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**ITALY IN THE EU: LOVE AFFAIR OR
DISILLUSIONMENT? ITALIAN DISCONTENT WITH
THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, PAST AND PRESENT**

by

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DISCONTENT WITH THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, PAST AND PRESENT**

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ABSTRACT

After 70 years, have democracy, prosperity, and unity finally reached Italy? Italians are still wondering since the European Union's (EU's) promises after World War II remain largely unfulfilled. This thesis analyzes parallels and continuities of Italian politics of disillusionment from the post-World War I period to today's European crisis, highlighting Italy's widespread discontent with the EU and its institutions.

From the “mutilated victory” of the Treaty of Versailles to a destructive fascist regime to the promises of future prosperity and progress in the EU, today Italy is still waiting for its early aspirations to materialize. While other EU members and cofounders (notably France and Germany) arrange the EU to their advantage—frequently overlooking Italy's interests and needs—Italy's increasing disappointment with the EU has reached an all-time high.

This thesis traces these developments through historical analysis of key turning points—the interwar period, fascism, and the postwar democratic transformation. It culminates in a discussion of the current European crisis and Italy's frustration with the EU by exposing the reasons for the country's serious consideration of abandoning participation in the EU project.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
ECB	European Central Bank
ECSC	European Community of Steel and Coal
EEC	European Economic Community
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	European Monetary Union
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
Km	kilometer
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali [Institute of National Affairs]
IPU	Integrated Police Unit
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ItAF	Italian Air Force
M5S	Movimento 5 Stelle [5 Star Movement]
MSU	Multinational Specialized Unit
MOS	more of the same
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OUP	Operation Unified Protector
PD	Partito Democratico [Democratic Party]
PdL	Popolo della Liberta'[The People of Freedom]
PC	Partito Comunista [Communist Party]
PIIGS	Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Spain
PVV	Partij Voor de Vrijheid [Party for Freedom]
RoE	rules of engagement
SEAD	Suppression of Enemy Air Defence
TOS	throwing out the system
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie [People's Party for Freedom and Democracy]
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom

U.S.	United States
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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I. INTRODUCTION

Italy is in turmoil, and protests have taken many forms: occupation of property and buildings, assaults on bakeries—because the price of bread has increased so sharply—strikes throughout the nation, and attacks on the institutions of power. The grievances take just as many shapes, from the high rate of unemployment among workers and laborers, compounded by the frustration of war veterans forgotten by the government and current soldiers whose prospective employment has been shattered—after the government decided to demobilize the military—to the huge gap growing between the capitalist classes of the north and the proletarian masses, especially in the south, and to new elections, the results of which have made the country ungovernable. All the while, longstanding politics and policies only obscure Italy’s problems behind new slogans and empty promises, rather than marking any real solutions for a nation exhausted by debt and devastated by conflict inside and outside its borders. Italy’s misery reaches a crescendo on two days in December, when clashes between police and demonstrators across the country erupt in lethal violence.¹

These scenes played out in 1919 as Italy sought to find its way in the post-World War I (WWI) order of Europe and the world, with the prospects for democracy and prosperity at an all-time low and the terrible simplifiers from both extremes of the political spectrum poised to fill the credibility gap with rhetoric and illiberalism.

These scenes were echoed in the 2008 Eurozone crisis and especially throughout the 2011–2013 protests when Italians again felt unduly squeezed by an international system—this time the European Union (EU)—that again seemed ever more at odds with Italy’s goals and needs. It is one thing to posit parallels between these periods of crisis in Italy, but can continuities also be discerned?

¹ “Manifestazioni e scontri in varie città” [Demonstrations and clashes in several cities] and “Gravi incidenti a Mantova” [Serious accidents in Mantova], *Il Corriere della Sera*, December 3, 1919, <http://cinquantamila.corriere.it/storyTellerGiorno.php?year=1919&month=12&day=03>.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The proposed thesis examines the history of Italy's dashed hopes and simmering dissatisfaction after WWI, World War II (WWII), and the euro crisis up to the present, with an emphasis on the ways these disappointments worked themselves out in Italy's domestic and international politics.

The main questions at issue are: Is the EU destined to become another seminal disappointment for Italy? What might the wages of this disappointment be in terms of Italy's national and international priorities? And what steps might mitigate these unhappy associations and prevent developments before a new worst-case eventuates with catastrophic consequences for Italy, the EU, and world politics?

B. IMPORTANCE

The Italian politics of disillusionment after the 1918–1919 peace process culminated in the reign of Europe's first fascist, Benito Mussolini, whose facile promises to restore Italy to global prominence on a stylized Roman model catapulted his people into dictatorship and WWII. In the aftermath of this conflict, Italians' hopes and dreams for future prosperity and progress prompted the popular embrace of the promise of mid-twentieth-century liberalism with such optimism that the leaders of the first hour signed the country up as one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the forerunner of the EU.

Italy is still waiting for its early aspirations for the EU to pan out, however—whereas other members, notably cofounders France and Germany, position the EU and its institutions to suit their needs and expectations, frequently to Italy's detriment, as the euro crisis that started in 2008 made clear. Today, Italians from all corners of society talk increasingly of leaving the EU amid these unfulfilled hopes, which raises the specter of another transformative Italian moment that may or may not perpetuate democracy, stability, or prosperity in Italy or in Europe.

The proposed research examines Italy's disillusionment with Europe's political, economic, and social stance after three important modern European events: from the Treaty of Versailles to the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) after WWII, culminating in Italy's membership in the EU, and finally its treatment by the EU during the European crisis.

An investigation of historical events sheds light on the trials and resulting political decisions that led Italy down the path toward fascism as well as its reasons and decision to strongly support and join a newly created EEC after WWII. A discussion of the current European crisis and Italy's frustration with the EU exposes the reasons for the country's serious considerations to abandon participation in the EU project.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

In 1919, after WWI and the disillusionment with the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war between Germany and the Allied Powers, frustration set in, leaving the majority of Italians believing that the only way to care for their country was to take matters into their hands and disassociate themselves from the rest of the world. Mussolini's promises of resurrecting the past glories of the magnificent Roman Empire were an easy prelude to fascism, considered by many at the time to be the only suitable choice for a strong Italy.

At the end of WWII, a devastated Italy within a shattered Europe, was eager to erase the memories of fascism and motivated by a profound desire for peace and prosperity, embraced the creation of the European Economic Community. Italy's strong commitment to the EEC, precursor to the European Union, was defined by the knowledge and the intent that a united Europe would change Italy.

Today Italians are feeling cheated again, this time by the EU, which has not equally provided for its members' prosperity and which does not seem to have paid the same dividends for all its members, even among the founding states. The EU, which Italy has strongly supported since the beginning, has changed. The hopes and the promises of a democratic, pluralistic, and prosperous Europe that would help Italy progress have faded away, leaving in their place an imperious, elitist, and broke Europe that seems

increasingly destined for the lowest common denominator in every relevant realm. The economic woes of the past few years have been exacerbated by central banking and fiscal policies skewed toward an approach that diverges from Italy's interests. Meanwhile, the political tensions brought on by additional policies that pressure Italy and force it inside its recession, and the lack of equal representation at the EU level, makes Italians pessimistic regarding the future of their country. Italian citizens' support for both the EU and the euro has declined sharply, and the Italians are seriously considering abandoning the EU.

Although it is difficult to tell how the future will play out for Italy and the EU, this thesis will pursue two hypotheses. First, it seems that a parallelism—if not a continuity—exists between Italy's feeling betrayed after the Treaty of Versailles and Italy's current disillusionment with the fading promises of a united Europe. Second, many signs observed in Italy after 1919 appear to be showing themselves again now, which should be a reminder to the world of what could happen if the perception of democratic representation in Italy fails and other, more dangerous, extremist political systems such as fascism or communism rise in its place.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout history, there have been several attempts to unify Europe. One might begin with the Roman Empire, which, through conquest and expansion, was the first to unify both Italy and most of what today counts as Europe. The fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century of the current era saw the beginning of the Middle Ages and the rise of a different political arrangement, including the formation of rival states and expansion of the church's influence all over the continent. After a quarter of a millennium of disintegration and decline, Europe again figured in a unifier's ambitions: the Frankish King Charlemagne, the "father of Europe," presided over the Holy Roman Empire, the European institution of the time, which he forged through conquest, conversion, and the careful management of his vassals.²

² Pim den Boer, Peter Bugge, and Ole Woever, *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London: The Open University and Routledge, 1993), 26–27.

Another imperial conqueror, Napoleon Bonaparte, fostered a vision of a Europe “...that was to be united under a single national sovereign.”³ However, his military victories initiated a process of nationalism among the conquered territories and their populations, paving the way for the emergence of nation-states in the rest of Europe as people rose as a nation to defend themselves against his invasions. The nationalism born of the Napoleonic years persists to this day and constitutes one of the main obstacles to Europe’s unity even now. Napoleon’s “continental system” of coordinated economies—to the extent that this phrase applies in early modern Europe—aroused the dissatisfaction of the subject peoples, who bristled to see their productivity and profit channeled back to France and its seemingly insatiable war effort. The system was meant to damage Britain but also to benefit France

by limiting where countries could export and import too, turning France into a rich production hub and making the rest of Europe economic vassals, and this damaged some regions while boosting others. For instance, Italy’s silk manufacturing industry was almost destroyed as all silk had to be sent to France for production.⁴

Somehow, even Hitler’s ruthless efforts to dominate Europe can be seen as a will to unify Europe. Although the Nazi empire’s racial policy marked a horrific, if peculiarly twentieth century innovation, the basic formula of conquest, coordination, and economic interconnection formed the basis of National Socialist plans. Under Hitler, for a short time at least:

³ Anthony Padgen, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2002), 17.

See also: Pim den Boer, Peter Bugge, and Ole Woever, 68. They state,

Napoleon had wished to bring about an ‘association européenne’ which would have brought prosperity and happiness to the continent. There would have been the same system throughout Europe, with the same principles: one European code, one European court of appeal, a single European currency a uniform system of weights and measures, the same law...Europe was to become one family and one people, and travelers would have found themselves in a common fatherland wherever they went.

⁴ Robert Wilde, “The Continental System.” *European History*, accessed March 25, 2014, <http://europeanhistory.about.com/od/napoleonicwars/a/The-Continental-System.htm>.

Europe's trade had been relocated and was held in place by a system of clearing agreements, some inherited from the pre-war period, ... [with] others more or less imposed upon the occupied countries of the west. The pattern of trade was heavily focused on Germany to the detriment of traditional partners, even where they too formed part of the New Order.⁵

The latest attempt at European integration dates formally to 1951, when, to stop the devastation brought upon the continent by thousands of years of wars the ECSC treaty was signed, initially by six European countries. Gillingham⁶ explores how the ECSC sought to create a common market for coal and steel among the member states, neutralizing competition among European nations—especially France and Germany—and serving the larger objective of maintain peace. (The other four original signatories, significantly, were states that had found themselves caught between the antagonists in the Franco-German conflict—either geographically or economically.) Here, Monnet's real interests in the formation of the ECSC come to light: raising French preeminence in Europe and keeping Germany under control while eliminating the potential disadvantages of the partnership to such smaller participants as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The controversy created in Italy by the plan is reflected in an article

⁵Peter M.R. Stirk, "Making the New Europe in the Second War: 1940–45" *A History of European Integration* (London: Pinter, 1996), 59.

⁶ According to Gillingham,

The birth of Europe resulted from a natural process but was not a painless act...France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg did not mesh together effortlessly and automatically...they had to be heavily lubricated, sometimes reshaped, and occasionally even forced together in order to get Europe to run.

John Gillingham, *Coal, Steel and the Rebirth of Europe, 1945–1955: the Germans and French from Ruhr Conflict to Economic Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 297.

published by an Italian newspaper of the time right after the 1951 signing of the treaty.⁷ The parallelism with today's Europe is strong, as France and Germany are still trying to foster some kind of cooperation to influence the political order of Europe.

In 2014, the idea of a European supranational identity that rules over the single states arouses ever more skepticism from Europeans, at least at the everyday level. The elites find it convenient and perhaps even self-serving to work with a relatively small EU and a government with policies based on principles that require a proportionally higher level of education and economic support.⁸ The current political situation in Europe appears to be a struggle between the elites and the masses to find a common ground in policy and governance that includes demonstrable representation for both. Currently, the struggle manifests itself in the different political commitments of the northern European states, which feel empowered by Brussels, versus the southern European states, which feel unrepresented by the same central institutions. When push came to shove with the euro crisis, for example, the policy preferences of the northern tier prevailed, denying Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece the accustomed tools and methods to achieve economic stability.

The discontent that this underrepresentation causes is not just popular dissatisfaction with austerity and unemployment. As Padgen argues,

⁷ According to Boffa,

Today the representatives of the six countries agree on the composition and functions of the administrative bodies The decisions taken on these matters are a striking example of how certain powers are riding roughshod over the interests of others ... The six member countries have been divided into two categories: the 'large' (France and West Germany) and the 'small' (Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). In the council of ministers, voting will be by a peculiar procedure that allows the two 'large' countries always to outweigh the four 'small' ones ... Foreign Ministers of other countries will be able to take decisions on Italy's industry that they judge to be to their own advantage, without any representative of our own country being able to express any effective reservations.

Giuseppe Boffa, "Sforza Sacrifica a Parigi gli Interessi dell'Industria Italiana" [Schuman Plan demotes Italy to colonial status]. *L'Unita'*, Archivio Storico, Aprile 18, 1951, accessed February 9, 2014, <http://archivio.unita.it/esploso.php?vperiodo=1&dd=18&mm=04&yy=1951&ed=Nazionale&nn>.

⁸ Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe* (New York: University Press, 2011), 115.

People do not willingly surrender their cultural and normative allegiances to their nation or the political system in order to exchange it for one that is neither better nor worse. They do so only in the hope of a brighter future.⁹

In other words, the fondest hopes of several generations are fading.

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas takes up the issue of representation and “European-ness” in his publication *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response*, written in 2012. He recognizes that political unity through solidarity and a more democratic decisional process are needed if Europe is to become completely integrated and argues from a different prospective about the lack of solidarity and legitimacy that affect the EU. He states that the Lisbon Treaty entitles European citizens to double sovereignty. They are citizens of both the EU and of its member states. This duality allows them to participate in the EU constitutional process (even if this sometimes generates conflict between the two roles); unfortunately, this dualism is not reflected adequately in the EU’s decisional procedures. According to Habermas, because the EU Parliament is reduced to a marginal role, citizens do not participate directly in the decision-making process of policies that have direct repercussions in their daily lives, especially in the economic and financial sectors. By not being represented equally at the EU level, Europeans deem EU policies illegitimate and therefore not applicable to them because they did not vote for them.

To a significant degree, Habermas articulates the latest iteration of the EU’s congenital “democratic deficit.”¹⁰ Peter Mair traces the deficit’s dynamic as follows: Politicians have let the national parliaments of European countries be stripped of many vital decision-making powers in order to rid themselves of voters’ unhappiness while leaving resolutions, important to the life of voters, to the judgment of unelected experts.

⁹ Padgen, *The Idea of Europe*, 20.

¹⁰See also discussion of democratic deficit by Philippe C. Schmitter, *How to Democratize the European Union... and Why Bother?* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000); Milev Mihail, “A Democratic Deficit in the European Union?” Centre International de Formation Européenne, 2012, <http://www.geopolitis.net/EUROPE%20EN%20FORMATION/Democratic%20Deficit%20in%20the%20European%20Union.pdf>; Robert Rohrschneider, “The Democratic Deficit and Mass Support for a EU-Wide Government,” *American Journal of Political Science* 6, no. 2 (April 2002); Andrew Moravcsik, “In Defense of the ‘Democratic Deficit:’ Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no 4 (2002).

The author argues that Europeans' confidence in their political class has thus sharply declined, displaying the alarming crisis of Europe's democratic legitimacy.

Habermas agrees with the formulation of the problem: "The 'pact for Europe' repeats an old mistake: legally non-binding agreements concluded by the heads of government are either ineffectual or undemocratic and must therefore be replaced by an institutionalization of joint decisions with irreproachable democratic credentials."¹¹ The solution, however, is "more Europe." Habermas asserts that the European public's rising skepticism would vanish as soon as it could vote directly at the European level. If Europe builds a better ballot box, the Europeans will follow.

