

Silvio Pons
Cold War Republic
The "external constraint" in Italy in the 1970s

The waves of social unrest, political conflict, and global economic turmoil that overlapped in the West by the late 1960s and early 1970s had far more of a shock impact in Italy than elsewhere. The formula used at the time, describing Italy as the “sick man of Europe”, gave only a superficial sense of the country’s crisis. This was a case hard to compare with the Western European situation in general, given Italy’s combination of a serious economic predicament, public corruption, the violence endemic in society, the heights of barbarism reached by terrorism, and a declining international standing. Italy's crisis set in motion major domestic political changes that questioned the traditional polarity between pro-Western forces in government and the Communist opposition. However, national forces ultimately proved unable to construct innovative solutions to this crisis, both because of their own long-standing antagonisms and, interacting with this, the international constraints incumbent upon them. This article examines the relationship between Italian politics and the Cold War in the 1970s. It assumes that the close interconnection between the international and domestic spheres in Italy makes it an extremely significant case study of how the shape of the Cold War lasted in Europe despite global changes – and thus also helps us to appreciate Europe’s particular place in the Cold War¹. By bringing into the picture both sides of the national and international scene, it argues that developments in this decade – significant and tumultuous as they were – did not fundamentally change the pattern of political

¹ F. Romero, *Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads*, "Cold War History" 2014/4 685-703. See F. Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009). For a comprehensive account of the relationship between domestic and international politics in Italian history during the Cold War, see G. Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella guerra fredda (1943-1978)*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016).

relations between Italy and the Cold War order that had been established in the aftermath of the Second World War².

The Republic's key political groupings, reflecting a bipolar antagonism – on the one side, Christian Democracy (DC), hegemonizing moderate forces and firmly established in government, and on the other side the Italian Communist Party (PCI), hegemonizing the Left and representing opposition – reproduced and even reinforced one another. While European détente did favour change in domestic relations, it could not remove their foundations. The DC represented the axis of the political system and the inevitable ally of the United States – even if a difficult one to manage – while Communists were excluded from government by the "external constraint" created in Western Europe from the late 1940s³. Collaboration between the two domestic blocs considerably helped overcome the worst moment of economic and social crisis in the second half of the 1970s, but the interaction between national and international politics prevented further transformation. At the end of the decade, Italian politics was stabilized by rescuing its traditionally polarized bloc framework, even if identities had undergone revision by adapting to social and cultural changes⁴. In this respect, the Cold War

² On Italy and the origins of the Cold War, see recently K. Mistry, *The United States, Italy, and the Origins of Cold War. Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). See also F. Romero, *Gli Stati Uniti in Italia: il Piano Marshall e il Patto Atlantico*, in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, vol. 1 (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), pp. 231-89. A. Brogi, *A Question of Self Esteem: The United States and the Cold War Choices in France and Italy, 1944-1958* (Westport: Praeger, 2002). M. Del Pero, *Containing containment: rethinking Italy's experience during the Cold War*, "Journal of Modern Italian Studies" 8/4 (2003) 532-55. On developments in the 1960s and the interaction between the United States and Italy in the years of center-left governments, see L. Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1999).

³ G. Formigoni, *La Democrazia Cristiana e l'alleanza occidentale, 1943-1953* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996). M. Del Pero, *L'alleato scomodo. Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo, 1948-1955* (Rome: Carocci, 2001). S. Pons, *L'impossibile egemonia. L'URSS, il PCI e le origini della guerra fredda, 1943-1948* (Rome: Carocci, 1999). S. Pons, *Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War*, "Journal of Cold War Studies" 3/2 (Spring 2001) 3-27. E. Agarossi and V. Zaslavsky, *Stalin and Togliatti. Italy and the Origins of the Cold War* (Washington DC and Stanford, Cal: Woodrow Wilson Center - Stanford University Press, 2011). A. Brogi, *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁴ On Italy's post-1968 crisis and its international context, see recently L. Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela. Stati Uniti, Europa e crisi italiana degli anni Settanta* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2014). See also *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*. Vol. I, *Tra guerra fredda e distensione*, edited by A. Giovagnoli and S. Pons (Soveria Mannelli:

simultaneously represented both the problem and the solution. While the "external constraint" kept a critical part of the Italian electorate out of government and prolonged a harmful division of the political nation, it would provide a structure to domestic politics up to the end of the Cold War itself. However, such a solution was hardly a sustainable one, and did not really establish a new legitimacy, as came to be obvious when the country's political system collapsed in the early 1990s, soon after the end of the Cold War - a unique development in Western Europe.

After 1968: Crisis and change

The political responses to the impact of 1968 in Europe were highly diverse, and did not constitute a single pattern. The needle on the scale swayed back and forth between conservative and progressive responses. The unifying element was the European détente connected with West Germany's Ostpolitik, launched by Willy Brandt, which was shared by the other main Western European governments and outlined a scenario distinct from that of bipolar détente. It was a scenario open to change, albeit over the long term, instead of being aimed at maintaining the status quo. West Germany's new policy, based upon the Social Democratic turn in 1969, was a vision of foreign policy and also an affirmation of sovereignty, in the context of fluctuating Western interdependencies that would give Western Europe an increasingly important role.⁵ Italy maintained a form of sovereignty much more closely linked to the initial phase of the Cold War, as its ruling classes still followed a "strategy of dependency" which acknowledged the country's economic and

Rubbettino, 2003). R. Gualtieri, *The Italian Political system and Détente (1963-1981)*, "Journal of Modern Italian Studies" 9/4 (2004) 428-49. U. Gentiloni, *L'Italia sospesa. La crisi degli anni Settanta vista da Washington* (Turin: Einaudi, 2009). V. Bosco, *L'amministrazione Nixon e l'Italia. Tra distensione e crisi mediterranea* (Rome: Eurilink, 2009). F. Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge. Washington face à l'eurocommunisme* (Paris: PUF, 2014). L. Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani* (Milan: Mondadori, 2015).

⁵ D. F. Patton, *Cold War Politics in Postwar Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

political frailties, and negotiated its integration and interdependences in the Western system accordingly⁶. Such a strategy had worked for a quarter century, stabilizing Italy's political system, making possible its integration in the European Community as a founding member, and supporting the impressive modernization that led the country to become one among the most advanced capitalist economies. As a result of Western integration, by the end of the 1960s Italy was Southern Europe's only democracy. However, it was also the single major Western European country not to experience alternating governments. The bipolarization of the political system between the DC and PCI meant casting such a prospect further into the distance, and hardly promised stabilization as the country's crisis developed⁷.

Many saw the Italian crisis as a crisis of the authority and legitimacy of the ruling class, largely identified with the DC. Historians have noted this essential consideration⁸. However, this crisis of legitimacy has not been adequately connected to the erosion of the Manichean certitudes of the Cold War, the country's uncertain drift through the new "world disorder," and the crisis of the United States' leadership. As Nixon and Kissinger's "Cold War-centric" and "Soviet-centric" vision of world politics developed into the strategy of détente - with the intention of de-ideologizing and preserving the bipolar order as a response to the political, cultural, and economic challenges at the dawn of the 1970s⁹ - the interaction between the United States and Italy took a twofold aspect. Détente with the Soviet Union indirectly encouraged the development of dialogue between Catholics and Communists, while it privileged the geopolitical status quo and

⁶ Romero, *Gli Stati Uniti in Italia*.

⁷ On the bipolarization of the Italian political system and its growing importance from the late 1960s, see R. Gualtieri, *L'Italia dal 1943 al 1992. DC e PCI nella storia della Repubblica* (Rome: Carocci, 2006).

⁸ P. Craveri, *La repubblica dal 1958 al 1992* (Turin: UTET, 1995), p. 539.

