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## NATIONAL INTERESTS AND SECURITY POLICY

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Contribuição do autor, como Presidente do Centro Alti Studi per la Difesa, de Itália, proposta no decurso da Conferência de Comandantes dos Colégios de Defesa da NATO que teve lugar em Berna, no período de 22 a 24 de Março de 1995, e na qual participou o Director do Instituto da Defesa Nacional (IDN).

### Resumo:

O artigo é iniciado por um ensaio da definição conceptual de «Interesse Nacional» procurando distinguir entre o que é e o que não é, considerado como tal, do ponto de vista da sua natureza, dimensão e relacionamento com o interesse colectivo. Em seguida, o autor analisa os conceitos de poder, segurança nacional e segurança colectiva, nos períodos anterior e posterior à bipolarização das relações internacionais. Por último, tendo presente o contexto da segurança ocidental e internacional, levanta uma hipótese de enumeração dos interesses nacionais da Itália, estabelecendo a sua relação com a política de segurança e com as Forças Armadas.

*Carlo Jean*

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### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

When one speaks of national interests it is like venturing onto a minefield. In fact, the term can be used with a myriad meanings, as occurs with the word «nation».

There has recently been a return to discussion of national interests, due also to the importance which the «national» question has assumed in domestic politics. Censorial criticism of this debate has not been lacking, as though only to speak of national interests is indicative of «regression» as compared to a «more modern» concept of politics, based on the primacy of widespread local, regional or even international concerns.

It has been claimed that national interests have no «national» basis, and are merely the product of diplomatic and military bureaucrats who, jealous of their own specific roles, tend to render the positions of their respective countries unilateral. Others, instead, have identified Italy's primary national interests with the simple predisposition of efficient instruments of foreign policy and security, thus – in a certain sense – inverting the ratio of priority aims, that is to say interests, and diplomatic, intelligence, military, economic and institutional means (although, obviously, aims and means interact and, without efficient instruments, no significant aim can be proposed).

Others maintain that European States no longer have national interests but that these have been replaced by collective European interests. But can interests exist without being expressed by political entities? No supra-national European entity actually exists. Fundamental decisions are made by the European Council, that is an intergovernmental body which cannot define or impose interests or policies other than those resulting from the component interests and policies of the member states.

It goes without saying that such claims arise from precise political, cultural and ideological interests and policies, even if they may not, in some

cases, be confessed to. Sometimes they are simply stratagems to disguise what one intends to do or to remove from any form of external control what has already been done. These, as Lorenzo Ornaghi states, are the leftovers from a «party democracy», rather than the «citizens democracy» which is, with some difficulty, establishing itself in our country.

Before speaking of national interests, it is necessary to define their meaning, nature and relationship with collective interests, which form the basis of alliances, or international interests which often reflect the general values and principles of co-existence.

I am firmly convinced not only of the existence of national interests but also of the need for these to be defined. This both for the planning and contingent management of foreign and security policies, as in the case also of military policy, and also so that these are not removed from the field of discussion and democratic control as though they belong, instead, to a separate field of «royal prerogative», a convenient screen for the self-determination of bureaucracy.

This conviction is strengthened by the fact that, now that the «fog» of the «warm peace» has replaced the certainties of the «cold war» and the disorder of Nations, the order of Yalta, the material and political costs of Italy's foreign and security policies must inevitably rise. It will, therefore, be necessary to have public consensus, and far more so than in the *belle époque* of the bipolar world. Citizens must be interested in foreign affairs and be aware of the problems to be faced, of the alternative options open and of their advantages, risks, costs and implications also in home affairs.

We must learn to avoid the conveniently distracting debate on systems and deal with concrete details. Only in this way will we be able to evaluate those national interests which the political *élites* propose as essential elements in their political programmes and for which, once in government, they will be accountable in the face of the opposition and of the voters.

Foreign policy cannot be limited to the declaration of principles and values, but must evaluate the effective consequences of specific choices. It must have a real ethic base, what Max Weber called «the ethics of responsibility» rather than a false ethical stance, such as that of abstract principles and values which are normally little more than screens behind which one may do as he wants.

We must stop seeing peace as a kind of acquired right, established by Article 11 of the Constitution but, in fact, dependant on the behaviour of other actors in the international scene. We must no longer boast, to the amusement,

bewilderment or disdain of our foreign counterparts, of being a disarmed nation or of considering our Armed Forces as instruments of war rather than seeing them as increasingly indispensable for whatever kind of peace may be possible. This is still a political peace which corresponds to our interests, our values and our vision of what the international system should be.

We must stop applying the rhetoric of the «soldiers of peace», implying by contrast the «bad» soldiers of the cold war, who were those who kept Italy firmly anchored to the West. Both are or have been soldiers of the Italian Republic, and that is all.

We must abandon the rhetoric of humanitarian patriotism and our fantasies of how Italy differs in some way from the rest of the West, fantasies in which can be heard the echoes of all the messianic and megalomaniac temptations of both Italy's colonialism and her missionarian attitude towards the Third World. Such rhetoric would like to give Italy a universal mission in the name of a moral primacy which nobody has recognized but which tends to transform the Foreign Ministry into a UN agency and the Defence into a branch of the International Red Cross.

We must stop seeing Italy in an ambiguous position between, first, East and West and now between North and South with «natural» mediating roles which no one has asked of us and which we have neither the material nor the cultural and moral weight to perform.

Italy's position in the West and with Western values is an established fact, and has no longer the need of the mediation of Atlanticism, anti-Fascism or anti-communism. National-neutralist tendencies do not exist in Italy, or are negligible, nor is there any destabilizing desire in the regional picture, not even on our eastern borders. Of this our allies must be certain and should be guaranteed. The problem lies not in Italy's belonging to Europe and the West but in what role the country effectively intends to perform in Europe and in the West.

But having a role means defining interests, priorities and, possibly, as indicated by Carlo Maria Santoro, preferential geopolitical directions and areas of interest.

