

# Italy and the Changing - But Not Waiting - World

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*Recently the French President, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, admitted that NATO should be considered cerebrally dead. Such a statement, although influenced by the search for domestic consent, certainly reflects a deep impatience with European and Atlantic limitations by French intellectuals in general. These statements also reflect the fact that France realises that the international framework has become multipolar, with the new prominence of Russia and China.*

*The French international strategy is in fact changing, with peculiar attention to Moscow, in light of its recent failures (Libya, Syria, Françafrique).*

While Paris is not hiding her feelings against Atlantic constraints, Rome still appears to consider US foreign policy as her own: the Italian Defence Minister recently stated that the main threats to Italy's national security are the Russian Federation and China. A decadent policy that gives away its crucial decisions to the EU or the USA. The current debate in Italy does not seem to connect the domestic socio-political situation to the international role of the country. During the First Republic (1945-1992) Italy was able to take some advantages from the atlantic constraint and thereby improve somewhat the country's general conditions, although not entirely without conflict. This whole period was defined as a "limited suzerainty" era, imposed on Italy by the US occupation.

Current Italian foreign policy is still affected by the notion of a world split in two blocks. That notion was dictated by NATO membership, imposed by US occupation rather than by a free Italian choice.

The former advantages of that era are now just a memory. A combination of blind obedience to the USA, the fear of an external threat – the USSR yesterday and the Russian-Chinese alliance today and disregarding real national interests, will surely end up in tears. The same applies to the current condition of Washington's atomic ammo depot, in the hope of unclear advantages. 13,000 US troops in Italy look like an occupation rather than an alliance, and Italian public opinion should consider that.

In recent years, US military interventions reduced to rubble some important parts of Italian foreign policy, such as Libya, ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia and Syria. Instead of opposing them, Italy always supported these interventions, at the cost of her international stance, relations, and public money, exposing thousands of Italian troops in the Middle East to unnecessary risks.

In a multi-polar global framework, the very existence of NATO is hard to understand, unless we consider it a tool of US decaying domination over even their allied countries, helped by

time-honoured money flows. Notwithstanding all this, important sectors of the political and economic Italian ruling class keep liturgically repeating the importance of the moral link between Europe and the USA, and NATO membership is never questioned. An attitude Italy can hardly afford, at the cost of her economic, political and moral decadence.

The results of the clumsy attempt to keep up a shabby status quo can be clearly seen in the country's stagnation, in its de-industrialization and in the massive migration of its young talented ones. Meanwhile, a significant section of Italian intellectuals is lazily giving up the task of developing an Italian-specific policy, oriented by real peoples' needs. This in turn causes the obsolescence of Italian institutions and a general impoverishment of Italian politics. The progressive decadence of national identity and culture is leaving ample space to reactionary and xenophobic views. These in turn are generating popular disaffection and a general contempt towards politics.

Italian intellectuals are usually divided between Atlantic or Franco-German loyalty. Some of them seem to think that the solution to US domination is to stick with French and German governments, both of which have clearly shown that they do not consider Italy a fair partner, or a real ally. Notwithstanding the good intentions, EU interests are exactly the opposite of the Italian ones.

A real Italian *realpolitik* should admit that Italy does not have any allies inside the EU. Others maintain that an "exclusive" or "privileged" relationship with Washington would balance the monetary, political and military pressure of France and Germany. But the USA are considering Italy as simply one of their outposts, or one of the tools of their foreign policy. Italian weakness will never generate wealth or prosperity, and this illusion will only make matters worse. Italy keeps half heartedly supporting sanctions against the Russian Federation, Iran and Syria. Relations with the latter country were broken in 2011, just before its de-stabilization began. Before that, Italy was one of the main partners of that country. Although common sense would suggest to patch up the Italo-Syrian relations, the Italian state television refused even to broadcast an interview with its President, Bashar al Assad.

Libya seems to clearly explain the current Italian weakness: notwithstanding the cease-fire appeals by Italy, Russia and others as well as the Berlin meeting, a solution remains far from near. Very few dare now to admit that the invasion of Libya was the worst Italian defeat since WWII. In November, the Russian ambassador in Italy, Sergey Razov, declared: "*Our approaches [Russian and Italian] are largely the same. We ask for a general cease-fire and support an international high-level meeting with all the interested countries, and a pan-Libyan forum*".

While the country's decline is getting more and more evident by the day, breaking the atlantic and European constraints is crucial. What we need is a new Mediterranean and continental perspective, and Italy should freely design its own strategic relations. Italy is placed in a sea that, small as it is, is probably the most important of the whole planet, and should keep that in mind.

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