Habermas is not alone in his belief that the EU's several polities are still just Europeans looking for a place to happen—and the spark to ignite their passion for such unity. In his book *A Community of Europeans?*, Thomas Risse argues that, thanks to a process of European integration, identities and public spheres in the EU are becoming more and more Europeanized (with the UK being the only outlier). He rejects the argument that Europe is far from integration solely because a minority of people who identify themselves as "only European"¹² exist. He also disputes the critical claim that Europe lacks common public communications tools based on the absence of a European-wide media capable of addressing Europeans with EU issues and concerns. Tellingly, Risse is not troubled by the extent to which Europe remains an elite-level project. The Europeanization of identities and public spheres grows through the debate of European integration itself and not through the acceptance by public opinion of the latest EU's institutional decisions.¹³

Although Risse tries to maintain an impartial tone on the topic—stating for instance that former anti-European ideas have been reframed as an alternative European discourse and should not necessarily be seen as racist or pro-nationalistic—his strong

¹¹ Habermas Jürgen, *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2012), 4.

¹² Thomas Risse, *A Community of European? Transactional Identities and Public Spheres* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

propensity for European integration and clear disdain for anti-European or “EU-concerned” groups becomes evident. To Risse, the main cleavages to Europe’s chances of unification are what he defines as “modern Europe” against “fortress and exclusionary Europe.”¹⁴ Here, Risse’s own distance—as a tenured professor at Berlin’s Free University—from the opinion of Europe’s masses may have the better of him. Risse’s ideas could seem out of touch with that part of European society for which everyday concerns still are based more on “terrain” and urgent situations than the development of a discourse in favor of EU integration.

American historian Walter Laqueur reads much more into the rank-and-file reality in Europe today. In his book, *After the Fall*, written in 2011, Laqueur argues that the current EU crisis is really an indication of the end of an experiment that was destined to fail. He believes that the EU represents an artificial entity based on Europe’s imagined past glories that is incapable of evolving to meet the needs of its citizens.¹⁵ Hostility toward Brussels has been increasing since 2008 as anti-EU political resolute parties have been progressing in many parts of Europe to voice their criticism of the EU and its institutions.¹⁶ In other words, unlike Risse, Laqueur takes the anti-Europeanist Europeans at their word—and hears the beginning of the end of this ungainly idea in their slogans.

There is no doubt that the flagship of European unity, the euro, stands as much for the EU’s travails as for its triumphs. Johan Van Overtveldt exposes how the adoption of the single euro currency that aimed to further unify the European countries backfired, creating imbalance and instability among the same countries. Tony Judt agrees and adds that the EU’s commitment to open its membership to the poorer countries of Eastern Europe will add even more instability to the already precarious economic situation because those countries will not be able to catch up and maintain the economic commitment required to join the EU club, especially by Germany’s standards. “It is unlikely that Italy, Spain, or even Britain will ever qualify for such an exclusive club,

¹⁴ Ibid., 245.

¹⁵ Walter Laqueur, *After the Fall: The End of the European Dream and the Decline of the Continent* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011).

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

even more absurd to envisage Poland or Slovakia doing so.”¹⁷ The failure by some EU countries to meet the required conditions of supporting the new monetary system has created serious problems for their economies. Sapir¹⁸ also agrees that the lack of a significant budget, limited coordination of budget policies, and nonintegrated financial supervision has worked together overtime to create the recent economic and financial crisis—which in turn revealed a further lack of contingency planning or vision for solutions. Because monetary union requires fiscal union, the author argues that what is needed is fiscal solidarity, a necessary step toward political union.

Of the three possible directions suggested by Overtveld that the EU can take: “more of the same,” “throwing out the system,” and “rebuilding of the system,” the second one seems to be the scenario the Italians are currently considering. Although the majority of Italians have historically voiced support for the euro, lately political tensions brought on by additional policies that pressure the country and force it inside its recession, have brought on a “rethinking the euro” sentiment resulting in open discussions and considerations of a possible referendum to say “yes” or “no” to the euro as a monetary system and to Italy’s participation in the EU membership, “The M5S will drive for Italy to have a referendum next year on whether the country should continue to have the euro as its currency and stay in the European Union.”¹⁹

José Magone argues that the euro crisis simply stands in for a longer-running grievance in Italy and much of the EU’s southern tier. Italy’s predominant dissatisfaction with domestic democracy (since the first Republic in 1947) and people’s alienation from its institutions has created what the author calls “democratic cynicism.”²⁰ Judt takes this

¹⁷ Judt, *A Grand Illusion?*, 123.

¹⁸ André Sapir, “Crisis and the Governance of the Euro Area” in *The Delphic Oracle on Europe: Is There a Future for the European Union?*, ed. Loukas Tsoukalis and Janis A. Emmanouilidis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 91.

¹⁹ Paul Virgo, “Italy: Grillo’s M5S Preparing Referendum on EU Membership: He Wants Italy to Follow Britain’s Lead,” ANSamed, May 23, 2013, http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/nations/italy/2013/05/23/Italy-Grillo-M5s-preparing-referendum-EU-membership_8755985.html.

²⁰ José M. Magone, *The Politics of Southern Europe: Integration into the European Union* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 2003), 55.

development as the ultimate evidence in favor of wrapping up the EU. While not disregarding the accomplishments achieved by the EU at present, Judt states that the premises that allowed the unification of Europe through the initial establishment of the ECSC are no longer present; therefore, the need for further unification both through the extension of membership to other non-EU countries and more complete integration among the current participating members has disappeared. Europe is becoming too large, states the author, and thinks of it on the same terms as German writer Habermas: a “local and supranational duality of communities around which allegiances may form”²¹ is not possible. Judt depicts a picture of Europe that can no longer offer the prosperity and grandeur promised at the beginning of the process and of a Europe whose detached and undemocratic government encourages citizens to look at their nation-states as their only source of communal identity.

Another source that provides a current examination of the Eurozone crisis is the Istituto Affari Internazionali. Among its publications, the article “Eurocriticism: The Eurozone Crisis and Anti-Establishment Groups in Southern Europe” provides a perspective on the rise of antiestablishment movements that emerged in the EU in response to the financial crisis. The paper focuses on Italy, Greece, and Spain. The article’s main point is that those movements are not really anti-Europe but only Europe-critical and all they want is for changes to be enacted. Recently, in Italy, the skepticism over an ungovernable Europe has brought movements and parties such as the Lega Nord, M5S, “Forza Italia,” and the latest “Forconi” to gather votes against the diktats imposed by Brussels. At the same time, in Europe the major anti-EU movements and parties are acting together to stop the push by Brussels to integrate borders considered physically and culturally different under the leadership of an EU that seems completely alienated from reality. Are these symptoms of criticism or of a deeper discomfort among Europeans with Brussels that has reached high levels of frustration and will not disappear by applying only a few changes?

²¹ Judt *A Grand Illusion?*, 118.

In *Italy and the Idea of Europe*, Mario Telò explains the initial broad Italian consensus toward the EU project, taking into account historical, political, and societal factors; a comparison with Italy's current situation in the EU sheds light on how much the EU has changed and how Italy's initial benefits of membership do not offset the current pains.²² Italy's ungovernability²³ was one of the main reasons for Alcide De Gasperi's strong support of entering the EU, but how ungovernable has the EU become?

*Modern Italy: A Political History*²⁴ describes the fate of Italy from its unification through 1996. Focusing on three historical experiences (before WWI and after, after WWII, and the Second Republic in 1992), Mack Smith argues how Italy's fast modernization after its unification before WWI contributed to its political, economic, and social instability. Its subsequent entrance into WWI and the Italians' disappointment with the Treaty of Versailles after Paris's rejection of Italy's previously negotiated territorial requests marks the rise of fascism and its totalitarian regime. After WWII and the civil war that followed, liberal democracy came in the form of the first Italian Republic. This marks a very important moment in the history of Italy (and Europe) because it defines social and political weaknesses marked by corruption and bureaucratic inertia. By the 1990s, Italy saw the collapse of its ruling elite at the hands of an angry electorate demanding real transparency and democracy. Interestingly enough, in 2014, Italians are still promoting the same kind of requests about the same lack of transparency and of a democratic process at both national and EU levels.

History also has taught Italy to be skeptical of its allies. While trumpeting their democratic ideology, the allies demonstrated in both 1918 with the Treaty of Versailles (and as was later the case in 1945 with the Luxembourg Peace Treaty²⁵) how far short

²² Mario Telò, "Italy and the Idea of Europe" in *European Stories*. ed. Lacroix Justine and Kalyspo Nicolaïdis (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), 122.

²³ Luigi Barzini, *The Italians* (New York: Touchstone Rockefeller Center, 1964), 191–192.

²⁴ Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1959, rev 1969).

²⁵ Luigi Villari, *The Liberation of Italy 1943–1947* (Appleton, WI: C.C. Nelson Publishing Company, 1959), 238.

their practice came from their preaching. Woodrow Wilson's²⁶ democratic message spread throughout Italy after WWI. While looking to fill a political vacuum, the Italians embraced Wilson's message only to reject it when the Paris negotiations did not bring Italy the outcomes expected. When the Treaty of Versailles resulted in failure of all the participants' expectations, with the exception of the major powers, Italy's political vacuum was filled by fascism. The tragic Italian turmoil of 1919 and 1920 resulted from the people's choice, through elections, of a totalitarian and illiberal regime that could provide prosperity, order, and international status.

E. METHODS AND RESOURCES

This thesis is a historical and comparative study. The historical study examines Italy's experience after the Treaty of Versailles and the steps it took as a result. This part of the study also examines Italy's condition at the end of WWII and the reasons for its strong commitment to the EEC, precursor of the EU.

The comparative study analyzes the parallels and continuities between the historical outcome of the Treaty of Versailles and the prospective outcomes that could rise from Italy's current discontent with the EU project. This comparison reveals political, economic, and social trends that, after WWI and WWII and during the current European crisis, help shape the ideas and the beliefs of the Italian people and why these resulted in Italians adopting similar approaches to self-government and self-determination.

A vast resource of relevant material and information is available and has been consulted in both Italian and English from leading European and Italian news agencies, such as *Il Quotidiano*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *Euronews*, *La Repubblica*, *La Nazione*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Europe's online journals such as the *Social Europe Journal* and American economic news agencies as well such as *The Economist*, *Businessweek*, and organizations such as the Inter Press Service. These news outlets include daily stories on economic and political events in

²⁶ Daniela Rossini, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Myth in Italy: Culture, Diplomacy and War Propaganda*, trans. Anthony Shugaar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Europe, with specific references to Italy, the euro, the European democratic deficit, and the Eurozone crisis from 2009 to 2014. Primary sources such as the Italian government and the EU's website, which provide official documents, reports, and opinion polls, are used to investigate the topic and provide relevant current information and facts. The Eurozone Portal provides information on the EU's main institutions such as the European Council, the European Parliament, and the European Commission site. Additional information comes from such primary sources as scholarly Italian-language books, journals, and press articles.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

To understand the parallelism between the events that took place in Italy after the Treaty of Versailles and the events that are taking place in Italy in light of the current European crisis, this thesis analyzes Italy's domestic and foreign policy after WWI with a brief reference to some aspects of the interwar period and Italy's approaches to domestic and foreign policy after WWII. After a consideration of these historical aspects, Italy's role as one of the EU's major troubled members today is examined. A discussion of the sacrifices made by Italians to stem the financial crisis and repay the debt is followed by an evaluation of issues and factors contributing to Italy's frustrations with its EU membership. This examination emphasizes how close the affinity with a potential worst-case scenario is.

The thesis is composed of two parts. The first starts with a brief chapter on the Treaty of London. This section sets the stage by providing a background on the events that preceded the Treaty of Versailles. The next chapters discuss the events that took place in Paris during the Treaty of Versailles among the Italian delegation and the Allies, the rejection of the previously negotiated Italian territorial demands, and Italy's disappointment with the notion of a "mutilated victory." A chapter on the events that facilitated the rise of Benito Mussolini and the fascist movement and Italy's domestic and international policies during this time concludes the first part of the thesis.

The first chapter in the second part of the thesis offers an account of Italy's conditions after the defeat of fascism at the end of WWII. This section also explains the

reasons for Italy's strong commitment to the creation of the ECSC and later of the EEC. The subsequent chapters take on a more contemporary tone by discussing Italy's stance in the EU as one of the "Is" in the unattractive designation "PIIGS," as EU-watchers refer to the "problem states"—Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain. Italy's austerity program and Italian discourse on the austerity reforms is also examined. Issues of national and supranational character that highlight Italy's reasons for disappointment with the EU project are included in this chapter as well.

The conclusion underlines the strong parallelism with past events and attempts to formulate the steps needed to help avoiding a possible worst-case scenario for Italy and Europe will end this study. The concluding argument considers possible steps to circumvent unwanted consequences for Italy, Europe, and the world.

II. FROM THE LOWS OF UNIFICATION TO THE HIGHS OF WWI: FROM FASCISM TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Since the time of its unification in 1861, Italy's race for power and prosperity brought many crises. Dominated for 50 years by a liberal oligarchy, Italy had a very limited democracy and alienated masses with only a small sense of unity and Italian identity. One of the numerous attempts to build the nation a rhetorical theme was the need for a great military victory that would have finally brought the unity desired.

When Italy decided to enter World War I (WWI) on the side of England, France, and Russia, the internal public opinion was still divided among neutralists and futurists. Based on economic, social, and moral reasons, the neutralists saw the war as an enormous cost for a young Italy that did not have the resources and strength to fight among major powers. The futurists, on the other hand, rejected all the ideals of the Risorgimento, or unification, welcoming war as a mean to modernize and advance the nation. Initially bound to keep neutral or to fight at the side of Germany and Austro-Hungary by the Triple Alliance agreement, Italy entered WWI in 1915 after the negotiation of the Treaty of London on the Triple Entente.

Even on the winning side, the tremendous cost of WWI brought Italy to political, economic, and social collapse that, in turn, contributed to its interrupted process of democratization and the advent of dictatorship. The notion of a "mutilated victory" took hold among the Italians after Paris rejected the territorial arrangement previously negotiated between Italy and its allies under the Treaty of London and generated a deep feeling of frustration and betrayal among the Italians. The treatment of the Italian delegation by the leaders of the three major powers (France, England, and the United States) during the Paris' negotiations left a strong impression on a young Mussolini. He chalked such disregard up to the instability and weakness of the Italian government and thus undertook to restore the country's reputation through strong leadership and a new, muscular domestic and foreign policy.

Aided by the country's civil unrest of 1919 and 1920—in which exhausted and frustrated masses were asking for order, leadership, and prosperity, and compounded by

the resentment of a treaty that had deprived them of important territories while considering their war sacrifices inferior to those of others—the Italians started to march to the rhythm of fascism after the rise of Mussolini in 1922.

A. ITALY’S REASONS FOR ENTERING WWI

Italy’s main aspiration was to elevate its status to that of a world power. At the beginning of the twentieth century, to reach this objective, Italy’s strategy rested on the claim of regaining the Italian territories in the northeastern part of the country still under Austro-Hungarian dominion. Most importantly, Italy was set to gain effective control of the Adriatic by securing that part of the Adriatic Coast, especially Dalmatia and Istria, that made Italy an eastern “open door” and therefore vulnerable to potential invasions if in the hands of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire or other potential enemies.

When WWI broke out, Italy’s neutral stance was assured and maintained by the Parliament’s opposition to ratify Italy’s participation in a conflict that, according to the majority of Italians, had risen from interests unrelated to Italy and was set among the major European powers of Germany and Britain in their race for hegemony. While Italy’s participation to the war would have destroyed the young and fragile Italian system, the Parliament believed that territorial concessions could have been obtained instead through means of diplomacy.²⁷

Neutrality was overturned when Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra and Foreign Minister Sidney Sonnino signed the Treaty of London on April 26, 1915, secretly without informing the Italian Parliament and committing Italy to enter WWI a month before the signing of the Triple Entente with France, Britain, and Russia. Austria had failed to inform Italy of the ultimatum given to Serbia freeing Italy at once from its ties to

²⁷ Smith, *Modern Italy*: 255.

the purely defensive agreement with the Triple Alliance and from supporting Germany and Austria-Hungary in the event of an attack from other powers.²⁸

Mostly concerned with obtaining Italy's naval strategic objectives in the Adriatic Sea rather than nationalistic demands in the northeastern territories of the peninsula, and certain that a war would have eliminated Italy's increasing social unrest, Salandra and Sonnino signed the treaty that would have granted Italy, in case of victory, the right to annex the territories requested.²⁹ The negotiations with France and Britain proceeded rather easily because both French Minister of Foreign Affairs Théophile Delcassé and British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey expressed that "Italian intervention, not only in their own opinion, but in that of all their naval and military advisers, would have a decisive effect on the course of the war."³⁰ Delcassé "ascribes a capital importance to Italy's entry, assuming that Roumania, Bulgaria and Greece will follow, and is therefore willing to leave Grey a free hand in fixing Serbia's share of the coast and the extent of the

²⁸ Michele Rallo, *Il Coinvolgimento dell'Italia Nella Prima Guerra Mondiale e la "Vittoria Mutilata."* *La Politica estera Italiana e lo Scenario Egeo-Balcanico dal Patto di Londra al Patto di Roma, 1915–1924* [*The involvement of Italy in World War I and the "mutilated victory." Italian foreign policy and the Aegean-Balkan scenario from the treaty of London to the treaty of Rome, 1915–1924*] (Roma: Settimo Sigillo, 2007), 39.