We should, by the way, criticize the general aspiration to «having an international role» in itself. In reality, this transforms the aim into a means and leads to a mere «lunch presence diplomacy» that disguises the lack of a foreign policy. «Being there» is not an end in itself. The «role» is secondary to the interests to be pursued. We belong to the European Union not so as to bring about European unity but to protect our interests better through common action

aimed at achieving single, common goals, not only that of having Europe as a benefit unto itself. Whilst a Europe of Nations is acceptable, a Europe of the kind proposed by German geopoliticians in the twenties and thirties would certainly not be. In this framework it can occur, in fact, that we take on a role (initiative, break, balance, mediator, etc.) but there is no sense in clinging to such a role at any cost.

The assertion that general European interests exist which differ from national interests (which, moreover, cannot be debated or controlled by the public) tends to diminish the weight of Italian participation in the International community or, more correctly speaking, in the world. At most, one could talk of «wider» national interests which are congruent with those of our European partners after having agreed on these or, rather, haggled even strongly over them as all national representatives should do, be they politicians, diplomats or members of the Armed Forces.

Defining Italian national interests should represent a clear duty on the part of those who wish to govern. Not to do so would mean ignoring one's responsibility and limiting the control of both the opposition and the voters over government action in foreign policy.

In such a manner we produce precisely that «disinterest» on the part of the public and the political powers about which we so ritually complain, but which is frequently mentioned in justification of the routine bureaucratic and diplomatic nature of foreign policy decisions. In order to overcome this, it seems to me essential that we recover the meaning of «national interests».

This study is in four sections. In the first the concept of national interests is examined and, in the second, that of security. In the third section I examine the problem of Italy's position and international role following the end of the bipolar world both within and outside our country. In the fourth section, I outline a hypothesis as to what could be the national interests of Italy and those of its security. These latter, I hasten to add here so as to avoid any misunderstanding, are not autarkic but should be considered in the context of western and international security. A sketch will also be given of the characteristics which institutional, intelligence, operative, economic and, in particular, military means should consequently have in order to satisfy the requirements of such interests of the current international context.

## NATIONAL INTERESTS

### WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT A «NATIONAL INTEREST»?

States still represent the fundamental elements in the current international system. This is reaffirmed also in the document *An Agenda for Peace* by the Secretary General of the United Nations. They constitute, therefore, a *prius*; they are where politics happen. They allocate also authoritatively values, projects and objectives. It is, in fact, within states that consensus is formed and the democratic participation of citizens finds expression. In an ever «narrower», «fuller» and «interdependant» world, the definition of one's own national interests must, of necessity, take into account the national interests of other states. But the national interest constitute a logical priority of any foreign policy or any form of presence in international organizations.

National interests express the wider choices of foreign policy aimed at guaranteeing the prosperity and security of the citizens and maintaining the values and world view that a state wishes to assert either in cooperation or in competition with other states.

Deriving from the definition of Italian national interests – for example, European integration or stability in the Mediterranean – we have the objectives, planning and organic management of the entire foreign policy, of which security is a part, contingent decisions in times of crisis, emergency or conflict, and the «genetic» planning of necessary means.

These last cannot be defined in abstract terms but must be seen in relation to objectives that we intend to achieve. At the most, if the politico-institutional system were not capable of dealing adequately with Italian participation in military intervention abroad, it would even be preferable not to have rapid intervention forces so as not to be obliged to intervene, in a secondary role, by the pressure of the international community or our more powerful allies. This, in a certain sense, is what Germany and Japan have done so far, hiding behind a debatable constitutional veto on the employment of their forces abroad.

The pursuit of national interests, therefore, does not in any way imply militarism, autarchy, neutralism, nationalism, overweening ambition or imperialism. It conflicts with neither multilateralism nor participation in temporary or permanent alliances. It does not exclude the possibility of creating supranational institutions which, however, are to be considered such only if they have the formal and substantial legitimacy with which to allocate forcefully values, objectives and policies. The defining of national interests is

an essential element in giving unity to foreign policy, that is, to the system of international relations of one state and which, within that state, represents the basis for the preparation of how and with what means this should function.

Clearly, the definition may be more or less explicit or implicit: a degree of ambiguity is always necessary and this will be greater in long-term planning than in the management of foreign policy. It would be extremely difficult to reach an agreement if one's own interests were defined in such detail as to render them inflexible and, therefore, non-negotiable. In the case of serious contrasts with other states, this ambiguity becomes a factor of power given that it leaves the adversary uncertain as to one's aims and moves. Even within alliances a limited unpredictability, in certain areas, can represent a means of increasing one's own weight as, generally, can one's dependability. Studies on this subject abound. National interests vary from year to year and from administration to administration. What they really are may be deduced by interpreting the constant factors, by logically connecting these and by examining the power relationship and decisions taken in economic or military policy.

An analysis of this kind reveals that, during the Cold War period, Italy pursued very clear, precise and constant national interests in terms not only of the broader choices (democracy, free market, Europe, the Atlantic Alliance etc.), but also in variances with respect to the interests and policies of her most important allies (Mattei: *mini-ostpolitik*; a low profile not so much to keep hands clean as to keep them free; Libya; Sigonella; etc.). This so as to exploit opportunities for freedom of action in the world with the aim of increasing our weight in Europe and the Atlantic Alliance, priority areas of our international presence.

The basic problem is that of the debate, analysis and internal explication of the aims being pursued in such a way as to define them, this time very clearly, for diplomats and whoever else represents and works for the state in international meetings. These must know what is wanted, what strategies to adopt to achieve these aims, how far they may go or how much concede in negotiations in which higher principles are not under discussion but, rather, interests are exchanged.

