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Introduction: Italy's Future Role in the European Union

The purpose of the book is to analyze three aspects of the relations between Italy and the European Union from different points of view: the political actors' historical attitude toward the foundation and development of the European Community/European Union (EC/EU); the institutional and legislative mechanisms regulating the Italy-EU relationship; and Italian negotiating strategies in "high" and "low" EU politics. The aim is to provide an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of how Italy relates to the European Union.

The book endeavors to fill a gap in the existing literature: as yet, there is no exhaustive study on Italy's interaction with the EU. This lack is particularly striking as Italy is considered—and considers itself—one of the most pro-European countries in the Union. Italy has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the process of European integration, yet the country is also widely known for its passive attitude in the day-to-day negotiations that make up the formative phase of EU policymaking.

In explaining this rather contradictory behavior, the book argues that the incomplete "Europeanization" of a country can affect its influence in EU policymaking; it also argues that the variables underlying the negotiating potential of EU member states are of a domestic nature.

The fundamental hypothesis of the book is that a "medium-size power," such as Italy, can be one of the leading countries in shaping EU policies only in the presence of well-defined aims, credible actors, and consistent strategies. Without these factors, the nation's influence will be strongly diminished, if not entirely irrelevant. In analyzing the Italian case the chapters in this book consider the following issues and questions:

—*Actors and procedures (formal and informal): relevant variables in defining Italy's interests and national positions.* How are national interests defined in Italy? Who are the relevant actors? What procedures are followed (formal and informal)? How are national positions defended?

—*Aims and strategies.* What are Italy's aims, interests, and objectives in EU policymaking? How much have these changed over the years? Is there continuity or discontinuity from one government to another? Are Italy's EU policies coherent with one another, or do they tend to diverge, and even contradict each other?

—*Impact.* What is the outcome of all this? How has Italy's action affected "high" and "low" politics in the EU? Is Italy a proactive or passive actor? Does it succeed in shaping EU policy?

The book is organized as follows. In chapter 2, I describe the intellectual path that led to the research underlying the results presented here. I first review early studies of European integration (federalism and functionalism) and how they later evolved in two opposite directions: multilevel governance and liberal intergovernmentalism. I discuss how these two approaches diverged in the context of the roles played by member states in the European decisionmaking process. I then analyze how the literature has dealt with the issue of relations between the member states and the EU. As the study of member states in the EU decisionmaking process is, with few exceptions, a young field within the larger area of European Studies, the broad goal of this book is—by focusing on the Italian case—to add knowledge about the role of member states in shaping the EU decisionmaking process and, in turn, to properly weigh the influence of decisions made at the European level on those member states.

Chapter 3 explores Italy's relations with the European Communities and Union in historical terms. Italy owed much to its early membership in the Communities to Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza. In the 1950s membership in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) represented a means of securing the newborn Italian democracy, though their decision was opposed by a number of influential actors at the time. Since the early 1980s, all major parties have become supporters of the European integration process. There was discontinuity in the strength of support for the EU in the years from 1994 (the first Berlusconi-led government: Berlusconi I) to 2008 (Berlusconi IV). With the 2008 elections, European affairs lost their salience in the electoral debate and again became a shared bipartisan issue. Did the domestic perception of European affairs influence the way Italy projected itself abroad and acted within the EU? How? With what results? Chapter 3 focuses on how the different governments and political

actors have dealt with European policies and on the role Italy has played in shaping the process of European integration.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the study of the Italian political system and the attitude of both political parties and public opinion toward the process of European integration. I first describe the changes that have taken place in the Italian political system since the 1990s, discussing the main features of the old and new political system both domestically and with respect to Italy-EU relations. I describe how membership in the Community—initially a unilateral decision of the then-leading Christian Democratic Party—gradually became a shared value of all the parties of the political framework and then again a divisive issue, alongside transatlantic relations, in the mid-1990s. I then discuss how, while governmental stability improved, Italian foreign policy became, on the contrary, increasingly less predictable; European and transatlantic policies were transformed into divisive issues both within and between the two coalitions. And with a plethora of parties in each coalition, some of the minor political parties acquired a veto power that far exceeded their effective political force. Indeed, they have often used this power in foreign policy issues, and EU affairs represents one of the major areas of contention. Chapter 4 also discusses the Italian public's opinion of the EU, unquestionably one of the most favorable in Europe toward the integration process.

Chapter 5 describes how the Italian parliament deals with European affairs and what effects the EU has on it. I focus first on the years before the early 1990s, when the influence of the Italian parliament on EU affairs was near zero. If, until roughly 1995, the Italian parliament demonstrated “low-level Europeanization” (its structural adaptation was weak, minimal time and energy were devoted to the scrutiny of EC law, and there was a general lack of interest in playing a greater role), since the mid-1990s the Italian parliament has successfully addressed many issues that had remained unresolved for years, thus greatly reducing the gap between itself and the national parliaments that were best organized in the scrutiny of EU affairs. While maintaining its traditional model of “paper-based scrutiny,” the parliament now has in place a full-fledged system organized around permanent committees specialized in EU affairs. It has expanded the scope of its scrutiny of EU policies, is regularly informed of developments in EU affairs, has developed clear procedures for scrutiny and fact-finding, and is even protected in its prerogatives by the introduction of a “scrutiny reserve system.” Chapter 5 also distinguishes between the formative phase of EU law and the implementation of EU law—the field of European affairs where the Italian parliament exerts the most control.

