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ITALY, THE EAST EUROPEAN REVOLUTIONS, AND THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY, 1989–92

Despite the fact that two decades have elapsed since the outbreak of the “clean hands” scandal, it is still a difficult task to deal in a balanced way and with a historical perspective with the policies pursued by the Italian cabinets between the early 1980s and the early 1990s, the decade in Italy that was characterized by the so-called five-party coalition governments (*pentapartito*) and dominated by political personalities such as Bettino Craxi, Giulio Andreotti, Arnaldo Forlani, and Giovanni Spadolini. Studying Italy’s foreign policy in this period is not an exception to this murky picture. As far as public opinion in this period is concerned, it seems that, after some first reactions to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism, most Italians focused less on international affairs and more on the internal events that led to the setting up of the so-called Second Republic. While a certain amount of scholarly research has been begun by historians,¹ such attempts face serious obstacles: on one hand, the almost complete lack of archival sources, and on the other, a sort of *damnatio memoriae* that appears to have affected most of the politicians who played a leading role in those years, especially the members of the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*) and the Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana*). In the early 1990s, members of both parties became the target of judges’ inquiries and widespread hostility in the media, both press and television. This played an important role in destroying an entire political class.²

If one examines Italy’s foreign policy between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Maastricht Treaty—the period that marked the most dramatic changes in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century—one encounters similar difficulties as a historian: once again the lack of archival records in this regard is a major obstacle. This is still the case despite the fact that Andreotti published several volumes of memoirs a few years ago and Gianni De Michelis published a long interview in which one section deals with his experiences as foreign min-

¹ See for example Ennio Di Nolfo, ed., *La politica estera italiana degli anni Ottanta* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2003); Simona Colarizi, Paolo Craveri, Silvio Pons, and Gaetano Quagliariello, eds., *Gli anni Ottanta come storia* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004).

² Simona Colarizi and Marco Gervasoni, *La cruna dell’ago. Craxi, il Partito socialista e la crisi della Repubblica* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 2005); Stefano Rolando, *Una voce poco fa. Politica, comunicazione e media nella vicenda del Partito Socialista Italianodal 1976 al 1994* (Venice: Marsilio, 2009).

ister between July 1989 and June 1992.³ However, in the last few years some new archival sources have become available, owing especially to the decision by former Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti to open his private archives to scholars.⁴

During the period from the early 1980s to the early 1990s Italy's foreign policy actually experienced an unusual continuity. Giulio Andreotti was foreign minister from 1983 to 1989; when in late July 1989 the Christian Democrat leader became prime minister, he appointed Gianni De Michelis as head of the Farnesina, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Andreotti's government would last until the eruption of the "clean hands" scandal in the late spring of 1992. Thus, it was Andreotti's cabinet that dealt with all the relevant events of those years, including the fall of the Berlin Wall, the revolutions in East-Central Europe, German reunification, the negotiations that led to the Maastricht Treaty, the first Iraq war, the end of the Soviet Union, the implosion of Yugoslavia, etc. In spite of the fact that a number of other issues, including problems in the Middle East and US-USSR relations, played a relevant part in Italy's international agenda, the dramatic events taking place on the European continent and the fact that the end of the Cold War was mainly a European affair gave the Italian political leadership the quite obvious choice of focusing its attention on the nation's attitude toward the new European balance emerging from the ruins of the communist system. This was also a consequence of the significant role the Italian Communist Party had played since the 1940s in the history of the Italian Republic.⁵ Together, Andreotti and De Michelis played an important role in shaping Italy's foreign policy during this crucial decade.

The well-known political figure of Prime Minister Andreotti characterized nearly half a century of Italian political history. He entered the Italian political scene in the immediate postwar period as an under-secretary in an early De Gasperi cabinet, then became one of the leading members of the Christian Democrats, and on several occasions he was Italy's prime minister. It should be mentioned that he led a so-called national unity government between 1978 and 1979, a cabinet that was supported by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). It was this cabinet that had to face one of the most serious crises in Italian postwar history, the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, a leading Christian Democrat who had

³ Giulio Andreotti, *De (prima) repubblica: ricordi* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1996); Gianni De Michelis, *La lunga ombra di Yalta. La specificità della politica italiana* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003).

⁴ The Andreotti archives are kept at the Luigi Sturzo Institute in Rome. The author would like to thank Senator Giulio Andreotti for permission to examine his private papers, as well as the Luigi Sturzo Institute in Rome. In this connection, he would like to express his gratitude to Dr. Flavia Nardelli, former secretary general of the Sturzo Institute, and Dr. Luciana Devoti, chief archivist, for their precious help. Cf. Antonio Varsori, *L'Italia e la fine della guerra fredda: La politica estera dei governi Andreotti 1989-1992* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2013).

