

Military Operations Abroad and Italian political culture. A content analysis of four parties*

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Abstract

Constructivist approaches to peace and war studies have focused on states' political cultures and role conceptions to define the specific normative frameworks that inform decisions on military deployment. The aim of this paper is to analyze Italy's political culture related to the fields of security and defense, looking at the particular perspective of far-left and far-right parties. Through content analysis of electoral program and vote-supporting speeches and data analysis of parliamentary votes, the article focuses on arguments, norms and values supported and put forward by these parties in order to understand how radical ideologies deal with the national security culture, when it comes to take position on military operations abroad. Findings show a great difference between far-left and far-right parties' foreign policy preferences and narratives. Notwithstanding, the likelihood for radical arguments to effectively influence the decision-making realm results inconsistent.

Keywords

Italian parties, Foreign Policy, Military Operations Abroad, Social-Constructivism

JEL classification

N4, N44, D8

Content

Introduction; 1. Foreign policy of the Italian Republic; 2. Italy's security culture and Military Operations Abroad (MOA); 3. The social-constructivist critique to "Democratic Peace theory"; 4. Analyze political discourses on foreign policy; 5. Final considerations; References.



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Operaciones militares en el extranjero y cultura política italiana. Un análisis de contenido en cuatro partes

Resumen

Los enfoques constructivistas de la paz y los estudios de guerra se han centrado en las culturas políticas de los estados y las concepciones de roles para definir los marcos normativos específicos que informan las decisiones sobre el despliegue militar. El objetivo de este documento es analizar la cultura política de Italia y su relación con los campos de seguridad y defensa, considerando la perspectiva particular de los partidos de extrema izquierda y de extrema derecha. Basado en el análisis del contenido del programa electoral y de los discursos que apoyan el voto y el análisis de datos de los votos parlamentarios, este artículo se centra en los argumentos, normas y valores respaldados y presentados por estos partidos para comprender cómo las ideologías radicales se relacionan con la cultura de seguridad nacional a la hora de tomar posiciones en operaciones militares en el extranjero. Los hallazgos muestran una gran diferencia entre las preferencias y narrativas de la política exterior de los partidos de extrema izquierda y de extrema derecha. No obstante, la probabilidad de que los argumentos radicales influyan de manera efectiva en el ámbito de la toma de decisiones es inconsistente.

Palabras clave

Partidos italianos, política exterior, operaciones militares en el extranjero, constructivismo social.

Clasificación JEL

N4, N44, D8

Contenido

Introducción; 1. Política exterior de la república italiana; 2. La cultura de la seguridad en Italia y las operaciones militares en el extranjero; 3. De la crítica social-constructivista a la "Teoría de la paz democrática"; 4. Análisis de los discursos políticos sobre política exterior; consideraciones finales; Referencias.

Operações militares no exterior e cultura política italiana. Uma análise de conteúdo em quatro partes

Resumo

As abordagens construtivistas dos estudos de paz e guerra focaram-se nas culturas políticas dos estados e nas concepções de papéis para definir as estruturas normativas específicas que informam as decisões sobre a implantação militar. O objetivo deste documento é analisar a cultura política da Itália e sua relação com os campos de segurança e defesa, considerando a perspectiva particular dos partidos de extrema esquerda e extrema direita. Com base na análise de conteúdo do programa eleitoral e discursos que apoiam o voto e a análise de dados dos votos parlamentares; este artigo centra-se nos argumentos, padrões e títulos lastreados e apresentados por essas partes para entender como as ideologias radicais relacionam-se com a cultura de segurança nacional ao tomar posições em operações militares no exterior. Os resultados mostram uma grande diferença entre as preferências e narrativas da política externa dos partidos de extrema esquerda e extrema direita. Entretanto, a probabilidade de argumentos radicais que efetivamente influenciem a tomada de decisão é inconsistente.

Palavras-chave

Partidos italianos, política externa, operações militares no exterior, construtivismo social.

Classificação JEL:

N4, N44, D8

Conteúdo

Introdução; 1. Política externa da república italiana; 2. A cultura de segurança na Itália e as operações militares no exterior; 3. De uma crítica social-construtivista à "Teoria da paz democrática"; 4. Análise de discursos políticos sobre política externa; considerações finais; Referências.

Introduction

The participation of liberal-democracies in multilateral peacekeeping and peace-supporting operations has consistently increased during the last thirty years, in particular after the end of the bipolar system occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. Among Western countries, Italy is one of those to have taken part in the majority of multinational operations in crisis areas. This activism in foreign policy has challenged the traditional aversion to military engagement and participation in war scenarios, historically maintained by Italian population and Italy's political class (Rosa, 2013).

