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Italian foreign and security policy in a state of reliability crisis?

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This article focuses on Italian foreign and security policy (IFSP). It looks at three examples of the country's policy-making which reveal its poor results as a security provider, namely: Italy's tardy reaction to the violence in Libya in 2011, its prompt reaction to the Lebanon crisis in 2006, and its efforts to be included in the diplomatic directorate, the P5+1, approaching relations with Iran in 2009. The article considers whether government action has bolstered the reliability of IFSP and, also, discusses the country's FSP in terms of its basic differences from that of its partners in the European Union, France, Britain and Germany, envisaging how Italy could react to build more credibility. Italy's policy is observed through a three-pronged analytical framework enriched by concepts of the logic of expected consequences (March and Olsen 1998). The article concludes that IFSP is predictable, but it must still reveal that it is reliable, and explains why this is the case.

Keywords: Italy's Foreign and Security Policy; European Union; crisis management; logic of expected consequences

Introduction

Italy's foreign policy has often been dismissed for punching below its weight, and for being too idiosyncratic and inconsistent (Missiroli 2000, Andreatta 2001, Croci 2002, Ignazi 2004, Romano 2006, Del Sarto and Tocci 2008, Croci and Lucarelli 2010, Carbone 2011, Walston 2011, Brighi 2011, Giacomello and Verbeek 2011). This judgement links to the question about whether Italy is a reliable foreign policy actor. Reliability suggests the quality of being trustworthy and in this context it may convey the idea of a foreign and security policy player who can be depended upon. This article develops its argument from a set of observations. Italy's efforts to behave as a trustworthy foreign policy actor and security provider in its region offer the opportunity to discuss both Italy's fear of being sidelined by France, Germany and Britain and the lessons that Italy could learn in order to improve the reputation of its foreign and security policy (IFSP). The focus on IFSP also offers the opportunity to examine the 'conduct' of the Italian policy-makers in terms of the expectations that they have may have thought would result from their actions. IFSP is perceived through a broader three-pronged analytical framework which is enriched by concepts of the logic of expected consequences (March and Olsen 1998).

More often than not, nowadays, external security tensions are approached in a multilateral setting. Three examples illustrate Italy's recent foreign and security policy: the country's tardy reaction to the violence in Libya in 2011; its prompt reaction to the Lebanon crisis, in 2006; and its efforts to be included in the diplomatic directorate, the P5+1, determining relations with Iran,¹ in 2009. These events are focused upon in order to shed light on the modest roles played by Italy, and its exclusion from any key responsibilities. Therefore, there is an implicit limitation to

this article in that the three examples are not fully analysed and contextualised in the same way that a case study would be.

The article contends that, in the case of Lebanon, IFSP under Romano Prodi's premiership was backed by strong multilateralism, but its influence was challenged by political instability. In the case of Libya, the change in the IFSP of Berlusconi's cabinet was associated with the benefits that a coordinated action with France, Britain and other states would produce. In the case of cooperation with the P5 Plus 'group' on Iran, IFSP was based on the idea that Italian policy would derive influence and effectiveness by supporting the collective 'norms' of the group. These examples lead to the conclusion that IFSP is 'predictable', as it is mainly linked with the common action, but that it has yet to show that it is reliable. The conclusion will explain the kind of commitment that Italy would need to make to demonstrate this.

In the next section (section two), the article introduces the framework of analysis, then (section three) looks at the examples that reveal Italy's poor results as a security provider, and successively (section four) considers whether government action has bolstered the reliability of IFSP, and (section five) discusses the country's FSP in terms of its basic differences from that of France, Britain and Germany, envisaging how Italy could react to build more credibility. Then (section six), it explains IFSP in the light of the analytical framework, and finally (section seven) summarises the main conclusions. The article employs official documents, secondary sources and interviews with public officials.

The framework of analysis

Since external security tensions arise chiefly in a multilateral context, one of the main tasks is agreeing on aims together with other EU or non-EU states. There has been a reported tendency, especially in the area of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), towards consensus-seeking which goes beyond mere diplomatic declarations to a more proactive policy-making. There have been some notable exceptions – over Iraq in 2003, or in 2011 over Libya – which suggest that national considerations can still trump conceptions of any common European interests. Member states have, in that sense, been determined to retain their national prerogatives, even while strengthening their commitment to the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP)/CSDP in the Lisbon Treaty.