⁵ For an overview, see Lucio Caracciolo, "L'Italia alla ricerca di se stessa," in Giovanni Sabbatucci and Vittorio Vidotto, eds., *Storia d'Italia*, vol. 6, *L'Italia contemporanea* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 1999), 541-604.

advocated the forming of the compromise with the communists. Later Andreotti was a leading member of the so-called five-party coalition, and during the second half of the 1980s, held the post of foreign minister in various governments. In 1989 he was once again appointed prime minister.⁶

De Michelis is perhaps less well known to the wider international public, but he held a significant role as well. When De Michelis became foreign minister, he was one of the leading representatives of the Italian Socialist Party of the Craxi era. De Michelis, a member of a distinguished Venetian family—his brother was long the owner of a flourishing publishing house—started his career as a scholar. He became an associate professor of chemistry at the University of Venice, but very early became involved in politics at a local level. He was an outstanding representative of the Socialist Party in the Veneto region, which between the 1970s and the 1980s emerged as one of the most economically dynamic and wealthiest areas in Italy.⁷ During the 1980s, De Michelis was the deputy-secretary of the Socialist Party, concurrently between 1980 and 1983 he was the minister for state industry, between 1983 and 1987 the minister of labor, and between 1988 and 1989 deputy-prime minister. Two British political scientists, Kenneth Dyson and Kevin Featherstone, have sketched the following portrait: “De Michelis [...] was an intelligent, loquacious bon vivant, liable to pursue grand political gestures [...] he] was an unusually assertive foreign minister by the standards of his predecessors.”⁸

Dyson and Featherstone, who have focused their attention on the creation of the European Monetary Union, are two of the very few foreign scholars to have dealt extensively with Italy’s foreign policy between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Maastricht Treaty, at least as far as the negotiations at the basis of the EMU are concerned. Most other foreign historians and witnesses have usually underrated Italy’s position in these years, also as far the European construction and the setting up of a post–Cold War European balance are concerned. A few examples can give an impression of this attitude. In his volume dealing with Mitterrand’s foreign policy, of Italian leaders, Hubert Vedrine quotes only Andreotti, and that very few times.⁹ In Hans Stark’s study on Kohl’s European policy there is no reference to the Italian leaders with the exception of Emilio Colombo, mainly with regard to the Colombo-Genscher declaration.¹⁰ In her memoirs, as

⁶ See Massimo Franco, *Andreotti. La vita di un uomo politico, la storia di un’epoca* (Milan: Mondadori, 2010).

⁷ Carlo Fumian and Angelo Ventura, *Storia del Veneto*, vol. 2, *Dal seicento a oggi* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 2004).

⁸ Kenneth Dyson and Keith Featherstone, *The Road to Maastricht Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 494.

⁹ Hubert Védrine, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand. A l’Elysée 1981–1995* (Paris: Fayard, 1996). The same under-evaluation is found in the memoirs by Roland Dumas, *Affaires Extrangères*, vol. 1, 1981–1987 (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

¹⁰ Hans Stark, *Kohl, l’Allemagne et l’Europe. La politique d’intégration européenne de la République fédérale 1982–1988* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 2004).

far as the Maastricht Treaty negotiations are concerned, Margaret Thatcher only remembers Italy's role in relation to the Rome European Council held in October 1990, writing: "As always with the Italians, it was difficult throughout to distinguish confusion from guile, but plenty of both was evident."¹¹ In his detailed study on Mitterrand and the German reunification, based mainly on French archival sources, Frédéric Bozo makes some interesting remarks about Italy's position, although in his analysis Rome's policies seem to have played a minor role. With regard to De Michelis' policies, Bozo has focused his attention on the joint Anglo-Italian statement regarding the hypothesis of the close ties between the Western European Union and NATO; in this connection the French author appears to regard this initiative as a failure that led to a closer French-German "rapprochement."¹² Indeed, this widespread underrating of Italy's international role is a common feature in most foreign scholars' studies dealing with European affairs, at least with regard to the Cold War and the integration process. But this is a complex issue to which we will turn our attention in this paper's conclusion.¹³

Italy's early reactions to Europe's changing balance

When the Andreotti government was appointed in late July 1989, a number of relevant changes were already taking place in the Soviet bloc, mainly as a consequence of glasnost and perestroika but also due to the crisis of the Soviet system: In Poland the communist régime was trying to work out a compromise with the opposition. At the same time, thousands of East Germans were leaving to spend their holidays in Hungary, holidays that were going to become the first step in their escape to the West. Nevertheless, very few statesmen or political commentators were able to predict what was then to happen a few months later. In the Western political scenario, Italy was not an exception.