²⁹ According to Seton-Watson,

Tirol to the line of the Brenner; Trieste, Gorizia and the littoral up to a line running from the Triglav, past Idria and the Schneeberg to Volosca; North Dalmatia as far as Cape Planka...all the islands from Cherso and Lussin in the north and to Lesina, Meleda, Curzola and Lagosta in the South; Valona and its district; the islands of the Dodecanese; and if Asia Minor is partitioned by the Allies, the province of Adalia. This last point is specifically justified by recognition of "the axiom that Italy is interested in maintaining the political balance of power in the Mediterranean." In the event of France and Britain acquiring German colonies in Africa, Italy also acquire the right of territorial compensation on the borders of Eritrea, Somaliland and Libya. A special clause bonds the Entente Powers to oppose the exclusion of the Holy See from any share in the peace settlement.

Robert William Seton-Watson, "Italian Intervention and the Secret Treaty of London," *The Slavonic Review* 13, no 14 (1926, December), 291–292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4202074>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

neutral zone.”³¹ For his part, Grey expressed that “Italian co-operation will be the turning point of the war, will greatly accelerate victory and will decide the co-operation of Roumania and other neutral states.”³²

The only resistance to Italian demands came from Russia, whose concerns were related to Serbian interests. By supporting Serbia, Russia was indirectly supporting its main interest of expanding into the Balkans and the Mediterranean. During the negotiations, Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov reported that “[Russia] cannot entirely sacrifice the interest of Serbia, their ally from the first moment.”³³ Further pressures from France and Britain induced Tsar Nicholas II to agree to the concessions, but it did not alleviate his concerns; the Tsar stated “Italian demands are at certain points in contradiction to the aspirations of the Slav people, whose sacrifice makes me fear for the future.”³⁴

On May 24, 1915, Italy declared war on Austria. With Italy on their side, France and Britain gained a new opening on the southern front; they could split the Central Powers by weakening them on the western and eastern fronts. By siding with France, Britain, and Russia, Italy would succeed in liberating Italian-speaking people from Austrian dominium, attaining a defined border in the Alps, and gaining final control of the Adriatic Sea.³⁵ During WWI, Italian troops engaged in a series of battles with Austria at the border between Austria-Hungary and Italy. The Italian offensive to recapture its territories ended in several defeats.

³¹ Ibid., 284

³² Ibid., 284.

³³ Ibid., 285.

³⁴ Ibid., 290.

³⁵ Smith, *Modern Italy*, 260.

Massive antiwar propaganda by the enemy³⁶ and at home contributed enormously to the demoralization of Italian soldiers, who were already disheartened by a long static war and being undertrained, short in munitions, and subjected to the poor generalship and “mystical sadism” of General Cadorna. They failed to overcome the Austrian defense. The additional arrival of German troops in aid of their allies ended with Italy’s devastating defeat at Caporetto in October 1917. A year later, during the battle of the River Piave in October 1918 and with the war coming to an end, Italian troops, under the leadership of General Diaz and the allied contingent in support, captured Trento and the port of Trieste.³⁷ By this time, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was falling apart.

B. THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

*“No nation made greater sacrifices in the European war than did Italy.”*³⁸

WWI ended on November 11, 1918. Europe was devastated. After the war, Italy—which had armed five million men and lost 700,000 of them in the conflict—was beset by enormous economic difficulties³⁹ and social unrest. Moreover, it found itself scrambling to preserve the territorial concessions previously agreed on by its allies with the Treaty of London. In fact, at the peace conference in Paris, Italy’s important contributions to the war were completely dismissed by the representatives of the major

³⁶ According to Merriam,

For many weeks an elaborate campaign had been carried on in Italy against the war. Many letters were sent to soldiers urging them to return to their homes. Bogus copies of Italian newspapers were printed, containing stories of discontent and disturbance pointing to revolution all over Italy, and finally certain Austrian troops were brought down from the Russian border for the purpose of fraternizing with the Italians. These Austrian troops had absorbed the Bolshevik ideas of immediate peace, and had endeavored to communicate it to their Italian enemies. And at a critical moment they had been able to open up a gap in a strategic point on the Italian line.

Chaler E. Merriam, “American Publicity in Italy,” *The American Political Science Review* 13, no 4 (1919): 542, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1944209>.

³⁷ Smith, *Modern Italy*, 275

³⁸ Merriam, “American Publicity in Italy,” 542.

³⁹ The financial drain of the war was enormous. Import values almost quintupled from 1914 to 1917, with the imports valued at just one-third of the exports. State expenditures multiplied, and overall the cost of war was calculated “at 148 billion lire twice the sum of all government expenditure between 1861 and 1913.” Smith, *Modern Italy*, 275–276.

three powers—Lloyd George from the UK, Georges Clemenceau from France, and Woodrow Wilson from the United States—who strongly opposed Italy’s demands on the Adriatic and other territories of vital importance to Italy’s national security.

The main obstacle to the Italian achievement was represented by the idealistic notions of American President Woodrow Wilson, who on the basis of his Fourteen Points, decided to defend the principle of nationality and self-determination of the people, leaving Dalmatia and the city of Fiume to the Slavs.

The Peace Conference took place in several phases and since the beginning it was characterized by peculiar ways to settle the peace among the nations. The concept of “nationalism,” the base for Wilson’s Fourteen Points and fundamental to the conference of Paris, was intended as a “national conscience” and very different from the concept of race and language found in Europe. Later events revealed how this peace was in reality inspired by punishment of the defeated nations and a politic of expansionism that was mainly in the interests of Great Britain and France. The unjust geographical divisions created by the great powers “were due not to the ignorance of their geographical knowledge but were committed purposely and knowingly, simply to punish and humiliate the nations defeated, aimed to steal their possessions, and to instill them fear of the big powers.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, a new way to negotiate the peace⁴¹ marginalized the defeated nations, leaving them out of any discussion that directly involved their national interests while forcing them to accept “peace treaties” already decided by the major victorious Powers and damaging to their security. David Andelman described the Treaty of Versailles as a future declaration of war because “[t]hose who were ignored and disdained at Versailles, [...] were those whose heirs and descendants would return and wreak their vengeance on us all.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Rallo, *The Involvement of Italy*, 94.

⁴¹ “Characteristic of the Peace of Paris was to break with the European tradition of reconcile nations thorough post-war conferences such as those of Westphalia, Berlin and Vienna, while replacing them with a new non-reconciliatory and punitive trend.” *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴² David A. Andelman, *A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 3.

Managed mainly by Britain, the United States, and France, the peace exhibited an Anglo-Saxon flavor that was defined by the economic strength of the major Powers with the United States in first place, then Britain, France, and last, Italy. Italy relied on its ex-allies for its food supplies and other resources, making it very vulnerable to their decisions. Britain and France did not waste any time taking advantage of the situation by “cynically betraying Italy and treating it as one of the defeated nations, using President Wilson to black mail it by refusing to give the necessary supplies in case of a refusal from Italy to sign a peace of humiliation.”⁴³ While Clemenceau was left free to roar at both Germany and Italy, behind the scenes Britain, eager to destroy Germany and profoundly adverse to Italy’s dynamism in both the Adriatic and the Mediterranean seas, was manipulating the situation to its advantage.

During the negotiations, France and Britain, who did not want an increased Italian influence in the Adriatic, and worried about a possible reconciliation between Italy and Germany, suddenly forgot the vital role they had bestowed on Italy at the beginning of the war—that is, the success of their operations against Germany and Austria—instead taking the opportunity to oppose Italy’s demands. Discrediting Italy for its initial neutrality, France and Britain opportunistically overlooked how much such neutrality had played in their favor: in the case of France, winning the Battle of the Marne, and in providing the British undisturbed access to the Mediterranean. According to Joseph-Jacques-Césaire Joffre, commander in chief of the French armies, “The neutrality of Italy had given France the victory of the Battle of the Marne, freeing ten French divisions otherwise employed to guard the Italian border.”⁴⁴

At the end of 1918, France and England were actively trying to influence territories by promoting the expansion of “friend nations” such as Greece, Serbia,

⁴³ Rallo, *The Involvement of Italy*, 91.

⁴⁴ Declaration of Joseph-Jacques-Césaire Joffre commander in chief (1914–16) of the French armies on the Western front. See Antonio Salandra, *La Neutralità Italiana (1914)* [Italian neutrality 1914] (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1914), 186.

Bohemia, Romania, and Poland previously negotiated by Italy with the Treaty of London. France and Serbia occupied spaces of Italian influence in the Balkans whereas Britain and Greece did the same in Asia Minor.

The official explanation for this sudden retreat included that the Treaty of London had not been ratified by the United States (which would have been difficult because the United States was not even participating in the war yet) and that the treaty of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne—with which France, Italy, and Britain defined the politics and the role of Italian troops in Asia Minor in 1917—had been not ratified by Russia (which had pulled out from the war before the negotiations because of its internal civil revolution).⁴⁵

The real motivations were to be found in Britain's perennial hostility toward a strong and powerful Italy. Furthermore, the United States, forced to abandon all its ideas of self-determination to avoid the embitterment of France and Britain, needed a scapegoat (Italy) to show to the world that the professed principles of nationality present in the Fourteen Points were maintained. In fact, Wilson's Fourteen Points were not imposed in the case of France, which was left free to persecute Germany; Serbia was free to colonize Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia; Greece could (and did) attack Albania, Bulgaria, and Turkey; Bohemia was free to take Slovakia, the Sudeten German population, and Ruthenia; and Britain free to colonize the Arabic regions and to make a plan to dismember Turkey completely.⁴⁶ But Wilson's main concerns did not rest as much with European territorial partitions as with making sure to accomplish Britain's desires.⁴⁷

When Italy requested to notify Wilson of Italian concerns on point nine of the program (related to the adjustment of Italian frontiers to recognizable lines of nationality), France and Britain promptly opposed on the basis that Wilson would not have allowed modifications to the Fourteen Points.⁴⁸ For Italy, it was not just a territorial

⁴⁵ Rallo, *The Involvement of Italy*, 103.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 103–104.

⁴⁷ Britain, as part of the Anglo-Saxon block with commune culture and interests, shared the same objective of world power dominance over Europe. *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

modification, but the freedom to rule over all the territories under Italian nationality and to establish a border that would have provided a defense from Austria. However, no problem was found in harming the rights of Italian self-determination at the northern border. Furthermore, losing the east bank of the Adriatic and maintaining Trieste as an open port would have jeopardized Italy's future national security. To this point, Wilson assured Italy that "The problem-solving function of the League of Nations would secure the security of the Adriatic zone."⁴⁹ Such a policy, however, did not work as an "alternative justification for the long and painful Italian war efforts. American policy was casting discredit on the liberal governing class and stoking the fires of domestic social and political conflict."⁵⁰

The partition of territories in Asia Minor was another point of bitter discussion as France and especially Britain once again opposed the division of territories with Italy, calling the Treaty of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne invalid. Free from Russian influence on the straits, Britain was trying to get rid of Italian influence in Asia Minor by transferring those territories to Greece, which represented no threat for Britain in the Aegean area.⁵¹ Additionally, Germany's colonial possessions and several Turkish provinces were divided between Britain, France, and Belgium, which were already rich in colonies while nothing was given to Italy.

At the end of the Peace Conference, Britain and France managed to keep their colonial empires. Italy's frontier was extended in the Alps from the Brennero to Monte Nevoso.⁵² Dalmatia and Fiume were not part of the concessions and ex- German colonies were distributed to other countries. In Africa, both Britain and France made minor concessions on the frontiers of Libya and Eritrea and the Egyptian-Libyan frontier and

⁴⁹ Rossini, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Myth in Italy*, 152–153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 152–153.

⁵¹ England opposed the Dodecanese and Rhodes islands as well on the basis that Italy's occupation of those islands established in 1912, had been "provisory." London pretended to ignore that the war had cancelled the temporary nature of the Italian occupation exactly like for Britain with Egypt and Cyprus. Rallo, *The Involvement of Italy*, 106.

⁵² Smith, *Modern Italy*, 280.

the Kenyan province of Jubaland.”⁵³ Such concessions did not justify Italy’s enormous sacrifice in the war. Profound discontent and frustration for the bad treatment reserved for the Italian delegation in Paris and the notion of a “mutilated victory” set in and rapidly filled the ranks of nationalists, war veterans, and other followers that later influenced the dramatic destiny of the nation.

Wilson’s Fourteen Points were tragically torn apart by the allies as the American President found himself having to deal with an old and rooted kind of politics very distant from his young, clear, and idealistic approach.

The great diplomats of the nineteenth century [...] talked often of humanitarian principles while practicing palace intrigue, moving armies and frontiers around the map of Europe as tin soldiers on a chalkboard. But such old habits die hard. And an innocent such as Wilson, insulated from the realities of European politics, came like a lamb to the slaughter.⁵⁴

C. THE RISE OF FASCISM: MUSSOLINI’S DREAMS OF AN EMPIRE

The unexpected outcome of the Treaty of Versailles brought immense disappointment among the Italians. After fighting and winning a devastating war on the side of her allies, Italy felt betrayed and defeated, exactly like Austria. This widespread frustration compounded by the poverty, high unemployment, inflation, and internal political instability among the Socialists, the Liberals, and the Christian-Democrats , contributed to the creation of antidemocratic and violent movements such as the *Arditi* and the *Fasci di Combattimento* composed mainly of nationalists whose aims were to establish a final internal order and revise the peace treaty. This last movement was formed by ex-Socialist Benito Mussolini, who had by then turned Nationalist.

In 1922, under Italy’s chaotic and unruly political situation, Mussolini threatened Italy’s King Victor Emmanuel with a “march into Rome” unless the government resigned and be replaced with a fascist government. The king, who was worried that the situation would escalate into a civil revolution and that his pro-fascist cousin, the Duke of Aosta, would replace him on the throne, invited Mussolini to Rome. Here the king gave

⁵³ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁴ Andelman, *A Shattered Peace*, 286.

Mussolini full power to lead Italy out of the chaos. The fascist troops gathered outside Rome and paraded triumphantly through the streets of the city.⁵⁵ These events marked the end of Italy's liberal democracy and the beginning of fascist Italy. Although the king's misjudgment precipitated this Italian tragedy, many people of every social class welcomed the rise of the fascist government and its promises to stop anarchic socialism and end an incompetent and corrupt parliament.⁵⁶

From the moment he achieved power, Mussolini aimed to improve the conditions of Italy domestically; internationally, he sought to raise Italy's prestige and influence among the major powers. Primary importance was given to the acquisition of resource-rich territories that would provide money and power to build up an army as well as lands for cultivation. Mussolini's domestic policy was defined by both autarchy and state intervention. The first would make Italy self-sufficient and free from reliance on external trade; the second would regulate the industrial and financial sectors. Through such reforms, he was able to increase cereal production up to the country's internal demand and to end the economic crisis by integrating public institutions and major private industries. Through controlling the bank system and the public funds, the state was able to organize a productive life for the nation. A series of institutions directing the needs of social assistance was also established.

Mussolini's efforts to improve Italy's financial situation were later affected by the French invasion of the Ruhr area, which followed Germany's default on its reparation payments to France for WWI. This situation made it difficult for Italy to import coal from

⁵⁵ Mussolini never marched into Rome. In fact "he crossed the Rubicon in a sleeping car, arriving the next morning at Rome station." Smith, *Modern Italy*, 322.

⁵⁶ According to Smith,

For students and ex-soldiers fascism meant a uniform and a job in the party hierarchy or the squad. Many white collar unemployed joined the nationalists, the futurists, the violence loving syndicalists, and other malcontents with a grudge to settle. Many peasants and small farmers had an animus against liberals who in sixty years had done so little for their welfare. Landowners wanted strikes broken and their laborers kept in order. Shopkeeper disliked competition from socialist co-operatives. Along with blatant plebeians [...] fascism had a large following among men of property [...]. Industrialists wanted a strong government to force through a new strike law. To keep wages low and raise tariffs for protection against the postwar slump [...]. Smith, *Modern Italy*, 312.

Germany and convinced Mussolini to take steps to ensure European peace for the sake of Italy's recovery. At the same time, his international policy focused on revising the Peace Treaties and the cancelling inter-allied war debts, a policy that was achieved after many years of quarrels and impossible arrangements. Another issue was the Washington Naval Treaty, in which countries agreed to stop a useless arms race through a series of naval disarmaments and supported by Italy as a necessary step in the achievement of war peace.⁵⁷

Mussolini was trying to have fascism recognized as a legitimate, antisocialist and anti-Bolshevik movement while, at the same time, supporting the increase of fascist movements everywhere. However, the international reaction to fascism was not positive, especially with the Anglo-Saxon countries, which believed that "the establishment of a totalitarian regime in any country was directly conducive to a policy of aggression"⁵⁸ and, more urgently, would endanger the current economic and financial system.