Italy's response to the violence in Libya, its reaction to the Lebanon crisis, and its attempts to enter the P5 Plus directorate on Iran, serve to point out its weak role and marginalisation from responsibilities. These events will be observed through a threefold analytical framework: how Italy has reacted to the changes in the international system that serve as the background to this article's narrative; how its domestic politics have affected its foreign and security policy; and how the European Union has constrained or helped Italy's positioning in the outside arena.

Member states have consistently declared their interest in common action, largely on the basis that influence and effectiveness in foreign policy is, to a considerable extent, based on speaking and working together. March and Olsen (1998) foresee consensus-building via a logic of 'expected consequences', whether consensus is sought within the European Union, in a coalition of the willing, or in any other framework. They posit that the strategic calculation of rational bargaining suggests a logic of expected consequences when a government's protection and defence of what it perceives as its national interest confronts but frequently becomes reconciled with the position of other states on the same policy issue.

Put simply, a logic of expected consequences ‘explains’ foreign policy by offering an interpretation of the outcomes expected from it (p. 950). It sees political order as deriving from negotiation among rational actors following personal interests, in situations where there may be advantages attached to coordinated action (p. 949). It perceives politics as aggregating individual preferences into collective action through various processes of bargaining, coalition building and exchange (see Downs 1957; Niskanen 1971; Hechter and Kanazawa 1997). The criticism of this logic builds on the ‘presumptions’ in predicting consequences (Simon 1955, 1956), and on the fact that interests are mutable and inconsistent (March and Olsen 1998, 950; March 1978; Elster 1986, 1989).

On the other hand, when the decision-makers tend to recognise the ethical dimensions and the collective norms of the group, March and Olsen identify a logic of appropriateness that motivates their behaviour. The logic of appropriateness embraces principled dimensions and aspirations (see March and Olsen 1989, 1995), and ‘explains’ foreign policy as the application of rules, associated with specific identities, to specific circumstances.

Yet, the division between the two logics is faint. Political actors are characterised both by their interests and by the rules ingrained in their identities and political institutions. However, ‘appropriateness need not attend to consequences’ (March and Olsen 1998, 951), in the sense that it does not include a focus on consequences. As March and Olsen specify, ‘the descriptive question is whether (or when) one logic is more likely than the other to be observed as the basis for actual behaviour’ (p. 949). The logic of expected consequences will suggest an explanation of the Italian policy-makers’ attitude to IFSP with reference to the expectations that they have possibly assessed as deriving from their action.

Unreliability?

Italy would aspire to be considered by its EU and non-EU partners as a reliable foreign policy actor and security provider in its nearby region. Its efforts in gaining leadership, however, have produced no adequate results.

During the recent crisis in Libya (February 2011), IFSP under the leadership of former Prime Minister Berlusconi and former Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, failed to respond promptly to the situation. Only six days after anti-government protests exploded in that country, Berlusconi denounced as unacceptable the use of force by the military regime, calling for a common effort to prevent the crisis degenerating into civil war (21 February). Domestic opposition politicians have argued that, as Libya’s closest western ally, Italy should have taken the lead in condemning the violence and mobilised its resources for humanitarian assistance. The country, initially, opposed objections to applying sanctions to the Libyan leader, when the European nations first discussed this issue. When the UN Security Council approved the no-fly zone over Libya, authorising all of the necessary measures to protect civilians (17 March 2011), Italy again took its time to adopt a clear position on the Gaddafi regime. Hinting at its 40-year colonial rule of Libya, it first affirmed that ‘it would not take part in NATO-led air strikes’, but the position slowly moved towards a more participative action, with former Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa declaring that:

Precisely because we are close to Libya, our role cannot be that of renting rooms, offering the bases and the home key. It must be purposeful [and] moderate but determined. The Italian participation will see [our] country on the front line within the coalition of the willing. (*Corriere della Sera* 19 March 2011)

