

Contributor Profile: Italy

Alberto Cutillo
(Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

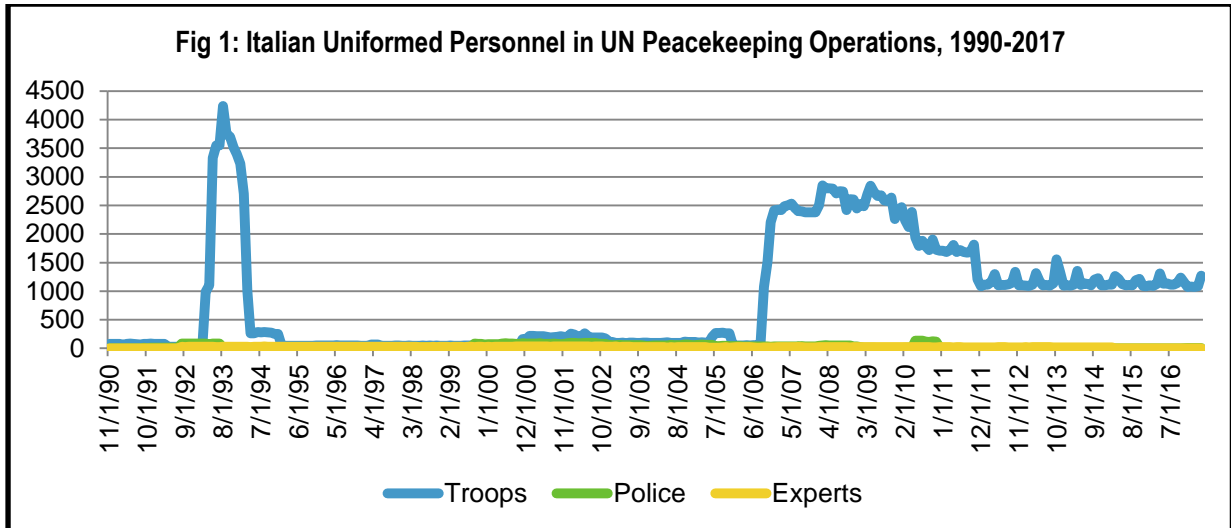
Lorenzo Vai
(Istituto Affari Internazionali)

Active armed forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
174,500 Army 102,200 Navy 30,400 Air 41,900 <i>Carabinieri</i> : 103,750 World Ranking (size): 30	Army: Aircraft Transport: 6 light Helicopters: Transport: 131 Navy: Helicopters: Transport: 14 Air Force: Aircraft Transport: 66 Helicopters: Multi-role: 58 Search & Rescue: 12 Transport: 31	2014: \$24.5bn (1.14% of GDP) 2015: \$21.5bn (1.18% of GDP) 2016: \$22.3bn (1.20% of GDP) World Ranking (budget): 13	1,272 (48 women) (30 April 2017) Ranking: 21st Top UN contributor among NATO and EU states.	UNIFIL 1,268 troops MINUSMA 1 troop UNFICYP 2 police UNMIK 1 police	Afghanistan: Op. Resolute Support 827 Iraq: Op. Inherent Resolve 1,120 Uganda/Somalia: EUTM Somalia 112 EUNavFor: 348 Libya: UNSMIL 300 Kosovo: KFOR 542
Defense Spending / Troop: US\$ 127,480 (compared to global average of approximately US\$77,000) ²					