Mussolini was more concerned with prestige than power in his foreign policy. The Treaty of Versailles had damaged Italy's pride. The lack of consideration for Italy's war sacrifices and the final concession of only a part of the territories previously negotiated with the Allies had been regarded as a "mutilated victory." When in 1923 Italy invaded the Greek island of Corfu after the assassination of an Italian diplomat by Greek officials, international tension rose between Italy and Britain, which still operated as Greece's protector. Because Italy's influence in Greece represented a major threat to Britain's interests and dominance there, Britain promptly sided with Greece as a representative of the League of Nations, only to reinforce Mussolini's ideas that the League of Nations was "an instrument of the British and French governments to be used for their own interests. [...] each of these two powers has its satellites and its clients, and Italy's position in the League was until yesterday one of absolute inferiority."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Italy agreed in building warships with tonnage smaller (1.67) respect to that of Britain (5), the United States (5), and Japan (3). Villari, *The Liberation of Italy 1943–1947*, 16–17.

⁵⁸ Luigi Villari, *Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1956), 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–24.

In 1933, Mussolini's foreign policy changed because of the rise of Hitler, whom he considered a dangerous rival with aggressive expansionistic plans. Although Mussolini was favorable to an independent Austria that would have acted as a buffer against a militarily strong Germany, Hitler wanted Austria annexed to Germany. Britain and France expressed their support for Austrian independence against outside interference; their actions did not match their intentions, though, because they took no practical steps to reflect this desire. After learning of the Germans' arrival in Austria and the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss by the Nazis, Mussolini was the only one to criticize these actions by Hitler and to threaten him by sending troops into the Brenner Pass to avoid a possible German occupation. "If at that moment other democracies had intervened as well the destiny of the world would have been different."⁶⁰ When later, Italy, Britain, and France signed the Stresa Front an agreement of intervention in case of German occupation of Austria, "Britain did not support the agreement that, consequently, failed as Italy could not provide such security alone."⁶¹ Britain's fear of Germany and communist Russia made her adopt a policy of appeasement toward Germany in which Germany exploited its advantage by signing the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in 1935. This allowed Germany to increase its naval fleet despite the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Mussolini's hard foreign policy toward Hitler was not backed by Britain and France.

At the same time, Mussolini, convinced that peace could not be achieved unless France and Germany came to an understanding, proposed an agreement among the four powers (Italy, Germany, France, and Great Britain), called the Four-Power Pact. Mussolini was convinced that, at a time when the prestige of the League of Nations was at an all-time low and the Disarmament Conference was stalled, the agreement represented the best chance for peace in Europe. After a series of negotiations, the agreement subsequently failed because of France's and Britain's unwillingness to ratify

⁶⁰ See Paul Gentizon, *Difesa dell'Italia* [Defense of Italy] (Rocca S. Casciano: Cappelli, 1949), xxi, 407, <http://catalogo.casd.difesa.it/Thesaurus.htm?numrec=051036535921830>.

⁶¹ Villari, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 114.

it. France's refusal to compromise on German rearmament that would limit its action in case of a conflict and Britain's refusal to upset France along those same lines made the game unplayable.⁶²

Understanding that his policy of European peace would not find any collaboration from the Western Powers, Mussolini turned to Germany as the only viable alternative. According to Villari, "British and French indifference or hostility to his peace efforts and to his attempts to protect Austria from Nazi domination forced him reluctantly into the Rome-Berlin Axis."⁶³

Motivated by desires of expansion—because of a substantial population growth and of revenge for the defeat of Italy during the Battle of Adowa in 1896—in 1935, Mussolini turned his attention to Ethiopia. An incident at the border between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland provided Mussolini an excuse for occupation. The League of Nations condemned the Italian invasion and voted for implement economic sanctions against Italy. Germany, Austria, and Hungary voted against the sanctions; France, which had previously stipulated an agreement⁶⁴ with Italy regarding Italian policy in East Africa and giving Italy "a free hand" in dealing with the Abyssinian Crisis in Ethiopia, did not support the policy either. France's initial intervention in favor of Italy upset Britain, which was trying to damage fascist Italy. However, once pressured to decide between Italy and Britain in view of a war with Germany, it was not difficult for France to side with Britain. Other League powers were not prone to apply any sanctions either until threatened to do so by Britain. The United States, which also opposed a fascist regime, imposed an embargo on the export of arms for both countries, which was subsequently applied only to Italy when "oil concession in Ethiopia was granted by the Negus to an

⁶² Ibid., 108.

⁶³ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁴ The Italian-French agreement signed in Rome in 1935 by Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini and French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval.

American firm.”⁶⁵ Villari states, “In her anti-Italian policy, Great Britain secured the full support only of Soviet Russia, which hoped to strike down fascism by means of a war.”⁶⁶

Meanwhile, even before the sanctions had been decreed, the British were getting creative in trying to generate further problems to trap Italy into a war against them. According to Villari,

[...] [T]he moment the delegates were jockeyed into decreeing sanctions, the button would be pressed and Italy blockade. [...] Italy] would be forced into some action capable of being interpreted as aggression against the League measure, and then France and other powers would be forced into supporting anything Great Britain might decide.⁶⁷

Although the sanctions were never applied because of a general lack of agreement, Mussolini’s actions in Ethiopia were harshly condemned by the same powers that just recently had conquered almost the entire world through the same means and techniques.

The Italian threat was high for the British in the Mediterranean as well. Later British attempts to improve relations with Italy ended in an agreement of free access and circulation in the Mediterranean and collaboration between the two nations and by Britain recognizing Italy’s equalitarian position in the Mediterranean. Things turned nasty when despite the agreement, Britain restarted a heavy rearmament program and concentrated a large number of British forces in the Suez Canal. That Britain at the same time was courting Hitler did not help Mussolini’s anxiety. These actions pushed Mussolini closer and closer to Germany. According to Villari, “If [Italy] could not find support in Great Britain or France, it had to count more and more on Germany.”⁶⁸

Between 1934 and 1938, relations between Germany and Italy grew substantially thanks to the Spanish Civil War, which helped bring together Mussolini’s and Hitler’s hate for Marxism and shape the relationship into an alliance. In 1937, the Rome-Berlin

⁶⁵ Villari, *Italian Foreign Policy*, 152.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

Axis agreement was reached between Germany, Italy, and Japan and was formalized in 1939 under the Pact of Steel. Paul Gentizon stated that, “The Rome-Berlin Axis was forged in Paris and London. It bears the trademark ‘made in England.’”⁶⁹ Later, Italy offered to

drop the Pact of Steel in December 1939 fell on deaf ears in London [...] Rather than deal, the British tightened their blockade of Italy began moving fleet units in to the Mediterranean ...and persuaded the French that any concession to Italy would only create an impression of [Allied] weakness.⁷⁰

Italy was not prepared for a war and Mussolini was trying to delay one because he knew that Italy would suffer great consequences from it. The problem was not whether Italy would have entered the war but when and how. This started a period of Italian neutrality, but Hitler’s concerns did not rest with Italy. He was ready to move the war to Poland; Mussolini’s worries were just the fears of a subordinate ally.

In 1940, Mussolini decided to join the war on the side of Germany; this decision had been shaped not only by French and British hostility, but also by fear of avoiding “being reduced to a ‘Switzerland multiplied tenfold’ and becoming a German satellite. Mussolini felt it absolutely necessary to use the war to improve Italy’s position.”⁷¹ Furthermore, Italy was not a great power like Britain and once war broke out and all diplomatic negotiations were cut, there was not much that Italy could do. Although Britain, the United States, and Russia had lands, resources, and isolation, Italy—and France and Germany as well—lacked all of the above.

When Germany attacked Poland, France, England, and later the United States had their pretext finally to enter the war against Germany, and then Italy in 1940. Because democracies do not declare war, these countries needed a pretext to fight against the totalitarian states of Germany and Italy. The U.S. propensity for the war was reflected by American President Franklin Roosevelt’s clear communications to France and England,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 186.

⁷⁰ James J., Sadkovich, “Understanding Defeat: Reappraising Italy’s Role in World War II,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 1 (1989, January), 30.

⁷¹ Ibid., 30.

telling them to stop any further compromise with the totalitarian states and of the U.S. intention to abandon its isolationist policy to fight at their sides.⁷²

The war ended in tragedy for Italy and the entire continent. Mussolini's dreams of empire, prestige, and power for Italy resulted in its destruction, but up to 1935 he had been the only statesman in Europe who had the strength to stand up to Hitler. His alliance with Nazi Germany can be considered the result of France's and Britain's hostile attitudes and to the soft lines they employed when dealing with Germany. Perhaps Italy's ambitions were surpassed only by the thirst for power and the egoistic interests of other powers that, in the end, contributed substantially to turning Europe into an enormous pile of ruins and shattered people.

D. ITALY BETWEEN THE RUBBLE AND THE HOPE: THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

The war, followed by foreign occupation and utter destruction, had changed the political landscape of Europe. After the disenchantment and harsh realities of the conflict set in, all of the European Powers—or what was left of them—decided to never wage war again and to avoid further destruction and death on European soil. This initial plan, the Schuman Plan,⁷³ known also as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), was created with the intent to merge European countries' economies through collaboration and cooperation. This arrangement would create a common market for steel and coal among the member states, neutralizing further competition for natural resources. In particular, by eliminating old rivalries between France and Germany, another war would become materially unthinkable. The initial founding members were France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries. The ECSC constituted the first supranational European institution that would later become the Economic European Community (EEC) and ultimately today's European Union (EU).⁷⁴

⁷² See rapport of the Polish ambassador in Washington Jerzy Potocki, January 16, 1939.

⁷³ Proposed by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman in 1950 and inspired by French political economist and diplomat Jean Monnet. Monnet is considered the founding father of the European Union.

⁷⁴ Frederic J. Franssen, "Monnet's Europe, 1943–1954," *The Supranational Politics of Jean Monnet: Ideas and Origins of the European Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 87–113.

In Italy, the postwar period marked another period of violent social and political unrest amid an economy reduced to the minimum by a broken infrastructure, high unemployment, nonexistent military, cities and villages reduced to ashes, and a provisional, still inefficient government imposed by the allies. At the beginning of 1950, joining the ECSC seemed the best way for Italy overcome this situation and to bring back life into the country. However, Italian disagreements on the composition and administration of the ECSC's administrative bodies arose as the treaty favored the interests of France and West Germany over the interests of Italy and the Benelux countries. According to Boffa,

In the council of ministers, each country will be represented by one delegate, but when it comes to making decisions, voting will [...] allows the two 'large' countries always to outweigh the four 'small' ones: in a ballot in which two votes each are cast by France and West Germany for one side, while Italy Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg vote for the other, the former will win [...] Foreign Ministers of other countries will be able to take decisions on Italy's industry that they judge to be to their own advantage, without any representative of our own country being able to express any effective reservations.⁷⁵

Italian Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza, a strong advocate of a pro-European policy and convinced that the European community would have helped Italy revamp its industry, which had been deprived of both foreign and domestic markets after the war, signed the treaty making Italy a founding member. In March 1957, under the Treaty of Rome, Italy became a member of the EEC, the predecessor of the EU. The Cold War divided Europe into East and West, and the leading nations of continental Western Europe came together in the EEC to eliminate their antagonism and develop the political and economic means to solve Europe's challenges. To achieve this end, they agreed to relinquish part of their sovereignty in favor of the community.

The vision of a united Europe and of Italy's participation to the EEC had always been strongly supported by Alcide De Gasperi, Italy's prime minister from 1945 to 1953 and one of the EU's founding fathers. De Gasperi's enthusiasm for a Europe without frontiers stemmed from the "ungovernability" of Italy that were traceable back to its

⁷⁵ Boffa, "Schuman Plan demotes Italy to colonial status."

historical and cultural roots. De Gasperi stated, “I must have a united Europe to absorb in her vast bosom three problems we Italians alone will never be able to solve and on which our future depends.”⁷⁶ He underlined the main causes of Italy’s “ungovernability” the interference of the church with Italian politics, Italy’s chronic unemployment, and the threat of communism. Other critical concerns that further pressured the prime minister to support a united Europe were Italy’s fascist past and appalling defeat after World War II, which he strongly hoped would be forgotten in the context of a united Europe, and the hope that Italians would be more prone to respect European laws and authorities than they did their own. Italy’s participation in the EEC represented a vigorous step toward much-needed economic, social, political, and cultural progress. In 1957, Italy signed the EEC deal with the knowledge and intent that European integration would have helped it to get rid of all its troubles.

Through the establishment of the EEC, tariff barriers were dismantled among the member countries, giving way to free circulation of people, goods, and capital. In time, this economic integration was enlarged to include other European countries and paved the way for the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 that included the creation and adoption of a unique currency, the euro, as the common monetary system to be used among the participants of the new EU. The treaties and agreements among the EU countries have contributed meaningfully to the success of the EU project over the past 60 years. Peace has been established through common economic markets, improved living standards, and strengthened core European values such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law, human rights, and social justice.

⁷⁶ Luigi Barzini, “The Flexible Italian,” *The Europeans* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 191–192.

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III. THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

Despite the major efforts to prioritize and maintain cohesion among European Union (EU) members and the notable successes along the way, in recent years a wave of discontent has swept Europe, bringing support for the EU project to its lowest level across all its member states. The Pew Research Center revealed that, although all member countries no longer see the EU in a favorable light, the most discontented country seems to be France with a 14 percent increase in negative impressions compared with the 2012 rate. Second highest was Italy, which reported 11 percent more discontent respondents in 2013 over 2012; then came Greece, with a seven percent increase; Spain, nine percent; and the Czech Republic with two percent.

Although these feelings reflect the EU's failure to provide the prosperity promised, member states, particularly in southern Europe, see the EU's political maneuvers as deliberate decisions taken to the detriment of the suffering states. This view is especially prevalent in Italy, where this frustration is also held against the national government for its incapacity to deal with Germany's austerity impositions, which have substantially hindered any prospect for Italy's economic recovery.

The distance between the EU and its citizens is compounded by the lack of accountability of EU institutions and fuels the rise of antiestablishment movements across Europe. Such movements highlight the persistence of a democratic deficit in the EU as well as the impossibility of participating on important referenda—for instance, the “Fiscal Compact.”⁷⁷

The crisis has also challenged EU integration, creating further distance among countries, especially between the northern and southern member states, where a lack of solidarity has confirmed that EU integration is mainly a project of the elite.

⁷⁷ The Fiscal Compact aims to strengthen fiscal discipline through the introduction of more automatic sanctions and stricter surveillance, and in particular through the “balanced budget rule.” It was finalized by all EU member states with the exception of the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic on January 30, 2012. “The Fiscal Compact Ready to Be Signed,” European Council, <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/home-page/highlights/the-fiscal-compact-ready-to-be-signed-%282%29>.

Italy's frustration toward Brussels today stands in clear contraposition with its feelings of hope at the beginning of the EU project 60 years ago as well as the intense sense of pride in qualifying for Eurozone membership only a couple of decades ago. Now, pride and hope have given way to bitter disappointment. Italy is increasingly inclined to seek its unity and prosperity on a path that may not run through the EU.

A. EUROPEAN DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE EU

How far has the EU diverged from its original purpose—of bringing peace, unity, and economic integration—that Italy no longer feels entirely at home in the institution that it helped create? The current economic crisis in the EU has severely hurt Europe on the financial, political, and social levels. The consequences have had sweeping effects, well beyond the monetary realm, in the past five years, including the loss of jobs and services, termination of economic investments, and an alarming increase in poverty. Italy, one of the founding “Six” that gave life to the European Economic Community (EEC), is now finding itself on the “problem” list in the austere new Europe. In response, Italians, among others, aspire to new heights of “Euroskepticism.”

Padgen seems to think that this Euroskepticism does not relate only to such problems as the EU's monetary sphere or other initiatives, but also to the complete rejection by Europeans of a supranational involvement plan by the EU institutions. He states, “If the European Union is to work at all, Europeans will have to accept that it is perfectly possible to be, say, French or Spanish while being ruled from Brussels or Strasbourg by multinational institutions,”⁷⁸ which seems both probable and pending. Other EU observers, however, argue that the concept of European integration is still rather idealistic among the Europeans masses. For example, Tony Judt writes that “[...] however desirable in principle, an ever-closer bonding of the nations of Europe is impossible in practice, and therefore imprudent to promise it.”⁷⁹ He argues that it was not idealism to bring together the nations of Europe but rather specific conditions after the world wars and during the Cold War, in which the desired outcomes were long peace,

⁷⁸ Padgen, *The Idea of Europe*, 21.