To a certain extent, it is inevitable and, perhaps, for the best that national interests are implicit; but we have gone too far, to the point that we have actually lost sight of them. To some degree they must be rendered more explicit and each question, great or small, must be discussed, above all in terms of national interests. This must be made very clear to those operating in the

diplomatic, military and economic-financial fields. Where do the interests of the nation lie: in the Balkans? In the European Union? In energetic policy? In ecology? In immigration? In a common agricultural policy? Does it make sense to pay Europe annually 1500-2000 billion lire more than we receive? The answers, clearly, are multifold; the choice depends on the scale of priority. For example, one interest lies in obtaining indemnity for Italian property in Slovenia and Croatia. But how great is this compared to other interests which could thereby be damaged? The scale of priority and consideration of interests is not fixed then, but alters according to changes in the mixture of problems and the period concerned.

It was, to a certain extent, justified not to speak of Italian interests during the Cold War. Not speaking of them, in fact, was essential to the aim of making two irreconcilable facts co-exist: membership of the western Alliance and the internal consociate situation. This phase is, however, now over. Italy can no longer be, at one and the same time, both allied and neutral, co-belligerent and non-belligerent, desirous of being present in world decision-making *fora* but against taking on burdens and responsibilities,

Italy can no longer be the friend of everyone but must clarify, first of all to herself, her interests and try to pursue them.

With the end of the Cold War and the Maastricht Treaty the *belle époque* of irresponsibility and impunity has come to an end, as the Ambassador Sergio Romano has said. Decisions must be made, including those which involve renouncing certain things and we must provide ourselves with the ability to make them. We can no longer delegate foreign policy, which consists more of many small decisions than of great choices, to others.

All the elements exist for an Italian «reawakening» to this question. In order to be involved in foreign politics and stay in the West it was necessary to reform the economy, the administration and, therefore, the internal political system. The transformations currently underway in our country are creating the basis on which Italy can become a state like the others, capable of defining its own interests without strange shows of modesty and of discussing them calmly, without indulging in passing fashions of the kind that caused us to abandon nuclear energy or to destroy the technological and industrial foundations of our defence with a policy so violently opposed to the exportation of armaments as to sometimes make one doubt whether or not there was collusion with foreign competitors.



#### WHO DEFINES NATIONAL INTERESTS?

National interests do not derive from external factors but from the political and therefore voluntary choices of the *élite* in power. These, it is to be understood, are limited both by the resources available or which can be mobilized in time and by the structures of the international system, that is by the divergence or convergence of one's own interests and vision of the world with those of other states with whom we interact. The choice is then limited by relative power relationships, not only in material terms (military, economic, etc.) but also in terms of image, reliability, credibility and proposal-making ability.

National interests are of a political nature and are defined by the political *élite* in power. Competition between interests always exists. One need only think of how many have intervened in defining Italian policy in the case of Yugoslavia, also at a local and corporative level. Regions, industry and parties all make foreign policy. The problem is that, with us, there is no discussion and things therefore get confused. You always see only one side of things and an overall vision is lacking which would enable us to settle sectorial visions and interests. This demonstrates a lack of a culture of government, poorly disguised by the bureaucratic reflexes of the Farnesina, or the statements by politicians responsible for the Ministry that the Italians have no personal interests. This, in the best of hypotheses, is merely a joke or case of leg-pulling. To place in doubt a national interest is not, therefore, to betray the country. Rather, it is necessary that this be done. It is fundamental to any democratic dialectic. It is the basis for that consensus which gives legitimacy to and renders functional any political project, not only at home but also in relation to other states.

National interests are, in foreign politics, what in domestic politics are called general, public interests, or for the common good. They should represent a component in any proposal or political «formula» or electoral programme. The lack of interest in foreign and security politics which was revealed in recent elections derives both from cultural inadequacies, cultivated in the period of the Cold War, and from the urgency and presumed or real priority of institutional and economic internal problems. Once the political system settles down it will become indispensable in Italy to pass from disinterestedness to interest, if nothing else because of the growing level of globalization and interdependency.

Obviously, in a state which *is* a state, that is which is based on a fundamental understanding between majority and opposition with regard to the rules of the game, there are interests which are shared by all the political parties such as guaranteeing territorial integrity, energy supplies, freedom of movement and so on. Italy's position as belonging to the West and to Europe is beyond doubt. There are, however, different options open, such as how to be in Europe and the world. A debate should be opened on these since each of them has a different impact on internal politics and on the life of the citizens.

Defining interests with the term «national» is not necessarily (as has been said) a hypocritical way of passing off as general what are really sectorial or particular interests or, even, merely ideological options. It is simply a conventional term which derives from the fact that any «political formula» in the sense attributed by Duverger, aims at representing its own values, projects and programmes as corresponding to the general interests of all citizens. If this were not the case, it would change them. The term national is fully acceptable since it obliges those who use it to reason in terms of the state and not of the corporation, group or region to which they belong.

The nation, moreover, is not a natural, organic or pre-existing entity, above the state or with its own «natural» or «divine» interests as was claimed by the organic theories of the State or postulated by the German Haushoferian school of *Geopolitik*.

The state is not merely an instrument of the nation or, as Mancini affirmed, it is not only the legal system of a pre-existing nation. The nation is, as Renan said in a marvellous expression a «plebiscite of every day», the ideological and symbolic substrata which expresses the will of the citizens to live together, the basis of the so-called «patriotism of the constitution». Nor is it true, as Albertini maintained, that the nation is «only a stratagem of the state», an ideology and a myth, basis of its legitimacy and the consensus of the citizens and also ethical point of reference for that kind of civil priesthood which is the civil service. The «nation» is not simple propaganda. It is the cultural and historical substrata of the State. There are nations without statehood which aspire to this status just as there are nations which are clearly the product of the state. In the case of Italy, as in Germany and France, both cases are true. It is for this reason that, in a certain sense, we today may overturn the statement «having created Italy, we must create the Italians». The Italians exist, we must instead reconstruct Italy, that is to say the state. Interest in foreign policy is defined as national because, on the international scene, the state tends to act as a unitary and coherent system, thus personified by the

government in power which makes use of the administrative apparatus, the diplomatic corps and the Armed Forces.