The increasing commitment of liberal states to military deployment has been puzzling not only for Italy, but also for the widespread idea of democracy as a pacific political system oriented toward nonviolent problem-solving (Doyle, 1983). Moreover, if the 'US unipolar moment' during the 1990s has supported the international spread of liberal-democratic values, which provide the basis for 'liberal interventionism' (Geis, *et al.*, 2013), the crisis of consensus experienced in the last years has favored the reemergence of other-than-liberal ideologies, which may challenge the idea of a collective security system based on multilateral frameworks of action.

This changing scenario rises the questions of how far-right and far-left parties deal with liberal values underpinning Western interventions and how the growth of these parties may reshape the approach of Western democracies to security threats in crisis areas.

Social-constructivist approaches have addressed the contradictory relation between war and democracy looking at national normative structures that informs decisions on military engagement (Geis, *et al.*, 2006). Notwithstanding, where a consistent number of studies have focused on countries such as the US, Germany and France (e.g. Berger, 1998), the analysis of Italy's normative framework remained widely unobserved. Moreover, although the amount of constructivist works on security culture and national role conception have been rising in recent years, the academic literature addressing the connection between party politics and foreign policy is still inadequate.

The scope of this article is to contribute to the discussion on Italy's strategic culture and national role conception looking at the narrative of other-than-liberal parties. Accordingly, the question addressed is how, in Italy, the stances on the use of military force, expressed by these parties, deal with the national political

culture, when it comes to take decisions regarding Military Operations Abroad (MOA).

Findings reveal a great variation between far-right and far-left parties in their narrative on defense and security issues. Anyway, the likelihood for both parts to actually affect the decision-making process result inconsistent throughout the examined period.

After a description of Italy's political culture on foreign policy based on the existing literature, a theoretical discussion on liberal interventionism and a methodological explanation, the article will present the political views on military operations abroad by four different parties. The article presents arguments and findings derived from the author's Master thesis research project.

1. Foreign policy of the Italian Republic

In the last years, a growing interest on the foreign policy of Italian 'Second Republic' contributed to the proliferation of academic works on this topic (e.g. Marchi, *et al.*, 2014; Giacomello & Verbeek, 2011), which particularly looked at the changes in the international system after the Cold War (e.g. Waltson, 2007), their repercussion on the Italian foreign strategy (e.g. Brighi, 2007) and the role of domestic politics (e.g. Carbone, 2009).

Born in the wake of the WWII, Italian Republic weighted its lack of national cohesion and strategic positioning with the membership in the two predominant Western alliances, namely NATO and the new-formed ECSC (now EU). "Paradoxically", according to Eichberg (Marchi *et al.*, 2014, p. 14): "during the Cold War, Italy's multilateral orientation and lack of defined objectives resulted as an asset". The political arena was indeed dominated by the Christian-democratic DC and the communist PCI that, not only, taken together, won the majority of consensus for long years, but also reproduced, within the domestic scenario, the static East-West division characterizing the international landscape. (Ignazi, *et al*, 2012, p.p. 30-1). As once stated by the former Minister Piero Fassino in an interview in 1998¹: "for a long time Italy had more of an international position than an international policy".

Whilst the PCI was to some extent dependent upon the directives coming from the Eastern Bloc, the DC was strongly tied with the political will of the Roman

¹ Come contare di più (How to matter more): L. Caracciolo interviews P. Fassino – *Limes* 1/1998 (<http://www.limesonline.com/cartaceo/come-contare-di-piu>).

Church and strategically informed by the Atlantic-European connection. In sum, one could argue Italian foreign policy to have been predominantly "crafted outside the country" (Ignazi, *et al.*, 2012): either due to the dependence on foreign actors and the lack of a shared national-based direction.

A remarkable exception of the just described other-directed behavior was the strategic backing of the Arab world in the MENA area. A good example is the historical support for the Palestinian rights. It is, indeed, within this framework that the only recorded face off between Italy and its Atlantic allied took place during the so-called 'Sigonella crisis', in September 1985.²

Then, the events occurred in 1989 changed not only the international system around Italy but also the domestic political party configuration itself. Thus, it is legitimate to question whether Italian foreign policy has changed accordingly and how this change occurred.

During the first years of the 'Second Republic', the reconfiguration of party politics was already dominated by a different dichotomy. The historical catholic/communist confrontation, indeed, pivoted to a new situation dominated by center-right/center-left coalitions. At the international level, the evolution of external threats changed the focus from the superpower nuclear war to multidimensional security issues. This scenario has favored the new engagement of Italy in the pursuit of a middle power status as a "security producer" (Waltson, 2007, p. 91).

Although the likelihood that a bilateral consensus emerges on matters of national interest is considered an expected behavior according to foreign policy analysis (Calossi & Coticchia, 2009, p. 1, unpublished), the fact that it really occurred in Italy is strongly debated (Carbone, 2009; Brighi, 2007).

