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The West's Policeman? Assessing Italy's Status in Global Peacekeeping

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s, and especially the 1980s, Italy has participated in and led numerous peace support operations (PSOs), predominantly under the aegis of international organisations. Italy's participation in PSOs authorised by the UN, the EU, NATO and other multilateral agreements stems from a combination of national interest and humanitarianism/multilateralism. However, although acknowledged as a significant contributor, a clear assessment of its status in global peacekeeping is still missing. In fact, Italy plays a role that is comparatively greater than all Western nations in the international fora taken into account, and, as such, can be described as 'the West's policeman', from both a quantitative (number of troops) and qualitative (role within the missions) perspective. This might be somewhat curbed in the future, however, due to some of the country's limitations on foreign policy.

KEYWORDS

Italy; Italian foreign policy; Italian peacekeeping; policing; peacekeeping

In recent times, increasing attention has been dedicated to Italian peacekeeping and peace support activities, as well as their scope and effectiveness, which has resulted not only in new scholarly efforts, but also in wider attention from the media. At the 2017 G7 meeting, for instance, Italy obtained the group's commitment to cooperate more extensively with the United Nations (UN), including on initiatives that could involve a "cultural heritage protection component in security and peacekeeping missions". The commitment, whose importance was underlined by global media coverage, was formally stated in the Florence Declaration (G7 2017) and strongly backed by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A few months later, Italian peacekeeping activities attracted additional attention when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, asking for a tougher stance against Hezbollah, pointed out Italy's role in Lebanon (Ahren 2018). Later, at the 2019 NATO CIMIC (civil-military cooperation) Unit Commanders Conference, the group commander praised one of Italy's foreign policy assets – adaptability as a result of civil-military cooperation – and prompted all members of the alliance to pursue such resilience (NATO SHAPE 2019).

At the same time, the debate has gradually shifted from an appraisal of the country's relevance in international peace support operations (PSOs),[1] commonly acknowledged,

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[1]The UN outlines five phases: conflict prevention and mediation; peacemaking; peace enforcement; peacebuilding; and peacekeeping, which, in essence, frame the wider concept of peace support itself. It should therefore be noted that peace support and PSOs also include peacekeeping and peacekeeping operations (PKOs), although the two terms are used interchangeably in this article.

to an international comparison. Elisabeth Braw has been the most focused on these matters, first defining the Italians as "Europe's military maestros" (Braw 2017), and then by investigating the valuable role of the *Carabinieri*, the Italian gendarmerie, in hybrid stabilisation missions, advocating that other countries equip themselves with similar atypical branches of the armed forces (Braw 2018). Yet, while several specific aspects concerning Italian PSOs have been the object of scholarly efforts, a more general assessment of the country's status is still missing in the related literature, a gap this article aims to address. To test whether Italy is 'the West's policeman', this study presents a selection of the current academic debate on Italian peace support activities, which mainly involve measures such as protection of the local population, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, crime control and respect of international law more generally (Bayley and Perito 2010, 1-4). After all, "[t]he nexus between good governance, rule of law, and public security makes effective policing an important component of well-functioning, modern societies. The UN has therefore increasingly engaged in building host countries' policing capacity to maintain law and order" (Hunt 2015, 38). Peace support operations and upholding the rules-based global order are therefore clearly intertwined.

The article goes on to discuss the country's role within the relevant international institutions it supports – the UN, the EU, NATO – and other bilateral/multilateral frameworks, identifying Italy's distinguishing features in PSOs. Subsequently, it draws an international comparison using a comparative foreign policy analysis (FPA) approach (Morin and Paquin 2018), specifically with reference to peace support activities, to examine the country's specific weight in both quantitative (number of troops) and qualitative (role within the missions) terms, and establish the country's status in Western and international peace support hierarchies. To do so, it relies on official and up-to-date data.

The debate on Italian peacekeeping

From an international perspective, the extant scholarship on peace support operations includes three main viewpoints on the underlying motivations for such missions. On the one hand, critical authors focus on the economic, military and strategic reasons for the implementation of PSOs, highlighting how they contribute to the forceful maintenance of a status quo that is favourable to great powers (Pugh 2004; Chandler 2004). On the other, substantially more positive views examine peacekeeping's promotion of liberal-democratic systems of governance and market economies, while enhancing human rights across the globe (Paris 2010; Lidén 2009). A third, more moderate strand of literature, however, manages to combine these diverging points of view, and it does so by investigating PSOs' overall efficacy, underlining their role in defending human rights, as well as their capacity to protect states' national interests at the same time (Fortna 2008, 172-80).