In fact, the country sought to gain leadership in the common action initiated by France, Britain and the US with the support of the Arab and European allies and American airpower – the Unified Protector Operation launched by NATO on 31 March 2011, according to resolution 1973.² As Berlusconi announced in a statement, Italy ‘was ready to allow its jets to take “targeted military action”’. It hosted NATO’s joint force headquarters in Naples, and offered its air bases to assist with the implementation of the no-fly zone. Under the guidance of Operation EUFOR (European Union Force) Libya, within the legal framework laid down by the Council of the European Union (1 April 2011),³ Italy was prepared to offer humanitarian assistance in compliance with possible UN requests. Obtaining the guidance of EUFOR Libya was a positive sign from Italy’s European partners, possibly an indication of the country’s reliability, as Foreign Minister Frattini later recalled in the Chamber of Deputies (27 April 2011). However, an unnamed senior foreign diplomat commented that ‘it [was] a bit strange to put an Italian rear-admiral in charge of a command centre in Rome for an operation that [didn’t] exist and [that was] unlikely ever to be launched’ (Vogel 2011).⁴ Italy’s ‘nominal’ command of the proposed EUFOR Libya hardly suggests a recognised responsibility, and earned authority as a reliable player to lead a multilateral operation, as Italy has hoped. In terms of Italy’s desire to build up dependence on its external security action, the nominal command was a sign of failure.

At other times, IFSP reacted promptly, when fast decision-making was needed. This was the case with the response in 2006, led by Prime Minister Prodi and Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema, to the escalating violence and humanitarian suffering in its region, caused by Israel’s military intervention in Lebanon in July of that year. Italian policy was at the forefront of the rapid reaction force, by offering 3,000 soldiers, at a time when France was offering 200 (*New York Times* 27 Aug 2006).⁵ It even contributed towards generating the political will to compose the military force, by requesting, at the Political Security Committee of 23 August, in Brussels, together with France and Spain, substantial troop contributions from the other member states. However, though Italy sought to assume operational command of the force at that time, France, facing intra-European pressure, boosted its military endeavour from 200 to 2,000 troops, and wielded operational control over the mission (Gross 2009, 53).⁶ Italy’s policy-makers possibly experienced this as having ‘the job’ taken over by France and by intra-European pressure, and they may have been dissatisfied about it, leading them possibly to acknowledge the limited expectations and trust that IFSP was able to attract.

Also, a look at relations with Iran suggests a similarly modest assessment of Italy as a foreign policy and security actor. Foreign Minister Frattini’s policy, in 2009, showed that he sought to have Italy included within the diplomatic directorate and its approach to Iran, which was formed by France, Britain (and the other permanent members of the UN Security Council – Russia, China and the US) plus Germany (P5+1). Frattini was cited as saying that Italy ‘will not be left isolated by a restricted group of European partners plus the US’ (*Financial Times* 15 May 2008). Then, the Minister exhibited a proactive posture, boosting initiatives, both unilaterally and multilaterally, many of which failed to materialise. In February of that year, Frattini announced his visit to Iran, and a few days later cancelled it. The visit was meant to involve Iran in a debate on regional questions concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan, and was said to be a reasonable task, shaping a fair agenda (*La Stampa* 18 February 2009). In the same year, when Italy was heading the G8, the Italian Foreign Minister

invited his Iranian counterpart to attend the G8 summit on Afghanistan, in Trieste, but shortly afterwards withdrew his invitation, stating that ‘the facts at hand [...] have forced [him] to change [his] mind’ (Istituto Affari Internazionali 2009). Frattini’s foreign policy did not succeed in these various tasks. By contrast, in the end, a more substantial Italian policy was pursued in support of the political process put into action by the ‘restricted group of European partners’ within the directorate (the P5+1). With regard to the inclusion in the P5 Plus group on Iran, the key point of Frattini’s policy, there were a number of negative reactions. Germany was the main EU member opposing the option. The US was concerned with how big the framework would become if an additional country were to be admitted (*Financial Times* 15 May 2008).

This section has highlighted several weak aspects to the IFSP: the nominal command of an operation that was very unlikely to be launched (EUFOR Libya); the influences of France and other countries, at the European level, to delay Italy’s operational command of UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon); and the negative reactions, led by Germany and the US, to Italy’s abortive efforts to become part of the diplomatic directorate on Iran. These features seem to add up to unsatisfactory outcomes which uncover the reality that Italy faces, particularly in the light of its would-be aspirations.