Most of the literature addresses the differences between center-right and center-left governments looking at Atlanticism and Europeism as the main vectors of Italy's foreign policy. A shared perspective is one that center-right coalitions have always promoted closer relationships with the US/NATO and favored an international approach based on unilateral or bilateral agreements. On the contrary, center-left has pursued multilateral frameworks and Europeanization of foreign policy (Carbone, 2009, p. 99; Brighi 2005, p.p. 232-4). The two different paradigms have been conceptualized, for instance, as "conservative/nationalist" and "international/progressivist". In particular, while the former privileges

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2954061.stm>.

bilateral or unilateral strategies to “promote a penetrative function of foreign policy”, the latter supports a strong internationalism, or “active multilateralism”, considering the integration in multilateral framework as a value by itself (Brighi, 2007, p. 110).

Nevertheless, according to Missiroli (2007, p. 166), “while the politics of each coalition has been significantly different, the policy has not”. It means that the language and the political stances assumed when in opposition have been significantly toned down once in office.

This conclusion seems particularly valid when junior coalition parties are put under the analytical lenses. For instance, when Lega Nord (LN), Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and Rifondazione Comunista (RC) were object of study in the few available papers on this topic (e.g. Albertazzi, *et al.*, 2011), findings show that they hardly managed to exert a remarkable weight on political decisions, even though their narrative kept harsh tones.

Accordingly, it could be argued that a “re-politicization of foreign policy” (Carbone, 2007, p. 904) actually happened just within each coalition more than as policy output at the governmental level. For instance, the comparison brought forward by Albertazzi, *et al.* (2011) on Lega Nord (LN) and Rifondazione Comunista (RC) reveals that LN better managed to keep its ‘outsider character’ even when challenged by government engagement. At the opposite, RC resilience to change its radical stances became a problem in terms of governability. In any case, the positions of the two parties never won the majority of the consensus indispensable to affect the policymaking.

2. Italy’s security culture and Military Operations Abroad (MOA)

Tracing the development of Italian defense culture back to the post-war period, Rosa (2013, p. 6) defines Italian strategic culture as “accommodationist”. In particular, he stresses the “institutionalization of pacific tendencies” brought about by the refusal of war as mean of interstate conflict resolution declared in the Article 11 of the Constitution, the disrupt of armed forces and the process of ‘de-fascistiation’. Accommodationist strategic culture is defined as the overall preference for pacific and cooperative means and the assessment of military force as exception, more than normality, in the international realm. Moreover, Rosa links the Italian pacific behavior and the absence of military deployment to the static political system characterizing Cold-war period.

Nevertheless, the changing balance of the international system occurred after the end of the bipolar superpower confrontation, led some scholars to talk about a "new activism" (Croci, 2008, p. 293) of Italy in the international arena. In particular, the consistent and assertive participation in multilateral frameworks of intervention has been interpreted as the pursuit of an acknowledged and stable middle power' status (for an extensive analysis see Giacomello & Verbeek, 2011). Interestingly, this observation gives arguments to a "middle power theory", as proposed by Cooper (1993, p.24-5), which considers middle powers more likely to support diplomatic and collaborative initiatives, work for multilateral solutions and preserve international institutions.

The rising interest toward Italian strategic and defense culture, in particular related to the use of force, has been the point at stake for a growing literature (Rosa, 2013; Pirani, 2010; Giacomello & Coticchia; 2007; Ignazi, *et al.*, 2012).

The evolution of NATO from war-fighting defensive alliance to 'liberal interventionist' alliance has been one of the main shifts that influenced Italy's "new activism" due to the rising importance of the participation in multilateral mission as a way to increase the national leverage (Pirani, 2010, p. 223). Furthermore, the reform of the Army (abolition of military conscription, upgrading of the Carabinieri as fourth Army division) have contributed to the new role played by Italian soldiers (Coticchia, 2012, p. 2).

The first extensive work on Italian strategic culture has been the one by Foradori and De Rosa (2007), who analyzed the changing threat perception along Italy's recent history and the security responses to those threats. They argue (2007, p. 87) that "for a very pragmatic reason - insufficient relative power - and also genuine ethical juridical considerations, Italy has developed a civilian and multi-nationalized security identity: i.e. a reflexive respect for international norms and the moral political legitimacy of the main multilateral fora, particularly the UN".

Given Italy's pacific and 'accommodationist' attitude, several authors have attempted to solve two puzzling questions: why has Italy taken part in that many multilateral military mission since the 1990s? How has Italy contributed to these military deployments?

To solve these questions, scholars have focused on specific aspects: role of engagements, strategic narratives and domestic factors (Marchi, *et al.* 2014, p.p. 97-109; Ignazi, *et al.*, 2011; Giacomello & Verbeek, 2011, p.p. 135-54; Pirani, 2010; Giacomello & Coticchia, 2007; Coticchia & Giacomello, 2009).