In consideration of the above, a selection of the literature examining Italian PSOs cannot but reflect the positive/negative dichotomy that characterises the concept of peacekeeping itself, even though there is a rather general consensus on a favourable assessment of the country's activities and the motivations behind them. Broadly speaking, the literature on Italian peace support activities can also be divided into three groups, respectively characterised by utilitarian, positive and hybrid motivations for setting up Italian PSOs. The first group of authors is sceptical about Italy's rhetoric of good

international citizenship, since they believe the rationale behind the country's choices is its perceived national interests. This is the case made by Andrea Carati and Andrea Locatelli (2017), who stress the importance of Italian interests in implementing PSOs, aided in turn by a strong discourse on their multilateral nature. Fabrizio Coticchia (2015, 75) examines the role played by the media in supporting such missions, underlining "recurrent elements in the Italian strategic narrative, such as the peace rhetoric and a low profile communication strategy. Both aspects aim to exclude the military dimension of the intervention from the debate".[2] Piero Ignazi *et al.* (2012, 185-6) point out an apparent divide between domestic political discourse, "resting on humanitarian, low-profile and peaceful premises", and the actual interests pursued by the operations, which might clash with the "the shared self-image of the Italians as peaceful 'do-gooders'".

The second and larger group of authors provides a more positive image of Italian peace efforts. With respect to the 1982-84 Multinational Force in Lebanon, Bastian Matteo Scianna (2019, 650), for instance, describes "a successful approach that sustained neutrality, respectful behaviour and minimal force, which resulted in a qualified success of the Italian efforts". Marina Calculli (2014, 202) explains why Italy is best suited to lead the more recent UNIFIL II in Lebanon, more so than countries like the United States or France, in that it provides legitimacy and stability to the mission for a number of reasons. Moreover, there seems to be a group of niche circumstances in which Italy provides a comparatively more effective contribution, due to its specific set of skills. Paolo Foradori *et al.* (2018, 97) recently compared French, Italian and British efforts in cultural heritage protection in conflict scenarios, concluding that Italy is at the forefront in this field, and "more strongly inspired by general and principled considerations of the universal value of culture and its preservation for the whole of humanity". Similarly, Laurie Rush and Luisa Benedettini Millington (2015, 175) examine the *Carabinieri*'s engagement in combatting international cultural crimes, concluding that the 'Italian model' works and should be followed by other countries. Interestingly, Pasquale Ferrara and Fabio Petito (2016) also examine Italy's comparative advantage in religion-related foreign policies, arguing for a stronger emphasis on these matters to reinforce Italy's power projection in its region.

Fabrizio Coticchia and Giampiero Giacomello (2009, 592) explore the field of civil-military cooperation, concluding that it represents a fundamental element of Italian PSOs, thus supporting a vast array of key activities such as "reconstructing services and infrastructure, food distribution, water and medication, law and order, de-mining, training of local forces, and supporting local institutions". On training, the US Government Accountability Office (2008, 23) presented a specific report to the US Congressional Committees, emphasising the importance of capacity-building for local police and military forces, and stressing the need to support "the Italian Government, specifically the Italian *Carabinieri*, in providing training [...] on peacekeeping missions", in consideration of their leading position in this field.

An academic middle ground therefore seems necessary to synthesise these two diverging groups of publications, a condition that is helpfully reflected in a number of analytically eclectic viewpoints. Giulia Tercovich (2016, 697-8) depicts Italy as both an "unwavering promoter of multilateralism" and one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping

[2]Italy's anti-militarism partially stems from its post-WWII Constitution, whose Article no. 11 "condemns war as an instrument of aggression", a 'peace clause' that is comparable to Japan's Article no. 9 and Germany's Article no. 26.

