Italy: In the Mediterranean, but of It?"; Balfour, "Italy's Policies in the Mediterranean"; Balfour and Cugusi, "The Return of Italy to the Mediterranean"; Coralluzzo, "Italy and the Mediterranean."

²²Giacomello and Verbeek. *Italy's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century*.

²³The Economist, 29 June 2000.

²⁴Ignazi, et al., *Italian Military Operations Abroad*.

Since February 2008, Italy has also been contributing personnel to the CSDP mission EULEX in Kosovo with about 36 units, led by the Italian Gabriele Meucci since October 2014. Finally, Italy also contributes to the UNMIK.²⁵

The continued involvement of Italy in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans within different frameworks (NATO, EU, UN) shows that the geographical priorities of Italy are prioritized compared to the need to work with specific allies or within specific frameworks (EU, NATO or UN). The framework that better suits Italy's current priority is the one chosen.

3.3. *Atlanticism and the Italy–USA cooperation*

The importance of relations with the USA and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the third Italian priority.

Italy is a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance. Initially, Italy tried to advocate for a robust role of NATO in the Near East, the Mediterranean region and in Africa. During the Cold War Italy used the NATO membership to both reinforce the friendship with the USA, and also as an element of internal political stability. After the end of the Cold War, *Atlanticism* became functional to *Europeanism*. The changed security environment required new ways to meet the new type of threats Europe faced.²⁶ Both centre-left and centre-right governments valued the USA as a strategic partner, but the relationship was secondary to other Italian foreign policy priorities (see the Mediterranean and the Balkans), whereas the centre-right governments led by Berlusconi since the end of the *Prima Repubblica*, transformed the relationship with the USA as a strategic objective.

Berlusconi changed the order of the traditional priorities of Italian foreign policy, which can be explained by personal reasons.²⁷ When he became prime minister, European leaders mainly from centre-left governments, side-lined Berlusconi as he was perceived as an unethical leader. The only support he received was from the Spanish Prime Minister Aznar and the British Prime Minister Blair. Outside Europe he encountered more positive reactions on his election from the Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President George W. Bush. In March 2003 the USA, under the Bush's Presidency, decided to attack Iraq without any support from NATO nor UN Security Council authorization. In this occasion Berlusconi demonstrated his loyalty to the USA by joining the *Coalition of the Willing* by providing logistical support first, and then by launching the *Antica Babilonia* mission with a contribution of around 3,000 troops.²⁸ Despite the losses and casualties, the

²⁵See MAE Italy, *Balkans Bilateral Relations*; Ignazi, et al., *Italian Military Operations Abroad*.

²⁶See Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union*; Croci, "Atlanticism and Europeanism in Italian Security."

²⁷Romano, "Berlusconi's Foreign Policy."

²⁸La Stampa, "Missione Antica Babilonia strana guerra degli italiani."

Italian involvement in the Iraqi war ended only in December 2006 after the election of the Prodi government. The withdrawal from Iraq was mainly due to counterbalance Berlusconi's *Atlanticism* as proved by the completely different approach of the Prodi's administration towards Afghanistan.²⁹

Italy was involved in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission since January 2002. Differently from the involvement in the Iraqi war, the military presence of Italy in Afghanistan was not preventive and was developed under NATO in observance of UNSC resolution 1386. Italy's engagement counted up to more than 4,000 troops. The ISAF mission officially ended in December 2014, but Italy remained involved in Afghanistan with the follow-up mission, the Resolute Support mission launched on 1 January 2015, with an initial deployment of 13,195 troops. Italy initially contributed with 500 troops, but at the end of the year the contribution increased to 829 troops.³⁰ Italy is currently the third top contributor, after Georgia (870) and Germany (850).