The first and most acknowledged feature of Italian military operations is the centrality of multilateralism (Coticchia, 2012), which has been interpreted through the participation in multinational frameworks, such as NATO, and, preferably, in conformity with a UN mandate. Insofar the choice of multilateralism has been supported by a bipartisan consensus, which, as I will show later, is confirmed by the constant refunding of military mission by both the center-right and center-left ruling coalitions.

Moreover, Italian troops are usually deployed in post-conflict scenarios and mostly committed to humanitarian tasks, which mitigate the rule of engagement (Pirani, 2010, p. 226). The civilian role of Italian soldiers (Coticchia & Giacomello, 2009) as much as the civil society-government synergy in foreign policy issues (Marchi, *et al.*, 2014, p.p. 130-48) has been considered a peculiar and fundamental feature of the Italian way of military deployment, which is derived from the necessity to keep a low-profile in order to not disappoint Italians' 'pacifist' public opinion. This type of soft engagement is clearly supported and regulated by the last strategic documents of the Ministry of Defense, namely the "2001 New Forces for a New Century"³, the "2002 White Paper"⁴, the "2005 Strategic Concept"⁵ and the "2015 White Paper for International Security and Defense"⁶. For instance, the document "New Forces for a New Century" singles out the particular duties taken on by Italian army, through the definition of four type of missions: peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, police operation and peace-building (Giacomello & Coticchia, 2007, p.p. 169). Adding on these four categories, the "2015 With Paper" include the safeguarding of free institutions and the evacuation of overseas compatriots in the main tasks of the Army. Moreover, this last strategic document reconfirms the UN, NATO and EU as the "points of reference" of Italian foreign policy and push for a transformation and modernization of the Army. In particular, the document says: "When preparing for the future, the system will place emphasis not so much on the centrality of specific weapons systems or levels of forces necessary to counter a defined threat, but rather on the tasks that the armed forces will have to perform and the skills that they will require to be able to carry out their tasks" (p. 61).

³ <http://www.difesa.it/Approfondimenti/ArchivioApprofondimenti/Pagine/2001-nuove-forze.aspx>.

⁴ http://www.difesa.it/Approfondimenti/ArchivioApprofondimenti/Libro_Bianco/Pagine/Premessa.aspx.

⁵ http://www.difesa.it/SMD_CaSMD/ConcettoStrategico/Pagine/default.aspx.

⁶ https://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Documents/2015/07_Luglio/White%20book.pdf.

Paradoxically, Italian public opinion passed from a highly adverse representation of the army in the 'First Republic' to a benevolent and "proud" understanding of the use of military means (Coticchia, 2012, p. 3). This new public permissiveness encouraged Italian governments to deploy soldiers in the contrast of other-than-war situations, such as illegal migration, terrorism, natural disasters and crime.

One characteristic of the Italian domestic politics in relation to military interventions is the "rhetoric of peace" embodied in the strategic narrative and the "fog upon the war" produced by the lack of official communications about the Italian soldiers' real tasks and missions (e.g. airstrikes, bombing, ground war-fighting).

Analyzing parliamentary debates on military missions during the Second Republic, Ignazi, *et al.* (2012, p. 81) find "multilateralism" to be the overwhelming preferred term to justify Italy war engagement. Then, the most used terminology includes pacifist stances as "humanitarian aid", "humanitarian mission", "human rights" and so on. In particular, where political parties supporting the ruling coalition have mainly stressed categories such as "peace and democracy", removing the military dimension, on the other side, opposition parties, even when supportive of missions, have tried to put forward terms like "war" or "military operations".

Interestingly, several papers underline the fact that the difference between center-left and center-right coalitions rests more on the rhetoric than the practice. In fact, where a bipartisan vote has been always guaranteed, the rhetoric supporting the vote changes across the political spectrum (Ignazi, *et al.* 2012).

Calossi and Coticchia (2009, p. 2, unpublished) point out the centrality of domestic politics in the decisions on military operations abroad, to be a constant feature of Italian contemporary politics. In particular, "*the removal of the military dimension*" and the instrumental use of the debates for domestic purposes characterize this behavior. (italics in the original). Accordingly, they argue that "the delay of the Italian political system in having a common denominator in IR increases the difficulties of developing shared identity and values".

The gap between strategic narrative and real practice is favored and ensured by both the already-introduced "fog upon the war" and the decision-making process dominated by collegiality. In particular, the latter stresses the fact that the spread of accountability throughout the entire political spectrum "hamper

the 'stopping the buck process' typical of other democracies", allowing a greater space of freeriding for diverse strategic narratives (Giacomello & Coticchia, 2007, p. 166). In particular, Giacomello and Coticchia conclude that "Thatcher-like tough standing does not win the sympathy of Italian voters".

The next section will investigate into a possible theoretical explanation of liberal interventionism and the participation of democratic countries in war scenarios.