Unanimity is not necessary for a definition of national interests which, it does well to repeat, are not objective or deterministic and do not fall outside the limits or values of politics. The rules of politics apply. Those who hold power, that is the majority, govern and therefore define this power. The minority controls and prepares itself to govern, becoming the majority in the next round of elections. Attempting to find unanimity at any cost leads to immobilization of the nation.

This, it should be clear, does not mean that the widest consensus should not be sought, especially in foreign policy but also in domestic policy, nor that, once a decision has been made, the minority is no longer obliged to respect the rules of the game. In other words, it is not legitimate to sabotage foreign policy or action of the government by looking for foreign allies. The political struggle between majority and minority is not a game without prizes, especially in foreign politics. Largely overlapping interests exist which must be taken into account, not taking the internal political struggle abroad so as not to weaken the position of the «country system» on the international scene.

#### THE NATURE AND DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

National interests can be classified in various ways which here we will merely list, leaving to more specialized literature any eventual in-depth study.

In the first place, these interests can be classified according to their nature: economic, territorial, political, ideological. This classification obviously refers us to the aims pursued: well-being, security and assertion of one's own vision of history, the world and humanity, that is to say the values which create the basis for the coexistence and culture of each population. They mainly relate to the role which it is felt necessary or convenient to play and concepts regarding those desirable structures of the international system which it is the intention to safeguard or create through one's own action.

Secondly, national interests can be classified according to priority as vital or secondary (the recent White Paper by the French Defence defines them as «strategic»), according to their permanency as permanent or variable and, according to their size as general or specific.

Thirdly, with reference to the interests of other countries, national interests can be considered as common, complementary or conflictual. Considera-

tion of these aspects in relation to other countries is necessary for the planning of foreign policy and decisions concerning war and peace in which the state pursues its own interests. It is also of use in cooperation or alliance agreements which give weight to common interests through common policy. Alliances or, at least, multilateralism are only means of pursuing national interests more economically and effectively. These, it goes without saying, influence the definition of interests. For example where there is a pre-eminent interest, a state may give up one of its specific interests which is in contrast and irreconcilable with this general priority interest. This must, however, be a voluntary decision, on the assumption of the priority of the national interest in maintaining the alliance's cohesion as compared to other potentially conflictual interests. It is therefore entirely wrong to see national interests and multilateralism in contrast, as has recently been the case in Italy. The definition of national interests is used, finally, for diplomatic negotiations which tend to settle conflicts and conciliate partially overlapping divergent interests by «swapping» one's own interest with that of another state. Only when it reflects and expresses an effective and realistic scale of priorities for national interests can multilateralism really work or alliances achieve a high level of ability and reliability.

Fourthly, national interests can be long – or short-term. The time factor is important in politics as in strategy. There is often a contradiction between short-term and long-term interests which necessitates the exercising of difficult political choices given that political «times» vary and are generally much shorter than those of interests.

Fifthly, interests can also be indirect, that is to say instrumental in the pursuit of completely different interests. This is the case, for example, when interests have the aim of consolidating the international image of the country and reinforcing its weight, credibility and reliability. For example, the expedition to the Crimea of the Armata Sarda or the interventions in Somalia and Mozambique are justified by the respective needs of submitting the Italian national question to the «concerto» of European powers and of supporting Italy's request to increase her presence in the Security Council of the United Nations. There are also, lastly, «historical» interests which can be debated as much as you wish but which are, in effect, at the root of many of the current ethnic and national conflicts. «Historical rights» such as those proclaimed by the Serbs or by Iraq in relation to Kuwait (and which «Civiltà cattolica» itself considered legitimate), however instrumental they may seem, nonetheless have a real effectiveness which cannot be ignored by other states and can form the

basis for internal and international consensus. Interests sustained by the various deterministic geopolitical schools of thought are analogous, such as those relating to natural frontiers, vital space, *manifest destiny*, as are those mercantile theories of «sacred egoism» or the various fundamentalist religious and ideological movements which lie at the root of so many holy wars, crusades and world wars.

#### INTERESTS AND POWER

An interest can be considered as such only if one is capable of achieving it, that is if one has the power needed to do so. If not, then we are not dealing with interests but simply with aspirations that are unrealistically ambitious and dangerous.

The range of interests depends, therefore, on the extent of power that can be wielded. Power undergoes a weakening process with «distance», not distance in the spatial sense but psychological, historical, temporal and so on. Technology in particular informatics, telecommunications, transport and weapons systems, have an influence on the gradient of «power reduction by distance». According to sector (for example, economic and military) totally different «gradients» exist, often characterized by large gaps (the economic sector is less continuous than the security sector, for example).

A similar phenomenon of weakening, described by Boulding, affects perceptions and, therefore, interests. A tribal conflict broadcast by the media throughout the world has far more impact on public opinion and, consequently, on political decisions than another even bloodier conflict which does not receive such coverage. This, on the one hand, leaves the way open to all kinds of manipulation and misinformation and, on the other, has sometimes led to «video-politics». This provokes uncoordinated and improvised reactions which makes politicians who have taken the initiative prisoners of their own actions, creating interests based on image and an unreasonable escalation in the use of force. This effect is to be distinguished from the mere amateurism or lack of serious and systematic action which was made palpable when certain Italian politicians, interviewed by a geopolitical magazine, revealed themselves to have an exceedingly vague idea of not only human but also physical geography. With signs almost of irritation, they pushed away the map that the interviewer was attempting to show them so as to bring the discussion down to concrete terms. Instead, they limited themselves to a repetition of general

and inane banalities, confirming by contrast the old saying «God is in the details, not in general ideas».

As in the case of interests, power is also of a multidimensional nature. Among its various elements there exists a certain fungibility, such as between economic and military factors. This varies from case to case and cannot be defined in the abstract but only in relation to individual concrete cases.

Power is, first and foremost, of an institutional nature. States must be able to plan their foreign policy in an organic and coherent manner and manage crises, emergencies and conflicts. This ability is particularly lacking in Italy, characterized as it is in its coalition governments, by a worrying lack of coordination and uncommunicative relations between the Foreign and Defence ministries.

