

James Sperling

## Taken for granted or not taken seriously? American Perceptions of Italy as a Foreign Policy Actor

Any analysis of the American relationship with the other major European states – France, Germany, or the United Kingdom (UK) – might ask whether that nation's support was taken for granted (particularly in the case of the UK), but the second half of the question would never arise<sup>1</sup>. But it does for Italy. There is a palpable insecurity about Italy's status in American foreign policy calculations despite Italy's status as a member of the G-8, its economic size, and its historically critical role in shaping the trajectory of European integration. In ISPI's Italian Foreign Policy in 2010, Italy's "uncertain international standing" was designated as a constant in Italian foreign policy. The report cited two additional major strategic concerns afflicting Italian foreign policy: an asymmetric alliance with the United States that leaves Italy with obligations outstripping its capabilities and a 'deficit of means' which limits the range of options available to Italy as a foreign policy actor or diminishes Italy's reliability as an ally<sup>2</sup>.

Three plausible hypotheses frame the range of explanations for Italy's standing in US foreign security policy calculations: the crowding-out hypothesis, which suggests that the process of globalization and the rising importance of the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia, particularly, have reduced the policy space available for Italy; the capabilities hypothesis, which suggests that Italy's secondary role in US calculations is roughly congruent with its material importance for the US and its ability to support US foreign policy objectives; and the *buffone di corte* hypothesis – Italy isn't taken seriously because its politicians can-

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at IPSI on 15 February 2012. I would like to thank Marco Valigi for the invitation to present the paper, Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli for their insightful and constructive comments on it, and the other seminar participants for their contributions. Thanks are also owed to Osvaldo Croci, Sonia Lucarelli, and Franco Bruni for comments on other versions of this paper. The usual disclaimers apply.

<sup>2</sup> ISPI, *Italian Foreign Policy in 2010: Continuity, Reform, and Challenges 150 Years after National Unity*, Milan, ISPI, 2011, pp. 2-5.

No.137 – SEPTEMBER 2012

### Abstract

The limited role of Italy in American foreign policy calculations begs explanation given Italy's status as a member of the G-8, its economic size, membership in NATO, and its historically critical role in shaping the trajectory of European integration. Three plausible hypotheses frame the range of explanations for Italy's standing in US foreign security policy calculations: the crowding-out hypothesis, which suggests that the process of globalization and the rising importance of the Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia, particularly, have reduced the policy space available for Italy; the capabilities hypothesis, which suggests that Italy's secondary role in US calculations is roughly congruent with its material importance for the US and its ability to support US foreign policy objectives; and the *buffone di corte* hypothesis – Italy isn't taken seriously because its politicians cannot be taken seriously. An analysis of Italy's role and the American perception of that role in two NATO operations provide the empirical foundation for testing those hypotheses and answering three questions: What role should we expect Italy to play in American foreign policy calculations? What role does Italy play in aiding or hindering American foreign policy objectives within the transatlantic community? Is there a disjunction between the subjective perceptions of Italy held by the American foreign policy elites and Italy's objective importance for the successful realization of American foreign policy objectives?

James Sperling, University of Akron, Akron, Ohio, USA

The opinions expressed herein are strictly personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of ISPI.

not be taken seriously. An analysis of Italy's role in two NATO operations – ISAF (International Security and Assistance Force) in Afghanistan and OUP (Operation Unified Protector) in Libya – as well as the official and press perceptions of that role provide the empirical foundation for testing those hypotheses. It also permits us to answer three critical questions: What role should we expect Italy to play in American foreign policy calculations? What role does Italy play in aiding or hindering American foreign policy objectives within the transatlantic community? Is there a disjunction between the subjective perceptions of Italy held by the American foreign policy elites and Italy's objective importance for the successful realization of American foreign policy objectives?

### Italy's material significance for the US

The level of economic interdependence between the US and Italy is disproportionately low compared to France, Germany, and the UK based on relative economic size. With respect to trade in manufactures, Italy accounted for only 1.11% of US exports in 2010 (less than half of the value of US exports to the Netherlands) and the Italian share of American imports was 1.50% (compared to the Netherlands 1.00%). Trade in services tells a similar story: the Italian share of US service exports was 1.54% compared to the EU's 30.91% share; and the Italian share of US service imports was 2.02% compared to the EU and UK shares of 34.20% and 10.8%, respectively. Italy also accounts for a mere fraction of the stock of US direct foreign investment (DFI). Over 55% of American DFI is in Europe, but Italy only accounts for 0.74%, a fraction of the Dutch and British shares and just under a third of the French share. Similarly, almost 72% of DFI in the US is European, but Italy accounts for 0.67% while the next lowest state, France, accounts for just under 8%<sup>3</sup>.