operations, while pointing to its "national interests, geographic priorities and security-related thinking". This perspective is shared by Michela Ceccorulli and Fabrizio Coticchia (2015; 2017) and Coticchia and Giacomello (2009) who feel that a strategic and military culture and pursuit of national interests coexist with an adherence to multilateralism, humanitarian norms and the responsibility to protect (R2P). Analogously, Manon Derriennic (2014, 160-1) describes the Italian approach to peacekeeping as one with "strong commitment", particularly "in the areas of civil crisis management and civilian policing", and one that shares some similarities with Chinese policies towards African states, although it is also designed "to focus on regions of particular concern for Italy", thus pursuing both multilateralism and the country's national interests. Lastly, Cornelius Friesendorf (2018, 85) praises the *Carabinieri*'s flexible and hybrid skills and relative autonomy from Italian political pressures, while cautioning against an excessive reliance on this corps in case of full-scale military conflict. In essence, current scholarship offers a nuanced understanding of why Italy is remarkably active in peace support activities. The country's engagement in PSOs appears to stem from the desire to uphold international laws and respect of basic human rights, while protecting national interests.

Italian multilateral missions

Although Italy has participated in numerous missions since the 1960s and especially the 1980s, and has led a number of them, only its current engagements in peace support operations (as of October 2019) are taken into account here, as other publications have already dealt with past PSOs. Current ones, on the other hand, have not yet been comprehensively examined in the available literature. On this premise, Italy's role in 40 international missions under the aegis of the UN, EU, NATO and other multilateral frameworks is examined.

UN missions

Italy has played and still plays an important role in the United Nations, despite the fact that it was not among its founding members as it was defeated in WWII, a condition that also applied to Germany and Japan. The US was the country that delivered the largest amount of post-war aid, partly out of humanitarian concerns, partly due to the need to counter the Soviet Union's increasing influence in Europe. As Kaeten Mistry (2014, 26) recalls, in Italy, the aim was to make the country "a bastion of democracy in the Mediterranean area", an effort that also resulted in Italy's admission to the UN in 1955, thus setting the ground for the country's future peace support activities. Hosting one tenth of the organisation's agencies, Italy has held a seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for 13 years, ranking fifth among non-permanent members (UNSC 2020), and currently provides the eighth largest financial contribution of 193 countries (UN Secretariat 2020). Italy also leads Uniting for Consensus (UfC), which it founded in 1995, a group of 120 nations that advocates a shared plan of reform of the UNSC (UN 2015).

With regard to PSOs, as of October 2019, Italy is participating in six UN missions, of which two are in Africa (MINURSO, Western Sahara; MINUSMA, Mali), two in the Near East (MIBIL, Italian bilateral mission in Lebanon, under UN aegis; UNIFIL II, also in Lebanon), one in the 'rest of Asia' (UNMOGIP, India and Pakistan) and one in Europe

(UNFICYP, Cyprus). Italy's contribution to the ones in Western Sahara, Mali, Cyprus, and India and Pakistan is a few police officers, military experts and staff officers (13 in total), while the two in Lebanon represent by far the country's largest contribution to UN missions, with a total personnel of over 1,100, almost all of which are troops (UN Peacekeeping 2020). As a result, Italy has headed UNIFIL ground forces since 2007, and is in command of the entire mission since 2012, with Major General Stefano Del Col the current leader. At the same time, it is also leading MIBIL.

If and when a conflict occurs in Italy's extended area of influence, moreover, the country has shown to have the ability to bring together relevant UN members to plan for an international commitment, often with Italy leading it, as happened when it organised and chaired the 2006 International Conference for Lebanon, held in Rome (US Department of State 2006). This condition is also acknowledged by some of Italy's main allies, such as the US, whose former Ambassador to Italy, John Phillips, stated that "Italy is a key player in peacekeeping operations in the world [...]. The US relies on Italy" (OnuItalia 2015).