3. The social-constructivist critique to "Democratic Peace theory"

The rising number of states adopting democratic systems as well as the general spread of liberal-democratic values came about after the end of the Cold War have fostered the debate on regime types and foreign policy behavior. Within this debate, the importance of "Democratic Peace theory" has gained more and more attention, supported by the idea that, among all the regime types, democracy is the most likely to maintain and promote peace in the international system (systemic level argument: Russett, 1993) and the less keen to the use violent approaches (monadic/dyadic argument: Doyle, 1983).

Whereas at the national level the link between democracy and peaceful manners has been historically debated, the dyadic argument is still based on large-N empirical findings rather than exhaustive explanations (Gates, *et al.*, 1996, p. 2).

Some scholars have refused the dyadic argument because statistically insignificant (Sipro, 1996) or because a clear definition of democracy is still missing (Sipro, 1996; Oren, 1995). Furthermore, the fact that democracy often go to war against non-democratic states is one of the most noteworthy critique to the validity of the democratic peace theory (Farber and Gowa, 1996).

Although an exhaustive theory still misses, scholars have attempted to inductively explain empirical evidences looking at two different types of arguments: institutional features and normative stances. In short, democracies are considered as less likely to go to war because they either face legal, social and political constraints or they externalize the domestic pacific problem-solving approaches (e.g. Doyle, 1983).

Notwithstanding, all the possible explanations deny the fact that democracy still use military means and have increasingly done so during the last couple of decades. This consideration leaves the ground to several unanswered questions

such as: why do democracies choose military options? Under which conditions do they opt for this way?

Looking at the normative aspects, social constructivists scholars have tried to uncover the “inherently ambivalent” characteristics of liberal norms, which, can “lend legitimacy to peaceful as well as militant political actions” (Geis & Wagner, 2011, p. 1564). The ambivalence rooted in the contradiction between admirable aspirations and violent manners is framed starting from the acknowledgement of the fact that the use of force as acceptable political mean has become a regularity of liberal global governance. Accordingly, the study of “regulative norms” that either prohibit or permit to fight a war for liberal purposes is at stake.

In so doing, domestic politics is analyzed through actions and discourses of political elites in order to understand the political and security culture of a given state and, accordingly, to evaluate expected behaviors. Political actors and elites are the primary object of the analysis because are considered as representatives of the set of shared politico-cultural norms according to a “logic of appropriateness” (Muller, 2004). The subjective consensus on a certain set of normative stances consequently informs the national identity and the political culture of a certain country.

The concepts of national identity and political culture not only contribute to the foreign policy-making process but also affect states’ role perception and the ‘evilization’ of a Kantian *hostis iniustus*, often referred to as ‘non-liberal other’ (like Bush’ “rough states list”) (Muller, 2014).

4. Analyze political discourses on foreign policy

The relevance of the normative aspects in relation to foreign policy behaviors lies on the fact that security interests are defined by actors who respond to cultural factors (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 2).

Accordingly, foreign policy is analyzed putting the norms shared by society as a whole, or by societal sub-groups like field experts or national elites (Boekle, *et al.*, 1999, p.p. 17-18), as independent variables of decision- and policy-making processes, and operationalize these norms looking at opinion survey data, party and electoral programs, parliamentary debates or the ‘symbolic guidance’ encapsulated in constitutional and legal orders. Furthermore, in order to

determine which norms effectively constitute and regulate the decision-making realm, a number of methods are required, such as discourse analysis, content analysis and process tracing.

The main questions to be addressed concerns whether political parties' ideological and political preferences actually matter outside the domestic realm.

Since foreign policy decisions are considered as a venue of national unity, in particular those regarding questions of national defense and international security (Wagner, *et al.*, 2016, p. 1), the literature on political culture usually take into consideration the positions of the major national parties (e.g. Calossi & Coticchia, 2009; Geis, *et al.*, 2013). By contrast, my purpose is to disentangle its monolithic understanding in order to explore the boundaries of this set of shared norms and analyze their relation with extreme political positions. Accordingly, the focus of this paper is the analysis of far-left and far-right political parties' positions in relations to Italian political culture in foreign policy.

The methodology employed for the paper develops on two levels: on the one side the assessment of parties' ideological positions and on the other side the evaluation of parties' voting behavior. Thus, the analysis employs qualitative and quantitative methods. The first includes content- and discourse analysis, which have been applied in order to assess party positions. The latter refers to the analysis of quantitative data on voting behavior.

The period taken into account is the Italian Second Republic. Whereas party programs will cover the period since the party's establishment, the analysis of votes starts from first Prodi cabinet, i.e. after the elections in 1996.

The four parties being analyzed are: Rifondazione Comunista (RC), Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL), Lega Nord (LN) and Alleanza Nazionale/Fratelli d'Italia-AN (FdI-AN).