On the occasion of a speech he gave at the Italian Parliament in July 1989, the new foreign minister De Michelis seems to have realized that relevant changes were going to shape a new international balance, especially in Europe, and he tried to develop a broader view of Italy's role in the international arena. He argued that Italy had always focused its attention on three geographical areas: Western Europe, East-Central Europe and the Mediterranean/Middle East. In the foreign minister's interpretation, the Cold War had denied Italy the opportunity to develop an effective policy toward East-Central Europe and there had been several obstacles to Italy's Mediterranean ambitions. Thus, from the late 1940s onward

¹¹ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 765.

¹² Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, la fin de la guerre froide et l'unification allemande* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005), 317–18.

¹³ On these aspects, see the introduction in Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010), 1–27.

the only theater open to Italy's initiatives was the Western European one, a fact that had mainly resulted in Italy's deep involvement in the integration process. But in De Michelis' opinion, the sudden dramatic developments that were taking place in the Soviet bloc were going to change the European balance and offer Italy a precious opportunity, especially in East-Central Europe.¹⁴ During the previous years, Italy had focused its attention on the possibility of closer relations with Gorbachev's Soviet Union, a policy, however, that had raised a number of doubts and debates.¹⁵ The new foreign minister did not ignore Moscow's position but he was eager to launch a new initiative. Also as a consequence of his political experience as a major local politician, De Michelis had already shown some interest in creating relations with Italy's northeastern neighbors.

His first venture was a meeting in Venice with his Yugoslav colleague Budimir Lončar. A few months later there was follow-up meeting in Umag on the Istrian coast. On this occasion the two governments launched a plan to create a cooperation agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia; this was to be a preliminary step towards a four-power (Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria and Hungary) organization. The *quadrangolare* was to promote political, economic and cultural cooperation, a plan aimed both at overcoming the division between East and West in the Adriatic region and at strengthening an already shaky Yugoslav state.¹⁶ In this context Italy was obviously a senior partner. Projects of this type were not new to Italian diplomacy. Indeed, after the end of World War I, under both the Liberal governments and the Fascist régime, although in different ways, Italy had always aimed at becoming the leading power in the Adriatic and the Balkans. Such interests had been revived from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s owing mainly to the growing economic links between northeastern Italy and certain parts of Yugoslavia and Austria. Despite these first steps, however, in the first months of the Andreotti government a more urgent question appeared that caused a quick shift in Italy's attention: the sudden collapse of the German Democratic Republic.

Italy and German reunification: advocating the European solution

The changing balance in Europe was a quicker development than most politicians in both East and West had foreseen. In November the Western leaders were confronted with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the possibility of a quick German reunification. Almost immediately these developments were linked to the integra-

¹⁴ De Michelis, *La lunga ombra*, 94–95.

¹⁵ The Italian Ambassador to Moscow, Sergio Romano, resigned from his office as a consequence of disagreements with the De Mita government on Italy's policy towards the Soviet Union. Romano had no confidence in Gorbachev's ability to achieve his planned reforms.

¹⁶ Italian Foreign Ministry (Rome) to various Italian embassies, 16 November 1989, in Luigi Sturzo Institute (hereafter ILS), Andreotti Papers (hereafter AP), box 382, tel.

tion process, since in the same period the European Community was dealing with Delors' ambitious project of creating an economic and monetary union. The Italian government was also compelled to focus its attention on what was happening in Germany. At an early stage, Prime Minister Andreotti appeared to share the doubts and fears that were being nurtured in Paris and in London about the creation of a new powerful Germany that would be less interested in European construction and more attracted by its traditional *Sonderweg*. In a public speech a few years earlier, Andreotti had stated half-jokingly, half seriously, that he loved Germany so much, two German states were better than one. At that time this statement had raised a sharp reaction and harsh criticism on the part of the West German authorities and press.¹⁷ Although most likely meant primarily as a joke, it nonetheless mirrored the feelings in some Italian political and diplomatic circles. In the Italian decision-makers' opinion, the postwar Western European balance had always been based on a cohesive group of four "big" countries that were roughly on equal footing, of which Italy felt it was one.¹⁸ Moreover, the legacy of the past had not been forgotten and thus it is not surprising that in December 1989, the Italian secret service sent a detailed memorandum to Andreotti about the presence of pan-German and neo-Nazi movements in Germany as well as in certain East-Central European countries.¹⁹

In spite of these traditional fears, Italy's political elite could not ignore the fact that in the Italian public opinion, the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to be viewed as a very positive event and German reunification an almost obvious consequence.²⁰ The Italian leadership realized very early that hindering Germany's quick reunification would be an impossible task: the only choice that would safeguard Italy's interests would be to create a close link between a reunified Germany and the existing Western structures, especially the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community. On 8–9 December 1989 there was a meeting of the leaders of the European Community in Strasbourg. On this occasion Chancellor Kohl pleaded for European support for his Ten-Point Plan, which aimed at a quick reunification. In De Michelis' recollection of this episode, most of the European leaders seemed to oppose Kohl's plan, but De Michelis and his diplomatic advisor, Ambassador Silvio Fagiolo, suggested that Andreotti take a more flexible

¹⁷ Ferraris (Bonn) to the Italian Foreign Ministry, strictly confidential, 14 September 1984, in ILS, AP, box 458, tel. no. 1518. The German state secretary for foreign affairs summoned the Italian ambassador and criticized Andreotti's statement severely.