The Italian military contribution to the alliance lags significantly behind that of France and the UK<sup>4</sup>. In absolute terms, Italian defence expenditures are only 65% of German defence expenditures, the next smallest defence budget of the four major European states. In terms of defence expenditure as a share of GDP, however, Italy ranks head of Germany (1.40% and 1.34%, respectively), but falls well short of the 2% NATO spending benchmark. Italian defence expenditures also are maldistributed: 75% of defence expenditures are on personnel (significantly above NATO's 50% benchmark) and only 15% of expenditures are devoted to equipment and investment (below NATO's 20% benchmark). Italy compares relatively well in terms of deployable forces as a share of total forces (31.90%) compared with France (37.67%) and the UK (34.73%). But of those deployable forces, only 6.28% are sustainable – a figure well below NATO's 10% benchmark.

Across the trade, service and investment sectors of the transatlantic economy, Italy has a disproportionately low profile in the American economy, particularly when compared to France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. Italy – and Europe – must increasingly compete for the attention and consideration directed to other important trading and financial partners in North America (Canada and Mexico) and the Asia-Pacific (China, Japan, and South Korea). On the military side of the equation, Italy can claim to be the one of the most reliable and capable NATO member states owing to its power projection capabilities and its demonstrated willingness to commit forces to NATO operations. Yet Italy's military salience remains negligible for the United States in the Asia-Pacific, arguably the future geopolitical pivot of American strategic concerns<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> The trade, services, and investment statistics are drawn from the OECD data base, at: <http://stats.oecd.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Data drawn from European Defence Agency, *Defence Data: EDA participating Member States in 2010*, Brussels, EDA, 2012), at: [http://www.eda.europa.eu/Libraries/Documents/National\\_Defence\\_Data\\_2010\\_4.sflb.ashx](http://www.eda.europa.eu/Libraries/Documents/National_Defence_Data_2010_4.sflb.ashx).

<sup>5</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament", 17 November 2011, at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

## Elite perceptions of Italian relevance as a foreign policy actor

Italy has not figured prominently in Congressional hearings since 1990, either in the absolute number of hearings devoted to Italy or relative to America's other major partners, allies, and adversaries. Since the end of the Cold War, the Congressional preoccupation with the nations of Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific has downgraded the importance of Europe in American foreign policy calculations generally, no doubt the joint product of the end of bipolarity in the transatlantic region, the economic rise of the Asian trading states, and the persistent geopolitical uncertainties of the Asia-Pacific<sup>6</sup>.

American presidents have placed greater emphasis on Italy as a security actor than as economic one; just over 60% of presidential references to Italy were in connection with security and defence policies, particularly its role within NATO and the common defence more generally. The balance of references to Italy was largely devoted to the issues of trade, the Euro, and energy. Of the executive departments, Italy enjoys the highest relative profile with the Departments of Defense and State on security issues, while the Departments of Agriculture and Treasury treat Italy as a relatively significant economic actor. However, the Federal Reserve had discounted Italy's importance for the dollar prior to 2002, owing in large part to the persistent weakness of the Lira and subsequently owing to its displacement by the Euro. Outside of Europe, every executive department devotes greater attention to China and Japan than to Italy; it is also overshadowed by Canada, Mexico, Russia and South Korea across a number of key issue areas.

Press coverage of Italy is generally consistent with the official attention bestowed upon it. The Washington Post and New York Times, for example, both assign greater importance to Italy as a security actor than as an economic actor. Italian security policies accounted for almost 72% of the Post's coverage of Italy and 61% of the Times'. Each newspaper devoted a similar amount of space to a wide spectrum of economic policies that affect US-Italian relations: agriculture, finance and energy or fossil fuels. Perhaps more telling is the relative frequency of stories that appear about Italy and Italian foreign policy as compared to America's other major allies and adversaries. If the Post, Times, and Wall Street Journal can be considered required reading for the attentive foreign policy elites, it is clear that there is a minimal demand for news about Italian domestic politics or foreign policy. Press coverage seems largely confined to reportage on Italian elections and, during his tenures in office, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's more outrageous public statements or private misdeeds. Italy is, in terms of headline stories, less important than eleven countries that are cited as critical to the American national interest in the CCGA (Chicago Council on Global Affairs) surveys: Italy ranks second to last in the Times (ahead of North Korea but behind Iran), dead last in the Post, and ranks a surprising seventh in the Wall Street Journal ahead of the UK, North Korea, Iran, and Israel.