Power has also a symbolic nature. The credibility, prestige and reliability of a state and the predictability of its behaviour represent the basis for its effective weight on the international scene. These are multiplying factors of power which cannot be replaced by any amount of material, economic or military force. The image of power often plays a greater role in foreign policy than power itself. In this area also, Italy is particularly lacking, given the weakness of those of its organizations which are concerned with institutional information.

Thirdly, power presupposes the existence of intelligence capabilities. These have become still more essential in recent times given the uncertainty which characterizes the existing international system, the existence of widespread risks, unpredictable threats and the shrinking of the time factors. In this sector also, it goes without saying, we find ourselves lacking thanks also to the fact that our intelligence services have come to be seen as demonic.

Fourthly, power and, therefore, the breadth of interests, are dependant on the availability of adequate operational – diplomatic, military and economic – instruments. Here again the Italian situation is not exactly rosy.

All these shortcomings have led Ambassador Romano to claim that Italian national interests should consist principally of the preparation of means essential to Italy's international presence and actions. Only after having put our house in order may we talk of external Italian national interests.

Such a claim can be shared only in part and, one could add, at a more basic level, there is the need to recover a sense of the operational culture of the state. However, our level of power is not nihil; we must, though, live in an international system which is rapidly evolving and which could leave us on the edges also in the new international division of tasks. We can no longer delegate

our security to others as we could in the time of the Cold War. We cannot go from delegating to the United States to delegating to Europe for the simple reason that Europe does not exist: it exists as a market, not as a state.

The definition of national interests and projects is necessary also because the consensos necessary for sustaining the political and financial costs of preparation and the use of these instruments can only be acquired through the proposal of programmes, roles and aims. Finally, there is always a logical priority of the ends over the means, and of the aims we hope to achieve over the means necessary in order to pursue them. We will, in the short term, have to set ourselves modest objectives so as to measure our interests against available abilities over time, gradually extending our interests as the means to achieve them are consolidated but preparing these means specifically in relation to those objectives, that is to pre-determined interests.

## NATIONAL SECURITY AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

### WHAT IS SECURITY?

The concept of security is, like those of interests and power, a multi-dimensional concept. It does not relate merely to the military dimension although, during the Cold War period, the threat of a Soviet invasion raised this aspect to pre-eminence as compared to political and non-military aspects.

Security is concerned with all threats, risks and dangers which may come into conflict with or impede the carrying out of political aims, first among which that of living and prospering in peace and affirming one's own values.

Vital security interests exist, such as one's own territorial integrity and that of one's allies, the independence of one's politics, the protection of one's own citizens whilst abroad and freedom of movement and sea lines of communication. There are also non-military threats, such as ecological or economic threats, drugs, organized crime, massive immigration, violations of international order and rights, underdevelopment etc. These are usually dealt with by the use of non-military means.

Generally, one normally tries to prevent rather than repress threats to one's own security. The availability of adequate operational means and the belief that they will be used where necessary, as well as the manœuvres of crisis management – for example, the preventive deployment of forces such as those of the United States in Macedonia – normally have a sufficiently dissuasive

and coercive effect. This means using the potential of one's available force instead of effectively employing it in order to attain dissuasive and coercive effects as illustrated by Schelling.

When prevention does not work, the use of force can be judged necessary. This is never an end unto itself but foresees a political result, that is the reestablishment or creation of a situation of peace which corresponds to one's own interests and values. Military victory has no sense in itself except in its psychological effect on the adversary's politicians. Also since it is however expensive, the minimum amount possible of violence should be used in order to achieve one's political aims. This does not mean that the size of the forces in the field should be limited. On the contrary, the larger these are, generally speaking, the less violence has to actually be used in order to achieve these aims.

Military force is not to be considered as a panacea. In ethnic conflicts, for example, military force can divide two fighting factions, as long as they have been grouped in different zones, by presiding over the strip dividing the two. It cannot, however, oblige two ethnic groups to live together who do not wish to do so. Each armed intervention has its political as well as its material costs and these must be carefully evaluated before intervention is decided upon. External peacemaking forces do not have vital interests to defend and will tolerate far fewer losses than the local ethnic groups fighting for power and survival. Political consensus for intervention can rapidly change and lead to disaster, as has happened in Somalia but as had already happened in Algeria, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan and as could still occur in Bosnia.

As Angelo Panebianco, Gian Enrico Rusconi and Carlo Maria Santoro, among others, have often pointed out, it is not possible for a country like Italy to have a foreign policy without a military policy, without adequate armed forces or, at an even more basic level, without a cultural concept of the legitimacy of employing military force in the defence of national interests and those of the international community. It is not necessary to stress this point; the majority of citizens are more than convinced as can be seen by the dignified behaviour shown on the occasion of the deaths of our soldiers in Somalia.

Everyone, however, must be convinced of the fact that, just as we cannot disarm the police in the fight against organized crime, in today's world, dominated as it is by geo-economics and interdependence, a loaded gun often carries more weight than a full wallet and that a state which does not maintain its own soldiers will, sooner or later, have to maintain those of another.



## NATIONAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

When common security interests exist then defence alliances or collective security systems are formed.

The former are permanent, like the Atlantic Alliance, or contingent, as was the case in the past. Permanent alliances are directed against a precise threat which involves vital, permanent and, therefore, common national interests of all the member states. Such alliances foresee the existence of military integration even in times of peace, at least at the level of systems of command. Since there is no transfer of sovereignty and, therefore, no automatism or certainty that, at the moment of danger, the states will keep to their undertakings, alliances always make provision for anti-defection or reciprocal insurance mechanisms similar to the system of the exchange of hostages practised up to modern times. In NATO, for example, the presence of a consistent amount of American air-ground forces in the forward defence of Central Europe and the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe guaranteed the so-called strategic coupling with the United States. In the reorganization of NATO forces, a similar reassurance is not possible. A certain cohesion, however, tends to be maintained by means of the creation of multinational units and the increase in combined forces, such as the multinational AWACS units.