¹⁸ On Andreotti's reaction to West Germany's critical remarks, see letter Andreotti to Pertini, 17 September 1984, in ILS, AP, box 458. Andreotti explained to the Italian president that he had only taken into consideration the existing situation, which stressed the existence of two German states.

¹⁹ Memorandum CESIS (Comitato Esecutivo per i servizi di informazione e di sicurezza) to Andreotti, "Prospettive di riunificazione delle due Germanie: eventuali ritorni nazionalistici e pan-germanici," strictly confidential, 15 December 1989, in ILS, AP, box. 458.

²⁰ On the relationship between Italy and Germany see Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Germania Italia Europa. Dallo stato di Potenza alla "potenza civile"* (Turin: Einaudi, 2003).

attitude and make a statement indicating that the European Community favored German reunification. This statement was very vague, but in De Michelis' opinion, it helped the German chancellor and prevailed over the tougher position of other European leaders, thus opening the way to Kohl's reunification policy. It is difficult to argue whether this Italian initiative was indeed relevant, since other sources do not mention Andreotti's role at the Paris meeting.²¹ Nonetheless, his position expressed Italy's main goal as far as the issue of German reunification was concerned: overseeing the reunification process and linking Germany to the European Community and NATO.

Despite Italy's interest in being party to the negotiations on Germany's future, however, from very early the issue of reunification was to involve only the four victorious powers of World War II (the United States, the USSR, Great Britain and France) together with the two German states. Thus, Italy's ambitions seemed to have been utterly frustrated. De Michelis repeated Italy's demands in February 1990 on the occasion of the Open Skies conference held in Ottawa, but the German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher replied curtly: "You are not part of the game."²² Italy was thus excluded from the diplomatic process that would lead to Germany's reunification as well as to the new European balance that emerged not only due to the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also as a consequence of the end of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. However once again, as on several occasions in the past, the European integration process and NATO—in particular, the bilateral link between Washington and Rome—offered Italy an opportunity to overcome its traditional weaknesses. In February, Andreotti met Kohl in Pisa and explained Italy's position to the German chancellor; the West German reaction seemed quite forthcoming.²³ Later there were a number of meetings between Italian diplomats and US representatives, whereby the latter appeared eager to reassure the Italian government concerning Italy's role in the new balance emerging in Europe, especially through Rome's role in the Atlantic alliance.²⁴

In spring 1990, Mitterrand and Kohl decided that a deepening of European political integration was the best way to achieve Germany's reunification without too many fears being raised of a "fourth" German Reich. At the European Council held in Dublin in April 1990, this goal was singled out by the EC-twelve. The political aspects of the integration process were clearly linked to Delors' project on an economic and monetary union. In the Irish capital, Italy supported the acceleration of the integration process and the link between a deeper political

²¹ See in general Bozo, *Mitterrand*.

²² Bozo, *Mitterrand*, 193.

²³ Cossiga to Andreotti, 19 February 1990; and Andreotti to Cossiga, 19 February 1990, in ILS, AP, box 458.

²⁴ Baker (Washington) to De Michelis, 20 February 1990; De Michelis to Baker, 24 February 1990 and note by the Italian Foreign Ministry, 3 March 1990, secret, in ILS, AP, box 458. The US authorities appeared to be interested in involving Italy in some of NATO's initiatives dealing with the process of German reunification.

integration and the setting up of a monetary union.²⁵ In this same period, the Italian Foreign Ministry was analyzing the dramatic events that were unfolding in East-Central Europe. Although the Italian authorities obviously welcomed the democratization process, they appeared worried that the changes in the European balance were moving ahead too rapidly, since they seemed very concerned about the Soviet Union's reaction. Italy thought that in order to avoid too many suspicions being raised in Moscow, a cautious policy based mainly on Western economic and technical aid was the best solution to the problems related to the fall of communism in East-Central Europe.²⁶

European integration and the fact that Italy was to chair the European Community during the second half of 1990 appeared to offer Italy a precious chance to recover its part in the game, especially as far German reunification was concerned. Both in his book *La lunga ombra di Yalta* and in a number of articles, De Michelis has emphasized Italy's ambitions, stressing that he was helped greatly in his task by a small team of experienced diplomats, including Silvio Fagiolo, Rocco Cangelosi and Pietro Calamia, who played important roles. At the Dublin European Council the Italian foreign minister advocated the convening of an intergovernmental conference to deal with the issue of political integration and stressed that it was important to achieve both the goal of a closer political union and of an economic and monetary union.²⁷ The Italian authorities regarded progress in political integration a paramount goal, since in their opinion achieving this would avoid a group of leading nations, a "directorate," being set up in the European Community, something that would threaten Italy's international position.²⁸