⁷⁹ Judt, *A Grand Illusion?*, 129.

prosperity stability, and security. Today, these conditions no longer exist and although the outcomes have been achieved, there are no implications for minimal cooperation among EU nations.⁸⁰

According to George Ross, the response of the European political elite to the crisis is “more Europe.” Ross’s extensive interviews with EU officials reveal their views of the EU as being dominated by the interests of member states’ respective governments, which during the recent economic crisis substantially diminished their commitment to the European project. In the view of the European elite, even if the necessary steps taken to revitalize the EU—for instance, the Lisbon agenda and the admission of 12 new member states—have caused further disagreements and mistrust among Europeans, the legitimacy crisis that characterizes the EU is a sign of Europeans’ discontent with their national governments. The elites still insist that ultimately, the “EU institutions are appropriate for the tasks of European integration.”⁸¹

The people increasingly believe otherwise. According to the Eurobarometer—a series of public opinion surveys—in the past five years, the amount of Italians who are not willing to believe in the EU or trust the policies made by Brussels has gone from 28 percent to 53 percent.⁸²

People are not satisfied with the ongoing situation in their countries and think that conditions will not improve as Brussels’ austerity programs strangle the life out of their economies and unevenly distribute the impacts across the EU. Only Germany with its strong economy can still afford a more positive outlook.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 5–6.

⁸¹ George Ross, *The European Union and Its Crisis: Through the Eyes of the Brussels Elite* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 96.

⁸² Gian Micalessin, “Distrutta in Cinque Anni la Fiducia nell’Europa Unita” [Destroyed in five years the confidence in a united Europe], April 26, 2013, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/esteri/distrutta-cinque-anni-fiducia-nelleuropa-unita-911740.html>.

B. AUSTERE? OR BLEAK?

In southern Europe, it really is the economy. Pessimism predominates the analysis of past, present, and future policies. According to the 2013 Pew Research Center's report, such countries as Italy, Spain, and Greece have seen their economies plummet, with severe complications that reverberate in people's everyday lives.⁸³ Unemployment has reached new record heights—"in January 2013 [it] was 27.2 percent in Greece, and in March [it] was 11.5 percent in Italy and 26.7 percent in Spain"⁸⁴—leaving people, especially the young, well-educated, and skilled generations, with meager prospects for their future and forcing them to migrate in search of a job to other European countries that have better economic conditions—for example, Germany and Switzerland.

Italy is one of the EU countries that best represents and conveys the feelings of mistrust and disillusionment with both its national political leaders and the EU project. According to the World in Time of Austerity's report on Global Rights 2013,

Italy is a deeply hurt country. Families can no longer pay for food, healthcare, rent, utility and heating bills. Poverty has increased dramatically with 121 deaths reported between 2012 and the first three months of 2013 directly tied to a worsening of the economic conditions.⁸⁵

The International Monetary Fund reports that "Italy's GDP [gross domestic product] decreased by 2.4 percent in 2012...The unemployment reached 10.7 percent on average in 2012 and further to 11.6 percent in February 2013."⁸⁶ Additional data from the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Pew Research Center, "The Southern Challenge" in *The New Sick Man of Europe: The European Union*, May 13, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/05/13/the-new-sick-man-of-europe-the-european-union/#the-southern-challenge>, 5.

⁸⁵ Luigi Franco, "Crisi, Italia Ferita dall'Austerità: Più Poveri, Meno Welfare. Ma il Pil Non Sale," (Crisis, Italy hurt from Austerity—more poor less welfare. The GDP Decreases), *Il Fatto*, June 4, 2013, <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/06/04/crisi-italia-ferita-dall-austerita-piu-poveri-meno-welfare-pil-non-sale/615586>.

⁸⁶ Vittorio Umberto Grilli, "International Monetary and Financial Committee," International Monetary Fund, April 20, 2013, <http://www.imf.org/external/spring/2013/imfc/statement/eng/ita.pdf>.

Istituto Nazionale di Statistica also reported that the economy will shrink another 1.4 percent in 2013 and unemployment will rise to 12.3 percent in 2014.⁸⁷

Like many of their neighbors, Italians are pessimistic regarding the future economic conditions of their country and believe that their children will have to battle with an even worse situation. Data from 2013 report an increase of 2 percent in people describing the economic situation as “very bad” compared with data from 2012 and a 30 percent increase from 2009.⁸⁸ Unemployment has sky-rocketed. The outlook for new graduates is gloomy because they are competing for a handful of low-skilled jobs that pay no more than €400 a month and are in black market conditions—or for no job at all.⁸⁹ The impossibility of finding employment has promoted anger and frustration, which are rapidly giving way, especially among the youngest, to anti-European sentiments.

C. THE EURO: A BACKWARD RACE?

The Maastricht Treaty in 1991 was supposed to represent the first step in the formation of a European monetary union further contributing to the European countries’ political union. Among Italy’s reasons to participate in the unified monetary system were more stability in the lira’s exchange rate, help in controlling inflation, and elevating Italian prestige at the eyes of the international community. In the words of Foreign Ministry Renato Ruggiero in 2001, “If we did not participate in the EMS [European monetary system], this would show that we are unwilling to accept the challenge...of being a fully European country.”⁹⁰

The creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU) was supposed to be a finish line but it has revealed itself as a starting point instead. In fact, if anything, it is a

⁸⁷ “Le Prospettive per l’Economia Italiana” [The prospective for Italian economy], *Istat.it.—Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*, <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/89447>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Concita De Gregorio, “Cronache dall’Italia in Crisi: Così Siamo Diventati Poveri” [Coverage from Italy in crisis: we have become poor] *La Repubblica*, January 24, 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/economia/2013/01/24/news/cronache_dall_italia_in_crisi_cos_siamo_diventati_poveri-51171453/.

⁹⁰ James I. Walsh, *European Monetary Integration & Domestic Politics: Britain, France and Italy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher Inc., 2000), 36.

backward race because of the economic disadvantaged created by the EMU's structural system shortcomings. Although initially politicians felt confident enough to overlook the required economic conditions that would have taken into consideration countries' diverse economic structures, the differences in their productivity levels and their governing policies, the project in the end revealed a crisis diminishing substantially Europeans' support for the euro.⁹¹

Before the euro, Italy's industrial production was number one compared with other state members of the Eurozone. In 2012, after the Italian adoption of the euro, Italy's industrial production was driven down just before that of Spain, favoring instead Germany, which was able to raise its production from the bottom to first place.⁹²

As Figure 1 shows, measuring the competitiveness of the major European countries in the Eurozone before and after the euro makes it clear how, before 2002, Italy and Germany were similarly competitive.

⁹¹Johan Van Overtveldt, *The End of the Euro: The Uneasy Future of the European Union* (Chicago: Agate Publishing, 2011), 7.

⁹² Banca d'Italia Relazione Annuale, "Andamenti Macroeconomici, Politiche di Bilancio e Politica Monetaria nell'Area dell'Euro" [Bank of Italy annual report, macroeconomics, fiscal policy and monetary policy in the Eurozone] 53, Roma, May 31, 2013, http://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/relann/rel12/rel12it/rel_2012.pdf.



Figure 1. Industrial production of the major countries of the Eurozone. (1) Index: 2005 = 100; seasonally adjusted data. (2) The aggregate of the Eurozone refers to the composition of 17 countries.⁹³

However, as Figure 2 shows, in 2011 Germany and France led the way.

⁹³ *Bank of Italy Annual Report 2013*, Elaboration process on data Istat and Eurostat, 53, http://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/relann/rel12/rel12it/rel_2012.pdf.



Figure 2. Indexes of competitiveness of the major countries in the Eurozone and the REAL EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE RATE of the euro based on prices at production of manufactured goods. (Index: 1999 = 100). (1)
An increase reports a loss of competitiveness. The indexes of competitiveness are calculated for 61 competitor countries (including the members of the Eurozone as well); the real effective exchange rate of the euro is calculated on the 20 competitor countries external to the Eurozone.⁹⁴

According to the Italian financial and economic newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, so far all attempts to negotiate with Angela Merkel on terms to share the burden of belonging to the euro have resulted in nothing.⁹⁵ In the meantime, the problems of the peripheral countries have been compounded by the enlarged gap between the German Bund and the yield of member states' state funds with worse public debt.⁹⁶ *Il Sole 24 Ore* reports:

⁹⁴ Ibid., 51.

⁹⁵ Vito Lops, "Ecco Quanto La Germania Guadagna Dalla Crisi. Bilancia Dei Pagamenti Piu' Che Duplicata con L'Euro" [Here it is how much Germany benefits from the crisis. The balance of payments has more than doubled with the euro]. *Il Sole 24 ORE*, June 6, 2012, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/finanza-e-mercati/2012-06-06/ecco-quanto-germania-guadagna-105240.shtml?uuid=AbL304nF>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Germany is technically benefiting in financial and economic terms from this crisis. In the last days , the German Bund for 10 years priced a yield of 1.345 per cent , the lowest in history [...] very good in times of crisis. [...] This while the neighbors in the close South, flounder, forced to pay record high yield on their debts. Furthermore, Germany that in 1997 paid for Bund of 10 years a 5.5 per cent yield...works very well with the euro. [...] from 1989 to 2000 (pre-euro phase) the balance of payments for Germany was of negative 126 million. From 2001 to 2012 (euro phase, including the current crisis of the periphery countries) jumped to a positive 1.791 million. Italy before the euro showed a positive balance of payments (53 million) against negative 338 in the euro phase.⁹⁷

In the euro phase, Italy can no longer issue its currency and is forced instead to take loans from the markets of international private capitals with interests established by them. Italy was doing well on its own before the euro; ten years after the euro Italy is among the “PIIGS”

Nobel-winning economist Professor Pissarides, once a supporter of the EMU, now believes that

The euro should be either dismantled in an orderly way or leading members should do the necessary as fast as possible to make it growth and employment-friendly; “[...] The policies pursued now to steady the euro are costing Europe jobs and they are creating a lost generation of educated young people. This is not what the founding fathers promised.⁹⁸

Today, the ambitious EU project seems to have backfired because it has caused a division within Europe by hindering the economic growth of the Eurozone (only 0.1 percent in the third quarter of 2013) and fueling more unemployment (12.1 percent, or more than 19 million people).⁹⁹

D. THE POLITICAL BACKLASH

Italy’s stand on austerity programs was exceptionally clear after the February 2013 elections: “Italians this week have voted their discontents, their divisions, and their

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Prynne, “Dismantle the Euro.”

⁹⁹ Ibid.

fantasies. Not so very different, then, from other European electorates.”¹⁰⁰ In Italy, the rise of the antiestablishment Five Star Movement (M5S) as a third force behind the main parties of the center-left (Democratic Party) and the center-right (People of Freedom with Silvio Berlusconi) is a sign of Italians’ strong desire for political change at both the domestic and EU levels. Although at the domestic level people saw the M5S as a chance to abolish an internal system marked by corruption and inefficiency, the message at the EU level was pretty clear as well: rejection of austerity and Germany’s impositions.

Two years of stringent austerity policies have been imposed by a government of unelected Italian technocrats between 2011 and 2013 by the economist and Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti to implement austerity programs mandated by authorities of the EU in Brussels. These programs have led Italy to the verge of collapse and to a historical record high rate of unemployment and static growth. These policies have worsened the already precarious economic conditions of the Italians who, through their last elections, declared their opposition to austerity rules by “rebell[ing]” against Brussels’ impositions: “Italian voters delivered a rousing anti-austerity message and a strong rebuke to the existing political order in national election on Monday...”¹⁰¹

With 11 percent unemployment, thousands of small firms closing in 2012, and a million graduates leaving the country, the Italians favored candidates who would reject, and not negotiate with, Brussels’s mandate.¹⁰² The February 2013 elections confirmed through the success of the antiestablishment 5SM—which won 8,689,168 votes (25.6 percent) and 108 seats for the Chamber of Deputies and 7,285,648 votes (23.8 percent) and 54 seats for the Senate¹⁰³—not only strong Italian resentment toward austerity, but also the confusion and inefficiency of the elected political class in forming a coalition and

¹⁰⁰ “Italian Elections: Austerity Challenged,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/feb/26/italian-elections-austerity-challenged-editorial>.

¹⁰¹ Rachel Donadio, “Split Vote Sends One Clear Message in Italy: No to Austerity,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/26/world/europe/Italy-elections.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ “Risultati Politiche” [Results political elections], *Il Sole 24 ORE* <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/speciali/2013/elezioni/risultati/politiche/static/italia.shtml>.

establishing a much-needed government to stop the country from falling further toward the financial abyss. In spring 2013, the country's lack of confidence in its political leadership increased to 21 percent compared with 17 percent in 2012; in other words, more than one in five Italians believed in 2103 that their politicians have done a "very bad job" governing the country.

According to the M5S, "The Italians have subjected themselves to European control in exchange for membership in the single currency and Five-Star will push for a referendum on leaving the euro."¹⁰⁴ The votes forecast for M5S at the next European election is 25 percent. The Northern League will add another five percent by proposing votes in favor of euro regions, and a third of Italian votes are likely to go to parties hostile to the EU.¹⁰⁵ Italy's general disappointment toward the power of Brussels and the euro is represented also by the "Pitchforks" movement of farmers, artisans, small business owners, the unemployed, and students who want to opt out of the euro altogether, claiming that this model of Europe took "their dignity, their houses, everything, reducing them to desperation."¹⁰⁶

The trend is EU-wide, as the May 2014 European elections demonstrated, with their anti-euro, anti-Brussels, and anti-austerity objectives. In France, for instance, the Front National party led by Marine Le Pen caused a big "political earthquake" with a full victory of 25 percent and 24 seats" at the European Parliament.¹⁰⁷ The Dutch Geert Wilders Party for Freedom (PVV) showed a decrease of electoral share. According to the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad:

¹⁰⁴ Jill Lawless, "Europhobes Gain Clout: Xenophobic, Right-Wing and Anti-EU Parties Catch on as Elections Near," *National Post*, May 17, 2014, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/05/17/europhobes-gain-clout-xenophobic-right-wing-and-anti-eu-parties-catch-on-as-elections-near/>.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Silvia Sperandio, "Forconi, chi c'e' Dietro la Rivolta? Ecco le Cinque Ragioni per cui Sono Scesi in Piazza" [Pitchforks, who are they? Here five reasons why they are revolting], *Il Sole 24 ORE*, December 11, 2013, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2013-12-10/-forconi-chi-c-e-dietro-rivolta-ecco-cinque-ragioni-cui-sono-scesi-piazza-172156.shtml?uuiid=ABnBcEj>.

¹⁰⁷ "Euro sceptic 'Earthquake' Rocks EU Elections," *BBC News Europe*, May 26, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27559714>.

Wilders, the tipped front runner, came fourth, behind the right-wing liberals (VVD [Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie/People's Party for Freedom and Democracy]). According to the exit polls, Wilders earned 12.2 percent of the votes, which adds up to three seats in the European Parliament.¹⁰⁸

Although Wilders' electoral fortunes have normalized, "the PVV remains popular in national polls and its anti-immigrant and anti-EU message continues to resonate with a considerable segment of the Dutch electorate."¹⁰⁹ As in France, the United Kingdom has shaken the election polls with the right-wing UK Independent Party winning with 27.5 percent of the votes and gaining 24 seats in the EU Parliament,¹¹⁰ Austria's far-right Freedom Party advanced to take 20 percent of the vote,¹¹¹ and Greece's (where extremist movements have formed before than anywhere) far left and anti-establishment parties also did well, with anti-bailout Syriza gaining 26 percent of the vote.¹¹² In Spain, "the two main parties [...] lost votes to other left-leaning parties, as well as to new groups led by Podemos, or We Can, a movement formed only a few months ago to oppose austerity cuts;"¹¹³ in Germany, the victory of traditional parties saw seven percent of the votes go to the nascent Euroskeptic party, the Alternative for Germany,¹¹⁴ whereas Poland was

¹⁰⁸ Although exit polls do not explain the decreased percentage of anti-EU votes in the Netherlands, Wilders blamed the low election turnout of 37 percent stating that "the Netherlands has not become a country of Europhiles." "Has Wilders lost his mojo? What the Dutch results of the European elections mean," May 23, 2014, <http://www.nrc.nl/verkiezingen/2014/05/23/what-the-results-of-the-european-elections-in-the-netherlands-mean/>.

¹⁰⁹ Armen Hakhverdian, "Exit Polls and Crowd-Sourced Results Have Wilders Losing in European Elections," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/23/european-elections-2014-exit-polls-and-crowd-sourced-results-have-euroskeptics-losing-in-the-netherlands/>.