EU missions

As a founding member of the many organisations that eventually became known as the European Union, Italy has undoubtedly played a remarkably significant role since the very beginning of the post-war European integration process (Bindi 2011, 1-6). Italy hosts a number of significant EU agencies, while providing the third largest net financial contribution to its budget (European Commission 2020) and having the third largest number of parliamentarians inside the European Parliament. Along with the UK, France and Germany, Italy is also a member of Europe's 'Big Four', an informal group comprising the Union's largest political, economic and military members (Buonanno and Nugent 2013). A quantitative assessment shows that Italy is the biggest contributor of peacekeeping forces in the EU, as publicly acknowledged by European leaders (*ANSA* 2016). As of October 2019, Italy is engaged in 14 EU missions (Italian Ministry of Defence 2020). Of these, eight are active in Africa (EUCAP Sahel Mali; EUCAP Sahel Niger; EUCAP Somalia; EUDEL Libya; EUNAVFOR Somalia; EUTM Mali; EUTM RCA-Central African Republic; EUTM Somalia), two in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED; Joint Operation Themis),[3] two in Europe (EUFOR Althea, Bosnia and Herzegovina; EULEX Kosovo), one in the Caucasus (EUMM Georgia) and one in the Middle East (EUAM Iraq). The Italian commitment varies considerably, and comprises a small number of troops, instructors and staff officers for nine of these operations, and a much stronger contribution for three of them: 520 soldiers for EUNAVFOR MED, commanded by Italian Rear Admiral Enrico Credendino, 407 for EUNAVFOR Somalia, and 123 for EUTM Somalia, commanded by Italian Brigadier General Antonello De Sio (Italian Ministry of Defence 2020).

With Europe – and especially the Mediterranean region – burdened by issues of balkanisation, terrorism and unregulated migration, it is not surprising that Italy focuses much of its resources on Europe's security as well as on the "enlarged Mediterranean", which is highly strategic for the country's PSOs (Foradori 2018, 502). The "enlarged

[3]Frontex, which manages J.O. Themis, regrettably does not release unclassified details of the operation for academic and research purposes.

Mediterranean" is important for the country's PSOs. In this sense, the country's latest (though not entirely recent) Defence White Paper provides an explicit statement concerning the relevance of the Euro-Mediterranean region for Italian security and peace support operations:

> The Euro-Mediterranean area is the main area of national intervention. The achievement of a high degree of stability and democratic development in the countries that affect the Mediterranean is therefore a priority for our country. [...] If specific circumstances make it necessary, the Defence must be prepared to take direct responsibility, in response to crisis situations and be prepared to intervene for peace and stability in accordance with the decisions of the international community. In some cases, Italy may also have to take on the responsibility of leading these operations, especially in those areas where Italy's direct knowledge of the situations is greater due to historical, social or cultural proximity (Italian Ministry of Defence 2015, 38).

More to the point, the country's current defence policy is strongly linked to that of the EU, as Italy played a prominent role in planning, drafting and promoting the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) (Morillas 2018). Nevertheless, both Abbondanza and Bailo (2018) and Marrone (2018) note that a marked Euroscepticism, particularly in times of anti-immigration rhetoric, is proving successful at the polls in Italy.

NATO missions

As a founding country, Italy has played an important role in NATO from the very beginning, first "as a means of recovering its lost legitimacy and its former status of major power" (Duignan 2006, 19-20), and then to contribute actively to Western integration processes. Indeed, Italy has participated in every major NATO operation (Carati and Locatelli 2017) and is regarded as one of the alliance's main contributors, both financially and militarily (Tessari *et al.* 2015). Since 2004, Italy hosts one of NATO's two Joint Force Commands (JFCs) in Naples (the other is in the Netherlands). Given the country's geographical position, as well as its geopolitical tradition, NATO's JFC in Italy is also tasked with contributing to "stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area" (NATO JFC 2020). Italy provides the fifth largest financial contribution to the alliance budget (NATO 2020) and is a member of the NATO Quint, an informal group made up of the alliance's five most important members.

With regard to PSOs, the latest official data relating to Italy's commitment to NATO activities show that the country is currently engaged in 11 operations, of which six are in Europe (HQ Sarajevo; KFOR; LO Skopje; ASIC IPPN, Iceland; EFP Latvia; MLO Belgrade), three in Asia (Active Fence, Turkey; Mission Iraq; Resolute Support, Afghanistan) and two in the Mediterranean (Sea Guardian; Standing Naval Forces). The Italian commitment is once again varied with only a few military experts in four of these missions and a much larger deployment in the others. More specifically for the latter, Italy provides 140 military personnel to ASIC IPPN, 130 to Active Fence, 166 to EFP, 54 to Sea Guardian, 538 to KFOR, 800 to Resolute Support and 259 to Standing Naval Forces (Italian Ministry of Defence 2020). Such a commitment is reflected in the key roles that Italy plays in some of them, since it commands the Military Liaison Office in Belgrade (Brigadier General Cesare Marinelli), the air surveillance mission in Iceland in 2019, the Kosovo Force (Major General Lorenzo D'Addario), the Standing NATO

Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (one of NATO's four Standing Naval Forces), while retaining deputy command in Afghanistan's Resolute Support.