Nonetheless, while the political aspects of the integration process were very relevant to the Italian government, in the opinion of the Italian authorities economic issues were just as important as political ones. Despite internal problems, Italy was trying to be deeply involved in the strategies for realizing the EMU. In this connection a few Italian top officials, including Tommaso Padoa Schioppa, were cooperating closely with Jacques Delors in developing the European common currency project.²⁹ The treasury minister, Guido Carli, and the governor of the Bank of Italy, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, also shared Delors' views, and not only because of the EMU's international significance. They hoped that the creation of the EMU would offer Italy the chance to force the political elites to implement healthier economic policies; in early 1990, as an example of Italy's faith in these policies,

²⁵ See for example Note by the Italian Foreign Ministry to the President of the Council, 27 April 1990, in ILS, AP, box 382.

²⁶ Memorandum, Italian Foreign Ministry "Sviluppi nei paesi dell'Europa centro-orientale," 18 April 1990, in ILS, AP, box 382.

²⁷ Luigi Vittorio Ferraris, *Manuale della politica estera italiana 1947-1993* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 2003), 403.

²⁸ See memorandum Guidi (Bonn) to De Michelis (Rome), 8 May 1990, in ILS, AP, box 458.

²⁹ Tommaso Padoa Schioppa, *La lunga via per l'euro* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2004).

the lira had joined the narrow band of the European Monetary System (EMS), a position similar to the one enjoyed by other stronger European currencies.³⁰

During the Italian EC presidency in the second half of 1990 two important European Councils were held. The first was an extraordinary session convened in Rome in late October, the second was held in the Italian capital in December. During this period, Italy's European policy was harshly criticized by a number of international commentators, especially in Britain, where *The Economist* stated that the Italian presidency was similar to a coach whose drivers were the Marx brothers. It was also criticized that at the October Council the various issues on the agenda had not been dealt with effectively enough or in detail. The British prime minister wrote that she was puzzled at the closing statement concerning the development of closer forms of political integration.³¹ Actually Italy's strategy was clear: it was Rome's intention to intertwine political and economic integration closely, since this would peacefully solve the problem of the European role of a reunified Germany. At the same time the Italian government was well aware of both the difficulties and interests this held for Italy. In September, according to De Michelis' memoirs, he had a secret meeting with Delors at the Argentario, a Tuscan seaside resort. On this occasion, the two politicians sketched out the document that the Italian government then put forward at the Rome extraordinary European Council. In De Michelis' opinion, this document combined the two traditional approaches to the European construction: on one hand the federalist ideal, and on the other, intergovernmental pragmatism.³² Mitterrand's and Kohl's position at the Rome Council seemed to imply that Italy's policy enjoyed the support of both Germany and France. Although any progress was impossible without Kohl's and Mitterrand's approval, Italy was able to play a role in the process, and the convening of these two intergovernmental conferences, the former on the political union, the latter on the EMU, can be regarded as an Italian political achievement. Moreover, this diplomatic success was achieved in the midst of a serious international crisis, namely, Kuwait's invasion by Saddam Husein's Iraq. This crisis caused serious difficulties to the Andreotti government due to widespread pacifist feelings in Italy, supported in part by the Holy See and Catholic circles and widely exploited by the former Communist Party.³³

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to deal with Italy's position at these two intergovernmental conferences in detail,³⁴ so our attention will focus on a few

³⁰ On this issue, see Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola*, 353–74; see also Paolo Craveri, ed., *Guido Carli senator e ministro del Tesoro 1983–1992* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009).

³¹ Thatcher, *Downing Street*, 764–67.

³² De Michelis, *La lunga ombra*, 141.

³³ The Italian Government was also very worried about the economic consequences of the Gulf crisis; see note for the Minister by the Italian Foreign Ministry, 23 October 1990, in ILS, AP, box 383. Thus, in the early stages they favored a diplomatic solution of the crisis.