Press coverage of European heads of state and government as well as the ministers of foreign affairs, defence, and finance provide another indicator for assessing the perception of Italy's importance for the American foreign policy elite. In the Washington Post, Italian Defence and Finance Ministers received minimal coverage as compared to their European and Asian counterparts (less than 5% of total references), while the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister fared only slightly better (less than 10% of total references). In the Times, the coverage is somewhat less asymmetrical: the Italian Prime Minister and Finance Minister compare favourably in number with the German Chancellor and British Chancellor of the Exchequer, respectively. However, Prime Minister Berlusconi's press coverage was devoted to his personal travails rather than his policy proposals – a fac-

---

<sup>6</sup> A full presentation of the data derived from the content analysis of executive office documents, the Congress and the press between 1990 and 2007 can be found in J. SPERLING, *Low Expectations: does Italy factor into American foreign policy calculations?*, in «Modern Italy», 15, 2010, Tables 3-6 and 8-12.

tor possibly contributing to the perception that America should not expect much from Italy as a military ally or economic partner.

### **The Italian contribution to International Security and Assistance Force and Operation Unified Protector**

The decade-long intervention in Afghanistan and the nearly eight month long campaign to protect Libya's civilians from the Gadhafi regime are relevant tests of Italy's contribution to NATO and the accuracy of the American perception of it. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, a limited number of NATO allies made significant contributions to ground combat operations in Afghanistan and devoted an impressive share of national naval and air assets to the defeat the Taliban. Italy was cited in US documents as a key ally and contributor to the American-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) along with the UK, France and Canada<sup>7</sup>. The Italian military role in Afghanistan continued after NATO assumed command of the UN-mandated ISAF in August 2003. Has Italy carried its share of the burden in Afghanistan?

Burden-sharing has three components: the relative contributions made to military operations in Afghanistan, the level of risk accepted by coalition forces, and the multilateral and bilateral financial contributions to support Afghanistan's reconstruction<sup>8</sup>. Has Italy provided a proportional share of troops participating to ISAF? The burden-sharing index – derived from the Italian share of NATO troops divided by the Italian share of NATO GNP – was 0.65 for the period 2002-2011. Although this index is below the NATO-Europe index of 0.87, it was equal to or greater than that of six member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain). Has Italy shared risk equitably? Italy had been largely risk adverse in Afghanistan: it stationed its troops in "safe" as opposed to "dangerous" regional commands within Afghanistan; initially placed operational caveats on the use of armed forces (which were eventually suspended); and had one of the lowest ratios of combat deaths to number of forces deployed, particularly when compared to Canada, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK<sup>9</sup>.

Does Italy contribute a proportionate share of the multilateral and bilateral financial aid given to Afghanistan? Multilateral and bilateral aid to Afghanistan is central to the Italian interpretation of the ISAF mandate, but Italy is nonetheless a minor contributor to the multilateral funds established to finance Afghanistan's reconstruction<sup>10</sup>. Italy's aggregate contribution to those funds places it in sixth place after the UK, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway. Of the Cold War NATO member states, the Italian burden-sharing index only exceeded that of Portugal and France. National overseas development assistance (ODA) to Afghanistan provides an alternative metric for assessing an ally's financial contribution to ISAF mission. The Italian government's rhetorical emphasis on reconstruction suggests that Italy would make a disproportionately large contribution to the financial requirements of stabilization and reconstruction. Italy ranks fourth in disbursements of ODA after the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands, but the Italian burden-sharing index of 0.97 indi-

<sup>7</sup> D. GERLEMAN - J. STEVENS, *Operation Enduring Freedom: foreign pledges of military and intelligence support*, CRS Report RL31152, Washington DC, CRS, 17 October 2008; K. KATZMAN, *Afghanistan: post-war governance, security, and US policy*, CRS Report RL30588, Washington DC, CRS, 10 November 2009.

<sup>8</sup> These indicators were developed in J. SPERLING - M. WEBBER, *NATO - From Kosovo to Kabul*, in «International Affairs», 85, 2009, pp. 491-511.