⁹ D. J. Sargent, *Superpower Transformed. The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 50, 66-67.

placed an insurmountable limit upon any perspective of national change - which meant abandoning ideas of modernizing and "Atlanticizing" Italy to adopt a strategy of freezing political transformations¹⁰. At the same time, Kissinger's strategy reflected a decline of US hegemony, producing a notion of American interest unharnessed from the universalistic tradition of Cold War Liberalism, and which placed limits upon consensual procedures for managing crises in the West¹¹. The United States subjected Italy to close and over-sensitive monitoring, carried out largely through the prism of traditional anti-Communism and inattentive to the profound changes generated by 1968¹². However, the USA's own shortfall of hegemony was itself part of the problem, as it weakened the legitimating resources of the Christian-Democratic ruling class. In particular, the global economic crisis prevented the further use of the argument that had, from the time of the Marshall Plan, linked the country's pro-Western choice to the promise of prosperity - a promise that was now increasingly vanishing. On the other hand, the legitimating resources that the PCI had in the past received from the socialist camp were largely dissolved after the invasion of Czechoslovakia of 1968. In the "global 1968", the PCI took part in anti-American protest and mobilization against the war in Vietnam, but also had to confront the anti-Soviet feelings especially widespread among young people. The Italian Communists' effort to criticize Soviet methods and the theory of "limited sovereignty" showed how the persistence of their link with the USSR was a source of trouble. Though the Communists represented the domestic political opposition and potentially constituted the country's back-up leadership, they had to reinvent their own international affiliation

¹⁰ M. Del Pero, *L'Italia e gli Stati Uniti: un legame rinnovato?*, in *Nazione, interdipendenza, integrazione. Le relazioni internazionali dell'Italia*, edited by F. Romero and A. Varsori (Rome: Carocci, 2005), pp. 301-15. See also Gualtieri, *The Italian Political system and Détente*.

¹¹ M. Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist. Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

¹² Gentiloni, *L'Italia sospesa*. On US visions of Italy in the early 1970s, see also L. Guarna, *L'Italia degli anni Settanta vista da Washington. Un nuovo strumento per la ricerca*, "Mondo contemporaneo" 2013/2 161-71.

in order to achieve credibility¹³. In other words, the foreign connections traditionally maintained by the country's driving forces were experiencing serious change.

Even so, the unifying element of the Christian Democratic strategy was the confirmation of the party's central place in the Italian democratic system, founded upon its axis with the United States. The alliance between the DC and Washington was not at issue, despite the fact that they had each observed an "Italian problem" that was now becoming increasingly sharper. This was especially clear after the Milan bombing of December 1969 and the emergence of a violent "strategy of tension" launched by shadowy right-wing forces, connected with sectors of state intelligence, who terrorized the country with the aim of fuelling raw anti-Communist feelings. The Nixon Administration became increasingly worried that Italy could follow the pattern of Chile's Allende, and Ambassador Graham Martin was able to obtain funding for anti-Communist forces with the aim of influencing Italy's political trajectory¹⁴. Kissinger did not rule out adopting neo-authoritarian solutions for Italy, and even supported Martin's "covert operations" encouraging the extreme right. However, he eventually remained faithful to the model of the anti-Communist guarantee represented by the Christian-Democratic tradition of Alcide De Gasperi¹⁵. At the same time, the Christian-Democratic leadership provided a diversified range of political responses, oscillating between Giulio Andreotti's neo-centrist solution - by far Kissinger's best choice - and the new version of the centre-left inspired by Aldo Moro. The political choices made first by Andreotti after the 1972 elections, with the attempt to restore the pre-centre-left anti-Communist front, and then by Moro, with the

¹³ On PCI's positions in the aftermath of 1968, see M. Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? Western European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007). Brogi, *Confronting America*, pp. 302-7.

¹⁴ Guarna, *Richard Nixon e i partiti politici italiani*, pp. 207-12. Cf. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1969-1976*, Volume XLI, *Western Europe, NATO 1969-1972*, docc. 202, 208.

¹⁵ Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela*, pp. 126-29, 166-69.

attempt to begin a post-centre-left stage, were different inflections of one single paradigm but had divergent implications. In very different ways, they both aimed at preventing the influence of dangerous, if minor, sectors of the Italian establishment inclined to adopt authoritarian solutions, and at reversing the predicament of Christian-Democratic supremacy. At the same time, each sought to defend the DC's autonomy regarding the specific solutions to be adopted, within the terms of its well-established relationship with Washington¹⁶. The trouble in the relations between the United States and the DC arose from the fact that Andreotti's conservative positioning proved to be too weak domestically, while Moro's progressive perspective looked rather uncertain in terms of internal and international stability.

The precarious nature of the post-1968 governments was not the sign of a new fluidity in Italian politics, but the result of immobility and deafness in providing responses to the changes now developing in the public mood and social mores. The immobility of Italian politics started falling apart only in 1973, chiefly under the pressure of outside factors, which entwined with what was already a full-blown crisis characterised by mounting violence. For many, détente's forward steps in the middle of Europe - with the conclusion of the agreements between the two Germanies - and the enlargement of the European Community to include the United Kingdom, appeared to be the prelude to an autonomous European role in world politics¹⁷. However, although such a scenario fuelled the expectation of new opportunities, the main impetus for change in Italy came from the apprehension that had first been generated by general Pinochet's September 1973 *coup d'état* in Chile, which was largely perceived as a consequence of the conflict between the United States and the Allende

¹⁶ Gentiloni, *L'Italia sospesa*, pp. 70 ff.

¹⁷ A. Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente. How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2009, pp. 206 ff.

government¹⁸.

Moro drew a link between Chile and Italy, implicitly showing dissent toward the United States' behaviour, albeit with extreme prudence¹⁹. His reference to the "sinister omens" generated by the affair hinted at the perception that one among Kissinger's possible options was that of separating the defence of America's interests from the defence of democracy, not only in Latin America but in Southern Europe as well. After all, the Nixon Administration had itself earlier established the analogy between Chile and Italy. Implicit in Moro's alarm was the idea of an Italian fragility that had now been laid bare. From this moment onward, he firmed up his detachment from the traditional formulas of Italian politics, and worked on expanding the margins for manoeuvre allowed by the "external constraint"²⁰. The coup in Chile marked a turning point for Enrico Berlinguer - the general secretary of the PCI from 1972 onward - leading him to articulate his strategy of "historic compromise" with the Catholics. Underlying this proposal was the persuasion that a society as divided as Italy could not be governed by following the European models of alternation. In his view, the only way to avoid the Chilean spiral between internal fractures and Cold War imperatives was that of recovering the "national unity" experience dating back to the end of the Second World War. The legacy of wartime anti-Fascism, which made the PCI a legitimate component of the Republic in institutional terms - since it took part in writing the Constitution - was thus to claim primacy over the legacy of Cold War anti-Communism that had denied Communists legitimacy in ruling the country. Furthermore, Berlinguer linked this domestic strategy to seeking to create a Western Communist pole based upon the positive recognition of the European Community, thereby validating the profile of a

¹⁸ On the role of the United States in Allende's fall, see J. Haslam, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile* (New York: Verso, 2005).

¹⁹ Archivio centrale dello Stato, Archivio Aldo Moro (hereafter: AAM), b. 28, f. 612.

²⁰ G. Formigoni, *L'Italia nel sistema internazionale degli anni Settanta: spunti per riconsiderare la crisi*, in Giovagnoli, Pons (eds), *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, I, pp. 285-88.

Communist force that could run for government in a Western country - even if this was seen as a measured transition²¹.

Any gradual vision of change was swept away by the escalating economic crisis, from late 1973 onward fuelled by the consequences of the Yom Kippur War. The shock created by the rise of oil prices inflamed the turmoil following the Nixon Administration's decision to end the Bretton Woods system two years previously. Throughout the West, the perception spread of a crisis dangerously evoking the Depression of the 1930s²². Italy rapidly fell to the brink of financial collapse, on account of a mixture of rising inflation, currency instability, and the prospect of recession. By the summer of 1974, West Germany and the United States had to intervene by granting huge loans to Italy in order to avoid unpredictable developments. From this moment onward, the "external constraint" on the country took on the aspect of a combination of political and economic conditions²³. Furthermore, in a matter of just a few months, the impact of the global crisis combined unpredictably with the "long wave" of 1968 in Italian society and its contribution to long-term secularization processes. With the crushing defeat suffered by the DC in the divorce referendum of May 1974 - when the conservative Catholics and the Church failed in their attempt to reject the introduction of a bill on divorce, voted through by Parliament for the first time in Italian history - the option of an anti-Communist, clerical-right-oriented front left the stage of the country's political perspectives. Consequently, Moro himself embodied his party's main resource. In the summer of that same year, he declared his idea of building a form of "national solidarity" to confront the crisis and keep Italy out of a spiral of marginalization and impoverishment - albeit maintaining the distinct roles of government and opposition.