¹¹⁰ "Farage: UKIP has 'Momentum' and is Targeting More Victories," *BBC News*, May 26, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-27567744>.

¹¹¹ Henry Samuel, "EU Elections 2014: France's Hollande Holds Crisis Talks on Record Far-Right Win," *The Telegraph*, May 26, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/10856377/Marine-Le-Pen-wins-record-victory-in-French-elections.html>.

¹¹² "Eurosceptic 'Earthquake' Rocks EU Elections," *BBC News*, May 26, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27559714>.

¹¹³ Alan Cowell and James Kanter, "Established Parties Rocked by Anti-Europe Vote," *The New York Times*, May 26, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/world/europe/established-parties-rocked-by-anti-europe-vote.html?_r=0.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

rocked by the “surprisingly strong far-right populist New Right party winning about 7.6 percent of the vote and four seats in the EU Parliament.”¹¹⁵ In Italy, although the anti-EU 5SM came in second (with 21.16 percent) to the Democratic Party—which also calls for more pro-growth policies—the right-wing Northern League saw an increase in votes up to 6.16 percent, allowing it to bring representatives to the EU Parliament.¹¹⁶ By establishing solid electorates, these parties and movements have the power now to shift mainstream political debate representing a big political challenge to the process of European integration. Their agenda is opposed to immigration, political and economic integration, international capitalism, globalization, and current socioeconomic and political systems, and is pro-national identity.

E. A REMOTE LEVIATHAN: LEGITIMACY AND IDENTITY CRISIS

In sum, the problem in Italy, as in many EU states that share this dim view of Europe, is a crisis of legitimacy and identity. The dual identity as both Europeans and national citizens is not well administered at the European level because they cannot vote directly in matters of significance to them. This democratic deficit is due to the EU and its various bodies’ lack of democracy and inaccessibility to ordinary citizens.¹¹⁷

Peter Mair states that political elites have created distance between the EU institutions and its citizens taking the decision-making process away from their national parliaments on any issue that affect their lives. Accomplices of this trend are, according to Meier, politicians who “want to divest themselves of responsibility for potentially

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. See also: “Europee, il Pd di Renzi vola oltre il 40%. M5S al 21%. Sorpresa Lega: 6%. FI al 16%. Borsa in festa, spread sotto quota 160” [European elections: Renzi’s democratic party flies beyond 40%. 5SM gains a 21%. Surprise from the Northern League: 6%. Forza Italia gains a 16%. The stock exchange celebrates. Spread below a quota of 160], May 26, 2014, <http://qn.quotidiano.net/politica/2014/05/25/1070317-elezioni-europee-risultati.shtml>, and Massimo Razzi, “E’ il Pd dei record. A pezzi M5S e Forza Italia. Lega Nord ok, Ncd e Tsipras col quorum” [The democratic party touches the record. Shattered the 5SM and Forza Italia. Northern League ok, Ncd and Tsipras achieve the quorum], R.it, http://www.repubblica.it/speciali/politica/elezioni-europee2014/2014/05/26/news/exit_poll_e_proiezioni_vola_il_pd_male_1_m5s_crolla_forza_italia_bene_1_a_lega-87206830/.

¹¹⁷ See Schmitter, *How to Democratize the European Union... And Why Bother?;* Milev, “A Democratic Deficit’ in the European Union?,” Rohrschneider, “The Democratic Deficit,” Moravcsik, “In Defense of the Democratic Deficit,” Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*.

unpopular policy decisions and cushion themselves against possible voter discontent.”¹¹⁸ This development has robbed the citizens of their voices creating a “lack of ‘demos,’ and hence, by definition, [the EU] cannot function democratically.”¹¹⁹

The consequences of this severe disillusionment with domestic and European politics in one of the EU’s strongholds can bring serious repercussions. Because many Italians already believe that their vote does not influence the outcome of policies since, until now, they have not reflected their will, they might skip the next European elections to benefit parties that challenge even the parliament’s mere existence. This development in turn will accentuate Europe’s democratic deficit while intensifying the contradiction between European monetary and political union.

A remedy to this democratic deficit is, according to Habermas, a balance of powers between the European Council that represents the states and the EU Parliament that embodies the EU citizens (which currently covers a rather marginalized role), and the adoption of a system of a single vote in all the member states that would give their citizens a direct voice to Brussels. Habermas also notes that the EU is experiencing an identity crisis. Europeans have gone from being citizens of nation-states based on their language, ethnicity, history, and culture to being citizens of a supranational organization that “undermines the democratic procedure in nation states to the extent that national functions shift to the level of transnational governance.”¹²⁰ With the advent of the EU, citizens have been electing representatives who cannot directly address their needs but must take those needs to Brussels that, through a representative process, decides if and how those needs will be met. In the Italian case, for instance, Italians are attempting to demand that their government listen to their needs first and to those of the EU member

¹¹⁸ Peter Mair, *Ruling The Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2013), 129.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁰ Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*, 15. See also discussion of the primacy of supranational law over the national law of the monopolist on the means for legitimate use of force for description of how the EU laws trump those of the member nations, Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*, 20–28.

states second. Europeans knowingly or unknowingly, by asking their governments to serve them first, are rejecting the EU as the dominant force in Europe and placing their governments in very precarious situations.

By being members of the EU, national governments have lost some of their power and ability to serve their citizens. Habermas states, “In the composition of most international treaty regimes, the states involved, assuming they have democratic constitutions, pay the price of sinking levels of legitimacy for a form of governance founded on inter-govern mentality [...]”¹²¹

Habermas thinks that the solution to the Europeans’ legitimacy and identity problem can be found in solidarity among states and a through vision for a common identity. In this sense, Habermas thinks in a political and juridical aspect more than a sociocultural one. He argues that to attain this level of solidarity, citizens do not have to necessary “feel” that they belong together ethnically and/or culturally but only need to share and respect a common set of ethical and civic values that allow for a free exchange of ideas among the citizens.

However, among Europeans these concepts currently seem to be far from their reach. The national divide caused by austerity policies has created an abyss between the citizens and the EU, killing any solidarity and common cause. Particularly alienated are the countries of southern Europe that feel relegated to a peripheral role without any possibility to determine their fate in the EU. In Italy, the increase of nationalist-populist and antigovernment movements, such as M5S and the Pitchforks, especially among the youth, has exposed the frustration of millions of Italians with all the Italian parties, the Brussels’ technocratic “regime,” and the whole of Europe.

Walter Laqueur also notes the lack of solidarity and unity among EU nations, taking the unwillingness and slow resolution of the creditor nations to bailout debtor nations as a clear sign that the internal cohesion necessary to establish unity among the nations of the EU is inexistent. During the peak of the economic crisis when collaboration and fast action were required by the biggest players in order to limit the

¹²¹ Ibid., 15.

spill; according to Laqueur, “the leading European powers were preoccupied with domestic affairs ... [Sarkozy and Merkel] both were anxious that their national interests were not harmed.”¹²²

Solidarity cannot take place by applying institutional measures because it cannot come from above. Every citizen must feel solidarity at an individual level, and Europeans do not yet seem ready for this level of commitment. Furthermore, given the economic, political, social, and cultural differences of the European nations and the growing number of member states that are joining the “EU Club,” it might not be unreasonable to think that the EU crisis could have been somehow been foreseen and averted if the EU leadership would have given more consideration to those basic elements that form the structure of Europe. As Laqueur states, “The indications for the decline of Europe were so obvious ... how could they be doubted and ignored?”¹²³

Italy believed in the EU membership, thinking that it would have been the last hope of counterbalancing inefficiency and corruption among politicians and its institutions, forcing Italy to finally become a country overseen by a “buon governo” (good government). However, what Europe revealed to be now is arrogantly authoritative, elitarian, and broke where contraposition and conflict between northern and southern European states are more distinct than ever. This is visible with the “red light” label policy required on all the Italian food products sold in Britain with the intent to make citizens aware of the potential “health danger” represented by Italian Mediterranean products such as olive oil and Parmigiano cheese. Siding with Italy to defend the quality of their products are also France, Spain, and Greece, whose local products have also ended up on the “bad foods” list compiled by Britain.

¹²² Laqueur, *After the Fall*, 46.

¹²³ *Ibid*, xi.

Britain's strategy cost Italy "more than 600 million of euros."¹²⁴ Furthermore, the extensive distribution system participating in the British initiative (covering 95.3 percent of the British market) lack stringent control in the attribution of colors (red, yellow, and green) to food labels. According to Bricco,

Italy's exports of home grown products in Britain are 2.25 million of euro. The 87.5 per cent is sold through a modern system of retail industry through chains of supermarkets and food intermediaries [...] So far Italian producers have sustained additional costs between 31 and 38 millions of euro.¹²⁵

F. ITALY'S FUTURE ROLE IN EUROPE

After the international shock caused by Italy's last elections, two months of political stalemate, and the birth of a new political coalition at the end of April 2013, Italy seems eager to get going with constitutional and economic reforms that have long been asked for at EU and national levels. These reforms represent a decisive step toward renewing and reinforcing Italy's competitiveness on a global scale; this will help the country regain political credibility at national and international levels. Furthermore, data from the last elections have shown that, to keep the Italian democracy healthy, a definite and fundamental intervention on the central issues that affect the country is needed.

Because of its geopolitical position as a Central/Southern European country, Italy has always played an important role in the Balkan and Mediterranean regions, especially in regard to security issues. Not only have these regions shared a cultural heritage with Italy for more than two thousand years, but Italy also acts as a giant substitute aircraft carrier for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the center of the Mediterranean, protecting both Europe's Southern and South Eastern boundaries. Italy's economic recovery is also very important because the state of its economy substantially influences the economic performance of the Balkan regions such as Croatia that rely on Italian tourism for 20 percent of its economy. Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic

¹²⁴Paolo, Bricco. "Quei semafori anti-made in Italy" [Those traffic lights anti-made in Italy], *Il Sole 24 Ore*, December 11, 2013, <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2013-12-11/quei-semafori-alimentari-anti-made-italy-085501.shtml?uid=ABYPGLj>.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

is looking forward to Italy's economy getting strong again, as he states "if the ailing Italian economy were to recover, it would boost the Balkan country's export industry following sluggish growth since the financial crisis."¹²⁶

Italy has always been one of the major supporters of the EU integration, a role that the country should try to maintain. In regard to the EU policy-making process, although Italy has played a passive role in the past, through the future implementation of well-defined strategies the country should be able to contribute to the shaping of Europe and regain that status of middle-size power that will allow it to have a voice in the EU and to play "on par" with such EU leading countries as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. History show us that, even if over time the country has undoubtedly produced political and economic uncertainty, Italy has always managed to rise from its ashes, achieving a ranking position as the eighth-strongest worldwide economy and the third-largest economy of the Eurozone.¹²⁷

What will drive Italy's future will be the opinion of its citizens, especially in the contest of an EU that has strongly disappointed them. Italy's coalition government appears to seek a balance in its relationship with Brussels by strengthening its relationship with such other countries as the United States through its NATO alliance and Mediterranean countries to compensate for the lack of economic flexibility in directing its own future. This strategic policy change by Italy will strengthen its economy and its bargaining power within the EU. Italy might also decide to make alliances with other Southern EU countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Greece who share the experience of Brussels' austerity program, and form a power base to include other emerging Mediterranean economies such as Croatia and possibly North Africa. This alliance could provide Southern EU countries with a balance of power in the EU in contraposition to their northern neighbors or it could lead to a separate Mediterranean centric economic base outside of the EU.

¹²⁶ Oliver Joy, "Croatia PM: We Need Italy to Recover" [online video], *Cable News Network*, April 26, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/26/business/croatia-prime-minister-eu-marketplace-europe>.

¹²⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. "The World Factbook: Italy," accessed May 20, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/it.html>.

IV. SECURITY AND DEFENSE: ITALY'S DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Throughout the past 60 years, Italy's foreign policy has focused on stabilizing and maintaining its relations with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Italy's main characteristic since the end of World War II (WWII) has been the use of "milieu goals"¹²⁸ in trying to achieve a desired outcome despite, often, negotiations with neighbors that have required Italy to overlook its personal interests. The most meaningful examples are Italy's decision to tie itself to the West and NATO after WWII, despite strong popular opposition at home and a massive presence of socialist and communist parties making up 40 percent of the electorate¹²⁹; its acceptance of American nuclear cruise missiles in its territory in the 1980s and of majority voting within the EU, breaking the "vice of unanimity," which ultimately brought the signature of the Single European Act; its support for British entry into the EU even while Britain represented a clear threat to Italian agricultural exports;¹³⁰ its renunciation of its possession goals "for the broader good of maintaining its position within the alliance"¹³¹—at the request of the U.S. alliance and NATO; and contributing to several combat operations, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq, despite constitutional questions and strong public opposition at home. This list demonstrates how Italy's interests have been put aside by neighbor countries' run toward their "possession goals" and how much more Italy seems to be to pay a price for the common good.

¹²⁸ When a nation seek to improve the environment in which it has to live rather than aiming to obtain greater power or possessions that disproportionately benefit a country compared to others. Mark Gilbert, "Italy: The Astuteness and Anxieties of a Second-Rank Power," in *European Foreign Policies: Does Europe Still Matter?*, ed. Ronald Tiersky and John Oudenaren (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 245.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

A. EVOLUTION OF ITALY'S PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Since 1956,¹³² when the United Nations (UN) Emergency Force was established, peacekeeping operations have increased and developed into a vast array of activities from peacemaking to peacekeeping to peace enforcement and peace building. In this context, Italy's participation in peacekeeping operations has increased substantially, especially after the Cold War.

During the Cold War, Italy's contribution to collective defense included consent for the United States to install military bases in its territory. However, the fall of the Soviet Union forced Italy's policy makers to review their objectives and strategies to face international challenges and avoid being left out of important international decisions by the Atlantic Alliance and the EU. Italy's main objectives became the advancement of its status among the EU states and to gain importance as a strategic partner to the United States in the Mediterranean region.

Italy's participation in peacekeeping operations represents an important part of its new international security policy. Engaging its troops in crisis-afflicted parts of the world has raised Italy's international visibility, gaining the country distinction as an outstanding international peacekeeper. This reflects the evolution of the Italian military to suit the needs of modern international challenges.

In the UN context Italy ranks 6th for financial contributions among the nations with 5 percent of the total contributions after the U.S., Japan, U.K., Germany and France...In terms of personnel, Italy's contribution is of 1.131 men. It employs a total of 7.000 men abroad, more than 5.500 in different operations under NATO gaining the 4th place as contributor of men and at the 5th place as financial contributor to the Atlantic Alliance. Those numbers report Italy's among the first rankings for its international military presence.¹³³

¹³² Valter Coralluzzo, "Le Missioni Italiane All'Estero: Problemi e Prospettive" [Italian missions abroad: issues and perspectives], *Istituto Per Gli Studi Di Politica Internazionale*, no.136 (2011, September).

¹³³ Stefania Forte, and Alessandro Marrone, "L'Italia e Le Missioni Internazionali" [Italy and the international missions], *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, Documenti Iai 12, September 5, 2012, 7.

Italy's military missions abroad are characterized by the quality of their intervention, which has been classified as "very positive" by the civilian population, leading to talk of a "via Italiana" because of Italian forces' special attention to the needs of the population, the humanitarian aspects of their missions, and the development of more specialized and professional military and civilian manpower employed in operations such as the Carabinieri, part of the Multinational Specialized Unit, and the Integrated Police Unit used in both NATO and EU missions (i.e., in Kosovo).¹³⁴

Peacekeeping operations are very important for Italy's foreign and security policies. It is through these missions that Italy acquires visibility and gains the influence necessary to defend its international status and ultimately its national interests. To accomplish these objectives, it is also necessary for Italy to assure a presence in powerful and influential alliances and institutions like the European Community of Steel and Coal (ECSC)/European Economic Community/EU and NATO. Italy's dependence on importing raw materials and energy and exporting goods and services make it a very attentive stakeholder in the international and global arena; membership in such institutions becomes key to protecting its national and international interests. For instance, crime, international terrorism, and illegal immigration are all important issues for Italy that can be solved with the help of the international community, whose interests most likely overlap with Italian interests. Such multilateralism is also essential to establishing legitimacy for the use of force, a necessary condition to Italy's participation in peacekeeping operations. Additionally, for Italy, NATO and the EU represent the guarantors of security and defense in Europe—especially NATO, to which support and contributions both political and military become a necessity. NATO also means good relations with the United States, another constant in Italian foreign policy; by showing support and reliability to both, Italy can exercise more leverage on issues of concern. For instance, the assistance given to NATO in Afghanistan can be reciprocated by NATO if

¹³⁴ Ibid., 39.

the need arises. At the EU level, Italy's participation in European military and civilian missions allows it to influence and control decisions that might affect its domestic and international interests.¹³⁵

B. ITALY'S DOMINANT POLITICAL CULTURE TOWARD WAR

Italians do not like war. As in the rest of Europe, the memories of two devastating world wars and their tragic consequences are still vivid. The brutality of the conflicts has shaped the perspective of Italians on the use of force as a means to solve problems. The complex political experiences in Europe over thousands of years have contributed to the perception of what is considered good or bad by Italians. For these reasons, the Italian resistance to the use of force and the acceptance of war is only as the "ultima ratio" when all other political and diplomatic alternatives have failed.¹³⁶ Peacekeeping operations therefore become an important instrument to assist people in distress and populations in crisis without the involvement of force.