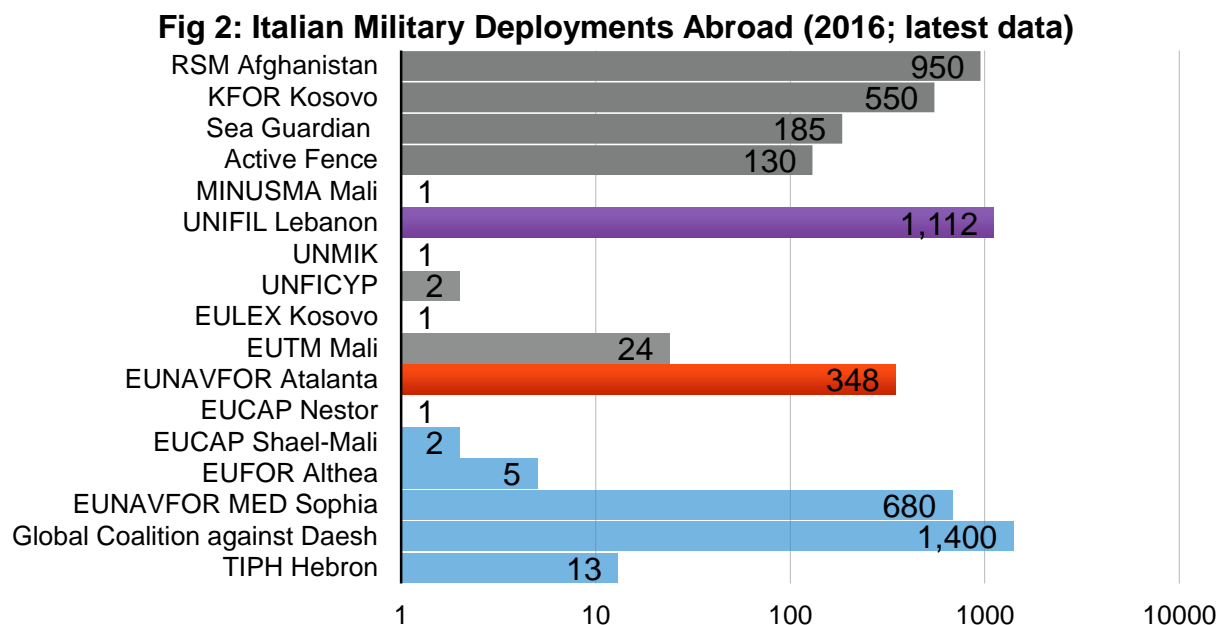
Part 1: Recent Trends

After a long period of minimal contributions since the mid-1990s, the number of Italian uniformed personnel in UN-led peacekeeping operations surged in 2006 with the expansion of UNIFIL in Lebanon. The Force Commander of UNIFIL was an Italian General who held this positions from 2007 to 2010 and again from early 2012 until July 2014. From a peak of almost 3,000 troops in February 2008, Italian uniformed UN peacekeepers declined to 1,108 in December 2011, and their number has remained substantially stable until mid-2017. Apart from UNIFIL, in 2017 Italy participated with military observers and staff officers in three other UN-led missions, MINUSMA in Mali, UNMIK in Kosovo and UNFICYP in Cyprus.

Overall deployment abroad in both UN and non-UN missions peaked at nearly 8,700 in 2005 and has subsequently ranged between 5,500 and 8,000. By early 2017, there were more than 5,500 uniformed Italian personnel deployed abroad, out of which about the 30% were in NATO-led operations, the 20 % in UN-led missions, 20% in EU-led missions, and about 30% in other multinational coalitions or bilateral operations. Currently, the main presence is in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Afghanistan, (NATO Resolute Support Mission (RSM), 950), in the Mediterranean Sea (EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, 680) and in the Indian Ocean (EUNAVFOR Atalanta, 348). Italy contributes significantly to the Global Coalition against Daesh as well, with over 1,000 troops deployed.



In December 2012, Italy’s Parliament approved a bill presented by the Government to restructure the Armed Forces. Spurred by two different dynamics (i.e., the changing geostrategic situation and financial constraints) the reform aims to fully integrate the Italian Army with its NATO and EU allies and enhance its technological sophistication. The reform – which is due to be fully implemented by the year 2024 – also calls for rebalancing the distribution of funds among the three key components of military spending: personnel (from 70% to 50%), operations (from 12% to 25%) and investment (from 18% to 25%). This will require a major reduction in both military and civilian personnel: from current levels of 183,000 and 29,000³ respectively, to 150,000 and 20,000. The cut will also affect senior managerial posts, with a 25% drop in the number of Generals and Admirals. More recently, in April 2015, a White Paper on International Security and Defence was published by the Government. The document sets out the future guidelines of the Italian Defence at the strategic, institutional, staff and logistics level. This new plan is expected to be implemented in the coming years, and will provide the context for decision-making in the Italian Defence.



Source: authors’ own calculation using Italian Ministry of Defence data.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

While the Italian Constitution stipulates a formal procedure for the declaration of war, Italy has no primary legislation regulating its participation in multilateral military operations abroad.⁴ This means that the executive branch is entitled to send troops abroad without, or prior to, Parliamentary consent. However, to date, government decisions to send troops abroad have always been submitted to a Parliamentary vote.

The rationale for this practice is twofold. First, the question of sending troops abroad is considered highly sensitive, both politically and legally, in light of Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, which states: “Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes.” While interpretations of this provision diverge, it is generally admitted that participation in peacekeeping operations, particularly those led by the UN, NATO or EU, are fully compatible with it. Possible breaches of Article 11, however, have been raised by legal experts and politicians in connection with peace enforcement operations, including the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and the 2011 bombing campaign in Libya. While Article 11 concerns did not prevent Italy from taking part in those operations, it is commonly recognized that they influence the acceptance of the rules of engagement of certain missions. Italian troops are sometimes limited in their action by operational caveats formulated to ensure compliance with Article 11, and this issue has occasionally caused controversy with some of Italy’s allies in those operations.

