

Contributing Country Profile: Italy

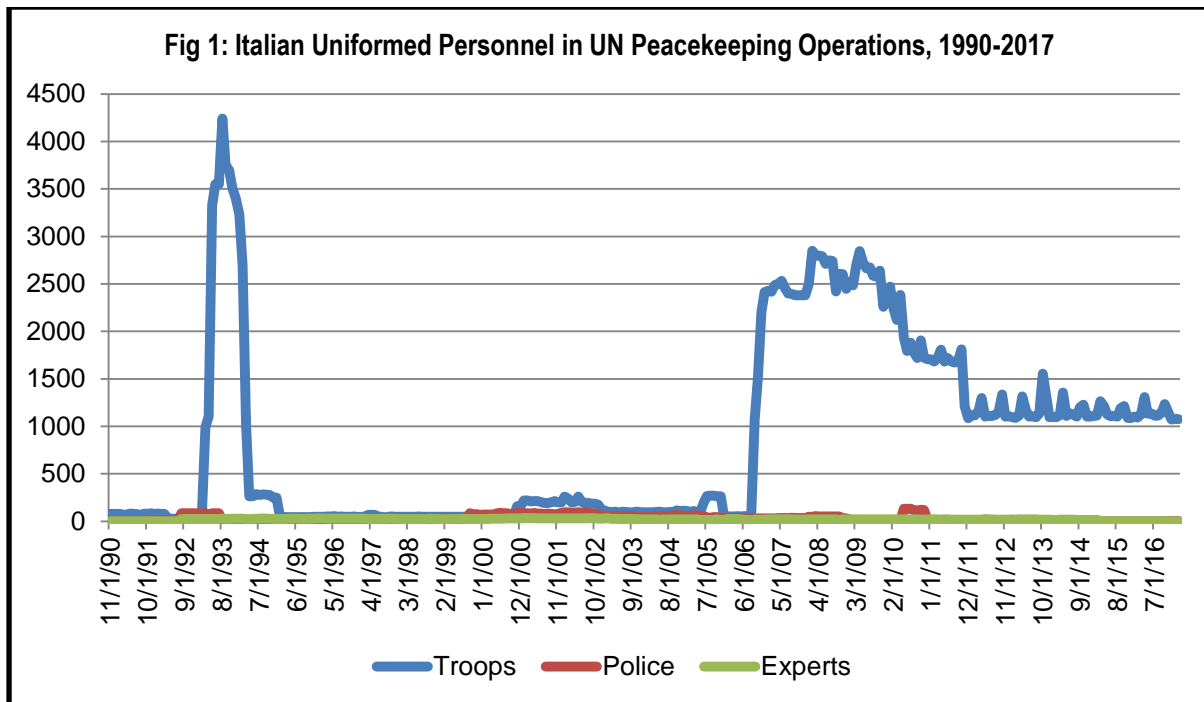
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Active armed forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
174,500 Army 102,200 Navy 30,400 Air 41,900 <i>Carabinieri:</i> 103,750 World Ranking (size): 30	ARMY: Aircraft Transport: 6 light Helicopters: Transport: 131 NAVAL: Helicopters: Transport: 14 AIR FORCE: Aircraft Transport: 66 Helicopters: Multi-role: 58 Search & Rescue: 12 Transport: 31	2014: \$24.5bn (1.14% of GDP) 2015: \$21.5bn (1.18% of GDP) 2016: \$22.3bn (1.20% of GDP) World Ranking (budget): 13	1,080 (45 women) (28 Feb. 2017) Ranking: 23rd Top UN contributor among NATO and EU states.	UNIFIL 1,076 troops MINUSMA 1 troop UNFICYP 2 police UNMIK 1 police	AFGHANISTAN: Op. Resolute Support 827 IRAQ: Op. Inherent Resolve 1,120 UGANDA: EUTM Somalia 112 LIBYA: UNSMIL 300 KOSOVO: KFOR 542
Defense Spending / Troop: US\$ 127,480 (compared to global average of approximately US\$77,000)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Italy is the top troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations from NATO, the EU and the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). As of February 2017, Italy participates in four UN peacekeeping operations, but almost all of its 1,080 uniformed personnel are deployed in UNIFIL in Lebanon. Italy is also the 8th largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping assessed contributions.