The Italian national debate on international missions is highlighted by the humanitarian intervention of troops such as assistance to the civilian population, dialogue, and socioeconomic reconstruction. This focus on Italy's humanitarian aspect has helped to conceal Italian participation in combat missions such as air and land attacks in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.¹³⁷ The increasing use of force is one of the reasons why, since 2000, the propensity of Italians to send troops to international missions has decreased substantially. Also, the lack of open public discussions on the realistic aspects and risks of proposed operations leaves the Italian public with an illusory sense of security, making it difficult for Italians to comprehend tragic events like the deaths of

¹³⁵ Ibid., 27–32.

¹³⁶ Fabrizio Battistelli, *Gli Italiani e la Guerra: Tra Senso di Insicurezza e Terrorismo Internazionale*, [Italians and war: between insecurity and international terrorism] (Rome: Carocci, 2004), 174–175.

¹³⁷ Alessandro Marrone, and Paola Tessari, "Il Dibattito Italiano Sulle Questioni di Difesa: Questa Sera Si Recita a Soggetto?" [*The Italian debate on defense issues: will we improvise this evening?*], *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, Documenti Iai 13. 5, September 2013, 32, <https://www.google.com/#q=Il+dibattito+italiano+sulle+questioni+di+difesa%3A>.

Italian soldiers.¹³⁸ Additionally, a lack of explanations for weapons acquisition that do not support peacekeeping operations and financial resources commitment for missions whose efficacy is not clear and that play no part in the advancement of Italian national interests have caused mistrust and acrimonious disagreements among the Italians. Other reasons that contribute to Italians' negative attitude about sending troops into international theaters are lack of a perceived menace to national security, poor Italian media coverage that provides ample space to the tragic deaths of soldiers while ignoring the reasons behind the mission and the context of the operations, and Italian opposition to investing money for defense and war when the country is economically destitute.¹³⁹

The debate in Italy is divided among different stakeholders who hold different views of the value of Italian missions abroad. Political parties and movements act mainly according to their values and interests. The “radicals,” mainly characterized by a leftist ideology, do not recognize the legitimacy of the use of force in the international arena and do not consider military missions a proper tool for the defense of Italian interests. They take a strict interpretation of Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, in which Italy “repudiates war as an instrument to offend the liberty of other peoples and as a means to resolve international conflicts.”¹⁴⁰ Regarding the missions in Afghanistan, for instance, the Movement 5 Stars has called for “the immediate repatriation of the troops to avoid the waste of further human life and to stop a war that was lost from the beginning.”¹⁴¹ Other parties, such as the Northern League, adopt a more isolationist outlook toward international affairs and the Euro-Atlantic alliance, considering these missions of limited value to Italy's interests and an expense the country cannot afford. Mainstream parties, on the other hand, consider these missions essential for Italy's international status and prestige and to keep up relationships with NATO, the EU, and especially the United States. They assume a position of “pacifismo interventista” (peaceful intervention),

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Senato della Repubblica, “Articolo 11, Principi Fondamentali” [Article 11, Fundamental principles], https://www.senato.it/1025?sezione=118&articolo_numero_articolo=11.

¹⁴¹ Manlio Di Stefano, “Mozione 1-00022” [Motion-1-00022], Atto Camera, April 16, 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtml.Asp?idAtto=113&stile=8.

claiming that the mission is necessary to reach an agreement in the international arena. For instance, in Libya, Italy's mission to fly and bomb the territory was justified because "[the mission] was not to make war but a way to impede the beginning of war and its awful consequences."¹⁴²

Minister of Defense Mauro and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bonino have expressed a generally positive outlook regarding Italian participation in international missions. In the case of Afghanistan, they both expressed that "the operations have contributed to the democratic transition of the country and [they] consider it irresponsible to recall the troops before June 2014."¹⁴³ Support came also from the Prime Minister Enrico Letta, who, in August 2013, during his visit to the Italian contingent in Afghanistan, congratulated the troops for "representing the best image of Italy in the world"¹⁴⁴ and from the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano, who has multiple times reaffirmed the importance of the Italian military in international operations, underscoring the Italian military's contribution to peace as fully consistent with Article 11 of the Italian Constitution.¹⁴⁵ The armed forces have kept a low profile regarding international missions, trying to avoid publicity especially in regard to the types of operations carried out by the Italian contingent. As with the military, the Italian defense

¹⁴² Franco Frattini, "Comunicazioni Del Governo Sulla Crisi Libica e Conseguente Discussione" [Government's announcement on the crisis in Libya and resulting discussion], Senato della Repubblica. Legislatura 16^a—Aula—Resoconto stenografico della seduta n. 525, March 23, 2011, http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Resaula&leg=16&id=00527183&part=doc_dc-ressten_rs-gentit_cdgsclcd&parse=no&stampa=si&toc=no.

¹⁴³ "Attacco in Afghanistan. Bonino: Non è Stato Un Bambino, è Propaganda" [Attack in Afghanistan. Bonino: it was not a child, it is only propaganda], *Rai News24*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.rainews24.rai.it/it/news.php?newsid=178683>. See also video interview by Lucia Annunziata in "In Mezz'Ora" [online video], http://media.esteri.it/videoEsteri/20130609_rai3_mezzora_arch.wmv, 30 mins.

¹⁴⁴ "Letta: 'La Missione Si Conclude nel 2014 Ma Non Lasciamo Solo l'Afghanistan'" [Letta 'the mission ends in 2014 but we will not leave Afghanistan alone], *Corriere della Sera.it*, August 25, 2013, http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13_agosto_25/letta-afghanistan-visitaaherat_f2c51184-0d65-11e3-a0ce-befba0269146.shtml.

¹⁴⁵ Marrone, *The Italian Debate*, 20.

industry has tried to keep a low profile. The major Italian defense companies, such as Finmeccanica and Fincantieri, are held and controlled by the government and do not express any opinion in public debates.¹⁴⁶

On the other hand, pacifist movements refer to Article 11 of the Italian Constitution in calling for international disarmament or for Italy's unilateral disarmament and they definitely oppose Italy's commitment to contribute more military forces to NATO's training mission in 2015. The Catholic Church also recommends peace and alternatives to the use of force, reminding Italy of its commitment to peace under Article 11 of the Italian Constitution. At the same time, the Vatican Council has expressed a favorable position on the right of nations to defend their territories, stating:

Unfortunately war has not been eradicated from the human condition. As long as there will be a danger of war without a competent international authority equipped with strong forces, once every possibility of a pacific resolution has failed, governments will not be denied the right of a legitimate defense.¹⁴⁷

As noted, the media discuss issues of foreign policy and defense in regard to attacks of Italian troops and tragic stories that further fire up public opinion against Italian missions abroad. Finally, other institutions and organizations such as universities, institutes of research, and specialized journals study discuss the issue mostly when related to Italy's foreign policy and international relations. Because of the scarce interest by the Italian public in its national interest and defense through the use of force, the number of experts on the subject in Italy remains low compared with other European countries. For this reason and others, including the level of complexity of the technical lexicon, public debate remains limited.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁷ Documento del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II. Section 1: La necessita' di evitare la Guerra [The necessity to avoid war] no. 79 Il dovere di mitigare l'umanità della Guerra [The duty to mitigate the inhumanity of war], http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ITA0128/_P1L.HTM

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

C. GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

Article 5 of the Washington Treaty states that, “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”¹⁴⁹ However, even in the case of a direct attack on a member state, each nation can still decide whether to respond, how, and to what extent.

Although people in the United States are generally very supportive of the government and their president’s decisions, in Italy there is no such thing. The Italian government is deeply mistrusted by its people. In terms of international operations and missions abroad, this translates into the Italian government’s need to skilfully present issues and convince the public of the necessity to take certain actions. Politically, the Italian prime minister cannot make any individual decisions; he or she acts purely as a mediator among the multiparty coalitions because decisions are the government’s responsibility.¹⁵⁰

In this context, a good deal of bargaining and compromise occurs because of the differences of opinion on military missions that have the potential to substantially complicate the outcomes and the speed of the decision-making process. Opposing sides usually demand conditions when considering using Italian armed forces in international theaters. Once conditions have been imposed, it is difficult to retract them because of the many parties that are involved. Furthermore, Italy’s participation in multilateral agreements and military operations keeps it from implementing individual missions.

During multinational missions, an officer notifies the multilateral command if his or her country cannot or will not participate in an operation. The decision to participate in the mission and to what extent is directed by instructions based on the acceptability of the mission at home.¹⁵¹ Table 1 shows Italy as one of the nations with stricter limitations.

¹⁴⁹ NATO, “Article 5 of the Washington Treaty,” NATO and the Scourge of Terrorism, <http://www.nato.int/terrorism/five.htm>.

¹⁵⁰ Marrone, *The Italian Debate*, 18.

¹⁵¹ Stephen M. Saideman & David P. Auerswald, “Comparing Caveats: Understanding the Sources of National Restrictions upon NATO’s Mission in Afghanistan,” *International Studies Quarterly* (2012), 69.

TABLE 1. Government Institutions and Caveats

Country*	Institutional Type	Caveats†
Belgium	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Denmark	Coalition Parliament	Loose
Germany	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Italy	Coalition Parliament	Tight
Netherlands	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Norway	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Sweden	Coalition Parliament	Medium
Turkey	Coalition Parliament until 2002, then Majority Parliament‡	Tight
Australia	Coalition Parliament until 2007, Majority Parliament	Medium
Canada	Minority Parliament§	Medium, then Loose
France	Premier-Presidential	Medium, then Loose
Poland	Premier-Presidential	Loose
Romania	Premier-Presidential	Tight
Spain	Majority Parliament	Tight
United Kingdom	Majority Parliament	Loose
United States	Presidential	Loose

(Notes. *Italics* indicates cases that are exceptions.)

*The table lists only those contingents larger than 500 as of December 2009. Figures are from the official North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) "placemat" at <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf>, accessed January 11, 2010.

†Caveats range from loose to tight, focusing mostly on geographic restrictions and limits on offensive operations.

‡Turkey has moved from a parliamentary system to a premier presidential system in 2007, but it is not yet clear whether this has made a significant difference in how troops are deployed and managed.

§Canada has had a minority government for much of this time. We discuss the Canadian experience in the cases below.)

Table 1. Government Institutions and Caveats 152

During missions, Italy adopts a “low-profile” military approach. Its rules of engagement (RoE) require soldiers to use a “minimal and proportional level of force for self-defense avoiding any confrontation or collateral damages as much as possible.”¹⁵³ Only during specific operations such as in Afghanistan, for instance, are those RoE somewhat relaxed for the protection of staff and facilities. In 2009, Italy’s RoE were relaxed at the request of its American ally. This decision was not seen favorably by the opposition parties at home, especially after the unfortunate death of a 13-year-old Afghan girl killed accidentally by an Italian soldier.¹⁵⁴ Political opposition came from Leda Calipari, leader of the Democratic Party, who strongly asked to

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁵³ Giampiero Giacomello, Bertjan Verbeek, *Italy’s Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century: The New Assertiveness of an Aspiring Middle Power* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2011), 144.

¹⁵⁴ Bernardino Ferrero, “Afghanistan, Si Discute Sulle “Regole d’Ingaggio” Ma La Missione Continua” [Afghanistan, discussions on the “rules on engagement” but the mission continues], *l’Occidentale*, May 9, 2009, <http://www.loccidentale.it/node/70793>.

redefine the missions of Enduring Freedom under the USA command and that of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under the United Nations due to the apparent difficulty to perceive the difference as the missions assigned are completely different, at least on paper.¹⁵⁵

Other restrictions are formulated also by the UN Charter and by Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, which obliges Italy to use its military in the service of peace. In the Afghanistan and Libya cases, those restrictions were not adequately respected by Italian forces, and the Italian government was criticized by its domestic opposition for choosing instead to conform to NATO and U.S. policy on the matter.

D. ITALY'S PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

When the war in Afghanistan started in 2001 as a response to a terrorist attack on the United States, Italy decided to support the United States fight against terrorism and contributed to international operations by sending troops to the province of Herat (3700 Italian troops, Regional Command West)¹⁵⁶ and participating in both Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF.

In addition to manpower, Italy has also provided financial support in the amount of “\$645 million for development assistance, with aid reaching about \$120 million in 2008 alone, ranking as the lead donor country in the international community’s efforts to rebuild and strengthen Afghanistan justice sector.”¹⁵⁷

During the operations in Afghanistan, although a mandate from the Italian Parliament did not allow Italian forces to fight the Taliban insurgency, Italian troops decided to resume the use of combat activities in Afghan provinces, taking a stand in favor of the United States and NATO. In this operation, the Carabinieri (the national military police of Italy) were valued by U.S. and NATO commanders and praised for

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Mark Gilbert, “Italy: Foreign Policy after the Cold War: The Changing Melieu, 1991–2001,” in *European Foreign Policies: Does Europe Still Matter?* ed. Ronald Tiersky and John Van Oudenaren (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 252.

¹⁵⁷ “Afghanistan: European Involvement,” Parliament of Canada: Library of Parliament Research Publications, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/researchpublications/prb0731-e.htm>.

their ability to train local police forces and the quality of their personnel.¹⁵⁸ With its participation in Afghanistan, Italy has proven to be a reliable partner to its European allies, to NATO, and especially to the United States. Although other European countries seemed to be less committed in fighting and sending troops in the various international theaters, in 2009, “Italy was the first NATO partner to declare its willingness to offer more troops for the NATO-led international force, ISAF, in Afghanistan.”¹⁵⁹ The willingness of the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to send more troops into the Afghan territory was also supported by the left parties, the Italian President Giorgio Napolitano, and the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Frattini, who believed that “the Italian peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan is the business card for Italy’s growing status in the international arena.”¹⁶⁰ Such a decision reflected the desire of Italy to establish with American President Barack Obama the same good relationship previously established with former President George Bush. The address to NATO by President Napolitano in 2010 was a further sign of the continuous support toward the Atlantic Alliance, outlining both the importance of NATO’s presence in Europe as a guarantor of peace and security and Italy’s further commitment to the Afghan cause:

Let there be no doubt about Italy’s commitment to ISAF and to the building of the Afghan nation. [...] On either shore, we will be still looking at the Alliance to keep us together, Europeans and Americans. In a world of shifting power balances and asymmetric threats we will need it more than ever.¹⁶¹

President Napolitano’s commitment came in a moment of deep Italian turmoil when the majority of the Italians were opposed to sending more aid to Afghanistan and calling for a repatriation of Italian troops. Opposition also came from Berlusconi’s

¹⁵⁸ James D. Bindenagel, “Afghanistan: The German Factor,” National Defense University, <http://www.ndu.edu/press/afghanistan-the-german-factor.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Fox, “Italy: America’s New Nato’s Best Friend?” *The Guardian*, February 6, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/06/italy-nato>.

¹⁶⁰ Carmine Finelli, “Dall’Afghanistan l’Italia non Puo’ Ritirarsi Perché e’ un Paese Strategico” [Italy cannot leave Afghanistan because it is a strategic country], *l’Occidentale*, July 31, 2009, <http://www.loccidentale.it/node/76075>.

¹⁶¹ Address by Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, to the North Atlantic Council, Brussels, March 2, 2010, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=1794>.

center-right coalition, because the Northern League was pushing to repatriate troops and to switch the political focus from international to national interests.¹⁶²

In 2013, public support for the troops in Afghanistan plummeted sharply after the death of another Italian soldier (the 53 since 2004).¹⁶³ In the current political environment, representatives of both the Right and the Left have asked to redefine the Italian role in the Afghan mission after more than 10 years of operations and to reevaluate the prospect of a continuous participation in NATO's training program Resolute Support after 2014. Despite strong pressure at home, shaped by public opinion that does not agree in pursuing wars that cannot bring any peace and is unwilling to absorb the costs for defense weapons that will cause additional economic hardship, Italy's commitment to both Afghanistan and Libyan operations show its willingness to make important sacrifices at home to maintain a good international stand with both NATO and the United States.