²¹ S. Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006) pp. 30-37.

²² C. Maier, "*Malaise*": *the Crisis of Capitalism in the 1970s*, in *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*, edited by N. Ferguson, C. S. Maier, E. Mandela, D. J. Sargent (Cambridge, Mass. - London: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 25-48.

²³ Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela*, pp. 171-72.

When he again took over the reins of government in November 1974, the alternative between old centrism and centre-left now sounded dated and without meaning, though Italy remained, in his own language, a "difficult democracy"²⁴. The political revision set in motion by both parties led to the definitive launching of Moro's "strategy of attention" towards the Communists and Berlinguer's decision to give up Communist opposition towards the Atlantic alliance²⁵.

At this point, the main national leaders were shifting their respective alignments' attitude towards the traditional Cold War landscape, which had been defined by "civilizational choices" now losing their old meaning. The Christian-Democratic vision of anti-Communism differed from the American one considerably more than in the past, as it was no longer simply a moderate "containment of *containment*"²⁶. There was in fact an attempt to establish some degree of cooperation with long-standing political rivals. The PCI hardly now represented an outpost of the "socialist camp" in the Western world, defining its own interest exclusively in accordance with the Soviet one²⁷. This was only the start of a roadmap that required building consensus within the body of the two blocs, whose identities were largely constructed upon the inheritance of mutual ideological counterposition and an incompatibility of values reflecting Cold War antagonism. Their respective "civilizational choices" still represented a basic cultural legacy as well as the imperative precondition for accepting any compromise. At the same time, such a roadmap implied serious questions as to its own compatibility with the international order, even in a time of *détente*.

²⁴ Gentiloni, *L'Italia sospesa*, p. 130.

²⁵ Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella guerra fredda*, pp. 462-63. On the origins of Moro's "strategy of attention" towards the PCI in the 1960s, see G. M. Ceci, *Moro e il PCI. La strategia dell'attenzione e il dibattito politico italiano (1967-1969)* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).

²⁶ Del Pero, *Containing containment*.

²⁷ S. Pons, *L'URSS e il PCI nel sistema internazionale della guerra fredda*, in *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana*, edited by Roberto Gualtieri, Carocci, Rome, 2001, pp. 3-46.

Italy and Détente

The prevalent strategies in the leaderships of the DC and the PCI mirrored one another. Both were an attempt to provide responses to the crisis of an entire postwar arrangement, although the former aimed at containing the long wave of 1968 and the latter at exploiting it. Both were marked by the task that they had inherited from the Republic's founding fathers – namely, governing Italian bipolarism by controlling its most inconsistent, conflicting and destabilizing aspects. Moro and Berlinguer ended up sharing the idea that the mutual containment of Italy's two Cold War political blocs no longer guaranteed the Republic's democratic order, and that this was insufficient for achieving a way out of the crisis. Crucially, they shared the idea that détente could offer the possibility of negotiating a renewed "external constraint" and changing the rules of Italy's bipolarism, even if without dismantling it. Such a vision concealed important underlying differences in their respective strategies. Moro thought that the axis between US hegemony and the centrality of Christian Democracy remained imperative in terms of domestic legitimacy, though it needed redefining. He believed that collaboration between government and opposition could produce gradual change of democratic anti-Communism. He understood the interdependency of the Western system rather well, but still hoped in the international acknowledgement of an Italian peculiarity, with the aim of involving the Communists in institutional responsibility while not associating them with government itself²⁸. For his part, Berlinguer's aim was to force Cold War constraints by associating the PCI with government, and recovering the primacy of the anti-Fascist alliance as Italy's national peculiarity. He contended that the crisis of US hegemony should be exploited to this purpose. In his view, the combination

²⁸ A. Moro, *L'intelligenza e gli avvenimenti* (Milan: Garzanti, 1979), pp. 283 ff.

of a growing national consensus and the turn in favour of the European Community were sufficient to legitimizing the Communists²⁹. The two Italian leaders conceived of national change mainly as a *fait accompli* that could itself induce an adjustment of international compatibilities, feeling that they had no other choice if they were to promote change without destabilizing their respective political blocs³⁰.

This scenario rapidly created a source of conflict with the respective Italian leaders' international partners - a dispute that emerged in the Communist camp even before it appeared in trans-Atlantic relations. Already in March 1973, Brezhnev and Berlinguer had mutually expressed entirely divergent ideas over détente. The Soviet leader assumed that the repression of the Prague Spring had been the precondition of détente, and maintained that "if, in 1968, we had not helped the Czechs who had asked for help, permitting the so-called 'democracy', Czechoslovakia would have ended up in the arms of the Federal Republic of Germany". The Italian leader defended "Socialism with a human face" and believed that this would be a source of political change in a Europe that was "neither anti-Soviet nor anti-American"³¹. By late 1974, the Italian Communists' Europeanism disappointed the Soviets even more than their detachment from purely anti-NATO positions, as the former implied change whereas the latter effectively acknowledged the existence of bipolar blocs³². At the same time, Washington showed hostility towards any discourse of "historic compromise" in connection with détente. Kissinger did not fear Soviet-led destabilization

²⁹ E. Berlinguer, *La proposta comunista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), pp. 5-30.

³⁰ On Moro's vision, see *Aldo Moro nella dimensione internazionale. Dalla memoria alla storia*, edited by A. Alfonsi (Milan: Francoangeli, 2013); *Aldo Moro nell'Italia contemporanea*, edited by F. Perfetti (Florence: Le Lettere, 2011). On Berlinguer's vision, see Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*; *Enrico Berlinguer, la politica italiana e la crisi mondiale*, edited by F. Barbagallo and A. Vittoria (Rome: Carocci, 2007). For a review of the two leaders' thinking, see E. Bernardi, *Aldo Moro and Enrico Berlinguer*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by M. Gilbert, E. Jones and G. Pasquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 368-377.

³¹ Archive of the Italian Communist Party (hereafter: APC), Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, *Archivio Berlinguer, Movimento operaio internazionale*, fasc. 109.

³² APC, *Note alla segreteria*, mf. 201, 779-783, 10 January 1975.

strategies, but rather the prospect of Italy becoming more or less like Yugoslavia, which would threaten the compactness of the Western alliance. In his view, Communists in power in Western Europe would have "totally redefined the map of the postwar world"³³.

However, détente as a conservative great-power strategy did not work in Italy. The impact of the change taking place on the European scene during 1974 made this even less feasible. The fall of the dictatorships in Portugal and Greece in April and July 1974 respectively, alongside the parallel demise of Franco's dictatorship in Spain, radically altered the Southern European landscape and prompted responses from both the United States and the European Community. There were major repercussions for Italy. Firstly, the very disappearance of right-wing dictatorships in Europe dealt a blow to the possibility of imagining and carrying out an authoritarian coup – a threat that had returned to the fore because of bomb attacks carried out by neo-fascist militants. It may even be said that 1974 represented the end of longstanding projects by radical anti-Communist sections of the Italian ruling classes and state apparatuses, whose dreams of the Republic taking an authoritarian turn counted on the United States taking a benevolent attitude in the name of Cold War priorities³⁴. Secondly, Soviet warnings as to the perils of Italy's domestic situation replicating what had happened in Greece and Chile – warnings aimed at bringing the PCI back to its past organic link with Moscow – became even more useless. After 1974 the Soviet capacity to influence the PCI substantially declined – not least as the approval of a law on funding for political parties made the party less dependent on Moscow's financial aid, though direct flows of money from the USSR would stop only at the end of the

³³ National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter: NARA), RG 59, Kissinger's Staff Meetings, 12 January 1975.

³⁴ Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela*, p. 172.

decade³⁵. In fact, Moscow would maintain an indirect influence by supporting Kissinger's view of détente as the conservation of the status quo, including the veto against Italian Communism³⁶. Thirdly, the Western international context underwent serious change precisely on account of the fall of the South European dictatorships. In particular, Portugal's Carnation Revolution led to the emergence of different ideas, on both sides of the Atlantic, on how to govern the Western crisis. While Washington considered the possibility of applying to Portugal the same illiberal version of containment that had been implemented in Chile - in order to avoid the axis of government shifting drastically to the Left - Great Britain, West Germany, and France ruled out this possibility and aimed at supporting the political players that could guarantee a democratic transition, starting with the Socialists³⁷.