4. EU–UN–NATO: competition or complementarity?

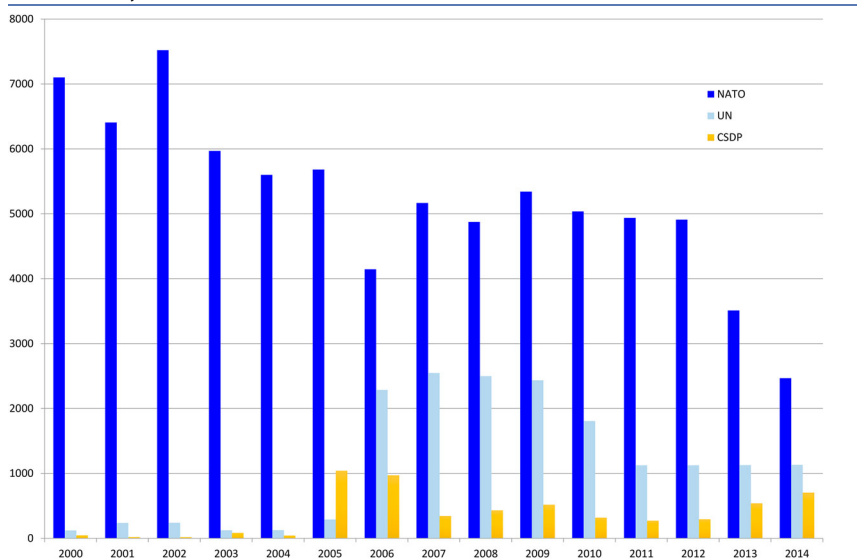
Italian forces are currently engaged in five types of missions: NATO, UN, EU, multinational and bilateral. The Italian national participation to NATO and EU missions might be perceived as a threat for the Italian contribution to the UN. As Table 3 shows, Italian contribution to NATO has dropped since 2000. While more than 7,000 Italian troops were in support of NATO's missions in 2000, the number decreased to encompass less than 2,500 troops in 2014. According to the number provided in the last available annual overview by the Minister of Defence (2014). In 2014, the majority of troops were deployed in the framework of the JOINT ENTERPRISE (former KFOR) operation in Kosovo and the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.³¹ Contrary to the actions of other European countries, Italy decided to not pull out of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan throughout 2016, therefore the withdrawal from Afghanistan does not represent an opening for a bigger Italian re-engagement, as it might be for other European countries.

Since its creation in 2003, Italy has also strongly supported the idea of a European CSDP; however, the contribution to CSDP missions and operations has not outpaced Italian contribution to NATO and the UN. The highest contribution to CSDP was reached in 2005 comprising a total number of 1,041, 1,009 of which deployed to the ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2014, Italy's contributions to CSDP comprised around 700 forces.

²⁹Mahncke, *Continuity and Change in Italy's Foreign Policy under the Prodi Government*, 10.

³⁰NATO, "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures."

³¹See Annual Overview by the Italian Minister of Defence (2014).

Table 3. Italy's contribution to EU, UN and NATO.

Believing that Italy only sees multilateral options as alternatives, meaning choosing the UN, NATO or the EU depending on the geographical interest of the country only, would be misleading. As Figure 2 shows, when comparing the Italian contributions to the three organizations, it becomes clear that the increase and decrease of contributions follows similar trends across the three organizations and are influenced first by the internal situation of the country (domestic factors) and the willingness of Italy to be involved in international disputes, and secondly by the foreign policy priorities of the running government, be it the Balkans, the Mediterranean or the need to reinforce relations with the USA (even if in a multilateral context like NATO).

5. Opportunities and obstacles for return to UN Peacekeeping

Since the beginning of the new Italian government led by Renzi (February 2014) and the improvement of the economic situation in the country, Italy seems ready to re-engage in its historical multilateralism, but in a more rational way. The number of UN missions in which Italy is currently involved in has dropped since the beginning of Renzi's government from seven in February 2014 to three in December 2015. With the provisions published on 18 February 2015³² on the rationalization of the missions abroad, Renzi's government put an end to the Italian contribution to the MINURSO mission in

³²See Ministry of Justice, Italy. DDL 7/2015.

Western Sahara (5), to the UNMOGIP mission in India and Pakistan (4), to the UNTSO mission in the Middle East (7) and to the UNFICYP mission in Cyprus (4). Although these contributions might be considered minor, the rationalization shows the preference for the current government for missions that are in the strategic areas of Italy.