The government

Has the government operated in the direction of bolstering the reliability of IFSP *vis-à-vis* its international partners? The (centre-left) government at the time of the Lebanon crisis, led by Prodi (2006–8), former President of the European Commission, and by D’Alema’s conducting of foreign affairs, was deeply involved in multilateralism and team work, engaged in giving greater strength to the EU and the Commission (Missiroli 2007, 164), and inputs to policies for North Africa and the Middle East. For the above commitments – and for the earlier handling of its foreign policy agenda, joining Italy to the Economic Monetary Union during its 1996-8 cabinet tenure – Prodi’s government was recognised as possessing both authority and international influence (Quaglia and Radaelli 2007). Prodi and D’Alema’s leadership was, however, undermined by political uncertainty. It came as no surprise to some, though as a paradox to others, that the left-wing parties caused the government’s collapse. Their international issues were salient to the point that no reasons were found to avoid a lethal clash. With regard to Europe, a concise statement that describes, whether rhetorically or not, the country’s general attitude, is the recognition that its Republican history had always ‘taken for granted that Italy’s national interests coincided with Europe’s interest’ (Carbone 2009, 98, 114; Newell 2010).

The drive of Berlusconi (2008-11) – the longest-serving prime minister of the Italian Republic (Pasquino 2008) – and Frattini with regard to Italian external interests was, by contrast, totally personalised due to the premier’s style of individual and private relations and particular friendships with other foreign players, outside any apparent aspiration to establish multilateral links (Crocì and Lucarelli 2010, 252). This tailored ‘behaviour’ of the premier’s distinct approach to policy-making was disconnected from the team players’ ‘method’ – which was developing in the various common forums and committees in Brussels, followed by the Italian government’s representatives to the European Union – of sharing problems and discussing solutions acceptable to the majority of member states. That behaviour and method were so unrelated that one may wonder what Berlusconi was actually acknowledging about

the inputs and feedback concerning common policies suggested and recommended by the Italian EU representatives. Many expressions by Berlusconi would convey the idea of what Europe meant to his policy, but an old one still makes sense: Berlusconi embraced 'Eurorealism based on a healthy mercantile spirit that refuses to lay down the cash before seeing the goods' (Rossi 2002, 105). His government had not heightened the appeal of Italy's external action (Marchi 2006). The international foreign policy community was also extremely troubled by the way in which the then prime minister promoted his personal ambitions, and protected his interests in the international arena (Furlong 2010). The European and international prestige of Italy declined under his tenure 'so much that Italy was rarely or never invited to the British-Franco-German summits' (Pasquino 2007, 50).

Hence, neither instable governments nor personalised politics could contribute towards promoting the trustworthiness of IFSP *vis-à-vis* other states and international partners.

How to react?

How could Italy (and its government) best react to the possible situation of being sidelined by France, (intra-European pressures), Britain and Germany, when it approaches international issues? Understandably, Italy is not recognised as having such a status in the world arena as France, Britain and Germany, generally referred to as the Big Three (Major 2006). Its non-inclusion in the Big Three club is influenced by historically and culturally grounded values, which are often difficult to separate from one state's vision of other states (Schmidt 2006).

Italy is not like France. Italians have an impelling necessity to rescue their national pride along with their nation (Ferrara 2003). They do not hold ideas of *grandeur* as do the French, who remain vitally tied to the general *grandeur* objective – though the end of the Cold War together with external crises and shocks have produced the multilateralisation of French policies. Italians have been uneasy about the combination of military and civilian tools, particularly with force projection, boosted by the vision of the military as a crucial foreign policy instrument, which characterises French policy and politics (Interview February 2011).

Italy is also unlike the United Kingdom, where the British find it essential to express a strong attachment to their own sovereignty, and have a self-perception as a great power. Britain, like France, has habitually employed its armed forces as a foreign policy instrument, along with its civilian resources, and is less hesitant regarding this choice than the other EU states. Italy, by contrast, perceives the need for a UN or an OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) mandate, before embarking on an operation utilising the military (see Marchi 2011, 162–5).

Italy is unlike Germany, too, though the Italians, like the Germans (Schmidt 2006), perceive the need to submerge their nation-state identity into the wider whole. Their choice of civilian means is like that of the Germans, and the Italian strategic culture encourages 'cooperative security as opposed to national security', analogously to the Germans. Peculiarly, Italian public opinion has accepted only a specific 'Italian way of peacekeeping' (Missiroli 2007, 165), which removes any idea of combat, emphasises post-stabilisation aid, and reduces the function of the military to that of a Non-Governmental Organisation. Yet, the Germans are keen to embrace an equivalent approach too (Giegerich 2006, 82, 84, 86). However, beyond these

similarities, Italy does not have, and cannot enjoy, the standing which places German foreign policy within the P5 Plus group.