Security systems, such as the United Nations or the CSCE, do not foresee the existence of an adversary who has to be faced as do defence institutions. These, instead, contemplate the principles of the creation of *ad hoc* coalitions so as to oppose an aggressor who, initially, is one of the member states of the system itself.

This greatly limits the real efficiency of collective security systems which have, in effect, so far been almost ineffective. Each state has its own interests, diverging perceptions and its own evaluation of the level of acceptable costs, losses and risks.

Moreover, since collective security and stability are public goods and, as such, cannot be divided, it follows that states also benefit from it who in no way participate in its production. All states are therefore tempted to come up with the most diverse reasons for letting others act or, at least, limiting their own responsibilities unless, obviously, their own national interests are involved in the conflict. They can also be tempted to come to an agreement with the enemies of their own allies so as to obtain advantages in the long or short term.

This is what is happening in Yugoslavia, what effectively happened in Somalia and what will inevitably happen again in the future.

With the globalization of information in real time, public opinion will continue to vacillate in an entirely unpredictably manner between the most megalomaniac calls for intervention and the most defeatist desire not to take any risks whatsoever.

## ITALIAN NATIONAL INTERESTS AND SECURITY IN THE BIPOLAR AND POST BIPOLAR WORLD

### THE COLD WAR PERIOD

In the bipolar period the existence of a permanent threat to the vital interests of all the Western states caused politics, sometimes including domestic politics, to be considered as secondary to security or, if we wish, strategy. The system followed the elegant logic of the confrontation of blocks and the technicalities of widespread nuclear dissuasion. There was strong cohesion within the Alliance resulting from the legitimacy of its American leadership, in turn derived from the essential role of the United States in the survival of the West. War had been pushed by nuclear weapons beyond the borders of Europe. Global geopolitical visions dominated, in particular that of containment of Euroasian continental power by the «maritime» Western nations, or that of linkage, closely connected to the former concept.

Italian politics developed, as Ambassador Incisa di Camerana says, in three distinct circles. The Atlantic circle, which guaranteed our security; the European circle which gave us development; and the Mediterranean circle which gave us a degree of originality and left space for expression of our ecumenical and «third world» missionary nature, an important element in our national culture.

The Armed Forces had an exclusively static task. They were not completely de-nationalized since, on the one hand, as they were aimed principally at the defence of the north-eastern border, they were less integrated in NATO than the German forces. On the other, we have obligatory military service and therefore the need to overcome the split between majority and opposition by appealing to national concerns that could motivate the conscripts, whose political opinions clearly mirrored those of Italian society in general.

The objectives to be followed and the resulting defence budgets could be determined with a degree of certainty and by mainly technical calculations in

relation to the size of the threat, the period of warning and the extent of the frontier to be defended.

The military problem had been removed from the national culture and political debate, to some extent because it was considered irrelevant and partly because studying it in depth would have highlighted the irreconcilable contradiction between, on the one hand, Italy's place in the international community and, on the other, the ideological split between the majority and the opposition. It was not for nothing that the debate on Euro-missiles had a notable effect on the politics of so-called national solidarity and, in the opinion of some, was provoked precisely in order to reignite contrast between the majority and the opposition.

Italy's position gave it undoubted benefits, not only because of the country's strategic position in the Mediterranean but also because of the fear that it could slide into neutrality, if not the opposite block even. This guaranteed Italy the support and solidarity of the West. Italy could have contented herself with enjoying the security provided by American soldiers and tax-payers without having to pay anything in economic or political terms herself, what one could call a market price. Italy could also, as we have said, move with impunity and a lack of responsibility, cultivating Messianic ideals, the legacy of the dominant political culture against which Cesare Bablo had already warned us, condemning the tendency to claim a «primacy» or the «universal mission of the Italians». Security policy was, in effect, delegated to the United States and this explains the combination of unease and emotion caused at one and the same time by the Sigonella incident which saw us in opposition to our main ally.

#### ITALIAN SECURITY IN THE POST-BIPOLAR WORLD

Today the entire picture is radically different. Italy can no longer delegate to others the management of its own security policy, neither to the United States which has different interests and aims to reduce its responsibilities, nor to Europe which exists only in the imagination and in desires. Italy has lost the advantage of her position. The unification of Germany, the disintegration of Eastern Europe and the likely extension of the Community to four EFTA countries, all combine to make European integration more problematical in the fields of foreign and security policies. The disappearance of a threat has weakened the links in the Atlantic Alliance, notwithstanding the continued,

notable American presence in Europe which everybody wants also in order to maintain European balances. This reduced cohesion has not been totally compensated for by attempts to bring the role of NATO up to date with the new political-strategic situation with initiatives such as: NACC, Partnership for Peace (PFP) and the placing of Atlantic military forces and means at the disposition of the UNO and the CSCE.

Geopolitics have fragmented. The world has become multi-polar also in terms of strategy and hopes for a new world order have floundered. The United States do not intend to bear the weight of being the policemen of the world. They are moving increasingly towards not so much an impossible isolationism, given existing global interdependence, as towards the adoption of a «great maritime strategy» of the kind proposed at the start of the century by Corbett for the United Kingdom, in opposition to both the theories of continental involvement and those «naval» theories which then held sway.

In this picture, the United States would represent an «honest intermediary» and catalyzer of temporary and contingent alliances, thus progressively decreasing their foreign involvement and linking each responsibility to precise national interests rather than those of an abstract international community.

War has once again become an historical reality in Europe. From the south, the Mediterranean is overshadowed by the demographic and Islamic bombs which could constitute a threat should weapons of mass destruction become available. European integration has been halted, if not actually been set back.

In Europe differing geopolitical views are in conflict. In contrast to a Germanized Europe of «Euroregions» we have that of a Europe of States acknowledged by the Maastricht Treaty which largely takes up the project for a Europe of Nations proposed by General De Gaulle and Fouchet Plan.