³⁴ For a detailed analysis of the two conferences, see Bozo, *Mitterrand*; Colette Mazzucelli, *France and Germany at Maastricht. Politics and Negotiations to create the European Union* (New

major aspects. Despite what is usually stated, it is likely that Italy was more interested in the EMU negotiations, and thus the outcome of the political union conference was also linked to these economic issues. De Michelis stated in an interview that Andreotti and the Farnesina were aware of the importance of the EMU, not only for the Community's and Europe's future, but also for Italy's international position as well as its economy in the post-Cold War European balance, a balance that would be dominated by a reunified Germany. Italy aimed at being recognized as a member of the "first division" in the future EMU, as this would be important from both a political standpoint and an economic one—the important lesson of Italy's participation in the EMS in 1978 had not been forgotten in Rome.³⁵ But the Italian economic situation posed serious obstacles for achieving this goal. This is why Italy clearly favored forms of closer integration, that is, the creation of a common European currency and definite rules to be administered by a supra-national body. Last but not least, the Italian leaders were aware that some European partners, in particular Germany, nurtured doubts concerning Italy's role in a future EMU that would have the deutsche mark and the Bundesbank's strict rules as its point of reference. Despite these difficulties, Andreotti and De Michelis relied on the experience and prestige enjoyed by the treasury minister, Carli, and a group of technocrats tied to the Bank of Italy who were well known in international financial circles (Ciampi, Padoa Schioppa, Draghi, etc.).

Italy's attention focused on the so-called convergence criteria.³⁶ Italy was able to achieve a few goals: the convergence criteria were not part of the treaty, so the Community could interpret them without changing the treaty. These criteria offered maneuvering room for economically weak countries. This included the public debt ratio not exceeding 60 percent of the GNP, whereby what mattered was progressing toward a decrease in debt, not achieving the final goal. Moreover, Italy played a role in singling out a definite date for the final implementation of the so-called stage three of the EMU,³⁷ a decision that would tie the member states, especially Germany, to the implementation of the EMU and the creation of the euro. And finally, the "tier" system offered Italy further room for maneuvering, since it provided steps in the longer process. If a country was unable to reach the scheduled agenda of "stage two," it would be possible to reach a favorable position later on. Obviously the Italian authorities were aware that they

York, London: Garland, 1997); Stark, *Kohl*; Dyson and Featherstone, *Road*. With the exception of the two British authors in these volumes, there are few references to Italy's position, although the attention is focussed on France and Germany, and, to a minor extent on Britain. A few important documents are available in AP. On Italy's position, see Antonio Varsori, "The Andreotti Governments and the Maastricht Treaty: Between European Hopes and Domestic Constraints," *Journal of European Integration History* 19, no. 1 (2013): 23–44.

³⁵ On this episode, see Varsori, *La Cenerentola*, 314–30.

³⁶ As far as these aspects are concerned, see Dyson and Featherstone, *Road*; Padoa Schioppa, *Lunga via*. See moreover Guido Carli, *Cinquant'anni di vita italiana* (Rome, Bari: Laterza, 1993).

³⁷ See De Michelis, *La lunga ombra*.

would have to deal with the country's economic problems in the near future, but they hoped that, as had happened at the time of the EMS, the *vincolo esterno* (external obligations) would help the political elite and the Bank of Italy to convince the public of the need for strict—and unpopular—economic policies.³⁸

As far as the political union was concerned, De Michelis and Andreotti supported Italy's traditional federalist approach. However, it is open to question whether on several occasions Italy merely paid lip service to federalist ideals, since they were useful for gaining a wider consensus in a political elite that was accustomed to debating grandiose—and vague—federalist projects. With regard to foreign policy, especially from the 1970s onwards when the PCI had accepted European federalism, faith in Spinelli's federalism was the only common ground held by the various political parties in a country where foreign policy had always been a matter of sharp divisions and disparities. Furthermore, a supra-national approach in the political context had always been regarded by both Italian politicians and diplomats as an easy means for coping with the nation's political weaknesses. Italy's "opportunistic" approach to the issue of political integration is confirmed by De Michelis' position on what was regarded one of the most difficult questions in the negotiations on political integration: foreign and security policies. In his memoirs, Delors seems puzzled by the joint Anglo-Italian declaration released in October 1991, writing: "sans qu'on sache pourquoi, le ministre des Affaires Etrangères italien De Michelis s'était associé à Douglas Hurd pour proposer que les questions de défense et de sécurité soient un instrument de l'Alliance Atlantique, destiné à la renforcer."³⁹

While it is not necessary to discuss the success of this Italian diplomatic move in detail here, it should nonetheless be mentioned that this decision was consistent with Italy's traditional foreign policy interests. The creation of a strong European defense instrument in the future European Union would mean a French-German leadership that was too strong. As has been stated above, De Michelis' European policy was less federalist than is usually thought; Italy did not agree to a leadership in the Community that was too powerful. Close relations with the United States had always counterbalanced the French-German duo, the UK being the obvious link to the United States and NATO being the instrument through which Italy could achieve its aims. In this context, Italy's declaration was an almost obvious move, especially since the Italian leaders could not ignore the influence that the future EU, typified by a reunified Germany, would exert in East-Central Europe. Last but not least, in the opinion of the Italian government, a strengthened NATO—and the presence of the United States—would better guarantee Europe's security in the uncertain post-Cold War balance, a balance that might likely be dominated by a too powerful

³⁸ On the *vincolo esterno*, see Roberto Gualtieri, "L'Europa come vincolo esterno," in Piero Craveri and Antonio Varsori, eds., *L'Italia nella costruzione europea. Un bilancio storico (1957–1997)* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2009), 313–31.