There is a specific field in which the Italian contribution to the alliance is invariably highlighted, that of military policing and training. Predominantly implemented by the *Carabinieri*, it has become a successful model in multinational specialised units, a "key element" in NATO PSOs and a "golden standard in the NATO context" (Foradori 2018, 512). Referring to the Italian training of the INP (Iraq National Police), Perito wrote:

> The participation of the Italian Carabinieri, however, was the key to transforming the INP from a rogue force into a competent constabulary. [...] The Carabinieri brought a disciplined chain of command and a coherent training program that replaced the ad hoc efforts of the American advisors (Perito 2016, 447-8).

Other multilateral missions

As mentioned, multilateralism, humanitarianism and the need to preserve a fragile truce or peace are all vital conditions for any Italian commitment in PSOs that have also been instrumental in political proceedings. To quote Fabrizio Coticchia and Silvia D'Amato (2018, 229), "In every Italian mission undertaken in the last 25 years, the relevance of a multilateral framework has been highly emphasised by political leaders in the public debate". There are, however, some contexts in which Italy's own political, economic and strategic ties have resulted in a multilateral engagement of a different nature, not necessarily based on decisions adopted by an international institution, and often the result of more direct bilateral or multilateral agreements. Here, too, the country's interests and area of influence are detectable, revealing Italy's willingness to employ financial resources and deploy military assets even outside international fora. The country's perceived national interests, and consequently its numerous missions, appear to be firmly rooted in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the Horn of Africa.

This can be seen in 10 different scenarios, with Italy's multilateral missions not sanctioned by international organisations varying substantially and ranging from scientific support missions to anti-terrorism engagements. Of these, five are in Africa (BMIS, Djibouti; MFO, Egypt; MIADIT 12, Somalia and Djibouti; MIASIT, Libya; MISIN, Niger), three in the Middle East (MIADIT 11, Palestine; Prima Parthica, Iraq; TFA, United Arab Emirates), one in the Mediterranean (MICCD, Malta) and one in Antarctica (PNRA) (Italian Ministry of Defence 2020). Once again, the personnel deployed varies considerably, ranging from the two officials training their colleagues in Malta, to the 1,100 military active under the Global Coalition in Iraq, with hundreds more being operative in the remaining conflict zones. Italy heads all its bilateral missions but, more importantly, it leads the Global Coalition's training mission in Iraq, while also holding joint command of the coalition's Counter-ISIS Finance Group (CIFG), alongside the US and Saudi Arabia (Global Coalition 2020).

In this context of asymmetric and variable engagement, Italian efforts in peace support are matched equally by the country's training activities, once again predominantly performed by the *Carabinieri*. Their most prominent initiative is the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU), established in Vicenza, Italy, in 2005, in accordance with a specific G8 plan (G8 2019), and now also cooperating with the UN after a memorandum

of understanding was signed in 2010. Comparable efforts of the Italian-based European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) are active with both the EU and NATO (Dziedzic 2016, 418). Given that several branches of the Italian armed forces are tasked with military and police training, no definitive number of personnel who have been trained is available; however, the official figures for the anti-terrorism Global Coalition alone are over 58,000 Iraqi and Kurdish police, security and military members so far (Global Coalition 2020). According to Foradori (2018, 522-3), this has contributed to a wide appreciation of Italy's PSOs.