Since the 1960s, Italy has participated in 33 UN peacekeeping operations. Its approach has been characterized by periodic engagements and disengagements, mainly driven by changes in foreign policy priorities linked to internal political issues. Italian commitment to the UN has witnessed four main turning points. First, the UNOSOM II mission in Somalia (1993), when the Minister of Defense Salvatore Andò asked the Italian Parliament to support the UN's efforts in Somalia because it was time for Italy to stop being a "security consumer" and start being a "security provider." Second, was Italy's contribution to the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK, 1999), when Italy increased its total contribution to UN forces from an average of less than 100 troops to 156 troops in September 1999 (out of which 57 troops were allocated to UNMIK). Third, was Italy's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq (2001–05), which illustrated a progressive decline in contributions to UN operations. Fourth, came the engagement with the UNIFIL II mission in Lebanon in 2006, which remains Italy's largest contribution.



During the last decade, Italy has provided fewer and fewer UN peacekeepers. In May 2008, there were 2,864 Italian blue helmets; by November 2011, however, deployments had dropped by more than 50%, to 1,233. After Silvio Berlusconi's resignation, the new government led by Mario Monti (November 2011–April 2013) mainly focused on Italy's internal economic situation. During Monti's government, Italian contributions to UN peacekeeping remained stable, although the resources devoted to the Italian Ministry of Defense faced budget cuts due to new austerity measures introduced to mitigate the economic crisis. Furthermore, although the next government led by Enrico Letta (April 2013–February 2014), increased the defense budget (+0.7% compared to 2011), the number of Italian blue helmets remained the same.

Since the beginning of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's government (February 2014), Italy now participates in fewer UN missions: from seven in February 2014 to four today. Following the provisions published on 18 February 2015 on the rationalization of the missions abroad, Renzi's government stopped Italy's contribution to MINURSO in Western Sahara (5), UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan (4), UNTSO in the Middle East (7), and UNFICYP in Cyprus (4, although this restarted in November 2016). Although these contributions might be considered as minor, the rationalization shows the current government's preference for missions that are in areas of strategic interest for Italy.

During his speech at the UN Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping in September 2015, Renzi declared Italy was available to further engage in UN peacekeeping. He also suggested a new turning point might come with greater involvement in key strategic areas (the Mediterranean, as well as the protection of cultural heritage). After Renzi's resignation, Paolo Gentiloni, former Italian foreign minister, has been chosen for the role of prime minister, suggesting continuity in the foreign policy priorities of the country for the near future.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

Although the Italian commitment to multilateralism is stated in Article 11 of the Italian Constitution, the Italian legislative system does not have a specific regulation on the use of

military missions abroad. Ad-hoc legislative measures and institutional practices are at the core of the Italian decision-making process on troop contributions. The national government is in charge of deciding how to use the armed forces, and it does so by respecting international laws and treaties, as well as in dialogue with the Italian Parliament. Since the end of the Cold War and the end of the traditional ideological opposition that for years prevented Parliament reaching a consensus on foreign policy priorities, the Italian Parliament has played a greater role in defining the country's foreign and military affairs. This activism is evident through the adoption of specific resolutions, the request of hearings of the Minister of Defense, and in many other procedural instruments at its disposal. With the approval of the Law 25/1997, a rationalization of this process was expected.

Law 25 outlines a temporal sequence of procedural steps. In January 2001 another resolution (7-01007) was adopted to further specify the provisions of Law 25. Overall, the governmental deliberation should be reviewed by the Supreme Defense Council and seek the approval of the Italian Parliament. The defense minister should then approve the operational options while parliament should simultaneously approve the bill. Yet, these new procedural steps have not been observed on several occasions for different reasons (i.e. being approved by only one branch of the parliament, or being approved but with different objectives, etc.).²

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

The Italian commitment to the UN peacekeeping should be seen not only as a result of the general support that Italian society traditionally express for the UN, but also as a need for this middle-power to increase its visibility and sphere of influence.