Currently, Italy is contributing to UNIFIL in Lebanon (1,080), MINUSMA in Mali (2) and UNMIK in Kosovo (1). Nevertheless, during his speech at the UN Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping in September 2015, Italian Prime Minister Renzi declared Italian availability to further engage in UN Peacekeeping.³³ Suggesting a new turning point for Italy: a bigger involvement in key strategic areas (the Mediterranean, but also the protection of cultural heritage), while giving a final cut to the mission that are not considered a priority anymore, as suggested by the recent rationalization.

Following the opening speech by Barack Obama, in which he announced an increase in USA commitment to UN peacekeeping for the first time in 20 years, Renzi announced that a few more soldiers, 'a infantry battalion' (between 500 and 1,000 soldiers), might be added in the next few months to the missions serving under the UN flag. Moreover, he proposed the launch of the 'blue helmets of culture' – 400 men that, in cooperation with UNESCO, will establish a specialized unit for the preservation of cultural heritage in crises situations. On 16 February 2016 the Italian foreign minister, Paolo Gentiloni, signed the agreement to set up the 'Unite for Heritage' task force. The task force brings together cultural heritage experts of the Italian Carabinieri specialized in the fight against the illicit trafficking in cultural property.³⁴ It is too early to say whether this is a major change in the Italian approach to UN Peacekeeping – contributing with small and specialized units, rather than big deployments – or just a gimmick to cover national interests in specific geographic areas.

In terms of more traditional foreign policy priorities, another possibility for the future involvement of Italy in UN Peacekeeping might emerge from an engagement in Libya. Since November 2014, Renzi indicated the readiness of Italy to support a UN-sponsored peacekeeping mission in Libya. The Italian Foreign Minister Gentiloni underlined on several occasions that this would eventually happen, only after the situation in Libya is stabilized and only in support of a peace agreement. Moreover, in response to the USA's recent initiative to fly armed drones to Libya for offensive actions against Islamic State's training camps, the Italian government made clear that Italy would not take part in military attacks in Libya without a request from a national government, in a framework approved by the UN. On this matter, Italy has already been involved in diplomatic dialogues with the Libyan

³³See Matteo Renzi. UN Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping (video).

³⁴Italian Government. "Nascono I caschi blu della cultura." 16 Febbraio 2016.

political parties and in the negotiations that led to the approval of the UN Security Council of the Political Accord for the Presidency Council in Libya on 17 December 2015.³⁵ Italy hosted the Ministerial Meeting for Libya on 13 December 2015³⁶ and managed to have the Italian General Paolo Serra – former Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon (2012–14) – appointed as senior military advisor of the UNSMIL mission in Libya. Gentiloni stressed that Italy stands ready to coordinate operations for the security and stability of Libya and to eventually lead the so-called Libyan International Assistance Mission (LIAM). The planning for such a mission seems already quite advanced. The mission is expected to deploy between 3,000 and 7,000 troops, out of which 5,000 will be provided by Italy.³⁷ What will happen if the UN will not deploy the mission? The need to stabilize a country that is only 355 kilometres away from Italian border suggests that Italy might decide to act within other framework like EU or NATO. Once again, the geographic and security interests will probably be prioritized.

Moreover, after the severe period of austerity Prime Minister Renzi is in search of regaining international prestige by re-launching its international and multilateral role, and by bringing the Mediterranean to the forefront of the UN agenda. Italy will run again in the elections that will be held in the General Assembly in June 2016 for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2017–18 term. Italy is the only Mediterranean candidate, which is why Italy is so interested in showing its links and strategic importance in that area. As a pro-active contribution to UN Peacekeeping has proven to positively influence the possibilities of an election as non-permanent member of the Security Council –and in line with the larger Dutch and Swedish contributions–, it is likely that Italy will increase its troop contributions in the run-up to the non-permanent Security Council election, while prioritizing the country's national interests, like the Mediterranean.³⁸

Italy is not pursuing its strategic objective within the UN alone. With the election of the former foreign minister Federica Mogherini as the new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Renzi gave a clear message about Italy's commitment to a stronger role for the EU in the international arena. Moreover, Italy managed to establish the crises in the Mediterranean and the migration crisis among the top priorities of the EU. Since the beginning of the Renzi's government, the Mediterranean area has been again at the top of the Italian strategic agenda, as was

³⁵ItalyUN.it, 23 December 2016.

³⁶UNSMIL, 13 December 2015.