Party positions will be assessed looking at the Chapel Hill⁷ expert survey data, electoral programs and parliamentary speeches. Parliamentary speeches refer to the vote-supporting declarations linked to the extension of the all-encompassing amendment through which military operations abroad are refunded, according to the Italian legislative custom.

The purpose of building the analysis on the two levels is to link the ideological positions of extreme parties to the effective policy-making process. For instance,

⁷ Downloaded from <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/datasets?archived=yes>.

whereas party manifesto and electoral programs allow every party to openly declare its narrow political preference on a specific topic, the parliamentary speeches are considered to mitigate political position in order to better fit in a given political culture (Geis, *et al.*, 2013). Finally, parliamentary vote shows the likelihood for a radical political party to influence effectively the policy-making process.

4.1 Alleanza Nazionale /Fratelli d'Italia-AN (National Alliance / Brothers of Italy-AN)

Born from the dissolution of the biggest Italian neo-fascist party (Movimento Sociale Italiano), AN (now FdI-AN) have made an historical shift toward conservative and social-conservative ideologies showing more openness toward coalition governments and the agreement with center-right parties.

In foreign policy, this change entails, for instance, the engagement with the European integration process and the commitment to 'UN values'. Notwithstanding, the party maintains the necessity to give a political-driven and national-based understanding of the integration process in order to control and balance the monetary union and the single market.

The foreign policy preference of FdI-AN can be summarized through two main drivers: loyalty to western alliances and reconstruction of the image of Italy abroad.

Loyalty to western alliances means the full acceptance of the political role played by and the security discourse put forward by NATO/US. Since its political manifesto in 1996, FdI-AN recognizes that "[t]he fundamental pillar of [Italian] defense policy is the 'Atlantic Alliance'". This position has never changed during the last two decades. For instance, in the last vote-supporting speech for MOA refunding, FdI-AN stated that "it's been seventy years that US and NATO guarantee peace, security and freedom for Italy"⁸.

Anyway, the general acceptance of multilateral clusters of foreign policy action is put together with a more nationalistic understanding of the actions in peripheral areas. In this area, namely the Balkans and the Mediterranean sea, FdI-AN promotes a policy directed to the reconstruction of the image of Italy as a middle power able to exert a considerable weight in order to enforce its national interest. As FdI-AN put it in the party manifesto in 1996, and repeated

⁸ E. Cirielli (17/01/2018) - Discussion and vote about MOA refunding.

in 2006, "the end of the US-USSR duopoly implies for our country to exert a middle power role [in the Mediterranean region, which] has been assigned to us by historical, economic and geopolitical contingencies". On one side, national interest is understood as the necessity to stabilize crisis areas with hard-power solutions and international cooperation, on the other side it is perceived through the intertwining relation among humanitarian interventions, political stabilization, migration, Islam culture and terrorism.

At last, FdI-AN rhetoric is characterized by a strong support for the military dimension and the role of the army as foreign policy agent. In fact, not only the professionalization of the army and the increase of the defense budget are key programmatic points in FdI-AN manifestos (1996; 2001), but also the 'heroic' image of soldiers as homeland defenders is frequently employed in FdI-AN discourses. A clear proof of this is the political campaign promoted during the years 2012-2016 by FdI-AN and Lega Nord for the liberation of two Italian soldiers detained in India⁹. The importance of this campaign is witnessed by the decision by FdI-AN to vote against the refunding of MOA in 2014 for the first time in its history. The party has supported MOA in every other occasion indeed.

Accordingly, it could be argued FdI-AN to share part of the norms and issues embedded in the Italian political culture, such as the acceptance of western alliance, motivations underpinning MOA and anti-terror wars. Notwithstanding, these parties shows a strongest commitment to classical right-wing values and arguments, such as nationalism, militarism, anti-migration policies, power politics in peripheral area, hard-power solutions and historical revanchism.

4.2 Lega Nord (Northern League)

The political history of the Lega Nord (LN) is an interesting case study since this party passed from the defense of regionalist/separatist claims to the support for nationalist and far-right positions. Even though the change might look clearly contradictory, LN managed to keep a continuity and coherence on some political points and rhetorical arguments related to foreign policy. In particular: anti-migration policies, identity politics, people self-determination and anti-establishment rhetoric have been distinctive features of LN narrative. For instance, in the transformation from a regionalist/secessionist party to a nationalist one, the

⁹ Two Italian marines, who were on duty as security guards on-board on Italian-flagged commercial oil tanker MV *Enrica Lexie*, were on trial because of the shooting against two Indian fishermen <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/117/>.

anti-establishment and self-determination narratives passed from the blaming of 'parties in Rome' to the disapproval of the EU leadership. Consequently, the pro-European stances of the first decade of LN political activities have been toned down in the last years due to a rising Euroscepticism. In this sense, the importance of self-determination as a party's core-value maintained its centrality even if it has been addressing two different 'peoples': the Northern-Italians at the beginning and Italians as a whole nowadays.