Given this legal background, parliamentary ratification is considered indispensable in order to provide political support and legitimacy to all missions abroad. Second, since the defense budget does not include financial resources for operations abroad, additional financing is required; under the Italian Constitution, this can only be provided by Parliamentary decision. Over time, and given the considerable number of different ongoing operations, parliamentary praxis has evolved so that the Government now presents one, comprehensive bill every year, seeking approval for the budget of all (including UN-led) current missions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Defense (MD) are jointly responsible, under the political guidance of the Prime Minister, for initiating the decision-making process on peacekeeping. The respective Ministers introduce the bill to the joint Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees of both legislative chambers.

The most recent bill was approved on May 16, 2016. It authorizes 20 operations with a combined budget of \$1.01 billion for the year 2016.⁵ The most costly operation on this list is the Global Coalition against Daesh, with a \$260 million budget for 2016, followed by the activities conducted in the Afghan theatre within NATO RSM and EUPOL (\$197 million), and in Lebanon by UNIFIL (\$197 million). Out of these 20 operations, nine are led by the EU, five by NATO, four are UN-led, one is an international coalition, and one is purely bilateral.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

The overarching rationale for Italy’s participation in military operations abroad is the shared international responsibility in addressing situations of instability. National security considerations favor a concentration of Italy’s efforts in areas close to its borders or sources of direct negative consequences. The fact that Italy contributes significantly to only one UN-led mission (UNIFIL) reflects the lack of UN operations in areas considered strategically essential for Italy. Pressure from major partners within NATO and the EU, as well as

decisions made in the main international fora, also exert a considerable influence over a decision to participate in a military operation.

Although UN-led missions enjoy the highest degree of legitimacy, and hence broad political and popular support, such missions are seen as only one possibility among many. According to a May 2009 parliamentary survey, since 1945, Italy has taken part in 132 military operations, out of which 96 were conducted by an International Organization (UN 38, NATO 27, and EU 23). 40% of these were peacekeeping operations, 36% international assistance (police, training and humanitarian relief), 17% were peace enforcement, and seven percent were preventive or peacemaking initiatives. Geographically, 48 operations were in Europe, 30 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 29 in the Middle East, 13 in Asia, eight in Northern Africa and four in Latin America.

Political and Security Rationales: Participation in operations in key strategic areas is normally considered crucial to maintain or reinforce Italy's influence in that region.

Economic Rationales: There are no significant economic incentives, since reimbursement from the UN only covers a fraction of actual expenditures. In addition, Italy is the eighth largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. Italian troops and police abroad receive a special indemnity which, depending on locations and other factors, might represent a significant economic incentive for individuals to serve as a UN peacekeeper.

Institutional Rationales: From the point of view of the military, participation in peacekeeping is seen as a valuable opportunity for the armed forces to conduct tasks widely supported by public opinion and that generally receive positive media attention. It is also valuable in terms of sharing experiences with other armed forces and international organizations. However, UN peacekeeping lacks the strongly integrated command and control mechanisms that are familiar to Italy through its participation in NATO and EU missions.

Normative Rationales: Participation in UN-led peacekeeping has often been used to emphasize Italy's contribution to the cause of peace and humanitarianism. Indeed, the rhetoric of "peace operations" has created some ambiguity (see also Part 2). The government, the military, and even large parts of the media have – at times maybe unconsciously – spread the image of the Italian peacekeeper as lightly-armed soldiers, delivering humanitarian assistance to civilian population in distress. This popular image has been fed by lack of critical information on contemporary rules of engagement and institutional coverage of UN operations. Only in the last years, with the high level of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan (respectively, 33 and 53 as of December 2016) has public opinion become more widely aware of the more robust nature of at least some of the "peace" operations conducted by Italian troops. In comparison, Italian military fatalities in all UN-led missions stands (as of 30 April 2017) at 48, out of which 22 occurred in ONUC (1960-64) and 11 in UNOSOM (1992-95).

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Most current UN-led operations are located in areas which are not of national primary strategic relevance, with the exception of the Middle East, where almost all Italian blue helmets are concentrated.

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: As noted in Part 3, NATO and the EU offer more familiar institutional vehicles for Italian crisis management initiatives and have generally been preferred over UN-led operations.