E. ITALY'S PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN LIBYA

Italy's initial neutral stance in regard to Libya reflected the country's efforts to protect its economic and security interests in the region, as well as the potential threat of a massive migratory flow into the peninsula caused by the crisis. However, because of the brutality of Colonel Muammar Gheddafi's regime toward the civilian population, Prime Minister Berlusconi switched his focus, favoring the adoption of more assertive methods in the hope of stopping Libya's violent repression. This decision was supported by Foreign Minister Frattini whose speech to the Italian Senate restated that, although it was Italy's intention and necessity to maintain good relations with Libya, the massacre of civilians by the regime was a urgent call for help to the international community. "Responding to this call," said Frattini, "would not mean going to war but instead avoiding war and its consequences" and "to bring this help, force is necessary in order to

¹⁶² Rachel Donadio, "Italy at War," *The New York Time*, December 9, 2009, <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/author/rachel-donadio/>.

¹⁶³ "Sono Cinquantatrè Le Vittime Italiane in Terra Afghana, a Partire dal 2004" [Raises to 53 the number of Italian deaths in Afghanistan], *Il Messaggero*, http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/esteri/sono_cinquantatr_le_vittime_italiane_in_terra_afghana_a_partire_dal_2004/notizie/289451.shtml.

apply that right to protect, previously ratified by the United Nations.”¹⁶⁴ Strong support also came from the center-left parties such as the Partito Democratico, Partito Comunista, the Ecology and Freedom of Left, and Italian President Napolitano who, mentioning Chapter VII resolutions of the UN Charter, stated that “actions with armed forces are authorized in order to maintain and suppress any violation of peace.”¹⁶⁵

Operation Unified Protector was the official name for the NATO intervention in Libya between March and October 2011. Italy’s military operation began on March 22. Initially limited to military and logistical support Italian participation evolved into active bombing a month after the start of the mission. The success of the Libyan mission depended heavily on Italian participation. NATO flight missions were authorized by the Italian government and carried out from the seven Italian bases of Trapani, Gioia del Colle, Sigonella, Decimomannu, Aviano, Amendola, and Pantelleria.¹⁶⁶ Skilled in the Suppression of Enemy Air Defense, Italy provided fighters to maintain the “no-fly zone” over Libya. The ItAF [Italian Air Force] and the Americans were the only countries to have employed this capability in Operation Unified Protector.¹⁶⁷

The intervention by international forces in Libya succeeded in a “change of regime after 40 years of dictatorship even though the outcome was not the official objective of the mission.”¹⁶⁸

By granting NATO the use of its military bases and aircraft and taking an active, even if controversial, role in NATO’s air operations, Italy confirmed once more its

¹⁶⁴ “Comunicazioni del Governo Sulla Crisi Libica e Conseguente Discussione” [Communication of the government on the Libya crisis and consequent discussion], Senato della Repubblica, Resoconto stenografico, Legislatura 16 seduta 525, March 23, 2011, http://mobile.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Resaula&leg=16&id=00527183&part=doc_dc-ressten_rs-gentit_rddscdg:1-trattazione_ddv-intervento_finocchiaropd&parse=no&toc=no&mobile=si&index=si.

¹⁶⁵ Marianne Arens, “Il Ruolo dell’Italia Nella Guerra in Libia” [The role of Italy in the war in Libya], June 22, 2011, <http://www.wsws.org/it/2011/jun2011/lbit-j22.shtml>.

¹⁶⁶ Aeronautica Militare, “The Italian Air Force in Operations Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector,” 5, http://www.aeronautica.difesa.it/News/Documents/pdf/Cerimonia%20chiusura%20Unified%20Protector_151211/Brochure%20Libya%20EN.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶⁸ Battistelli, *Opinions on the War*, 96.

commitment to its Euro-Atlantic bonds. Such support worked in Italy's interests as well as serving to avoid international isolation, to realign with its allies, and to further develop its Mediterranean policy by establishing a solid partnership with the new Libyan regime, revitalizing the suspended Treaty of Friendship.¹⁶⁹

Italy's contribution to international crisis management has been outstanding. The increased contribution of Italy to peacekeeping operations, especially after the Cold War, has increased Italy's prestige in the international arena.

Italy's decision-making processes are aimed at finding a common denominator among allied countries and Italian coalitions. Sometimes these processes are slow, and limits imposed by Italy's national caveats and RoE can obstruct the effectiveness of its actions in international theaters. Despite this, Italy has proven to be a reliable partner for its European allies, NATO, and especially the United States. Among Italy's primary motivations are the desires to be seen as a good ally and to ensure a leading role within alliances.

Italy's lack of a comprehensive strategic culture on defense and foreign policies and internal assault from adversaries such as the Communist Party has contributed to its reliance on NATO for much of its security policy. This dependence on NATO and, to a certain extent on the United States, makes it difficult for Italy to refuse aid to its allies because that could imply "renouncing forty years of foreign policy."¹⁷⁰ This collaboration implies a loss of autonomy and defense to U.S. decision-making, even if these U.S. decisions are not directly in line with Italian and/or European interests, such as wars in distant international theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Finally, another reason for Italy's strong support of NATO and the United States is the historical ambitions of major EU powers to dominate the European foreign policy scene. Historically, Italy's initial intent of integrating into a European context where England and France would have bestowed their power according to their specific interests made Italy uneasy, preferring U.S. interference in Italian foreign policy to that of France

¹⁶⁹ Valérie Vicky Miranda, "Striking a Balance between Norms and Interests in Italian Foreign Policy: The Balkans and Libya," Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI Working papers 11, May 11, 2011, www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiw1111.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Gilbert, "Italy: Foreign Policy after the Cold War," 251.

and England.¹⁷¹ Today, France and Germany are at this point again and it is in Italy's favor to support the U.S./NATO alliance because the United States has proven to be more inclined to listen to Italy hold forth on its problems and more supportive in attaining its interests than Italy's fellow EU members.

F. ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: CLASH BETWEEN ITALY AND BRUSSELS

Because of its strategic geographical position as the crossroads of Northern and Southern Europe, Italy is considered the springboard of or a destination for illegal immigration. Surrounded by five seas (the Adriatic, Tyrrhenian, Ligurian, Jonian, and Mediterranean), Italy has 7600 kilometers of coast (4,722.42 miles). Because of the Balkan crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, the 2011 "Arab Spring," and Syrian uprising in the past two decades, the number of illegal immigrants has increased substantially with Puglia Calabria, Sicily, and the isle of Lampedusa being the most affected border section of the peninsula.

This geography also makes Italy a candidate for particular security problems in addition to the variously hot wars in which it finds itself involved through alliances and other agreements. Currently, "Italy is the fourth European Union country for the presence of foreigners in its territory but it is the one with the most immigrants who come from non-EU country (approximately 88 percent) and one of the most multiethnic."¹⁷² Italy's agreement with Libya to curb illegal immigration by deporting illegal immigrants back to Libyan shores without filing asylum applications dissolved when the Gheddafi's regime was overthrown leaving open doors to an over flux of illegal immigrations and asylum seekers.

As such, Italian participation in the Libyan campaign in 2011 was not popular among Italians and opposition parties such as the Northern League and the Popolo della Liberta' who feared a sudden uncontrolled influx of Libyan refugees into the Italian

¹⁷¹ Leopoldo Nuti, "The Richest and Farthest Master is Always Best: US-Italian Relations in Historical Perspective," in *The Atlantic Alliance under Stress: US-European Relations after Iraq*, edited by David Andrews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 198.

¹⁷² "La Presenza Straniera In Italia" [Foreign presence in Italy] L'Altro Diritto, Capitolo I, Sez. I, <http://www.altrodiritto.unifi.it/ricerche/devianza/dibello/cap1.htm>.

peninsula. Data from the SWG polls of March 21-23, 2011, show that, even if operations were successful in preventing the actions of the Libyan regime, only 45 percent of Italians were favorable to the intervention and use of Italian troops in Libya, whereas an important 37 percent was opposed and preferred to find alternative solutions to solve the crisis; 18 percent of Italians feared a major influx of refugees into the country.¹⁷³

When this fear of unregulated Libyan immigration materialized, Italy's requests of financial, political, and human capital help and the proposal to share the burden of the massive migration flow were ignored by the EU and its members such as Britain, France, Germany, and Sweden, who, because of the crisis, face popular pressure to stop immigration in general. The issue contributes further to the divide between Northern and Southern Europe, because, according to current EU policies that regulate immigration, "the country in which persons first arrived is responsible for dealing with them."¹⁷⁴ Although Southern Europeans ask for a more proportional distribution of refugees, the Northern Europeans want to keep the status quo: "German courts have frequently prohibited planned deportations to Greece and Italy of asylum seekers who had originally entered the European Union through those countries."¹⁷⁵ And only a year ago, "France and Italy had a diplomatic clash after Rome granted special permissions for illegal African immigrants to cross the border with France."¹⁷⁶

Brussels's position was that Italy could certainly take care of the problem by itself. Preferring instead to blame Italy for "making only wrong decisions" in dealing with the problem and for "its incapacity to persuade other EU members to share the

¹⁷³ Fabrizio Batiselli et al., *Opinioni sulla Guerra; L'Opinione Pubblica Italiana e Internazionale di Fronte all'Uso Della Forza* [Opinions on the war: the Italian and international public opinion on the use of force], *Sociologia Militare* (Milano, Italy: Tipomozza, 2012), 93.

¹⁷⁴ EurActive, "Who is Responsible for EU immigrant?" October 8, 2013, <http://www.euractiv.com/global-europe/eu-ultimately-responsible-immigr-analysis-530931>.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Stratfor Global Intelligence, "Questioning the EU's Schengen Treaty," December 5, 2012, <http://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/questioning-eus-schengen-treaty#ixzz30mPY8Av2>.

responsibilities,”¹⁷⁷ the EU distanced itself from the issue of Libyan refugees. The 2013 shipwreck in Lampedusa is an example of how the tragedy was still not enough to move Brussels to send the aid needed.

Calling further attention to the problem, Italian Minister of Internal Affairs Alfano has recently urged once more that the EU take measures to deal with migrant issue because it is something that affects all Europe and not just the Mediterranean countries: “15,000 migrants have been rescued at sea so far this year by Italy, and estimated that there were between 300,000 and 600,000 people in Libya ready to board smuggling boats [...] This was a ‘low estimate confirmed by the European Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem.’”¹⁷⁸ How long will Brussels keep playing deaf?

¹⁷⁷ Andrea Indini, “Immigrati, tragedia senza fine: braccio di ferro sulle politiche migratory” [Refugees, tragedy without and end: Iron fist on the political migratory], October 3, 2013, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/immigrati-tragedia-senza-fine-lue-mette-sotto-accusa-litalia-955410.html>.

¹⁷⁸ Nathan Fred, “Italy Calls for EU Help as it Pulls 4000 Migrants from Sea in 48 Hours,” April 9, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/10754685/Italy-calls-for-EU-help-as-it-pulls-4000-migrants-from-sea-in-48-hours.html>.

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V. CONCLUSION

Europe's economic integration did not produce solidarity and cannot constitute the infrastructure of the European Union (EU). Political unity must also be an essential part of the European framework if Europe wants to survive the challenges that lie ahead. Many things have caused this process to fail. The EU economic crisis that started in 2008 and remains ongoing is just an effect caused by the incapacity of the EU's economic model to produce the needed results.

The mismanagement of the current economic crisis by the EU elite has eroded the EU's own legitimacy in all member states, has made the EU Parliament less relevant, and has fueled discouragement with democratic politics throughout Europe. Many citizens today consider EU institutions distant and unresponsive to their needs because of the poor level of information provided to citizens regarding EU issues. European and national identities collide, creating frustration and disillusionment that lead to anti-EU sentiments.

Austerity programs imposed by Brussels on debtor countries have created an erosion of democratic legitimacy in these nations and produced widespread dissatisfaction with EU policies among the people and are only deepening the crisis, as shown in Italy. Many experts agree that if the EU project is to survive, political unity through solidarity and a more democratic decision process that includes the direct participation of EU citizens in EU matters needs to be achieved.

Both German philosopher Jürgen Habermas and American historian Walter Laqueur agree on these points, even if expressing different views. Habermas believes that the EU's current state is part of the growing pains of this evolution. The EU, according to the philosopher, was created to have a system capable of maintaining peace and addressing problems as they occurred. The EU's lack of solidarity and of well-defined democratic constitutional institutions does not represent a failure. For Habermas, the EU is an organic, living organism constantly progressing that in time will be able to develop the necessary features to survive its future challenges.

On the other hand, Laqueur's view has a more pessimistic flavor. The historian argues that the current EU crisis is really the indication of the end of an experiment that was destined to fail from the beginning. He believes that the EU represents an artificial entity based on Europe's imagined past glories that is incapable of evolving to meet the needs of its citizens. He also notes that the EU's real goals and values seem to have been overtaken by events, pushing Europeans further apart. Hostility toward Brussels has been increasing since 2008 when anti-EU political parties have been developing in many parts of Europe resolutely voicing their criticism of the EU and its institutions.¹⁷⁹ Laqueur's view of the EU project is that of a superpower: supposed to fix all the sickness of the old continent but the crisis has now sealed its decline ending the Europeans' dream of living a peaceful and comfortable life style. Offsetting the author's point of view however is that ordinary Europeans are not concerned with Europe being the major world powerhouse; their dreams are more modest and their real worries reside in the ability of Europe to be able to keep peace, overturn the odds of the economic crisis, and go back to being as affluent as it was for the past 60 years.

Europe has been undergoing a process of integration since the EU's creation. Italy has been part of this process since the beginning, and Italians understand the EU's role and its main objectives of peacekeeping through economic growth. Now, however, they are questioning the legitimacy of its policies. Italy, although confusing and at times incomprehensible to the eyes of outsiders, has shown, during the February 2013 elections, its capacity for being a leader as much as the other European powers.

Differently from Spain, Greece, Portugal, and other Southern EU countries that have expressed their frustrations by demonstrating against austerity, Italy has voiced its strong opposition and questioned the role of the EU and its legitimacy by means of electoral votes. Although some optimism regarding the use of a common monetary system is still present among Europeans, it is difficult to tell how the future will play out

¹⁷⁹ Laqueur, *After the Fall*, 48.

for the EU and for Italy. One thing that is quite clear to the Italians and to its European cousins, however, is that the EU should not hurt its people but work with the people for the people.

Today, strong similarities exist between Italy and Italians' present and past disappointment with Europe and its allies. Italy's negotiated rewards in entering WWI on the side of the Triple Entente in 1915—the promises of Italian economic prosperity through the concession of colonies and territories and the acquisition of equal political status—were broken during the Treaty of Versailles by the same allies that decided to divide the promised colonies among themselves, preferring to keep Italy economically and politically weak in the postwar international environment. Today, Italians feel that their vision of economic prosperity and political equality—negotiated through their participation in the ECSC economic exchange and resource sharing, later the EU—have been destroyed again through the austerity programs imposed by the same EU. Although the EU originally promised wealth, stability, and unity, Brussels' austerity contributed instead to further economic collapse and political and social instability within the country and the entire EU.

In 1922, Italy's lost faith in its former allies and cooperatively worked with other European countries. Reacting to such events, it turned its focus toward political isolation and economic self-sufficiency as promised, delivered, and regulated by Mussolini's fascist regime. Today, euro-disappointed Italians are desperately searching for a system that will finally deliver their economic dreams and sweep away the acts of an inefficient political order.

Many more Italians are turning their support to political parties that demand a strong internal and international Italian identity, Italian control of its economy and monetary system, and isolation from the EU.

With this in mind, Italy's commitment to EU unity might shift. Italy's rejection of German-imposed austerity and strong economic pressure might see Italy's focus switch toward more domestic concerns. After all, with a youth unemployment rate higher than

36 percent,¹⁸⁰ pressing social issues such as immigration, and a country in which widespread discontent with the EU institutions runs high, perhaps the Italians' instincts of self-preservation will kick in. So far, a historical pro-European Italy and its long record of sacrifices in prestige and sovereignty to keep neighbors happy have reassured the international community of Italy's commitment to EU integration and stability. Will Italy chose to look somewhere else for prosperity and internal unity this time? The May 2014 elections showed the victory and increase of a large number of anti-European votes. To survive perhaps the EU will need to change its message of pain with one of hope.

Because parallelisms with past experiences are strong, history warns us of the challenges and dangers of continuities that present events might bring with them. It is unclear if and how Italy will continue to contribute to the unification of Europe; it is hoped that Brussels and Italy can proceed in a path of reciprocal trust and respect for each other's views and needs, avoiding the repetition of past mistakes.

¹⁸⁰“Italy's Elections: Send in the Clowns,” *The Economist*, March 2, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21572763-how-beppe-grillo-and-silvio-berlusconi-threaten-future-italy-and-euro-send>.

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