Distinguishing features of Italian PSOs

On the basis of the data provided, some considerations can be made concerning the distinguishing features of Italy's peace support operations. First, Italian PSOs – both with and without the sanction of international organisations – seem to reflect the dichotomy depicted by the current scholarship on peacekeeping, as missions seem to pursue multilateral and humanitarian objectives, while defending the country's perceived national interest (Tercovich 2016). Second, given the duality just mentioned, Italy favours an approach based on civil-military cooperation whenever feasible, making it "one of the most active players" globally (Coticchia and Giacomello 2009, 606). Third, Italy's more substantial commitments in the MENA region, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa suggest where the country's interests are perceived with greater emphasis. Fourth, the Italian approach to peace support operations is distinguished by its significant policing and training activities. The former is an increasingly common element in global PSOs – not just Italian ones – and does not merely play an observational role, as it actively contributes to the enforcement of international law, while supporting state-building efforts (Hunt 2015, 1-24). Training, instead, is an umbrella term that may include police, secret service, military and wider organisational training (Shurkin *et al.* 2017, 1-36), and does not necessarily develop hand in hand with policing activities. In the Italian case, however, it does, which brings us to the fifth distinguishing feature of Italian PSOs, the presence of the *Carabinieri*.

The literature on the international engagements of this gendarmerie – whose tasks include policing, military activities, training and cultural protection activities on a routine basis – underlines the usefulness of their police and anti-riot skills, as well as their military capabilities, whose hybrid nature can "prevent and close" security gaps, and whose flexibility "can have positive effects in multinational missions" (Friesendorf 2018, 83-5). As former CIA Director David Petraeus put it: "The Carabinieri are for training what Michael Jordan is for basketball" (Caferri 2017, 7). Finally, the *Carabinieri* are well known for their Protection of Cultural Heritage (Tutela del Patrimonio Culturale, TPC) branch, now in its 50th year of activity, whose success in combatting international art crimes has led to the development of the so-called 'Italian model', as described by Rush and Benedettini Millington (2015, 175).

The West's policeman?

In consideration of the above discussion, it is useful to assess the relative weight of this vast peace-related activity, in order to establish Italy's status in the peacekeeping hierarchy, thus addressing the research question of this article. This is immediately feasible with reference to UN operations, since the UN Department of Peacekeeping

Operations produces international comparisons that are freely available on its website, but requires a more indirect approach when addressing EU and NATO PSOs, since these two organisations do not supply such data. It is possible, however, to trace countries' relative contribution by looking into their status within the missions in which they participate, as it is customary for a mission's main contributor to lead it and for the second largest contributor to hold deputy command. Lastly, Italy's multilateral missions not sanctioned by international organisations are not taken into account here, as a detailed comparison with similar missions implemented by other countries would be incomplete and, therefore, not useful for the purposes of this international comparison.

With this methodological premise, the first international comparison concerns UN peacekeeping operations, which historically see a higher participation of the countries directly affected by the instability produced by the conflict scenario. In this context, Italy ranks 19th out of 193 countries, after a series of African and Asian nations. More importantly for the purposes of this article, the military deployed by Italy are by far the largest in number of all European countries (total personnel of 1,140), followed at a distance by France (743) and Spain (647) (UN Peacekeeping 2020). Widening the geographical perspective, it can be shown that Italy's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations is the largest of all countries in North and South America, Northern Asia and Oceania. Employing the UN Regional Groups nomenclature (UN Department for General Assembly and Conference Management 2019), the country's peacekeeping deployment is the largest among the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), the Eastern European Group (EEG) and the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC). In other words, Italy is the leading contributor to peace support operations in the developed and nearly developed world.

Secondly, as mentioned, member countries' relative placement in EU and NATO PSOs can be inferred from their status within them. The latest information provided by the European External Action Service shows that the EU is currently operating 17 missions. Of these, three are headed by Italy, two by Germany, France and Finland, while Spain, Austria, Poland, Belgium, Ireland, Sweden, the UK and Portugal head one each. As far as deputy command of missions is concerned, it applies to six of them, with Germany holding two, and Italy, France, Sweden and Hungary one each. As for NATO military missions, on the other hand, the alliance is currently operating 14 of them, of which three are headed by Italy, on a par with the US and Canada, and one by France, the UK, Germany, Poland and Denmark; Italy, the US, France and Austria hold deputy command in one mission each. Here too, Italy is very active with respect to the number of missions it commands and their relevance in EU and NATO peace support operations.

It therefore appears that Italy is not just 'Europe's policeman', as hypothesised by Braw (2017), but 'the West's policeman' too (Table 1), a remarkable and yet understudied role that it has held for a number of years. Furthermore, as highlighted throughout this study, Italian PSOs operate predominantly under the aegis of international fora, as they are better suited to the concept of international policing – unlike comparable countries such as France or the UK, who display a more unilateral approach to international relations – and are constrained by Italy's idea of multilateralism, which, in turn, is instrumental in maintaining the country's presence in its extended area of influence (Figure 1).