The resistance which Europe's leading countries mounted against any doctrine of "limited sovereignty" in the West turned out to be a successful choice, and also influenced the conduct of their American partner. The US Administration and European governments both adopted a multilateral approach to crisis management, and shared the vision of Southern Europe as a unitary and interdependent theatre of crisis, also including Italy³⁸. However, American worries sharply increased as the apex of détente in Helsinki coincided with a strong advance for the PCI in the Italian local elections of May 1975. In a meeting held on 1 August, at which Moro explained how the Italian Communists had their own peculiarities and were popular even among non-

³⁵ On Soviet financial aid to the PCI in the 1970s see V. Riva, *Oro da Mosca. I finanziamenti sovietici al PCI dalla Rivoluzione d'Ottobre al crollo dell'URSS* (Milan: Mondadori, 1999).

³⁶ S. Pons, *L'Italia e il PCI nella politica estera dell'URSS di Breznev*, in Giovagnoli, Pons (eds), *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, I, pp. 78-81.

³⁷ M. Del Pero, *Distensione, bipolarismo e violenza: la politica estera americana nel Mediterraneo durante gli anni Settanta. Il caso portoghese e le sue implicazioni per l'Italia*, in Giovagnoli, Pons (eds), *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, I, pp. 123-44. M. Del Pero, *La transizione portoghese*, in Id., V. Gavin, F. Guirao, A. Varsori, *Democrazie. L'Europa meridionale e la fine delle dittature* (Florence: Le Monnier, 2010) pp. 95-171.

³⁸ N. P. Ludlow, *The Real Years of Europe? US-West European Relations during the Ford Administration*, "Journal of Cold War Studies" 15/3 (Summer 2013) 136-61. A. Varsori, *La cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2010), pp. 291-96.

Communist voters, Kissinger was severe in his reaction, insisting that the perspective of involving the PCI in government was "incompatible" with NATO. Ford added that détente did not mean taking a less firm anti-Communist line, famously remarking that "the fact that I shake hands with Brezhnev does not mean that I wish to have him as my vice President"³⁹. Washington's view of détente could hardly have been expressed more clearly. The United States and the Western allies were increasingly worried about the Christian Democrats' capacity to maintain their cohesion and willingness to withstand the Communist challenge.

Instead of playing to Italy's advantage, the reshaping of Western governance played against it. Precisely because of the democratic transitions in Southern Europe, Communist participation in government in Italy would have provided a troubling precedent – all the more so given that the DC's weakness seemed liable to open up the worst kind of prospects. As such, the Western partners' attitude toward handling the crisis became much more intransigent, as was apparent at Kissinger's meeting with the representatives of West Germany, Great Britain, and France in December 1975. Kissinger dramatically declared that "the dominance of Communist parties in the West is unacceptable" because "the alliance, as it is now, could not survive". European leaders, beginning with Dietrich Genscher, essentially shared his position that the PCI still believed in the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and that its relative independence from Moscow had no real significance. It remained common sense that Communist participation in Italy's government could jeopardize the Atlantic Alliance and represent a destabilizing factor⁴⁰. The subsequent January 1976 meeting in Brussels was but the confirmation of this stance⁴¹. Kissinger wrote an open letter to Brandt in which he summarized the basic argument that even certain Western

³⁹ NARA, RG 59, Records of Henry A. Kissinger, 1 August 1975. See H. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal. The Concluding Volume of His Memoirs* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 2000), pp. 629-31.

⁴⁰ NARA, RG 59, Records of Henry A. Kissinger, 12 December 1975.

⁴¹ NARA, RG 59, Records of Henry A. Kissinger, 23 January 1976.

Communist Parties' independence from Moscow would not stop them from posing a danger to "the political nature of our alliance" if they did come to participate in government⁴².

"National solidarity" and international constraints

The Italian case exhibited the rise of a new model in Western governance, which emerged immediately after the Italian elections of 20 June 1976. This was the moment when the PCI reached its historic electoral peak, while still remaining the country's number-two party. In retrospect, the significance of the Western powers' Puerto Rico meeting later that same month - the first G7 summit, following the November 1975 G6 summit in Raimbouillet - was that of reaffirming the "external constraint" on Italy and adapting it to the times by intertwining the economic and political rules of the game. The Puerto Rico summit reasserted the unwritten rules of the bipolar order, with its decision to deny or limit economic aid to Italy in the event that the Communists were included in government. This was made public in a statement attributed to German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt on 15 July 1976, before the formation of the new Italian government. This was an obvious interference in the internal affairs of a country that had never been - nor wanted to be - sheltered from such interference. At the same time, it was a model less inspired by pessimistic domino theories than by a positive vision of Western interdependencies - as it adopted the perspective of a stabilizing intervention, under the banner of defending democracy and economic conditionality⁴³. Kissinger had himself partly reshaped his agenda by accepting Western countries' own management of interdependence and

⁴² Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela*, pp. 194-96.

⁴³ A. Varsori, *Puerto Rico (1976): le potenze occidentali e il problema comunista in Italia*, in "Ventunesimo secolo" 7 (2008) 89-121. See also A. Castagnoli, *La guerra fredda economica. Italia e Stati Uniti 1947-1989* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2015), pp. 151-52.

their global relations⁴⁴. Nevertheless, no dynamic interpretation of détente was accepted. After the Italian elections Kissinger was even more insistent that Moscow's strategic interests were "perfectly well served by the independent Communist parties in Western Europe" ⁴⁵ . This stance was implicit in Schmidt's statement. The democratic transitions in Southern Europe affected the development of the Western system, and not relations between the two Europes.

Caught between the Puerto Rico warning and the impossibility of forming a government without a compromise between the two poles of Italian politics, in August 1976 national forces gave life to the "government of abstentions" led by Andreotti. Such national unity was quite different from that of thirty years earlier, based as it was not upon joint participation in the country's government, but upon an asymmetry between the Christian Democrats' full control over the executive - despite their minority in parliament - and the Communists sharing responsibility while remaining confined to a parliamentary role. "National solidarity" represented the temporary and precarious outcome of a realist-minded cooperation between the two political blocs. At the same time, it also marked the apex of the mutual siege dating back to the origins of the Republic and the Cold War. This ambivalence was to be the main feature of the 1976-79 period. The installation of "national solidarity" presupposed unchanged antagonistic blocs, with their long-term mutual recognition remaining something yet to be built and shaped.

The Andreotti government received its investiture from the United States. Its contorted arrangement respected, in substance, the warning of the Puerto Rico summit. On 17 September 1976, Kissinger wrote to Andreotti, expressing the United States' full support, and promising financial aid⁴⁶. Such support implied a

⁴⁴ Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, p. 183.

⁴⁵ NARA, RG 59, Kissinger's staff meetings, 1 July 1976.

⁴⁶ Istituto Sturzo, Archivio Giulio Andreotti (hereafter: AGA), Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 601, 17 September 1976.

shift in the Western perception of the Italian crisis. In the aftermath of Puerto Rico and the formation of a government that continued to exclude the Communists, despite their influence, the worst political and economic scenarios could be said to have been avoided. Italy remained a headache, but the developments there appeared manageable, as the DC still maintained its centrality. The multilateral set of interdependent relations and constraints newly established in the West for the purposes of crisis management did indeed work, and even provided a general psychological sense of relief from the specter of a catastrophic outcome replicating the 1930s⁴⁷. Jimmy Carter's programmatic declarations after his victory in the American election of November 1976 – based upon the principle of "non-interference" in the allies' internal affairs – would appear further to encourage the new Western governance model and, consequent to this, the experience of the Italian government. In his December 1976 trip to Washington – even before the establishment of the new Administration – Andreotti presented himself as the most reliable figure in Italian politics from an anti-Communist standpoint, although he was neither able to provide total reassurance as to the DC's role, nor to depict stable scenarios for the country's future⁴⁸. From that point onward, the Christian-Democratic strategy had the ambivalent nature of maintaining a necessary truce with the Communists while also wearing down their popularity in the country. This would be achieved by keeping them in the uncomfortable position of having to share responsibility for the austerity measures adopted by the government, but without truly shaping its choices.