In addition to these differences, which define these states' foreign and security policies, there is the fact that France and Britain sit on the UN Security Council as permanent members, and 'consider their UN standing as expressing a higher calling'. They have the prospect of representing the EU states at UNSC meetings, and have managed to maintain their freedom of manoeuvre at the UNSC through the formulation and passing of the treaties (Treaty of Maastricht art. J.5 and Treaty of Amsterdam Art. J.9). As a consequence, regarding the decisions to be taken at the UNSC, such as concerning peacekeeping and crisis management operations, Italy, together with the other EU partners, is, in a way, taken hostage by France and Britain and their policy (see Hill 2005).

As for Italy's foreign and security policy, the Italian military class had undergone 'a loss of reputation' (Mini 2008). Throughout the Cold War, it avoided taking responsibility for its national defence, thus acknowledging its diminished sovereignty. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Italy became incrementally active (Croci 2003, Missiroli 2007, Walston 2007, Carbone 2009, Romano 2009) through its participation in multinational security operations, apparently for two main reasons. Obviously, it was no longer assured of US protection. In addition, after the end of the Cold War in 1998 the Saint Malo summit took place, marking the beginning of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and common activity. Also, Italy's preference for security action in a multilateral framework (see Fabbrini and Piattoni 2008), and its acquiring sense of responsibility in the governance of regional crises (Giacomello and Verbeek 2011), led the country to participate in twenty operations abroad (Senate 18 Jan 2012, Di Paola, 9). Its newborn security activism, linked to its contributions to the multinational forces, had failed to preclude the country from being a willing ally in its involvement in both Iraq and Afghanistan from the very outset (Mallinson 2011). 'From Mozambique to Afghanistan, from Kosovo to Rwanda, not only has the Italian Army deployed paratroopers and rangers, but also heavy units and means' (MoD 2011; Ignazi, Giacomello and Coticchia 2012). Italy is the fourth largest contributor to missions under the guidance of the EU and NATO, and the ninth largest to missions run by the UN. The Italian military class is trying hard to build its reputation.

Hence, with regard to the above question of how to react to being sidelined by other states, Italy's government would need to generate some 'strength' and reconstruct IFSP credibility with both its European and non-European partners. Taking advantage of policy issues which have a particular resonance with national values (De Guttery 1993; Attina' and Irrera 2009, 2010), namely its civilian rather than military action (Marta, Pirozzi and Ronzitti 2008; Miranda 2009), and fostering security cooperation in its nearest region would be a beneficial approach. Italian foreign and security policy would invest in those civilian operations that evoked approval and trust, recognised in the Italians by their transnational partners, and by those with whom the forces came into contact. It would capitalise on what has been acknowledged as the Italian style of peacekeeping, which has long served as a model for the management of international missions (Senate 18 January 2012, 15), and which mostly relates to deeper integration with those in the recipient country, and to skill at relating to different cultures and traditions (MoD 2011; Mini 2008). If the government succeeded in generating some strength, it would, perhaps, also diminish the perception that Italy is isolated from other states when engaging in international affairs.

What the framework of analysis reveals about IFSP behaviour

Drawing on the three-fold analytical framework, and on the logic of expected consequences, the observation of IFSP, i.e. Italy's response to the violence in Libya, its reaction to the Lebanon crisis and its attempt to be included in the P5 Plus, suggests two sets of considerations.

Within the first set, an examination of the ways in which Italy has reacted to changes in the international system (i.e. the end of the Cold War, and the crises in Lebanon and in Libya) has found that these changes coincided with the greater activism of IFSP, and increased participation in peacekeeping and crisis management initiatives, with the remarkable exception of the Libyan case. Partly influencing the delay of the reaction to Libya was the non-aggression clause agreed by Berlusconi's government with Tripoli in 2008. That international agreement ensured that Italy would not consent to the use of its territory for any 'hostile act' against Libya, or engage in 'direct or indirect' military action against it. That agreement was suspended on 28 February 2011. The hesitation of Berlusconi's government regarding how to act with regard to Gaddafi had no positive effect on the reputation of IFSP as perceived from outside.