Table 1. Italy's global peacekeeping status (as of October 2019)

	Peacekeeping status
UN	Largest military contribution of all countries located in Europe, North and South America, Northern Asia and Oceania Total Italian personnel: 1,140
EU	Largest number of missions of which it holds command and second largest number of missions with deputy command (on a par with three other countries) Total Italian personnel: 1,093
NATO	Largest number of missions of which it holds command (on a par with the US and Canada) and deputy command (on a par with three other countries) Total Italian personnel: 2,104
Overall	Greatest number of troops deployed among all developed and nearly developed countries in UN missions, greatest number of headed missions of any member country within EU and NATO missions Total Italian personnel deployed in UN, EU and NATO missions: 4,337

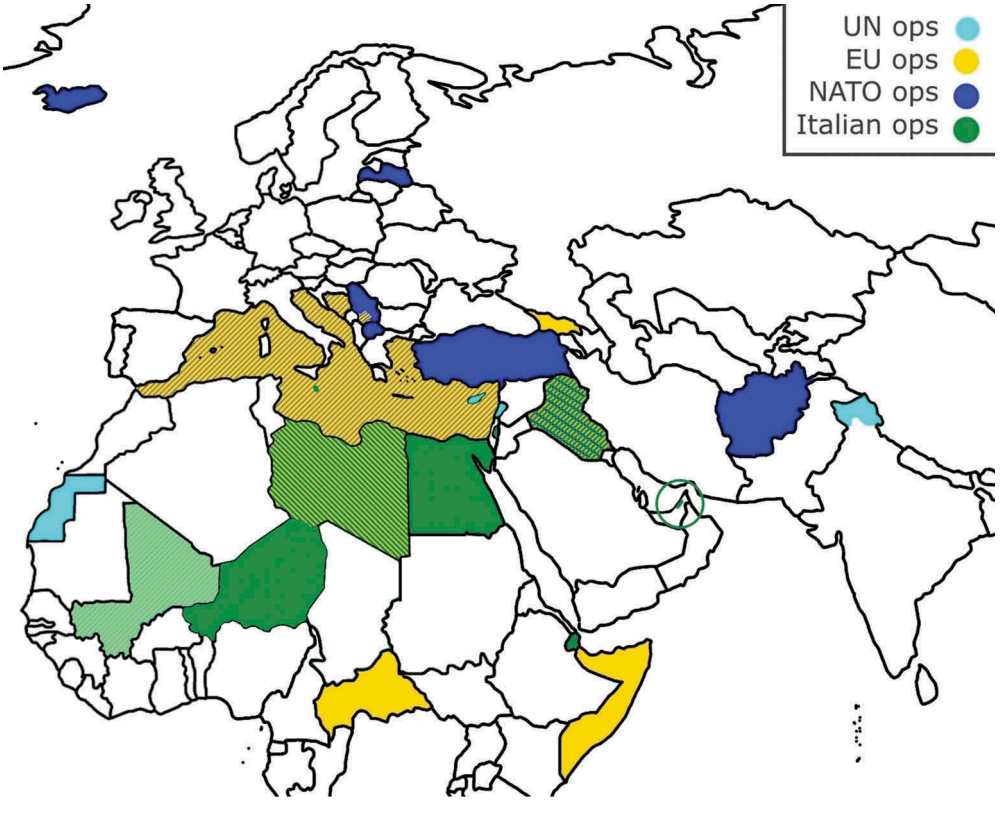

Figure 1. Italian PSOs globally (as of October 2019)

Striped areas indicate where more than one mission is active, as per the figure's colour coding: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Mediterranean host both EU and NATO missions; Libya hosts both EU and Italian missions; Mali hosts both UN and EU missions; and Iraq hosts UN, NATO and Italian missions.