Political Rationales: Italy is still trying to appear as a credible middle-range power. It supports multilateral organizations as arenas where its interests can be best pursued. Italian society and elites have always perceived its participation to UN peacekeeping as “prestigious.” As Italy is not in the position of permanently driving decisional processes at the UN, its prominent contribution to UN peacekeeping has often been the ticket to access non-permanent seats at the UN Security Council.

Normative Rationales: Historically, Italian public opinion supports multilateral peacekeeping because of three main cultural elements.³ The first element is Catholic morality. After the end of the First World War, the interpretation of wars in general shifted. Rather than being seen as a punishment from God, they became understood as decisions made by mankind. War became morally unacceptable, unless it was declared a “just war;” and since its creation in 1945, the UN became the only morally acceptable body to legitimize war. The second element is the liberal political culture initiated by Mazzini during the “Risorgimento” period.⁴ Mazzini viewed Italy's mission, after all the struggles as a result of its reunification, as being to promote recognition among people and to support their brotherhood. The third element of the Italian commitment to multilateralism is the notion of the “Good Italian” and Italian national identity. Italians perceive themselves as an empathetic population; one that understands and shares the struggles of the poor and supports them in their fight for better life conditions. These three elements combined have shaped Italian public opinion through time, generating significant public support for peace support missions within international institutions, with a strong preference for UN-led missions.

Security Rationales: Italy's policy towards the Mediterranean and the Balkans remains the geographical priority. The need to stabilize Mediterranean's countries to secure energy supplies and control migration explains the reason behind Italy's involvement in UN peace-

keeping missions in the area. The proximity of the Western Balkans countries also explains why this region is a strategic priority of Italian foreign policy within the UN forum. An example of this is the 1997 UN-authorized Operation Alba in Albania led by Italy. Historically, the focus on the Mediterranean and on the Balkans as geographical foreign policy priorities, clashes with the unconditional support to the USA prioritized, to the detriment of the other two, by the Italian center-right governments. The Italian involvements in Iraq (with around 3,000 troops) and in Afghanistan (with over 4,000 troops) are examples.

Economic Rationales: Since reimbursement from the UN only partially covers deployment expenditures, there are no significant economic advantages for the Italian Government in participating in UN peacekeeping missions. On the other hand, participation in UN peacekeeping operations might be attractive for individual personnel, as they receive a special indemnity, which might represent a significant economic incentive.

Institutional Rationales: Although, participating in UN peacekeeping missions is considered a valuable experience to share knowledge with other armed forces in an international framework; the Italian army still considers UN peacekeeping missions as lacking effective command and control mechanisms and overall feel that NATO and EU missions are a much more familiar setting in which to operate.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Despite remaining the largest contributor to UN peacekeeping among Western countries, Italy's commitment is likely to fluctuate and focus on missions deployed in areas that are a geo-strategic priority. Overall, a difficult domestic situation (with four government changes in the past five years) together with the lingering effects of the financial crisis, force Italy to rethink its interventions within the UN framework and prioritize activities in those areas.