³⁹ Jacques Delors, *Mémoires* (Paris: Plon, 2003), 366.

Germany. When in February 1992 the EC-twelve signed the Maastricht Treaty, the Italian government was satisfied with the role the Italian delegates had played, and the final outcome was consistent with the nation's political and economic interests.

The end of communism: War on Italy's border

Between 1990 and 1991, Italy not only had to focus its attention on the Iraq war, but also on another serious political crisis, especially as it was taking place along its borders, namely, the crisis developing in Yugoslavia. As already mentioned above, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Italy tried to strengthen the already shaky Yugoslav republic through the so-called *quadrangolare* initiative. At the local level, this policy was backed by another initiative, the so-called AlpeAdria, a cooperation agreement involving various border regions.⁴⁰ In 1990 De Michelis continued these efforts by strongly supporting Ante Marković's federal government. In this period Italy was aiming at saving some sort of Yugoslav unity, and supported the Yugoslav federal government taking a pro-Western and pro-Community stance. In an article published in 1994, De Michelis writes that Italy played a leading role in Europe's policy towards Yugoslavia in 1990, and that its position enjoyed the full support of Germany.⁴¹ But he also seems to complain that the European Community paid little attention to the Yugoslav situation, focusing its attention, also as a consequence of Germany's interests, on Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. These three countries enjoyed almost immediate aid from the Community through the PHARE program. Indeed, Italy also supported these policies, since the Italian authorities believed it possible for the European Community to stabilize these former communist nations.

For a period of time Italy's policy toward Yugoslavia appeared successful, but in 1991 the Yugoslav economic situation worsened. Georg Meyr stated: "Italy and France strongly supported the Delors-Marković economic plan in Brussels, where it was not approved due to British opposition."⁴² When that spring both Slovenia and Croatia marched toward full independence and hostilities began between the Slovenian militia and the federal army, De Michelis became part of the so-called European troika (together with Jacques Poos from Luxembourg and Hans van den Broek from the Netherlands), which sought, at the Brioni conference, a diplomatic solution to the conflict. There, De Michelis was very active, hoping that an intervention of the Community would preserve some form of confederal bond between the various republics of former Yugosla-

⁴⁰ See Georg Meyr, "Italy and the Dissolution of Yugoslavia up to the Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia (1989–1992)," *Journal of European Integration History* 10, no. 1 (2004): 169–78.

⁴¹ Gianni De Michelis, "Così cercammo di impedire la guerra," *Limes*, no. 1, 1994, 229–36.

⁴² Meyr, "Italy," 172.

via.⁴³ The Italian foreign minister hoped to halt Slovenia's and Croatia's move toward full independence; he thus put pressure on both republics to refrain from making any major decisions.

De Michelis' position was not an easy one, since the Italian media, the political leaders of Italy's northeastern regions, the Catholic world, and most of the population favored a quick independence process. These groups perceived Slovenia and Croatia as Western democratic nations that were freeing themselves from Belgrade's backward communist oppression. But Andreotti and De Michelis feared the obvious consequences: the danger of mass emigration. In August 1991 Italy was compelled to face an early wave of illegal immigrants, when about 20,000 Albanians reached the Italian coast looking for a better future. In 1991 De Michelis launched the project of transforming the *quadrangolare* into a *pentagonale*. In September of the same year, a German-Italian meeting was held in Venice, where both De Michelis and Andreotti tried to convince the German delegates to take a cautious attitude towards the Yugoslav question. The same issue was debated at the Brussels European Council in December 1991. Nonetheless, while other delegations still opposed this solution, Germany appeared determined to recognize the independence of both Slovenia and Croatia immediately, which left the situation in an apparent deadlock. In his memoirs, De Michelis states that it was the Italian delegation that found a compromise: The members of the Community would recognize the two republics, but this would be made public by the EC-twelve only on 15 January 1992 as the outcome of a unanimous decision.

De Michelis has tried to explain this radical change in Italy's foreign policy: On one hand, the Italian government could no longer ignore the intensification of the public opinion in favor of the two republic's full independence. On the other hand, the Italian foreign minister wanted to avoid revealing, on the morrow of the Maastricht Treaty, that there were serious disagreements between the EC-twelve on an important foreign policy issue.⁴⁴ Actually De Michelis and Andreotti hoped that one month would be long enough to slow down the recognition process. We must also not forget that internal factors were playing a role in shaping Italy's policy as well: The Andreotti government was becoming very weak, and the policy toward Slovenia and Croatia was closely linked to the strong autonomy sentiments emerging in northern Italy. Italy's new policy was a means for appeasing the Northern League, which some Italian decision-makers feared would make claims based on the Yugoslav secessionist "model."

