Country: the Italian Republic

Committee: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Topic: Nato's Indo-Pacific Involvement With Regard to the 2022 Strategic Concept

Italian political parties sent mixed signals on NATO membership, changing opinion over short periods of time, with the exception of the Communist Party that consistently campaigned against the future Alliance. The Italian Communist Party had played a pivotal role in the Resistance during the Second World War and was the second largest political party in the post-war period. For a while, it was the biggest Communist Party in Western Europe. Aside Italy’s strategic position in the Mediterranean, the power of the Communist Party was the main reason for American involvement in Italy. The United States did not want to lose a strategically placed European country to the Soviet Union. War-torn Italy became a recipient of American aid in the form of the European Recovery Program, better known as the Marshall Plan, to build up the economy. France also had an interest in seeing Italy become a member of the Alliance since it would help secure North Africa and protect the Po Valley. Italy would be stabilised within a stable NATO.

The April 1948 elections secured a victory for the Christian Democrats, led by Alcide De Gasperi, who eventually agreed to lead his country towards NATO membership. This decision was reinforced by the country’s fear of insecurity and instability and its desire to play a role on the world scene. Moreover, the staunch anti-fascist Count Carlo Sforza, Italian Foreign Minister from February 1947 to July 1951, had economic cooperation as one of his major goals. NATO was a first step towards the integration of Italy into the Western European community. Count Sforza signed the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949 in Washington D.C., and also led his country into the Council of Europe (May 1949) and then the European Coal and Steel Community in April 1951.

On 16 September 2021, the Commission and the High Representative adopted a Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a macro-area spanning from the east coast of Africa to the Pacific island states. Italy strongly supportsthe Strategy asthe optimal framework for conducting its foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific, a region where our engagement has been increasing in light of its geopolitical and economic centrality. Italy is determined to work closely with regional partners in each of the Strategy’s components. We have already been carrying out activities in all seven priority areas, as identified by the Strategy: sustainable and inclusive prosperity; green transition; ocean governance; digital growth; connectivity – in tandem with the recently established Global Gateway tool – security and defence; human security. We intend to continue promoting our action in the IndoPacific within the framework of adherence to the fundamental values underpinning the European Union – multilateralism and regionalism; the safeguard of human rights, democratic processes and the rule of law; the international rules-based order; the fight against climate change; free and fair trade based on a genuine level playing field; social, environmental, fiscal and financial sustainability; transparency; inclusiveness. Cooperation with regional bodies is at the core of our action in the region. In the last few years, we have acquired partner status to the main regional organizations. We have been IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) Dialogue Partner since 2019 and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Development Partner since 2020. Italy has been a Dialogue Partner of PIF (Pacific Islands Forum) since 2007. For many years now, Italy has been carrying out several cooperation activities with these regional bodies and their Member States in a large number of sectors, ranging from sustainable development to the maritime economy, from the fight against climate change to the areas of security and defence.

References:

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