On a global level, counterbalancing a French-German-Russian axis, the basis for Europe as a world power, we have British scepticism in relation to European unity, a «Europe in Atlantic sauce» as well as a re-evaluation of NATO policy. Today, uncertainty reigns. European integration has not prevented different policies arising in the varying states in relation to the Yugoslavian crisis, although it has limited opposition and avoided the growth of tension at the price, however, of inaction.

The United States have lost a large degree of the interest he had in European integration in the fifties. This can be seen in the spread of the geopolitical theories of Nicholas Spykman which, unlike those of MacKinder that formed the basis of the Truman doctrine of containment, claim that the

major threat to American security derives not so much from Russia, the heart of the Eurasian continent, as from both European and East Asian Rimlands. World stability depends on the ability of the United States to prevent these Rimlands from uniting, an event which could give rise to a global power that could compete with the United States for world leadership.

## NATIONAL INTERESTS AND ITALIAN SECURITY: REALITY AND PROSPECTIVES

### WHICH NATIONAL INTERESTS FOR ITALY?

This is not the place to outline in sufficient detail Italian national interests and their effects on security policy or necessary military capabilities. I will limit myself to merely indicating them as the stimulus for further study.

One may say that the principal Italian national interests are as follows:

- a. Following a process of European integration which, on the one hand, does not destroy the unity of the state and, on the other, does not exclude us from a «board» of the principal European powers. This will only be possible if we increase our weight within Europe. In the meantime, we have every interest in maintaining a strong balancing presence of the United States both in Central Europe and the Mediterranean;
- b. Stimulating a Mediterranean political dimension both of Europe and of the Atlantic Alliance so as not to be excessively burdened by problems of underdevelopment, stability or security in the area and thus, to a certain extent, compensating for the attraction which Central-Eastern Europe is exercising on the European Union and on NATO;
- c. Avoiding a situation in which the extension of Europe or of NATO involves only the Visegrad countries, thus marginalizing the Balkans and South-East Europe and isolating Turkey;
- d. Protecting our interests in Libya, Egypt and Turkey, the link with oil resources in the Caucasus and in Central Asia;
- e. Guaranteeing our full participation in G7 and, possibly, in an enlarged UN Security Council (but is this worth it?) by continuing to participate in international missions aimed at maintaining stability and peace;

- f. Avoiding a total absorption of the Balkans, Central Europe and the ex-USSR by Germany by extending Italy's presence/influence in competition/cooperation with Germany's and trying to obtain support for our actions from the other Western states;
- g. Maintaining open relations with the Maghreb but avoiding being caught up in its internal problems or taking sides th any one of the factions fighting for power;
- h. Stimulating the integration into Europe of Italian high-tech industries, such as those in the defence sector. However, should our European partners dictate excessive conditions, Italy should not hesitate to attempt to extend its cooperation with the United States and Japan, possibly even in conflict with European cooperation;
- i. «Ending» as soon as possible the legal suit with Slovenia and Croatia so as not to damage our cooperation with those countries and continuing to protect adequately those minorities and those «historical rights» of Italian culture in Istria and Dalmatia which we cannot abandon;
- l. Coordinating economic and fiscal policy on a global and not merely community scale by modifying also those strategic priorities established to date: no longer supporting the impossible objective of the standards of Maastricht but, awaiting and in anticipation of a revision of the Treaty, relaunching production and employment;
- m. etc. etc ....

Each interest which, whilst general, should be clearly outlined so as to constitute guidelines for foreign policy, should derive from more contingent and specific objectives enabling diplomatic activity to negotiate an «exchange of interests». For example, in an entirely simplistic if not imaginative way, one could think of an agreement with Germany on the East to compensate for a German support for the Mediterranean area and the Balkans.

A similar consideration in an interministerial picture could thus render explicit the component factors – military, economic, cultural, etc. – of actions to be performed so as to achieve these interests; in particular, the qualitative and quantitative structures to be pursued by the Armed Forces in the context of alternative medium and long term resources.

The areas of Italian national interests are now basically threefold: European, Mediterranean and global. In Europe, the changes which have occurred in the last few years have shifted Italy's geopolitical centre towards the north-east, from western to central Europe. As a result, the problems of relations

with Germany have become crucial, as has cooperation with this country for the stability and development of eastern Europe, rich in both human and technological resources at low cost. Exploitation of these resources is essential to the reinforcing of our economy in its competition with South East Asia which will be extremely difficult.

The Mediterranean context no longer represents a realistic opportunity for the kind of Italian development which could increase our weight in Europe, which, after all, is that which counts. The attraction of Africa, historical curse of Italy's nationalism and colonialism at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century, risks absorbing too many of our economic and military resources and involving us in unsolvable problems. Some, in particular the Ambassador Incisa, convincingly maintain that Italy should shift her attention from Africa to Latin America which would appear to offer more promising opportunities for development. Moreover, the presence of millions of citizens of Italian origin should be an element in favour of a relaunching of interesting economic and cultural relations etc.

The Mediterranean, rather than representing a bridge would become a barrier. This clearly would not be hermetically sealed given the importance of Italian interests in Libya, Egypt and Turkey, but Mediterranean and African policies would no longer be ruled by a missionary spirit but by rigorous evaluation of the possible benefits, costs and risks they would represent for Italy.

As far as world policy is concerned, Italy should perform above all the role of «mercantile state», fully re-evaluating the global policies of pre-unification Italian states, especially the maritime republics. In a certain sense, Italy should follow a foreign policy similar to that of Japan, aimed, that is to say, at the development and support of commerce without limiting ourselves to a purely neo-mercantile vision of the new field of geo-economics. The minor overall importance of military force in the post-bipolar world and the greater economic weight of Italy clearly represent a favourable element to be exploited. Instead, we must firmly distance ourselves from a foreign policy which deals in those generalized universal values that, in the past, provided a convenient smoke-screen behind which amateurism, inability, improvisation and disorganization could hide.