³⁷See The Wall Street Journal, 23 February 2016; La Repubblica, "Nuclei d'Assalto e Sostegno dal Mare l'Italia pronta alla missione in Libia"; New Europe, "In a UN Meeting"; Corriere della Sera, "Gli Usa";

³⁸On 28 June 2016 Italy and the Netherlands after five rounds of voting (each country receiving 95 votes) decided to split the seat: Italy will hold the Security Council seat in 2017 and the Netherlands in 2018.

previously explained in Italy's new defence white paper presented in April 2015.

It seems realistic to expect Italy to 'choose' the format (UN, EU or NATO) that will better fit its strategic interests in order to spend the defence budget in the most rational way. Apart from UNIFIL in Lebanon, most current UN-led operations are located in areas that are not of national strategic relevance for Italy, as demonstrated by the entire withdrawal of contributions from the MINURSO, UNFICYP, UNMOGIP and UNTSO missions. Therefore, a bigger engagement should be expected if Italy will receive the seat in the UN Security Council, gaining the possibility to shape UN priorities, and if the UN decides on a mission in Libya.

This is not guaranteed as also other organizations are starting initiatives in the same strategic areas. For example, the NATO Aegean monitoring operation agreed on 25 February 2016, might represent a new trend that sees the Alliance heading south. If in the next NATO Summit in Warsaw (July 2016), southern member states like Italy and Turkey manage to convince other members that the Alliance is focusing too much on Eastern Europe and underestimating the threats coming from the Mediterranean, it is reasonable to think that NATO will decide to engage more in the area.³⁹ As a consequence, a bigger engagement of NATO in the Mediterranean might undermine future Italian involvement in UN Peacekeeping.

Nevertheless, the either-or option is not the only one available to Italy. During second half of 2014, Italy, in cooperation with Germany, launched the initiative for the EU-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management and Peace Operations. There is indeed a momentum for strengthening the cooperation between the EU and UN, as both are currently reviewing their strategic visions. The interests of the two organizations are complementary. On one side, the UN can offer legitimacy, while, on the other side, EU Member States can provide the capabilities the UN needs for its peacekeeping missions.

6. Conclusions

Despite celebrating 60 years of membership in the UN, Italy is still fighting to appear as a credible middle-range power. As suggested in this article, national interests, geographic priorities and security-related thinking, motivate Italy's contributions to UN Peacekeeping. While its commitment to UN Peacekeeping has faced some ups and downs and has mainly focused to mission deployed in area that are a geographic priority for the country, Italy remains the largest contributor among Western countries, but is not in the position of driving decisional processes.

³⁹See NATO, "NATO Secretary General Welcomes"; Kamp, *The Agenda of the NATO Summit in Warsaw*.

Italy was severely affected by the recent economic crisis and some of its effects might still unfold in coming years. Italy's future engagement will depend on both internal factors and on the future role that the EU and NATO will decide to play in the geographic area considered as a foreign policy priority by Italy (the Balkans and the Mediterranean).

Moreover, the future role of Italy within the UN Peacekeeping framework will depend on the support that the recent proposals advanced by Prime Minister Renzi will gain, and in particular regarding the UN involvement in Libya and the 'blue helmets of culture' proposals as well as the result of the 2016 election on the non-permanent membership to the UN Security Council. Driven by the national historical interest for the Mediterranean and new threats like the migration crisis, a reengagement of Italy sounds plausible. Italy will be much more involved in UN Peacekeeping as much as the UN itself will be involved – either directly or indirectly – in the Mediterranean region as it currently represents the main strategic priority for Italy. As an unwavering promoter of multilateralism, strong support from Italy is expected for initiatives that aim at reinforcing the UN-EU cooperation.

The Italian reengagement will probably have different characteristics of the previous ones. As some authors⁴⁰ already suggested, Italy was so-far driven by the fear of doing too-little, showing its engagement by sending the biggest number of troops and keeping the record of the biggest contributor among the Western Countries. On the contrary, the new Renzi's government was not afraid of doing a strong rationalization of UN missions, suggesting that Italy should promote a more selective approach in line with other European countries.

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⁴⁰Romero, L'Italia nelle trasformazioni internazionali di fine Novecento.

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