<sup>9</sup> The removal of those caveats allowed Italian participation in combat operations in the more dangerous southern and eastern commands. See F. FRATTINI, *International Security and the Libya Crisis*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 11 April 2011. On the risk-sharing debate see D. KORSKI, *Afghanistan: Europe's Forgotten War*, London, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2008; T. NOETZEL - S. SCHEIPERS, *Coalition warfare in Afghanistan: burden-sharing or disunity?*, London, Chatham House, 2007; and J. SPERLING - M. WEBBER, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> There are three multilateral funding agencies the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) and the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF).

cates that Italy is contributing a roughly proportional share of ODA. Thus, the Italian military and financial contributions to ISAF are not egregiously disproportionate to its economic size and capacity, particularly on an intra-European basis. Yet, the Italian share of financial assistance, defined by the percentage share or burden-sharing index, did not set Italy apart from the other major NATO allies.

Italian participation in OUP, the UN-mandated NATO operation under UN Security Council Resolution 1973, was particularly impressive and important for the alliance owing to the geostrategic importance of Italy in the Mediterranean, the authorization to deploy allied aircraft from seven Italian air bases, the significant Italian contribution of naval and air assets to the operation, and the Italian share of total NATO sorties. The Italian contribution was all the more impressive given the ostentatious non-participation of German and Polish forces in either the air campaign or naval blockade. Italy contributed almost 14% of the naval assets, including the carrier battle group Garibaldi, and almost 17% of the combat and support aircraft committed to OUP. The Italian contributions of air and naval assets were only exceeded by those of France and the UK. Italy did not authorize strike sorties in Libya until the end of April 2011, but did fly 7% of the operation's total number of air sorties behind France (25%), the Britain (11%) and Canada (10%)<sup>11</sup>.

The official and attentive foreign policy elite's assessment and perception of Italy during OEF and then ISAF were virtually identical: Italy was portrayed as a loyal ally making important contributions to the US-led mission in Afghanistan. Prior to 11 September, the U.S. Department of Defense noted that Italy ranked second (after France) in the number of European troops committed to two NATO operations, KFOR (Kosovo Force) and SFOR (Stabilisation Force)<sup>12</sup>. After 11 September, the US Department of Defense highlighted Italian financial and personnel contributions to multilateral peace-keeping operations, the Italian contributions to OEF and then ISAF, and the importance of Italian force projection capabilities for the success of ISAF, notably the deployment of the carrier battle group Garibaldi in the Arabian Sea<sup>13</sup>.

This publicly pronounced gratitude had a short half-life. In a February 2005 Defense Department report, the only explicit mention of the Italian contribution to Afghanistan was the deployment of a carrier task force, while Germany was praised for its naval "leadership role" around the Horn of Africa with a fraction of the Italian naval forces dedicated to ISAF<sup>14</sup>. In a Congressionally mandated report on ISAF, the administration hardly mentioned the Italian role, obliquely criticized the caveats on Italian troops, and chastised the Berlusconi government (and other allies) for failing to commit additional troops to ISAF in 2008<sup>15</sup>. However, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's observation

---

<sup>11</sup> Naval and Air contributions derived from Global Security, *NATO Arms Embargo: Operation Unified Protector Naval Order of Battle* (1 August 2011), at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/unified-protector-orbat.htm>. Global Security, *NATO No-Fly Zone: Operation Unified Protector Order of Battle* (1 August 2011), at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/unified-protector-orbat-air.htm>. The Italian share of sorties is cited in Aeronautica Militare, *The Italian Airforce in Operations Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector*, 2012, at: [http://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/News/Documents/pdf/Cerimonia%20chiusura%20Unified%20Protector\\_151211/Brochure%20Libya%20EN.pdf](http://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/News/Documents/pdf/Cerimonia%20chiusura%20Unified%20Protector_151211/Brochure%20Libya%20EN.pdf). French, British, and Canadian estimates were taken from French Ministry of Defense, *Opération Harmattan/Libye*, at: <http://www.webcitation.org/63rgPazcA>; British Ministry of Defence, *155/2011 - Defence Secretary visits UK Forces in Italy as end of Libya operations is announced*, at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/PressCentre/PressReleases/1552011DefenceSecretaryVisitsUkForceInItalyAsEndOfLibyaOperationsIsAnnounced.htm>; S. LEVITZ – M. BLANCHFIELD, *Harper hails dictator's death in Libya, as Canadian jets to end mission early*, in «The Canadian Press», 2 October 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Defense, *Allied Contribution to the Common Defense*, Washington DC, DoD, March 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense, *International Contributions to the War Against Terrorism*, Washington DC, DoD, 7 June 2002, pp. 6-7; *Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, Washington DC, DoD, July 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Defense, *Facing the Future: Meeting the Threats and Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Washington DC, DoD, February 2005, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Defense. 2008. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Washington DC, DoD, June 2008, p. 13.

that ‘Italy is an ally in the truest sense of the word’ accurately summarizes the overall official assessment of the Italian contribution to ISAF and OEF<sup>16</sup>. The Defense Department has subsequently underscored Italy’s importance to OUP: after France and the UK it received the greatest share of positive commentary, exceeding that of Canada and Spain. The White House, however, was less effusive in its praise: Italy’s role in Libya was only mentioned in 8% of press releases and speeches, much less than France (17%) and the UK (12%)<sup>17</sup>.