The Communists were aware of such a risk, but they maintained that further steps might follow that would open their way into government. They continued looking to their dual-track strategy

⁴⁷ F. Romero, *Refashioning the West to dispel its Fears: The Early G7 Summits*, in *International Summitry and Global Governance. The Rise of the G7 and the European Council 1974-1991*, edited by E. Mourlon-Drouot and F. Romero (London-New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 117-37.

⁴⁸ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 624.

of "historic compromise" and Eurocommunism as the key to complete legitimation. Up to this point, they could count on Soviet tolerance. The Soviets had shown no reaction after Berlinguer's statement to *Corriere della sera* of 9 June 1976, a few days before the elections, in which the Italian Communist leader recognized in the Atlantic Alliance a greater guarantee of the PCI's autonomy than the Warsaw Pact provided⁴⁹. Berlinguer took part in the conference of European Communist Parties held in Berlin in late June, re-affirming his Eurocommunist and pro-détente stance. Brezhnev and Suslov intentionally avoided conflict⁵⁰. Moscow did not even miss the chance to blame the West for the Puerto Rico episode. They may at this point have seen the PCI's inclusion in the Italian government as a blow to the United States' credibility in the Western bloc, but the balance between advantages and pitfalls was rather tricky to assess. Such an event was likely to increase the PCI's distance from Moscow, threaten destabilization in Eastern Europe and damage the credibility of the Soviet leadership. The compromise reached in Berlin was a precarious one⁵¹.

The Carter Administration's launching of the "non-interference and non-indifference" approach brought about ambiguous change. Such a shift is scarcely reflected in the memoirs of Ambassador Richard Gardner, who somewhat overlooks the attempts that the Administration made to adopt a vision of interdependence freed of Kissinger's "geopolitical pessimism", and provides a retrospective account of US policies more coherent than they actually were⁵². The Carter administration embraced both a global vision of the world order that prioritized transnational cooperation in the West, but also assumed the notion of interdependence with the Third World and even with the Communist world. The concept of a single interdependent world

⁴⁹ E. Berlinguer, *La politica internazionale dei comunisti italiani* (Rome: Editori riuniti, 1976), pp. 159-60.

⁵⁰ A. S. Chernyaev, *Moya zhizn' i moe vremya* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1995), p. 345.

⁵¹ Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, pp. 85-89.

⁵² R. Gardner, *Mission Italy. On the Front Lines of the Cold War* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

came to define American foreign policy. In the aftermath of the Helsinki conference, the concept of human rights as the transnational issue *par excellence* assumed crucial importance⁵³. Moving from his earlier criticism of Kissinger, the new National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski sought to mark his distance from his predecessor by doing away with the priority of the balance of power. Brzezinski saw Eurocommunism as being as much an opportunity as a problem, as it cast doubt on Moscow's influence over Western Communism and helped exploit the Soviet vulnerability over human rights in Eastern Europe. He maintained that Eurocommunist independence from Moscow potentially challenged Soviet interests, though the means and prospects of encouraging such a development were not yet defined⁵⁴. This did not mean the United States adhering to the prospect of dynamic détente – a misunderstanding that observers, intellectuals and even leading figures in Italian policy circles fell into – but adopting an approach aimed at linking together détente in Europe, rivalries in the Third World, and global affairs. Closely connected to Brzezinski by personal ties and their background in the Trilateral Commission, Gardner publicly adopted a wait-and-see stance as he arrived in Rome, but also began urging Washington to focus on the problem that the PCI represented⁵⁵. As early as March-April 1977, Brzezinski criticized Secretary of State Cyrus Vance for looking exclusively at the Italian economic crisis, even though Italy was "potentially the most serious political problem we have in Europe today". Andreotti was well-aware of such a stance and knew that it was likely to reinforce Washington's support for his government⁵⁶.

⁵³ Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, pp. 233-36. See also U. Tulli, *Tra diritti umani e distensione. L'amministrazione Carter e il dissenso in URSS* (Milan: Francoangeli, 2013).

⁵⁴ Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, Cyrus Vance and Grace Sloan Papers, "Memorandum on foreign policy priorities for the first six months", 3 November 1976, box 9, f. 19.

⁵⁵ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 68.

⁵⁶ AGA, Serie Stati d'America, b. 596, 14 March 1977. NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 7 April 1977. Z. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle. Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983), p. 312.

In other words, Italian actors were not wrong in perceiving change in American policy, but Washington's new orientation was largely misinterpreted as either dangerous or beneficial "open-mindedness". Many feared or hoped that the margins of national politics had substantially broadened. More particularly, the Communists had cultivated hopes of change even before the American elections, when the figure responsible for the Party's Foreign Department, Sergio Segre, was invited to a meeting of the Trilateral Commission, reporting to Berlinguer that Brzezinski was "a man open to dialogue and novelty"⁵⁷. The PCI's expectations were further encouraged by the positive reception of Eurocommunism among numerous liberal intellectuals in the United States, such as Peter Lange, Stanley Hoffman, and others. However, Eurocommunism could not provide the PCI with complete legitimacy. It created empathy in sectors of Western public opinion, but gained it no significant support. This was rather disappointing for a party that aspired to govern a key country in the West and break the vetoes of the Cold War. While the Italian Communists cultivated an *Ostpolitik* inspired by their "reform communism", they did not really outline a *Westpolitik* aimed at establishing concrete relations with Europe's governmental Left or with the Carter administration. The PCI's relationship with European Social Democrats remained vague and fragile, despite similarities in their respective political agendas. Although mutual contacts intensified between the PCI and European Social Democrats, even the most empathetic leaders like Brandt were very cautious about establishing open collaboration, and feared that Eurocommunism could serve to destabilize détente⁵⁸. Italian Communists were no less cautious. Their optimistic view of détente, combined with their enduring *liaison* with the Communist world, prevented them from assuming

⁵⁷ APC, Note alla Segreteria, 24 September 1976, mf 0243.

⁵⁸ M. Di Donato, *I comunisti italiani e la sinistra europea (1964-1984). Il PCI e i rapporti con le socialdemocrazie* (Rome: Carocci, 2015), pp. 167-75.

Westpolitik as a priority. The Italian Communist leader held in highest esteem in the West, Giorgio Napolitano, was the first to visit the United States, but did so only in 1978⁵⁹.

Thus, no opening of Western credit balanced the growing Soviet hostility as the attraction the PCI exerted upon certain Eastern European establishments – above all Warsaw and Budapest – became apparent and its "national solidarity" experience confirmed its trajectory away from Moscow's influence. The Soviet decision to launch a counter-offensive against Eurocommunism emerged by early 1977, and coincided with the Carter Administration's campaign over human rights, which Moscow saw as the end of Kissinger's guarantee that *détente* meant the *status quo*⁶⁰. The February 1977 Eurocommunist summit in Madrid reasserted the idea of exploiting the space of *détente* in order to effect political change in national government, while challenging Soviet orthodoxy and even dissenting on the issue of human rights. Moscow raised the stakes of hostility against Eurocommunism, characterising it as a form of "revisionism", and began its covert operations aimed at discrediting Berlinguer⁶¹. Even a reform-oriented official of the CPSU International Department like Anatoly Chernyaev thought that Brzezinski "has started playing with Eurocommunism" in a way that could become "more dangerous than the nuclear potential of the USA" for an "ideological power" like the Soviet Union⁶². The Italian

⁵⁹ Both the PCI's efforts at *Westpolitik* and its limits are apparent from Napolitano's memoirs. See G. Napolitano, *Dal PCI al socialismo europeo. Un'autobiografia politica* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005), pp. 128-29, 158-59. See also *The Italian Road to Socialism. An Interview by Eric Hobsbawm with Giorgio Napolitano of the Italian Communist Party* (London: Lawrence Hill, 1977). Cf. Di Donato, *I comunisti italiani e la sinistra europea*, pp. 192 ff. L. Fasanaro, *The Eurocommunism Years: The Italian Political Puzzle and the Limits of the Atlantic Alliance*, in *Atlantic, Euro-Atlantic, or Europe-America?*, edited by V. Aubourg, G. Scott-Smith (Paris: Soleb, 2009), pp. 548-72. V. Lomellini, *The PCI and the USA: Reversal of a Difficult Dialogue in the Era of Détente*, "Journal of Modern Italian Studies" 20/3 (2015) 346-60.