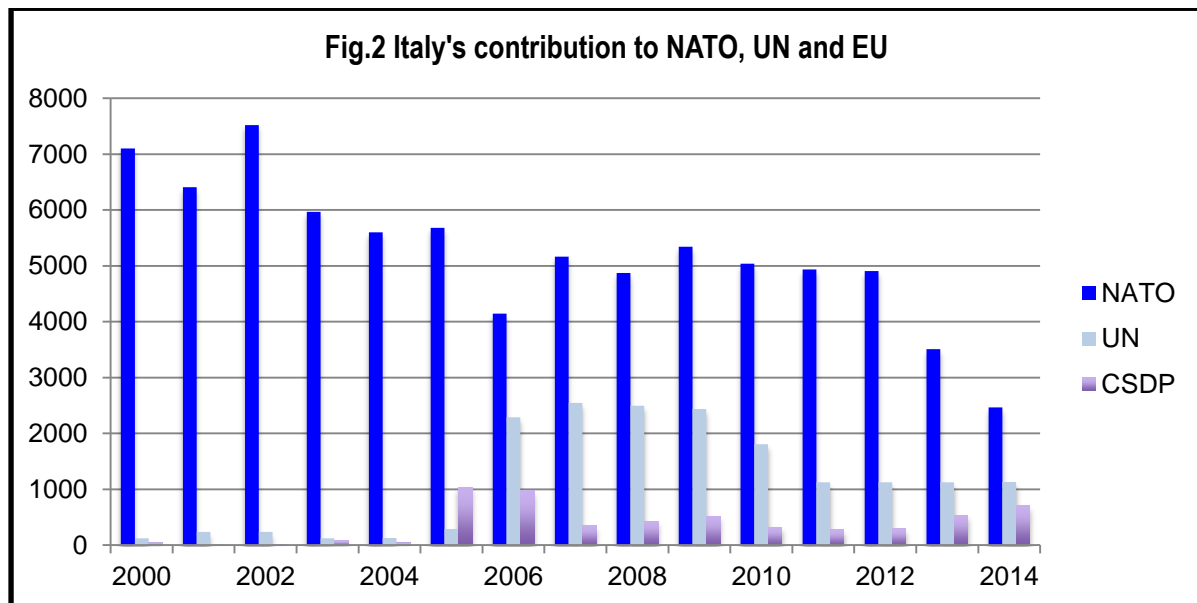
Difficult domestic politics: Frequent changes in leadership and in geostrategic priorities explain Italy's intermittent approach to UN peacekeeping. Historically, Italy's policy towards the Mediterranean and the Balkans remains the key priority region of the center-left governments. Meanwhile, relations with the USA have been prioritized in the past by the center-right governments, leading to intervention outside the traditional area of priority and the UN (see Afghanistan 2001 and Iraq 2003). The emergence of new political actors, such as the Five Star Movement,⁵ that do not have a specific position on foreign policy or on multilateralism, adds uncertainty to Italy's future involvement in UN peacekeeping.

Financial costs: Italy was severely affected by the recent economic crisis. It generated a domestic debate focused on the need to rationalize Italian resources and to cut unnecessary costs. An example of this was Renzi's recent cut of UN peacekeeping missions that were not in line with Italy's foreign policy priorities.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: The majority of UN missions are currently taking place outside Italy's priority regions. Therefore, Italy's involvement should be expected to be minimal, if not absent, from these missions.

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Italy's main contribution is to NATO crisis management, followed by UN peacekeeping and EU CSDP (see Figure 2). NATO and the EU offer more familiar institutional settings for Italian crisis management initiatives, and they often focus on areas that are among Italy's foreign policy priorities. Yet, believing that Italy only sees multilateral options as alternatives, meaning choosing the UN,

NATO or the EU depending on the geographical interest of the country only, would be misleading. In fact, as an unwavering promoter of multilateralism, Italy strongly supports initiatives like the [EU-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management](#).



Source: G. Tercovich, "Italy and UN peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping*, 23:5 (2016).

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Since January 2017 and for the seventh time in its history, Italy holds a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council. On this occasion, this position will last for one year only and in January 2018 the Netherlands will take over. The priorities of Italy are summarized in the [Building Peace for Tomorrow](#) program.

Overall, within the peace and security framework, Italy is seeking to promote better integration of a civilian-military approach and is advocating for keeping the protection of civilians as a key goal of UN peacekeeping. On the clarity and effectiveness of peacekeeping mandates, Italy is advocating for flexible mandates capable of facing current challenges, such as disorderly flows of refugees and migrants, climate change, and threats to cultural and historical patrimony. In February 2016, Italy launched the Unite for Heritage Task Force, a specialized unit for the preservation of cultural heritage in crises situations and is now proposing the inclusion of measures for the protection of cultural heritage in peacekeeping mandates. The MINUSMA mission in Mali was the first peacekeeping operation with a mandate that also covered the protection of cultural heritage.