Financial costs: There are two different kinds of costs related to UN peacekeeping: those derived from Italy's assessed contribution to the peacekeeping budget (approximately between \$320 and \$350 million annually), and those incurred by the Italian contingents. The latter is directly determined by the number of Italian troops, and therefore represents an obvious limitation. Financial and operational constraints represent the most obvious limitation to Italy's contribution to military operations abroad. The European Defence Agency (EDA) estimates that Italy can sustainably deploy 12,000 troops abroad (as of June 2013).

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: This is not relevant, since Italy has consistently supported the expansion of mandates of UN-led operations.

Exceptionalism: This is not a relevant consideration for Italy.

Difficult domestic politics: Currently not relevant, since there is still a large, bipartisan support among most of the political parties for UN-led peacekeeping operations.

Resistance in the military: While past episodes linked to the failure of UN-led peacekeeping (such as Somalia and Bosnia Herzegovina) have generated some caution, there is overall recognition within the Italian military of recent improvements in UN peacekeeping.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The broad and solid political support for UN peacekeeping may partially weaken in the future, due to the recent rise of new political forces critical of the Italian participation in such missions abroad. In this sense, the results of next political election could represent a change. Additionally, the current public finance constraints and the ongoing restructuring of the army may reduce Italy's future participation in UN peacekeeping. At the same time, the relevance of the area of deployment might leave room for a larger Italian presence within UN operations.

Besides the possibility of larger numbers of Italian blue helmets, at least in areas of strategic interest for Italy, the participation of specialized units might likely expand. This is particularly likely in the field of police, where the Carabinieri offer a highly sought after model of civilian police with military status and training. They are particularly suitable for maintaining public order in low-security scenarios, as well as for mentoring and training activities. A recent MoU between DPKO and the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU), a multilateral institution hosted within a Carabinieri facility in Northern Italy, is a sign of growing cooperation with the UN. This might lead to stronger Carabinieri presence on the ground (currently, out of hundreds of Carabinieri deployed abroad, only a handful serve within UN-led operations in Lebanon).

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

There are no major, significant opponents to UN-peacekeeping, which, on the contrary enjoys broad and bi-partisan political support and widespread favor among the public. Aversion to casualties is a significant factor, which is systematically raised by some political parties (historically by the left-wing parties, and – in more recent times – by the Northern League

and the Five Stars Movement) to call for an end to the Italian participation in missions abroad. This concern especially relates to NATO operations; it seems less relevant to UN-led operations, which are generally perceived to be less dangerous. Financial constraints due to the economic crisis have also become an argument used by the political opponents to the Italian involvement in international missions.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Italy possesses a professional, well-equipped and well-trained military. Potentially, it is capable of providing specialized capacities in many areas, particularly in terms of mobility, enabling units, formed police units, and rule of law functions. The main constraint is financial. Italy hosts the UN Logistic Base (UNLB) in its southern city of Brindisi. The base has significantly expanded and now offers a unique (and probably not yet fully exploited) opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the UN and Italy in the area of logistical support.

Part 8: Further Reading

Legal expert opinions on the interpretation of Article 11: “La Guerra e La Costituzione,” Stefano Rossi, Sintesi Dialettica: per l'identità democratica. “Guerra e diritto, Note a margine di una tesi kelseniana” Tecla Mazzaresca, Università di Brescia.

Italy's involvement with Lebanon/UNIFIL: “The UNIFIL II Mission in Lebanon: Italy's Contribution (ARI),” Lucía Marta, Real Instituto Elcano.

“Italy Steps into the Lebanese Breach” Global Strategy Project. The Daily Star. Marco Vincenzino.

Carabinieri participation in international peace operations: Maria Gabriella Pasqualini, Missioni dei Carabinieri all'estero, 1936-2001: Vol.1 (Arma dei Carabinieri, 2002).

Notes

¹ Table based on the data provided by IISS, *The Military Balance 2017* (Taylor & Francis, 2017). UN data are the most recent available on the UN DPKO [official website](#). Other data is from the [Italian Ministry of Defence](#). Defense Budget figures do not include the Carabinieri's budget. While a military corps, and since 2001, one of the four Italian Armed Forces, the Carabinieri's main task is policing. Currently Carabinieri, take part in military operations abroad, including UN peacekeeping, as police components.

² Armed Forces spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2017*.

³ Source [European Defence Agency](#)

⁴ Several bills have been presented in the past ten years to provide a framework for legislation. However, despite broad bipartisan support, none of them is currently scheduled for a vote.

⁵ €925,707,136.