But as is well known, Germany did not wait until the date set in Brussels, recognizing Slovenia's and Croatia's independence only a few days later. Shortly thereafter the Yugoslav army opened hostilities leading to a civil war that would last for nearly a decade, a war that involved Italy both directly and indirectly.

⁴³ See in general Joze Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001).

⁴⁴ See De Michelis, *La lunga ombra*; Meyr, "Italy."

Conclusions

In February 1992, Italy signed the Maastricht Treaty. The same month, a minor Socialist politician and administrator was arrested in Milan by an almost unknown public prosecutor, Antonio Di Pietro. This episode was the beginning of the “clean hands” inquiry. In April the general elections were marked by a defeat for both the Christian Democrats and the Socialists; in northern Italy the true winner was the Northern League. The Andreotti government acquiesced. It was the beginning of the collapse of a political system that had ruled Italy for almost forty-five years.⁴⁵ It seems paradoxical, but in the post-Cold War period it is significant that Italy, a Western European country, seemed to share the same fate as the former communist countries, namely, a crisis of its internal political system owing to the end of the Cold War.

This paper will not conclude, however, with what happened in Italian politics after 1992. Our attention has focused on Italy’s foreign policy as pursued by the Andreotti government in one of the most difficult and complex periods of Europe’s history, the period that witnessed the end of the Cold War, German reunification, a series of revolutions in East-Central Europe, and the emerging of both a new European balance and a different European role in the international context. To the Italian government’s credit, it is possible to list the following points:

- The Italian political elite and Italy’s diplomats clearly understood the importance of the events that were occurring and were able to target a number of goals that were consistent with Italy’s foreign policy experience as well as the country’s traditional interests.
- Regarding the radical transformations that were beginning to shape a new Europe, Italy considered it vital to back the reunification of Germany, but also to thwart the emerging of a German superpower that was no longer interested in its relationship to Europe’s traditional partners. To this end, strengthening the integration process, from both a political and an economic viewpoint, was Italy’s chief political goal.
- Economic integration, based on the creation of the EMU and a common European currency, was a related goal, but this involved a number of serious risks due to the structural weaknesses that characterized the Italian economy. Connected to this, the Italian government tried to attain some concessions that would allow the Italian authorities to cope, over time, with the country’s internal economic problems as well as the general public opinion.
- Regarding the dramatic situation in East-Central Europe, Italy felt itself compelled to focus its attention on the Yugoslav crisis and, to a lesser extent, the situation in Albania. The most dangerous crises connected to the end of communism were taking place along Italy’s border, bringing obvious threats both internationally and internally, especially the danger of a flow of illegal immi-

⁴⁵ See in general Caracciolo, *L’Italia*.

grants. In this connection, between 1989 and the second half of 1991, the Italian government attempted, by means of various initiatives, to hinder Yugoslavia's implosion, although this position became more and more unpopular in the general Italian public opinion. De Michelis changed his mind only when he was convinced that there was no longer any possibility for diplomatic maneuvering from either an internal or international standpoint.

It is clear that there were some serious shortcomings in Italy's policy towards the changing European balance:

- The end of the Cold War in Europe and the reunification of Germany was the last stage in a long process that had started in the immediate postwar period; the role of the “Big Four” plus Germany was an almost obvious consequence of both the postwar situation and the entire Cold War period. History was still able to exert its influence. In this context Italy was a minor actor, also from a formal viewpoint.
- Within the integration process, it was possible for the Italian political elite only to postpone solutions to various serious problems. These were problems of an internal nature, namely, addressing Italy's economic situation.
- As far as the Yugoslav question was concerned, while the Italian position was sound, Germany's determination proved a too powerful factor. Moreover, in late 1991 the Andreotti government could no longer face the pressure of the Italian public opinion as well as that of the Holy See.
- The Italian political elite was unable to understand that Italy's internal political balance had also been tied to the Cold War. Once the Cold War was over, the policy of “clean hands” transformed itself into the collapse of the political system. No foreign policy can survive a crisis of the political system of which it is a part. There is some irony in the fact that, although the communist regimes in East-Central Europe lost their external support due to changes in the international arena, the Italian Communist Party quickly transformed into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and would be the one party to survive internally.

Last but not least, a nation's foreign policy is largely influenced by its international “image,” that is, how it is perceived by its international partners. This is something that the Italian political elite also often forgot. One of the consequences of this has been the failure of foreign actors—and sometimes of foreign historians as well—to recognize the relevance of Italy's foreign policy in this period.