In terms of more traditional foreign policy priorities, Libya also remains a priority for Gentiloni's government, as underlined by the new Foreign Affairs Minister Alfano in his first press briefing at the UN Security Council. Italy remains strongly involved in UN mediation efforts in Libya and remains ready to support a UN-sponsored peacekeeping mission in support of a peace agreement. Overall, in its role as a UN Security Council non-permanent member, Italy will focus on having Libya high on the agenda.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Italy has a number of key champions for UN peacekeeping. One is the former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who served as UN Special Envoy for Sahel (2012-14). He also served as Chairman of the United Nations-African Union High-level Panel for Peacekeeping

in Africa (2008) and was the main promoter of Italy's engagement in UNIFIL II (2006). Since November 2015, the Italian General Paolo Serra is the senior military advisor to Martin Kobler, the head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Previously, he served as Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL II (2012-14). Since 2007, Italy has provided three of the four Force Commanders for UNIFIL II, including the current commander, General Luciano Portolano. He followed two other Italian Generals, Claudio Graziano and Paolo Serra. It is rare for the leadership of a UN mission to repeatedly assign top officials of the same nationality.

Overall, UN peacekeeping benefits from supportive Italian public opinion and enjoys support from political parties from both the left and right. The fact that Italy has recently experienced no casualties in UN-led operations makes it easier for Italian citizens to accept the missions, and more difficult for parties that traditionally oppose military intervention (i.e. left-wing parties and the Northern League) to justify their opposition. This might change if the new emerging Five Star Movement (M5S) plays a prominent role after the next Italian elections (May 2018 at the latest). In case of a success of the pro-Russia party lead by Grillo, an alignment of Italian foreign policy with Russia's priorities should be expected. However, the M5S does not have a clear position on the role that Italy should play at the UN and, so far, there is no mention of foreign policy priorities in the movement's program.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Italy possesses a professional, well-equipped and well-trained military and other security services. Potentially, it is capable of providing specialized capacities in many areas, particularly in terms of mobility, enabling units, formed police units, and rule of law functions. The Italian contribution to peacekeeping is not limited to supplying troops. It also provides training, naval vessels, air assets, intelligence resources, which are all integrated by an experienced military leadership, logistical support through the UN Logistics Base (UNLB) in Brindisi, (the first permanent logistics base to support peacekeeping operations since 1994) and the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units (COESPU). Located in Vicenza, Italy, COESPU is an international training center focused on increasing the global capacity of formed police units for the UN and regional peace operations.

Part 8: Further Reading

Carati, Andrea & Andrea Locatelli (2017), "Cui prodest? Italy's questionable involvement in multilateral military operations amid ethical concerns and national interest," *International Peacekeeping*, 24(1): 86-107.

De Guttry, Andrea, Emanuele Sommario And Lijiang Zhu (2014), "China's and Italy's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations: Existing Models, Emerging Challenges (Lexington Books).

Ignazi, Piero, Giampiero Giacomello and Fabrizio Coticchia (2012), *Italian Military Operations Abroad: Just Don't Call it War* (Palgrave-Macmillan).

Tercovich, Giulia (2016), "Italy and UN peacekeeping: constant transformation," *International Peacekeeping*, 23(5): 681-701.

The Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations

Notes

¹ Table based on the data provided by IISS, *The Military Balance 2017* (Taylor & Francis, 2017). UN data are the most recent available on the UN DPKO [official website](#).

² F. Cinoglossi, “Decision-Making Process and Modalities of Financing Participation in PKO: the Italian Experience,” in A. de Guttry, E. Sommario, L. Zhu (eds.) *China's and Italy's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations Existing Models, Emerging Challenges* (Lexington, 2014): 117-132.

³ A. Polsi, “Reasons for Italy’s Active Engagement in PKO” in de Guttry et al (eds), *China's and Italy's Participation in Peacekeeping Operations* (Lexington, 2014): 57-66.

⁴ Risorgimento (resurgence or revival) is the name that identifies the political and social movement that lead to the unification of Italy in the 19th century.

⁵ The Five Star Movement (M5S) is the political party created by the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo in 2009 with the aim of acting as the watchdog of the Italian political class often perceived as corrupt and self-interested. More on the Five Star Movement can be found in Filippo Tronconi (ed.), *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, Communication and Ideology* (Ashgate Ltd., 2015).