Last but not least, the chapter briefly addresses the question of the Italian constitutional framework and how its peculiarities have affected the way the

parliament has approached European issues. It also discusses the evolution of the normative discourse about the relation between national and EC law; and it explains how the Italian Supreme Court moved slowly from denying the supremacy of EC law to acknowledging its effects, transforming the latter into national law. This development, naturally, has affected the way Italy deals with European affairs.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the executive and to the way the Italian government deals with European affairs. First, I address the question of Italy's form of government, as established by the Constitution and as it evolved after the reforms of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Then I look specifically at how the different actors in the government deal with European affairs. The analysis begins with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because in Italy, traditionally, it has played the main role in European affairs. Within the ministry, the two main actors handling European affairs are the minister himself and the secretary of state for European affairs, both assisted by the Directorate General for European Integration. Since 2000, however, a number of reforms have delegated partial responsibility for EU policies to the Presidency of the Council (that is, the Prime Minister's Office). Since 1999, in fact, the Presidency of the Council has been responsible for the "participation of the Italian State in the EU" and for the "actuation of EU policies." Acting in coordination, the Presidency of the Council and the Foreign Ministry are to ensure the promotion of Italy's positions within the European institutions. At the Presidency of the Council, the relatively new Department for EU Affairs is entrusted with following EU policies. It also gives logistical and technical support to the new Interdepartmental Committee for Community and European Affairs (Comitato Interministeriale per gli Affari Comunitari Europei, or CIACE), which coordinates EU policies among the ministries. Chapter 6 looks at how coordination takes place, both within and across departments and ministries. Last but not least, the chapter examines the role the Permanent Representative in Brussels has played in the past and is playing now.

Chapter 7 investigates the role played in Italy's EU affairs by regional and local authorities and by organized interests. The chapter seeks to answer questions such as: Can the regions oppose "scrutiny reserve" to proposed EU legislation? Do they do follow-up analysis?

The regional case is particularly interesting as in October 2001 the Italian Constitution was modified to provide Italy with a federal framework. Before the 2001 constitutional reform, the Italian institutional framework was based on the hierarchical supremacy of the central government over regional authorities. In drafting law, regions had to respect the principles fixed by the central legislative power, while the central government's decentralized authorities

checked the administrative acts of the regions. This constitutional reform served to create a new philosophy—namely that the Italian Constitution should no longer enumerate regional competencies, just state ones. Regions can now act in every area that the Constitution does not specifically attribute to the state and enjoy, at least on paper, ample powers in EU policies. Chapter 7 therefore discusses whether these powers are effective in dealing with European affairs and how the different regions address them.

The second part of the chapter focuses on organized interests with regard to the European Union. How are Italian interests presented and defended at the EU level? What strategies do they follow and how effective are they?

After looking at the actors dealing with EU policies, the closing chapters focus on Italy's negotiating strategies and behavior within EU negotiations. In 1966 Stanley Hofmann introduced the distinction between *high politics* and *low politics* in the EC policy process. The terms are now commonly used by scholars in the field: *low politics* refers to "technical" negotiations—that is, day-to-day negotiations about EC law; *high politics* refers to negotiations about EU constitutive and "grand" policies, such as treaties, foreign policy, and security. Chapter 8 studies the role played by Italy's EU high politics. I first examine the drafting of the Single European Act (in 1985), followed by the preparation of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1990. In both instances, Italian action was pivotal for the success of the negotiations. The story is different, however, for developments during the 2003 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), also led by the Italian presidency. Here, the lack of support by both France and Germany ultimately led to the negotiations' failure. The next cases examined in the chapter relate to Justice and Home Affairs—in particular, the controversial case of the European arrest warrant—and to the aborted cases of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the so-called "Alba" mission to Albania. The latter two cases present elements of both success and failure for Italy and are therefore of particular interest.

Finally, chapter 9 deals with two relevant cases of low politics. One regards the strategy used by Italy in its negotiations over the Economic and Monetary Union. How was that strategy implemented and to what effect? Did the outcome respond to the Italian national interest? How did the government act to preserve it? The second case study is related to the negotiations over the EU's so-called 20-20-20 directive on renewable energy. This is a very interesting case for Italy. The time span covers two different governments, whose actions and behaviors were quite different. The case therefore provides a broad overview of Italy's negotiating style. While in the first phase coordination was almost impossible because of deep differences among departments and ministries, with the change of government, approaches to negotiations changed

completely and Italy was able to successfully define and defend its national interests. How effective it was, however, remains open to debate.

The conclusion looks at the crux of the matter from two perspectives: one, the degree of Europeanization of the Italian system; and two, Italy's influence on both high and low politics in the EU. Regarding Italy's degree of Europeanization, I review whether and how Italy's governance and state structure, constitutional practice, political discourse, policy output, and other matters have been affected by the process of European integration. Regarding Italy's influence, I make some observations about the impact Italy has had on EU policymaking, both in drafting laws and in creating intergovernmental policy.

In the end, the conclusions test my fundamental hypothesis—that a “medium-size power” such as Italy can only be a leading country in EU policymaking in the presence of certain variables. I conclude that there are political and institutional mechanisms that facilitate the ability of member states to elaborate adequate national positions, and lacking such mechanisms, the member states will lose negotiating efficacy. In particular, relevant intervening variables appear to be:

- a *consociative political culture*, at least as far as participation in the EU is concerned (that is, agreement among elites about the importance of promoting national interests in EU decisionmaking procedures);

- mechanisms of *interministerial and intraministerial coordination*, which make it possible to define positions that take into account all the nation's different interests;

- adaptable national institutions*, which allow a country to adjust quickly, as the EU structure and its decisionmaking procedures are subject to frequent changes.

Finally, well-defined *aims*, credible *actors*, and consistent *strategies* strengthen a nation's influence, keeping a medium-size power like Italy from becoming irrelevant in Brussels.