⁶⁰ V. Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 254-56.

⁶¹ APC, Estero, 1977, mf 0297, 1494-95. Chernyaev, *Moya zhizn' i moe vremya*, p. 349. Ch. Andrew, V. Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield. The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 277-78.

⁶² A. Chernyaev, *Sovmestnyi iskhod. Dnevnik dvukh epokh 1972-1991 gody* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), p. 269.

Communists had certainly banked on a reaction from Moscow. Nevertheless, Berlinguer kept the conflict from coming to light, believing that a break with Moscow would damage the PCI more than enduring ties would hinder it. These ties could, after all, allow Western communists to stimulate change in Eastern Europe and international Communism. As a result of this, a serious strain emerged between the goal of Western legitimation and the Party's identification with "reform communism"⁶³.

Unlike the PCI, the DC continued to enjoy significant international support, even if the axis with Washington was subject to tension. The party was also divided between different visions of anti-Communism and diverging ideas of how relations with the American and European partners should be managed. A significant portion of Christian Democrats openly argued for the end of any collaboration with Communists, and maintained their own contacts with Gardner ⁶⁴. Even more importantly, a discrepancy again emerged between Andreotti and Moro. Moro imagined gradually expanding the institutional foundations of the Republic and convincing the Western allies to accept some change in the Cold War constraints on Italy - though not to the point of envisaging a political alliance with Communists. In this respect, he was the main architect of the government program negotiated with the PCI during May-June 1977 - and this was also how the US Administration perceived him⁶⁵. Andreotti instead saw "national solidarity" as a necessary path toward recovering the DC's guarantor role within the traditional context of relations with the United States. At his 26-27 July 1977 meeting with Carter in Washington, Andreotti aimed at consolidating his government's position. He presented a vision of détente that ruled out any notion of sudden change, by remarking that it was necessary not, 'as has occurred at times, to confuse détente with a lack of

⁶³ Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, pp. 104-11.

⁶⁴ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 1 February 1978.

⁶⁵ AAM, b. 34, fasc. 740. Gentiloni, *L'Italia sospesa*, p. 200.

vigilance, because détente (...) rests upon the balance of forces." On internal policy, Andreotti maintained that the government program - as agreed between the main parties by mid July - would have been "unachievable" without political and trade union deals. But he also pointed out that the austerity policy had "created difficulties for the PCI," and that the DC held to a line firmly and consistently opposed to including Communists in the government. He presented the program of restoring order and implementing austerity to deal with Italy's terrorist and economic emergencies - possible thanks to the "situation of non-belligerence between the parties" - as a priority for the Western system⁶⁶. In other words, Andreotti deftly argued in defence of his own government's role as the national guarantor of the Western alliance. Carter even avoided repeating the American veto against Communist participation in government, as he probably considered it superfluous after the Italian leader's reassurances⁶⁷.

Thus, Andreotti presented a vision of "national solidarity" coherent with the "external constraint" and implying a strategy of attrition. A plan had emerged far more aimed at wearing down Italian Communism than including it in the sphere of governmental legitimacy. Andreotti was its most consistent exponent, though all the Christian Democratic leaders, Moro included, shared the idea of eroding and limiting the PCI's popularity. Such a strategy was not contradicted by the foreign-policy document that all the parties of Italy's "national solidarity" majority signed in October-November 1977, re-affirming the country's link with both the European Community and the Atlantic Alliance. The PCI's international stance was further sharpened with Berlinguer's speech in Moscow on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, in which he invoked the "universal value" of democracy and raised tensions

⁶⁶ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 589, 26-27 July 1977.

⁶⁷ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 103.

with the Soviet leadership to the highest point⁶⁸. However, the document on foreign policy concluded at the end of 1977 was a mere corollary to previous agreements on domestic politics, in view of a temporary understanding between the leading national forces. The tensions between Andreotti and Gardner in late 1977 only concerned the tactics with which they could achieve what was a shared objective. In a comment on Gardner's memoirs, Andreotti later recalled that he felt "very annoyed" by the Ambassador's insistence on the American concerns about Communist influence, as "preventing Communists going beyond the limit-point was our precise political goal, and we did not need anyone to call us to order"⁶⁹.

International players remained inflexible and even hostile toward further change in Italy. A session of the Trilateral Commission held in Bonn in late October 1977 demonstrated that the Italian Communists could gain the understanding of individual political figures, but not of key decision-makers, and still less the American Ambassador in Rome. The Trilateralist Gardner found himself in tune with Kissinger, who warned of the PCI's continuing anti-NATO attitudes, while criticizing the German Social Democrat Horst Ehmke and also the Carter Administration for its soft approach⁷⁰. According to an anonymous source in the PCI's possession, Brzezinski maintained that the US would continue following their line of non-intervention, but only if the German government agreed. Such information may have been oversimplified, as it suggested that it was an even more important priority for the PCI to open dialogue with Bonn than to break with Moscow⁷¹. However, it served to clarify that there was no short-term prospect of any revision of the "external constraint" on Italy.

⁶⁸ APC, Fondo Berlinguer, serie MOI, fasc. 151. A. Rubbi, *Il mondo di Berlinguer*, Napoleone, Rome, 1994, pp. 108-14.

⁶⁹ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, n. d.

⁷⁰ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, pp. 116-17.

⁷¹ APC, Note alla Segreteria, 4 November 1977, mf 0309.

Back to the Cold War

The government crisis that began in late 1977 – triggered by the PCI's ultimatum demanding entry into the government – again brought to light Cold War imperatives. Berlinguer was trying to get himself out of a corner and provide a response to the tumult and protests growing among the party's social base as well as on the radical Left. The DC replied by opening up to the possibility of including the Communists in the majority, but firmly ruled out their participation in the government. The United States reacted promptly. Brzezinski had already turned to address the question of Eurocommunism, as a consequence of increasing international concern as well as domestic criticism of the Carter Administration for being too soft on Italy. During December 1977 and in early January 1978, Gardner urged the Administration to take a position in order to prevent any step which would strengthen Communist influence⁷². He went then to Washington where he took part in a presidential meeting on 11 January 1978 and strongly argued in favour of a US firm stance to help blocking the creation in Italy of an emergency government that would include the PCI. The following day, the State Department released a statement reaffirming the American veto against Communist participation in the governments of countries member of the Atlantic Alliance. The Ambassador claims to have decisively contributed to forging a "bipartisan position in American policy on the PCI issue"⁷³. However, going back to Kissinger's paradigm was not an outcome that the Carter Administration had intended to achieve. The Administration's attempt to provide new approaches to Europe, Italy, and the Communist question was more serious than historians have usually conceded, though it ultimately proved to

⁷² NARA, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, Rome20693, 16 December 1977; Ibid., Rome20997, 22 December 1977; Ibid., Rome00062, 3 January 1978.

⁷³ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, pp. 114-17, 143-44. The personal role of Gardner is downsized by Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge*, pp. 270-76.

be an indecisive response, as the principle of "non-interference and non-indifference" was never translated into a consistent strategy⁷⁴. The crisis of bipolar détente, the European allies' (and first among them West Germany's) reluctance to alter the long-term perspective of détente, US domestic pressures, and Italian national contradictions, all combined to thwart any paradigms alternative to Kissinger's. In Italy, this was the moment of the clearest gap between a national trajectory registering the Communists' legitimate – if contested – demand to take a forward step in the sphere of national government, and an international environment that made such a demand substantially illegitimate. The divergence between domestic and international trajectories aggravated tensions. The PCI reacted angrily to the US statement. However, the Italian Communists suffered from a major weakness, as they had to face the government crisis without the support of any international partner, even in Western Europe. The statement also produced irritation in the DC, not so much out of national pride as because it weakened its image of autonomy as it faced the Communists' challenge⁷⁵. Nevertheless, by placing an explicit limit upon national margins of manoeuvre, Washington actually facilitated the DC's continuing unity. After all, it reassured the DC's more conservative members, who were strongly opposed to "national solidarity" and represented a conglomerate of forces exclusively driven by blind anti-Communism – as even Gardner recognised⁷⁶.