Having established Italy's status in peacekeeping hierarchies, a look has to be taken at the strengths and weaknesses of Italy's activity in this field. Coticchia (2014) lists seven main drivers behind Italian PSOs: national security (by minimising threats); economics (by protecting trade routes and national companies operating abroad); national politics (by reflecting the foreign policy aims of the government in charge); prestige (by leading and

participating in international missions); military-industrial complex (by providing deployment for what would otherwise be an excessive military apparatus); security culture (by upholding the country's image of global peacekeeper); and multilateralism (by operating predominantly under the aegis of international and supranational institutions). Certainly, the difficult regional context that Italy has to face, characterised by unregulated migration flows, balkanisation, regional frictions and terrorism threats, has also favoured its participation in PSOs (Abbondanza 2017). The strengths of Italian PSOs are those illustrated in the previous section. Training and policing, activities in which the country excels; civil-military cooperation, employed on a large scale; cultural protection, of which Italy is a forerunner; and the *Carabinieri* corps, whose hybrid nature is useful for strengthening both Italy's and the recipient countries' national security.

Italy's weaknesses – or rather difficulties – in the peacekeeping field, on the other hand, are the same as those found in its broader foreign policy, some of which have been discussed at the beginning of the article. The global financial crisis has had severe effects on the Italian economy, and, although there has not been a subsequent reduction in PSOs, some have hypothesised that national capabilities may have to be rationalised in the future (Foradori 2018). Moreover, as discussed previously, scholars detect a tension between the country's internal political discourse, stressing peace and multilateralism, and its actual military involvement in a number of warzones, which has not affected Italian deployments yet, but might do so in the future (Ignazi *et al.* 2012). Additionally, there are instances in which Italy's autonomy within the international organisations it cooperates with is limited (Abbondanza 2016, 277-83), and, despite generally bipartisan party support, the Italians' lack of knowledge concerning their country's global peace support activities – closely related to what Brighi (2013, 153) aptly defines as the country's "indomitable self- and misperception of weakness" – could curb public support for such operations in the long term. The country's deep-rooted internal political instability, lastly, is arguably one the single most important elements of risk for both the extent and efficacy of Italian peace support activities.

Conclusion

One of the aims of this study was to provide a detailed account of Italy's current engagement in international peace support operations, which was in turn instrumental to its other aim, that is, to assess the country's status in the field of peace support. What stands out as a result of this positional analysis is not only that Italy is among the main peace support contributors globally, as often highlighted in the recent literature, but also that it can claim the status of leading peacekeeper among all European, North and South American, Northern Asian and Oceanian countries. This position answers the article's question of whether or not the country can be described as the 'West's policeman'. Italy's peacekeeping is driven by a number of rationales, including national interests and security, economics, domestic politics, prestige, the military-industrial complex, security culture, the protection of culture and unwavering multilateralism. In implementing PSOs, Italy has made a name for itself and displayed specific strengths in this field, especially in policing, training, civil-military cooperation and cultural protection, thanks to a large extent to the hybrid role of the *Carabinieri*, Italy's gendarmerie.

A certain dichotomy has been found in Italian peacekeeping, driven as it is by both national interests and humanitarianism/multilateralism. It is argued here that these represent two sides of the same coin, rather than two conflicting and diverging features. This condition should hardly come as a surprise, since Italy can arguably be considered a great power pursuing its national interests either alone or in concert with other great powers (Penttilä 2013, 17-32), and is a nation whose multilateralism has been a dominant feature in its foreign policy since the beginning of the post-war era. In particular, multilateralism has been pursued with the aim of contributing to the maintenance of the rules-based international order, often with missions designed to promote regional stability as well as respect for international law. Additionally, any analysis of Italy's participation in international peace support has to consider the risks and limitations of such a prolonged effort. This article has identified seven of them, namely economic uncertainty, distance between domestic peace rhetoric and international military involvement, considerable but not unlimited capabilities, a hazardous regional context, limited strategic independence within international institutions, domestic misperception concerning the country's actual roles and capabilities, and deep-rooted internal political instability. These are substantial limitations that are bound to curb Italy's role in global peacekeeping somewhat, although to what extent is hard to discern.

In conclusion, therefore, Italy appears to be a country with tangible endogenous and exogenous constraints that, however, do not seem to currently inhibit its pre-eminent role in international peace support. This implies that Italy's motivations, in this respect, are stronger than its limitations. The relationship between these two elements is undoubtedly interesting and understudied – as is the degree of effectiveness that ongoing PSOs will have once concluded – all of which calls for future research.

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