Italy has been underrepresented in press coverage of allied contributions to ISAF as compared to Italy’s contribution. Where press coverage did not simply report on the interaction between American and Italian policymakers or present factual information about the nature and magnitude of the Italian contribution, the coverage would revert – even within otherwise sober assessments – to commentaries focusing on Italy’s secondary status (and relative unimportance) within NATO, the chronic instability of the domestic political system, particularly after Prodi lost a vote of no confidence in 2007, the persistence of a sizeable, anti-American Parliamentary Left, and a lack of “steadfastness” supposedly demonstrated when the Italian government arranged the exchange of five Taliban prisoners for an Italian journalist held hostage<sup>18</sup>. The postulated Italian preference for *la dolce vita* was inevitably relied upon to explain both Berlusconi’s personal and marital travails, the turbulence of Italian politics more generally, and fickle foreign policy positions<sup>19</sup>.

This pattern of reportage continued as the Libyan crisis unfolded. Of the four major European powers, Italy only exceeded Germany in press coverage and the references to Italy focused on Italian financial and oil interests in Libya, the Italian preoccupation with illegal immigration from North Africa, and Berlusconi’s erratic policy pronouncements or his suspect relationship with Colonel Gadhafi. The coverage of the Italian Prime Minister lagged far behind that of his counter-parts in France and the UK, although the coverage was on balance more favourable than that accorded Angela Merkel. By comparison, the Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini received favourable press coverage. Although Frattini’s coverage was less than half that devoted to France’s Alain Juppé or Britain’s William Hague, he fared much better than German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, who was largely ignored by the *Washington Post* and received negative press in both the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

## Conclusion

The assessment of Italy’s importance to the United States as a foreign policy actor has both subjective and objective elements. But it is clear that the subjective interpretation of Italy’s capabilities, interests, and value as an ally is not always consistent with Italy’s contribution to American foreign policy goals. Italy does suffer from three liabilities that limit its influence with the United States and renders Italy, more times than not, peripheral to American interests and calculations. Italy’s internal political weakness, although not a condition unique to Italy, is chronic and has reduced the percep-

<sup>16</sup> D. RUMSFELD, *Secretary Rumsfeld Town Hall Meeting At Aviano Air Base*, 7 February 2003, at: <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1900>; see also: D. RUMSFELD, *Media Availability with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Italian Defense Minister Antonio Martino*, 12 July 2005, at: <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3174>.

<sup>17</sup> Germany received just under 62% of the White House commentary, no doubt a by-product of its non-participation in the operation and abstention on the Security Council vote on Resolution 1973. Prime Minister Berlusconi received the same number of mentions as did NATO Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen (6% and 7%, respectively), less than one-fifth the number accorded to British Prime Minister Cameron (34%) and French President Sarkozy (34%).

<sup>18</sup> P. KIEFTER, *Prodi comes under attack after Taliban killed a hostage*, in «Financial Times», 9 April 2007; I. FISHER, *Italy swapped 5 jailed Taliban for a hostage*, in «New York Times», 22 February 2007.

<sup>19</sup> See R. COHEN, *Vive la dolce vita*, in «New York Times», 16 April 2006; I. FISHER, *Italian Premier resigns after losing foreign policy vote*, in «New York Times», 22 February 2007; J. VINOCUR, *Politicus: Prodi’s campaign song beckons to the hard left*, in «International Herald Tribune», 28 March 2006.

tion of Italy as a dependable ally or partner of the United States. The concurrent financial, fiscal, and Eurozone crises underscore the limited influence and capabilities of Italy owing to its status as a debtor nation unable to implement the structural reforms necessary for revitalizing the economy and stabilizing the government's fiscal position. The current fiscal crisis has harmed its credibility as a military ally: the carrier *Garibaldi* had to be withdrawn from service during OUP from budgetary rather than military necessity. Consequently, the United States is more likely to view Italy as a problem to be solved rather than as a reliable and able partner for addressing the negative externalities of globalization. The weakening of multilateralism, a paradoxical by-product of the globalization process, has also diminished Italy's importance within Europe and the broader transatlantic area. The process of globalization has weakened multilateralism owing to the attending shifts in national calculations of self-interest and the geopolitical reorientation of the United States to regions of the world where multilateralism is normatively and institutionally weak and where Europe lacks a compelling geostrategic interest.