Since the period before the crisis of government, Moro's political discourse had been centred upon policy convergences, ruling out

⁷⁴ O. Njolstad, *The Carter Administration and Italy: Keeping the Communists out of Power without Interfering*, "Journal of Cold War Studies" 4/3 (2002) 56-94. I. Wall, *L'amministrazione Carter e l'eurocomunismo*, "Ricerche di storia politica" 2006/2 181-96. R. D. Portolani, *The United States and Eurocommunism*, PhD. Dissertation, University of Rome "Tor Vergata", 2015. The question of Italy and Eurocommunism in US foreign policy is poorly treated by Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*.

⁷⁵ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 13 January 1978. See also G. Andreotti, *Gli USA visti da vicino. Dal Patto Atlantico a Bush* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 118. Andreotti had warned Gardner that he would not welcome a US statement against the PCI involvement in the Italian government: NARA, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, Rome00512, 9 January 1978.

⁷⁶ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, pp. 121, 137-8.

more significant political understandings. In November 1977, he coined the famous turn of phrase "parallel convergences" - a Byzantine formula in which the adjective was no less important than the noun - in order to signify collaboration without contamination. Although Moro appreciated the importance of the parties' "common feeling" in facing the country's crisis, he never neglected to recall that the DC and PCI were "ideally alternative parties" and that any agreement between them would also have to reckon with impassable boundaries. He became the lynchpin of the operation seeking to create "more advanced equilibria", and after the onset of the crisis of government established a dialogue with Berlinguer. However, he also justified in no uncertain terms his refusal to accept the PCI in government, both for internal reasons (the risk of a break in the DC and even more radical opposition to "national solidarity" among young people) and for international reasons (Washington's opposition, but also that of the leading European allies)⁷⁷.

On 21 December, Moro asked Gardner for the United States to support the attempt to negotiate the inclusion of Communists into the parliamentary majority. He thought that US intervention in Italian politics would be appropriate only in the event of failure in negotiations and early elections⁷⁸. In his last meeting with Gardner, on 2 February 1978, Moro maintained that it was necessary to continue to buy time and keep an agreement with the Communists, as one more year was needed to create an electoral atmosphere in which the PCI would lose considerably and the DC gain strongly⁷⁹. According to Gardner's memoirs, Moro told him that he understood the US declaration of 12 January⁸⁰. In his *Memoriale*, written when he was a prisoner of the Red Brigades, Moro recalled that the Ambassador "neither agreed nor objected"

⁷⁷ L. Barca, *Cronache dall'interno del vertice del PCI. Volume II. Con Berlinguer* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2005), pp. 704-5, 709-10.

⁷⁸ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 139.

⁷⁹ NARA, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, Rome02197, 3 February 1978.

⁸⁰ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 159.

to his strategy "of moving from non-opposition to assent", while excluding "a general political alliance" with the Communists⁸¹. In other words, there was a mutual understanding between Gardner and Moro, though as we now know this came only as a sequel to previous contacts with Andreotti's entourage. The day before, speaking to the Prime Minister's Diplomatic Advisor, the Ambassador had expressed US support for the decision to avoid early elections and create a new government⁸². Such a difficult equilibrium allowed Moro to secure the green light from his party for a new Andreotti government, this time supported by a parliamentary majority that was to include the Communists⁸³. In his speech to the DC's parliamentary groups on 28 February 1978, Moro underscored the risk of "mutual paralysis" between the two blocs, and the role of emergency in pressuring the decision to include Communists in the parliamentary majority. However, he also ruled out "a full political solidarity". He invoked Christian-Democratic "hegemony," though admitting that it had been "attenuated." And he appealed to the defense of the DC's "identity," which was obviously linked to its central importance in the Italian political system⁸⁴. In other words, Moro saw as necessary the opening of a new chapter of "national solidarity," but did not suggest any prospect of national unity in government, and indeed theorized its impossibility⁸⁵. Gardner endorsed this DC strategy at the NSC meeting on Italy held in Washington early in March⁸⁶.

Moro's tragic kidnapping and assassination by the Red Brigades between 16 March and 9 May 1978 has often been interpreted as an international plot crafted either by Washington or Moscow, or even, subordinately, by major forces of the Middle Eastern conflict

⁸¹ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁸² AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 1 February 1978.

⁸³ Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella guerra fredda*, pp. 505-10.

⁸⁴ AAM, Serie scritti e discorsi, b. 35, fasc. 768.

⁸⁵ A. Giovagnoli, *Il caso Moro. Una tragedia repubblicana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), p. 30.

⁸⁶ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 164.

in some way interlinked with the Cold War context. The most informed reconstructions rule out the reliability and seriousness of such a vision, which reduces the Brigades to mere executors, manipulated by others⁸⁷. To be sure, Gardner offered Andreotti US collaboration in acquiring information on the Red Brigades and on their international connections. According to US intelligence, there was no evidence implicating the Communist regimes "in precise terms," except for "vague hints" that pointed to Czechoslovakia⁸⁸. Italian Communists had similar indications, though we do not know their sources⁸⁹. The basic assessment of Brzezinski, even before the "Moro affair", was that Red terrorism in Italy represented "essentially a domestic phenomenon"⁹⁰.

At any rate, the United States strongly supported Andreotti and the decision to refuse any negotiation with terrorists. A few days after the kidnapping, on 22 March, talking to the Prime Minister's Diplomatic Advisor, Gardner criticized Moro for "having given the impression of having resigned himself to the Communists' entry into government" - thus showing that he had not fully believed in what Moro told him in February - and declared that Andreotti was "from our point of view the only political leader able to govern Italy"⁹¹. In early May, Brzezinski expressed to Andreotti, via Gardner, Washington's appreciation for the firm line his government had taken, as well as its concern over any "destabilizing" consequences of the Italian Socialists' position in favour of negotiating with terrorists⁹². From this standpoint, the American presence in the "Moro affair" should not be neglected. However, Washington should be seen not as a source of shadowy plotting, but as a visible player deploying its weight in consolidating the prevalent orientation in the DC and the

⁸⁷ On the question of the international links of Italian terrorism, see G. M. Ceci, *Il terrorismo italiano. Storia di un dibattito* (Rome: Carocci, 2013), pp. 55-70, 263-70.

⁸⁸ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 22 March 1978.

⁸⁹ U. Pecchioli, *Tra misteri e verità. Storia di una democrazia incompiuta* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi, 1995), p. 80.

⁹⁰ Gardner, *Mission Italy*, p. 173.

⁹¹ AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 22 March 1978.

⁹² AGA, Serie Stati Uniti d'America, b. 598, 3 May 1978.

government, which also enjoyed the PCI's consent. In his letters from his Red Brigade "prison", Moro often hinted at the role he felt that the US was playing in thwarting the possibility of negotiations⁹³. We do not have to entertain conspiracy theories in order to understand that the "Moro affair" had enormous political implications. Moro symbolized many things all at once: Christian-Democratic power and the attempt to reconstruct its hegemony on new foundations; the co-optation of a major Communist Party into a sphere of Western power; and a national change partly conceived outside the schemes of the Cold War. Each of these things won him many enemies. As far as we know, the Red Brigades' interrogations of Moro revolved around the concept of the Christian-Democratic "regime" being a mere emanation of American capitalism, but their language also revealed awareness of the intertwining of all these elements.

The year 1978 has often been seen as marking an epochal dividing-line in contemporary Italian history, due to Moro's assassination and the subsequent removal from the scene of collaboration between DC and PCI. In many respects, such a perspective inevitably focuses on the consequences of violence and terrorism in Italian republican history. Nevertheless, the era-marking significance of 1978 should be understood in a wider context. This is not a matter of diminishing the enormous emotional and symbolic impact of terrorist violence on the entire national community, or even less of devaluing Moro's standing as a public figure. However, two points must be stressed. First, the "national solidarity" experience already appeared to be in trouble before the "Moro affair," and the inclusion of the Communists in the majority was unlikely to be an enduring solution - let alone a step towards their participation in government. Second, the "Moro affair" coincided with the definitive crisis of détente between the superpowers, which made the international environment even more impervious to any national unity agreement in Italy.

⁹³ A. Moro, *Lettere dalla prigionia*, edited by M. Gotor (Turin: Einaudi, 2008), pp. 7-8, 29, 41, 171.