Observation of how Italy's domestic politics have affected foreign and security policy has shown that in the case of Lebanon, the multilateralism professed by Prodi ensured a rapid and firm decision of being operative. However, as far as the 'overall' credibility of Italy's policy as assessed by its partners is concerned, the instability of Prodi's government could do little to promote it. In the case of Libya, the fear of jeopardising the commercial interests of Italian companies also contributed to the delay of the government's response. Eni SpA, the Italian integrated energy company, has been active in the North African country for more than half a century, leaving Italy dependent on Libya for a quarter of its crude oil. FIAT SpA and UniCredit SpA, to mention but a few enterprises, were partly owned by the Libyan government. Similarly, the prospect of safeguarding Italian industry and business in Iran was a strong inducement for former Foreign Minister Frattini's attempts to be included in the P5 Plus group. The domestic politics perspective clearly indicated that Italy's reputation at the European and international levels deteriorated under Berlusconi's tenure.

Consideration of whether the European Union constrained or helped Italy's positioning in the external arena has yielded further results. In the case of Lebanon, the European Union, particularly the Political Security Committee, helped to gather forces, including those of Italy, for the peacekeeping action, though the operation was conducted within the United Nations framework of UNIFIL. In the case of Libya, the security action was undertaken within the NATO framework. NATO was more present than the EU, as a reference structure for the military intervention in the debates of the Lower House (27 April 2011), but this does not imply a weak tie to the common foreign and security policy of the European Union. The EU had been notoriously inactive as far as the Libyan crisis was concerned (Biscop 2011; Howorth 2011; Menon 2011; Witney 2011). The EU is an important focus in the Italian commitment to peacekeeping operations in general, and has provided great support to the country's evolution of its policy in this area, making progress and becoming more participative in the collective action.

Within the second set of considerations, the analytical framework offers an interpretation of the Italian leaders' conduct of the FSP concerning Libya and the P5

Plus from the viewpoint of the expectations driving their action. It makes three main contributions.

First, the Berlusconi's government to the Gaddafi regime, at a time when this had severely lost legitimacy, confronted the position of the other states (France, Britain) and no less crucially the United States, which took important decisions on the Libya policy issue. Rational thinking and negotiation would have indicated that Italy would maintain its initially friendly stance towards Gaddafi. The Italian decision-makers, however, while in contact with their homologues in the decision-making process, were inclined to seek action according to the logic of expected consequences – i.e. neither normative nor ideological. In this way, then Prime Minister Berlusconi, in telephone calls with US President Obama and the European leaders, announced his decision, which shifted Italian policy towards pursuing choices favouring situations where there might have been 'gains to coordinated action' (M&O 1998, 949). Since Italy had previously declared that it would not take part in NATO-headed air strikes, the newly agreed behaviour now consisted of its approval to employ Italy's air force in the NATO Libya mission. Because 'coordination' was accepted as an important issue in relation to the effects that it was expected to achieve, it was only after the then Minister of Defence La Russa met his counterparts in the various capitals, that he formed a determination to bring the Italian contribution into conformity with the commitment of France, the United Kingdom and the other allies in the coalition of the willing – as he communicated to the Lower House. This commitment was pragmatic. The provision of combat aircraft⁷ was likely to give access to significant political opportunities that would open up following the crisis. La Russa appeared to confirm this:

the Italian contribution 'will correspond also to the possibility of influencing the choices of international strategy, bringing peace and security ... and therefore have a voice in the chapter of the consequences that the crisis produced' (Chamber 27 April 2011, p. 10-11).

Consequentialists see these changes in behaviour as connected to the benefits that the new positions would bring about.

Second, Italy was, then, able to agree with France and Britain to send military advisers to assist the Benghazi-based rebel Transitional National Council (TNC), in its battle against the pro-Gaddafi forces. Consequentialists again suggest that coordinated action may represent 'a collection of "contracts" negotiated among actors with varying interests' (March and Olsen 1998, 949). Former Foreign Minister Frattini had, previously, loudly voiced the 'threat' of losing infrastructure projects worth €4bn, agreed by Italian companies in Libya under the Gaddafi regime (Krause 2011). Giving support to the practices of consensus building at a supranational level (i.e. joining the position of France, Britain and other states, on their decisions on Libya) was not the same as saying that Italy renounced its national interests. In the end, representatives of the TNC and Libyan representatives from the oil industry made known their intention to form a 'business continuity', and their resolve that 'the previous government's international obligations' would be respected (Miozzo 2011).