In short, one of the questions is: does the regional self-determination matter more than the national one? When it comes to actual decision making, practice shows to be contradictory in relation to the theory. For instance, in the 1996 electoral manifesto (p. 20) LN maintains that "the peace-building process in the Middle East must be supported maximizing the respect of the right of self-determination, including Kurds stances. [...]. The same criteria must inform the EU and Italy in the solution of North Ireland and Basque Country issues". By contrast, LN once abstained and once voted against in 1999 parliamentary vote on MOA because of its contrariety to the intervention in Kosovo, due to the respect for Serbian national territorial integrity (2012).

To understand LN point of view on the relation between foreign intervention, territorial integrity and sovereignty, pragmatism must be considered as the main driver of the party action. For instance, reading in-depth the voting speeches¹⁰ on Kosovo intervention, the arguments about self-determination and identity politics are completely absent, whereas issues related to migration flows and organized crime emerge as of paramount importance in the decision to not vote for. Then, in the electoral program of 1994, LN declared to back "contribution to the peace preservation and maintenance in those areas where Italian and European strategic and economic interests are at stake" (1994). Furthermore, LN argues that "peace missions must look at effectiveness of results more than propaganda and image appearance" (1996).

Notwithstanding, even when a harsh rhetoric was deployed, LN always confirmed its role of loyal junior coalition member in government. When in office it has always vote for MOA refunding. Instead, as opposition party it had exploited the opportunity of free-riding, changing voting behavior and arguments in the years. After the aforementioned Kosovo case, LN voted in favor of MOA refunding during Prodi II government, but voted against or abstained during the period 2013-2018. If the vote against in 2013-2016 was justified by the joint campaign

¹⁰ Simone Gnaga (LN) (07/13/1999) and Simone Gnaga (LN) (06/16/1999).

with Alleanza Nazionale supporting the two Italian soldiers detained in India, the abstention in the period 2016-2018 based upon a different set of arguments, such as inaccuracy of the role of engagement, migration flows and impossibility to vote case by case due to the all-encompassing amendment procedure. Anyway, in the last voting speech in January 2018, looking at the political election in March 2018, LN spokesperson said: "we never made any trouble on foreign policy issues to governments we were part of, and we won't do it in the future"¹¹.

To conclude, LN shares the international positioning of Italy within western alliances but it also remarks classical right-wings norms, values and arguments, such as national sovereignty, identity politics, closeness to military realm and interest-oriented foreign policy conception.

4.3 Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation Party)

The history of the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (RC) has witnessed a slow and continuous shift from a classical Marxist ideology to a contemporary conception of radical left, which is observed to be more inclined toward the support of western-based alliances and international frameworks of intervention.

The first party program drafted by RC in 1992 addressed the issues of military spending review, the reform of the army, MOA and Western hegemony, pointing out the contrariety to war and the "new interventionist spirit brought about by the Gulf War". For instance, NATO is defined as the "world policeman in the service of the interests of richest countries at the expenses of the others".

Moreover, RC discourse emphasizes the importance of international cooperation when directed to a "solidaristic" aid for underdeveloped countries. In particular, the party criticizes the fact that "the funds for the international cooperation [often] end up as export credits of our industries" (1994; 1996). It could be argued this to be exactly the opposite conception to the one described for LN, which views international cooperation as a foreign policy driver of national interest.

Regarding MOA and systems of collective security, RC has more and more accepted the role of UN as "international policeman", but kept a clear opposition to NATO and the US leadership. Anyway, this acceptance came along with a

¹¹ Gianluca Pini (LN) (17/01/2018) - voting speech on MOA refunding.

critique against means and method of Western intervention and the UN decision making process, in particular on the role of the Security Council.

On the relation between discourse and practice, RC lacked a straightforward and coherent plan as junior coalition member. Indeed, the two government experiences (1996-1998 and 2006-2008) witnessed several party divisions, contradictory voting behaviors, and coalition break up that lead the governments to resign.

Until 2006, RC voted for MOA refunding only three times, twice in 1997 and once in 1999. In 1997 RC linked the vote in favor of the mission in Albania to the establishment of a parliamentary 'committee of inquiry' with the task to analyze the situation of migrants coming to Italy¹². Unlike LN, the declared aim of RC was to support immigrants and provide humanitarian aid under the flag of the UN. Then, in 1998 the party abstained twice because in favor of only three out of the four missions at stake¹³. Furthermore, in 1999 RC voted for the UN intervention in Timor Est due to "the shared concerns for the ongoing genocide"¹⁴.

Between 1999 and 2006, RC coherently voted against MOA refunding in every occasion.