The government should define its interests more clearly and make the effort to involve public opinion in the debate on foreign policy. It could find itself facing difficult choices should contrasts arise between Germany and the United States, especially if the former was attracted excessively to Mitteleuropa

and the more western of the ex-Soviet republics. In this case, above all, the costs of foreign policy and Italian security would inevitably rise and could not be confronted without strong internal consensus. Only in this way could we reduce the danger of brutal wavering between interventionist furor and the inability to run risks and the eternal attempts to mediate between the proposals of others in the absence of any ability to come up with our own.

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT DEFINING NATIONAL INTERESTS

Here I will merely list the consequences since they have been fully dealt with in the previous sections:

- a lack of political responsibility and, therefore, of democratic control;
- a waste of resources (including those of credibility and «image») in useless initiatives;
- a reduced impact of Italy on the international scene and reduced ability to uphold her interests;
- a lack in coordination between various policies, for example between fiscal and foreign trade policies in favour of exports; between foreign investment and a reduction in unemployment; therefore, a lack of control between the various sectors and a limited understanding by those responsible for one sector of the needs of the others. Without the means to discuss and clarify these together, areas of interference cannot be identified. This is also exacerbated by the partition of responsibilities by subject, rather than geographical area currently existing in the Foreign Ministry organization;
- duplication of conflicting and uncoordinated foreign policies; a levelling effect compared to previous and historical constants;
- a reduced ability to plan for the future; reactive, improvised and not strategic decision-making;
- vagueness and lack of effectiveness;
- greater vulnerability to media campaigns, often if not always directed by particular interests;
- a tendency to level out to the lowest common denominator;
- greater space: for lobbying, for a patronage system, (for example in the destination of personnel to lucrative and prestigious posts as Italian representatives abroad or in international organizations), for overween-



ing ambition, for ideological stances, for «being present», and for «go-getting» pseudo-decisional stances;

- a prevalence of regional interests and views over national ones;
- the use of foreign policy in favour of internal political competition in terms both of action (for example, aimed at weakening the government) and of omission (for example, not using the potential of the Italian communities abroad for fear of damaging one's own political position in Italy).

#### SECURITY POLICY AND THE ARMED FORCES

Security policy should be adapted to foreign policy, in relation to which it should have a subordinate function. Foreign policy will not bow down to the logic of security policy as occurred in the bipolar world. The Armed Forces will no longer have to perform the static task of defending the territory in the context of collective dissuasion of the Alliance under American leadership. They must guarantee an adequate presence of our country in western or international foreign interventions aimed at the solution of crises and conflicts, as well as protecting the maritime flank of the peninsula and the territory against threats deriving from the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction. They must be capable of acting also in a purely national context in the case of minor crises, such as the intervention in Ruanda to save the lives of national subjects, and must also ensure a qualified presence in the various tasks which they may be called on to perform, from providing international observers to intervention in cases of natural or technological disasters, both at home and abroad.

Qualified does not only mean of an equal quality as those of other European Armed Forces. It also means polarized into those sectors which are most lacking in international interventions, above all light infantry units and systems of command, control, communications, surveillance and target acquisition. All forces must possess full strategic and tactical mobility and be capable of very rapid deployment. They must, therefore, possess total operational readiness. The knowledge of languages will represent one of the most important indicators of readiness for the Armed Forces to perform their new tasks.

It is far more difficult to determine the dimensions that the Armed Forces should have. The quantitative definition of force goals can no longer be purely

technical as in the times of the bipolar world. Foreign intervention is not the result of an obligation but of an autonomous political choice. It is, in a certain sense, optional, deriving from the role which Italy decides to play as a result of her national interests. The control of frontiers and air and sea space cannot be abandoned, nor can the monitoring of the strategic situation in areas considered of critical importance for security, the defence of the territory against missile attacks, the defence of the freedom of the seas and strategic supply, the availability of special forces for the rescue of Italian nationals abroad or the ability to reconstitute the main defence forces through mobilization in the albeit remote possibility of a new land threat to the national territory.

But to these irremissible requirements must be added effective participation in multinational missions.

Given our membership of the Alliance and our interest in active participation in European integration, one could presume that the Italian ability for external military intervention should be in the range from half to two-thirds that of other principal European countries. Clearly, one cannot do everything immediately. Time and rigorous planning will be needed and the necessary resources must be supplied. A technological and industrial military policy will also be essential to enliven the industrial base weakened by a reduction in orders, the block of exports and the lack of stimulus for that qualitative improvement which can only lead to international competition or cooperation.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order for such an ability to be meaningful, that is, to be of concrete use to the nation, greater general cooperation is needed, above all between the Foreign and Defence Ministries, but also between the Ministries for Foreign Trade, Finance etc. in such a way as to prevent our efforts and resources aimed at intervention from being rendered largely useless, as happened in Somalia, in Albania and in Mozambique. This could only occur if our interests and the aims of national foreign policy are clearly defined and each intervention is seen in an organic and coherent overall political context with precisely evaluated priorities.

In order to achieve all this, as already suggested – apart from internal restructuring of the country, the reacquisition of a sense of the state, recognition of the legitimacy of using force in order to protect national and collective

interests and the preparation of institutional organizations and operative and intelligence means – we must recreate the cultural conditions that serve as both the premise and the stimulus for serious debate of both foreign and military policy. We must abandon the empty ambition of ecumenical debates on the different nature, the primacy and the mission of Italy in the world. We must instead adjust our efforts and resources, costs and risks to contingent aims deriving from the rigorous pursuit of national interests and their priorities in the context also of those political resources that can be dedicated to foreign policy.

This is a task which is also a civil and, without being rhetorical, patriotic duty of diplomats and the members of the Armed Forces. It must also involve the academic world, media operators and teachers, who have so far shown too little interests in real problems, in the essentials and perspectives of foreign policy and national security and their impact on the growth of prosperity and cohesion within the «Italian national system».

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