Third, the attempts of then Foreign Minister Frattini to gain a deeper engagement with IFSP conjointly with the other EU and non-EU states over Iran, in the end showed that the Italian policy-makers, instead of neglecting to support the institutionalised contact group on that country, predictably endorsed cooperation with the P5 Plus. Yet, by assessing the likely value of the available choices, Italians were

induced to accept that the influence and effectiveness of their policy were, to a considerable extent, based on supporting the collective 'norms' of the group. This 'consequentialist behaviour', however, was not meant to bolster the institutional framework within which the P5 Plus forwarded security policy, but was the least 'high priced' choice from the political viewpoint. Others may disagree and may argue that Frattini, *et alia* in the government, followed the logic of appropriateness, since the action of applying sanctions to Iran was 'rule-based' and operated within principles that 'lead to better and safer societies'. Nevertheless, consequentialists contend that the political actors also estimated the consequences (March and Olsen 1998, 951). If asked why they followed the procedural norms, they would reply: 'because I have to preserve the international reputation of the Italian government' (Interview March 2012). These two sets of considerations lead to the conclusions.

Conclusions

This article focused on some modest roles taken by Italy and exclusions from key responsibilities while it pursued its foreign and security policy in a multilateral form, on Libya, Lebanon and within the P5 Plus directorate on Iran. Italy's aspiration for gaining leadership, and reliability as a foreign policy and security player that could be depended upon in its close neighbourhood, contrasted with the reality challenging Italy. The reality unveiled the fear of being isolated by France, Britain, intra-European pressure and Germany, while Italy approached crisis management and other international issues. The article claimed that the IFSP could have been strengthened neither by the multilateralism weakened by the governmental instability of Prodi and D'Alema nor by the policy style of Berlusconi and Frattini, disengaged as it was from the team player approach promoted in Brussels to sharing decisions by most EU member states. The article's emphasis on the lesson that Italy would learn from its concerns considered the differences between Italy, France, Britain and Germany and their FSP. It argued that capitalising on those civilian operations that bore witness to the approval and trust of their partners (and operational counterparts) would be the right approach for the IFSP to gain credibility in the international arena.

The framework of analysis has explained the effects on IFSP of the changes in the international system, of domestic politics, as well as of the European Union concerning Italy's position in the external arena. With the help of the logic of expected consequences, the framework has shown that the Italian policy-makers paid great attention to the policies of France, Britain, Germany and the US, whether on Libya or on Iran. It demonstrated that the policy-makers' conduct was motivated by the expectations that action coordinated with France, Britain and other partners appeared likely to bring about. An example of these expectations was the acquisition of the political opportunities that opened up following the Libyan crisis, and another was the continuity of business initiated under Gaddafi's governance. The framework also disclosed that coordination with the P5 Plus was meant to safeguard the international reputation of the Italian government.

As far as policy reliability is concerned, this article's conclusion contends that Italian foreign and security policy is 'predictable' because, in spite of the uncertainties and delays associated with agreeing with Italy's EU and non-EU partners, it mostly contributed to the common action. It maintains, however, that IFSP has still to reveal that it is reliable. For that task, it has to demonstrate its ability to engage at least on two fronts. At the international level, that would involve multilateral civilian security operations with its partners, when the need arises, and according to its capabilities as

described above. At the domestic level, it would guarantee long-lasting governments. When Italy is able to meet these aims, it will, without doubt, remove the perception of being isolated by other states in international affairs.

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Notes

¹ France, Britain and the other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – Russia, China and the US – plus Germany.

² Rome's contribution was controversial: the French military forces were commanded by the operative centre in Lyon, and the British by the headquarters in Northwood. Italy felt it played no influential role and argued for the use of Napoli Capodichino airport (Marizza 2011).

³ Italy provided the EU Operation Commander (Rear Admiral Gaudiosi) and the Operational Headquarters in Rome. Council of the European Union (8589/11).

⁴ As the diplomat explained, 'there was a lot of pressure by the French and others to demonstrate that the EU is a military player'.

⁵ D'Alema to *The New York Times*.

⁶ The peacekeeping force, in the end, had the UN mark, UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). Italy seized command over the mission only later, in February 2007.

⁷ The country's provision of combat aircraft consisted of four aircraft of the Eurofighter or F16 type for defence tasks, four Tornado ECRs that were capable of launching missiles to destroy Libyan radars and suppress Libyan defence, and four AV-8B Plus set on the warship *Garibaldi* for air defence and recognition.

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