The two parliamentary votes in favor of MOA in 2006, one for the all-encompassing MOA decree and one for the specific mission in Lebanon, took place with the harsh dissent within the party's factions. In the first case, RC linked the vote to the acceptance of parliamentary motion addressing an "exit strategy" from ISAF and Enduring Freedom missions in Afghanistan¹⁵. In the second case, RC voted sincerely for the UN mission in Lebanon "in order to guarantee the cease-fire and assisting the Lebanese government" (Calossi, Calugi & Coticchia, 2013, p. 12). In this latter case, the RC historical support for the Palestinian question and the aversion for Israelis must be taken into account.

In short, whereas, according to party manifestos, RC have kept a coherent political position against military interventions, the parliamentary activity of its MPs has been contradictory. When the party leadership have tried to find out acceptable compromises with the center-left counterparts, RC has witnessed secessions and internal conflicts. This unreliable institutional behavior has caused the loss of consensus for RC, which has never won parliamentary seats after 2008.

¹² Maria Nardini (RC) (12/04/1997) – Parliamentary speech on the financing of the mission in Albania.

¹³ Maria Nardini (RC) (03/10/1998) – parliamentary speech on MOA refunding.

¹⁴ Giovanni Russo Spena (RC) (09/14/1999) – parliamentary debate on the situation in Timor Est.

¹⁵ Ramon Mantovani (RC) (07/19/2006) – parliamentary speech on MOA refunding.

4.4 Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà (Left, Ecology and Freedom)

Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL) has been the only leftist party in parliament during the period 2013-2018. It could be argued SEL to have inherited part of the consensus won by RC during the first years of the 2000s.

The greatest difference between RC and SEL rests on the complete abandon of both the label "communist" and the traditional communist terminology. Arguments related to western hegemony, US dominance, neocolonialism and neo-imperialism are almost never deployed and new vocabulary referred to human rights and the respect of international law is predominant. The main points put forward by SEL refer to civil and social rights, environmentalism and peace. In this regard, they criticized the fact that international cooperation transformed into an 'ancillary instrument' serving military interventions and Italian industries abroad.

The only available electoral program (2013) include a clear-cutting acceptance of the "use of force for international police-operations when required". Moreover, SEL propose a reduction of the military budget and the development of a collective security in the EU framework.

Looking at SEL MPs' parliamentary behavior in relation to MOA refunding, the party has always voted against due to the opposition to the use of violent means in peacekeeping interventions. Anyway, due to its short history and the lack of in-government experiences, it is hard to assess the real possibility of this party to influence the policy-making realm.

5. Final considerations

Content analysis of party manifestos and data analysis of parliamentary speeches show a greatest inclination of far-right parties to vote for MOA refunding and the consistent support of far-left parties to peace, international cooperation and anti-militarist arguments. Nevertheless, when the party' position went too far from the average national strategic culture, the likelihood for them to be integrated in the policy-making process resulted inconsistent.

The greater space of freeriding for diverse strategic narratives is mainly connected to the center-left and center-right bipartisan consensus on MOA refinancing. Thus, to the fact that the extremist parties' contribution was often non-determinant for the parliamentary majority.

On the right-wing side, whereas narrow ideological positions have been mainly put forward for political campaigns or minor requested, the overall behavior of AN and LN shows a strong propensity to accept compromise with center-right parties and the overall Italian strategic culture alike. A remarkable difference between the two right-wing parties emerges on the arguments underpinning MOA. Where AN generally accepts the idea of liberal interventionism, although backed by a militaristic discourse, LN takes a more pragmatic point of view and see interventionism as a national interest driver in foreign policy. Anyway, this difference on the narrative never affects the policymaking, as proved by the fact that, when in government, they had always guaranteed the support for the parliamentary majority.

On the left-wing side, it has been observed how classical Marxist narrative regarding anti-imperialism and western-hegemony has been gradually abandoned in favor of a new dictionary related to human rights, global inequality and peace-support. This change indicates a continuous shift toward the Italian strategic culture in relation to MOA and came along with the impossibility for RC to address policy making with radical arguments. In facts, when it happened, the coalition or the party itself broke up.

Thus, no request by far-right or far-left parties has won the favor of the parliament as a whole.

A common though shared by all the parties investigated in this paper is the desire to change the MOA approval system, based on a single all-encompassing amendment. As described for the cases of LN and RC, these parties would have voted in favor of specific missions, but not for others, according to their distinct point of view. This factor lays the ground for a theoretical consideration. The social-constructivist approach, indeed, meaningfully identifies the importance given to values and principles when a democratic state decides to go to war. In the case of LN and RC, the point is not whether or not to use military means, but rather under which purposes and according to which values go to war (e.g. protect refugees in a crisis situation or defend national interest).

A deepest evaluation of parliamentary voting declarations and legislative documents (e.g. amendments) might increase the relevance of the analytical approach deployed in the paper. Moreover, a proper comparative analysis between the findings just discussed and the growing literature on the national culture of center-right and center-left parties may shed the light on the whole set of norms-based arguments recognized by the Italian society.

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Appendix 1.1

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