Three hypotheses were proposed in the introduction to explain the place of Italy in the American foreign policy calculus. How do they fare against the empirical record? The *buffone di corte* hypothesis – Italy isn't taken seriously because its politicians cannot be taken seriously – can be rejected. Prime Minister Monti (and by association European Central Bank Governor Mario Draghi) demonstrates that the Italian political class is taken seriously when represented by a "technocrat" of serious mien and purpose. There is no evidence, however, that such seriousness of purpose translates into greater importance or influence with the United States on a routine basis. Moreover, the tone and content of the press coverage of Monti reflects his seriousness of purpose, but it has not increased the coverage of Italian politics. Berlusconi was simply better copy.

The capabilities hypothesis is generally confirmed. The fiscal crisis of the Italian state, limited military capabilities and a declining defence budget, and the necessity of defending Italy's place in the Eurozone place real limitations on Italy's potential role as an interlocutor between Europe and the United States. This capability constraint is exacerbated by the confirmation of the crowding out hypothesis: the Italian profile in US foreign policy calculations has been and will continue to be diminished by a number of mutually reinforcing developments: the EU, should it survive the Euro-crisis, will increasingly emerge as the locus of US attention on trade, financial, and monetary affairs; Britain and France have laid a successful claim to military leadership within Europe, while the Franco-German tandem dominates the EU's political trajectory. Moreover, US attention will be increasingly diverted to the Asia-Pacific, particularly if the emerging Sino-American great power rivalry in the region intensifies.

The three questions posed in the introduction can now be addressed.

- Is there a gap between the material and subjective in the US assessment of Italy as a foreign policy actor? Probably not. Italy's role is largely commensurate with what Italy can do for the United States. There is a tendency, however, to understate (or ignore) the importance of the Italian contributions to US- and NATO-led operations.
- What role does Italy play in American calculations? It would appear that Italy is marginal to US foreign policy calculations either with respect to the content of policy or the necessity of Italian support. Within the Atlantic Alliance, Italy is unlikely to figure prominently in US foreign policy calculations *unless* US foreign policy is facing an allied revolt as occurred with Iraq (France and Germany) and Libya (Germany and Poland).
- What role should Italy expect to play in US foreign policy calculations? Italy will only enjoy a supporting role and cannot expect to do otherwise except in special circumstances as arose, for example, in the case of OUP. Moreover, Italy could be progressively marginalized if the United States were to rely increasingly on coalitions of the willing in regions of little or no strategic or economic importance to Italy or the NATO alliance. Within the geographical ambit

of the Washington Treaty, however, Italy's importance to the US and influence over US policy is likely to remain inversely related to the degree of concord within the alliance.

The United States has assigned Italy a modest, subordinate, and sometimes silent role as a partner and ally. Italy is usually taken for granted, but it is also taken seriously (most of the time).

La ricerca ISPI analizza le dinamiche politiche, strategiche ed economiche del sistema internazionale con il duplice obiettivo di informare e di orientare le scelte di policy.

I risultati della ricerca vengono divulgati attraverso pubblicazioni ed eventi, focalizzati su tematiche di particolare interesse per l'Italia e le sue relazioni internazionali e articolati in:

- ✓ Programma Africa
- ✓ Programma Caucaso e Asia Centrale
- ✓ Programma Europa
- ✓ Programma Mediterraneo e Medio Oriente
- ✓ Programma Russia e Vicini Orientali
- ✓ Programma Sicurezza e Studi Strategici
  
- ✓ Progetto Argentina
- ✓ Progetto Asia Meridionale
- ✓ Progetto Cina e Asia Orientale
- ✓ Progetto Diritti Umani
- ✓ Progetto Disarmo
- ✓ Progetto Internazionalizzazione della Pubblica Amministrazione

Le pubblicazioni online dell'ISPI sono realizzate anche grazie al sostegno della Fondazione Cariplo.

ISPI  
Palazzo Clerici  
Via Clerici, 5  
I - 20121 Milano  
[www.ispionline.it](http://www.ispionline.it)