Berlinguer's combination of "historic compromise" and Eurocommunism was in crisis, and the risk of attrition materialized in the PCI's disappointing results at the local elections of May 1978. The old leader of the moderate wing of the party, Giorgio Amendola, criticized Berlinguer by asking for a new pacifist mobilization, which would hardly have been compatible with the "national solidarity" framework⁹⁴.

The PCI's political predicament did not lead to *rapprochement* with Moscow. On the contrary, their mutual relations reached the pinnacle of conflict in October 1978. During his visit to Moscow, Berlinguer held positions hardly reconcilable with the Soviet Communists on the themes of pluralism and human rights. The ideologues Suslov and Ponomarev sharply accused the Italians of falling into the enemy camp. Brezhnev maintained that the "national unity" government had bound Italy closely "to the American military machine and to NATO" ⁹⁵ . Berlinguer understood that Brezhnev was no less hostile to the Italian Communists' entry into government than Kissinger and Brzezinski⁹⁶. Even if the Soviets could not force realignment of the PCI along traditional Cold War patterns, their angry reaction was successful in dividing and weakening the Eurocommunist movement - which declined by late 1978⁹⁷. In this respect, the perspective of "national solidarity" and the PCI's chances in Italy were decisively constrained by the bipolar framework as a whole - thus contributing to rendering impossible any alternative path able to lead to an authentic transformation of bloc politics. As the new pacifist mobilization now coming into view in Western Europe interacted with the scenario of increased economic conditionality - since the Andreotti government planned to join

⁹⁴ APC, Fondo Berlinguer, Politica interna, fasc. 525.

⁹⁵ APC, Direzione, Allegati, mf 7812, 19 ottobre 1978. S. Pons, *Meetings Between the Italian Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Moscow and Rome, 1978-80*, "Cold War History" 2002/3 157-66.

⁹⁶ Rubbi, *Il mondo di Berlinguer*, p. 142.

⁹⁷ S. Pons, *The rise and fall of Eurocommunism*, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. III Endings*, edited by M. P. Leffler and O. A. Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 45-65.

the European monetary system, which outlined an additional "external constraint"⁹⁸ - the door was opened to the final crisis of "national solidarity" and the PCI's return to opposition in early 1979. After the elections of June 1979 and the start of the Euromissiles dispute, a center-left coalition government confronted a defeated, though still resilient, Communist opposition, again following a well-established pattern.

Protagonists, cultures, and power relations were changing Italy's domestic political landscape. The DC had to confront an ongoing crisis of its political centrality to the Republican space. Liberal anti-Communism, as represented by Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party, was challenging traditional Catholic paradigms well before it took over the leadership of the government in the 1980s. The PCI's condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan showed how disconnected the party was from the Soviet Bloc, while it also emphasized the Party's vocation of "reform Communism". Furthermore, new pacifist, ecologist, and feminist movements imposed their own agenda over the traditional political parties, representing a transnational perspective that hardly accorded with bloc alignments. In other words, deep transformations were taking place in Italy's political culture, as elsewhere in Western Europe, while the emergence of Soviet socialism's crisis of legitimacy was irreversibly modifying perceptions and identities, thus removing the Cold War's ideological legacy as a context for opposed perspectives on modernity⁹⁹. However, all such cultural adjustments and revisions were trapped within a still-unbending bipolar framework, which ultimately proved to contain changes of identity more than it was itself affected by them. The Cold War was the overarching element that presided over the Italian tragedy, and at the end of a decade of crisis, conflict, compromise, dissent, and violence, it ultimately represented the major stabilizing factor

⁹⁸ Varsori, *La cenerentola d'Europa?*, pp. 314-29.

⁹⁹ See *Gli anni Ottanta come storia*, edited by S. Colarizi, P. Craveri, S. Pons, G. Quagliariello (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004).

in politics.

Conclusions

The global crisis of the 1970s basically produced two opposed political responses in Italy, and an outcome that would determine the shape of the Republic up to the end of the Cold War. In the middle of the decade, the leaderships of the two main national political forces called, in their different ways, for a change in the "external constraint," as they each imagined forms of collaborating to manage the crisis that were more demanding than what the bipolar order suggested. Their political discourse and strategy aimed at liquidating past dichotomies, reflected the growing detachment of important parts of public opinion from the domestic legacy of the Cold War, and interpreted détente as a framework for change in Europe. However, neither Moro nor Berlinguer had a fully realistic understanding of détente, and they each underestimated the great powers' reaction. Even if the Cold War was manifestly of ever less importance as a disciplined worldview and mobilizing tool, the constraints of the bipolar order still remained standing. No less important, the identity and structure of each of the two poles of Italian public life was deeply marked by the previous decades. Such a dilemma would also mark the "national solidarity" experience - indeed, even tragically so. The paradox of "national solidarity" was that while it proved effective in containing the economic crisis - even by adopting significant welfare measures, which would lay roots in the country's social relations - it ended in political failure, showing itself unable to open up new paths.

The complex set of forces militating against "national solidarity" appeared both fierce and robust, distributed as they were across a number of fronts of national and international politics, traversing movements, parties, and governments. The crucial point, however,

was the combination between inflexible external influences and the cleavage of the Italian political nation by the Cold War divide. The basic weakness of "national solidarity" was that the cooperation that was undertaken in order to confront an emergency situation did not create any common domestic front to re-negotiate the "external constraint". Moro and Berlinguer did not agree on any shared design to this end. What they did share was an understanding over dealing with the country's emergency, and a vague consensus about broadening the foundations of the Italian state. At the same time, the two leaders were divided by their need to affirm their own, opposing identities - fundamental to their respective constituencies - as well as by their external compatibilities. The legacy of the two poles' mutual siege co-existed with national solidarity, and it was eventually this legacy that prevailed, through its interaction with the influence exerted by the "external constraint". It may be said that Italy faithfully reflected the "revenge of geopolitics" emerging in American foreign policy and in Western conduct by the end of the decade¹⁰⁰. The Cold War continued gradually imploding as a global order, while Western Europe preserved détente and achieved a deeper sense of its identity. This would soon see it develop the project of a monetary Union¹⁰¹. However, the legacy of the Cold War persisted in defining forms of sovereignty and political spaces across the continent. Italy provided striking evidence of this enduring legacy, even within the increasing multilateral framework of the West. The bipolar "external constraint" represented a shelter from the "global shock" and a reassuring perimeter-fence that most Italians considered necessary, despite their recurrent reluctance to accept all of its consequences. The enduring importance of Italy to Cold War strategies - further enhanced by Euromissiles - could be seen to counter-balance the country's relative economic weakness and

¹⁰⁰ Sargent, *Superpower Transformed*, pp. 261 ff.

¹⁰¹ S. Pons, F. Romero, *Europe between the Superpowers 1968-1981*, in *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s. Entering a Different World*, edited by A. Varsori and G. Migani (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 85-97.

exposition to the gospel of de-regulation, monetary discipline, and competition, which had by the late 1970s assigned a new global meaning to the notion of interdependence¹⁰². Italian Communists had no alternative external connections to offer - especially as distinctions between Europeanism and Atlanticism had proved to be unrealistic while their distancing from the Soviet Union meant that they themselves could hardly believe in an old-fashioned "civilizational choice". Their anti-Americanism provided a vital source of identity - even more with the advent of Ronald Reagan - and their dreams of a "third way" were essentially intended as another such source¹⁰³.

Ultimately, the Cold War proved the central factor for stabilizing Italy's political order, even before the establishment of the Reagan Administration. However, this hardly represented a long-term solution. Although the pattern of bipolar divide would not prevent Italy's post-industrial modernization, there was to be no true rescue from the crisis of political legitimacy that emerged in the 1970s. Such pattern provided stability for some time, but also created paralysis and an increasing erosion of the main parties' credibility among wide layers of Italian society. Although the late Cold War consensus fuelled the trans-Atlantic nexus and restored a reassuring sense of American supremacy, it also prevented political innovation in the context of increasing economic globalization and media modernization¹⁰⁴. In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, irreparable de-legitimation would lead the Italian political system to collapse.

¹⁰² Maier, "Malaise", pp. 42-4.

¹⁰³ Brogi, *Confronting America*, pp. 367 ff.

¹⁰⁴ On Italy, global processes and the end of the Cold War, see *L'Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi. I. Fine della guerra fredda e globalizzazione*, edited by S. Pons, A. Roccucci and F. Romero (Rome: Carocci, 2014).