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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This paper represents the revised version of the work “L'Istituto Affari Internazionali attore della politica estera italiana? Problematiche di analisi di un attore non statale” elaborated and presented by Jean-Pierre Darnis and Carolina De Simone at the XXVIII Annual Conference of the Italian Society of Political Science Studies, held in Perugia on 11-13 Settembre 2014. The authors also thank Roberto Aliboni, Gianni Bonvicini, Ettore Greco, Cesare Merlini, Michele Nones, Stefano Silvestri, Nathalie Tocci e Roberto Zadra for the fruitful exchange of views on the issues considered by this paper. The authors are the sole responsible for the content of the paper.

Introduction

- ¹ The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is an example of think tank working in the context of Italy's foreign and defence policy since its establishment in 1965. The aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, it presents an empirical analysis of IAI activities, on the basis of both Institute's archives and interviews to its founding members and leading personalities. On the other hand, it relates to the relevant literature on think tanks by contributing to understanding how a non-state actor like IAI participates in the framing of a state's foreign and defence policy.
- ² IAI represents a relevant non-state actor within the Italian foreign policy community, including the defence policy community. The concept of foreign policy community has been put forward in Italy by Santoro in 1991,¹ also on the basis of the US debate in this

regard.² According to Santoro, the foreign policy community is the constellation of political, institutional, bureaucratic and other types of actors, from public or private sector, which participate in the political process to shape and implement foreign policy. Through its 50 years-long history, IAI has interacted in various ways with these actors by participating in the making of Italy's foreign and defence policy.

The analysis of think tanks working on foreign policy

- 3 Political science studies on think tanks working on foreign policy are part of the broader reflection on non-state actors, which begun in the 1970s with the seminal works of Kaiser in 1971,³ Keohane and Nye in 1972.⁴ These authors began to question the state-centric paradigm within international relations theory, by marking a significant difference with regards to the realist approach. Whilst realists do not consider non-state actors' role in foreign policy, nor their theoretical relevance, Keohane and Nye underlined the importance of non-state actors by analysing a number of examples including the action of multinational corporations, churches and sectarian groups, revolutionary movements, trade unions and networks of scientists. The role played by non-state actors in the collapse of the Soviet Union revived academic interest in this subject from the late 80s onwards.⁵
- 4 Regarding in particular think tanks, and specifically those working on foreign and defence policy, their role begun to be analysed in the late 1990s. The focus was initially on Anglo-American examples, with specific empirical studies on single prominent think tanks such as Council on Foreign Relations,⁶ RAND⁷ and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House)⁸ –as well as comparative analysis of selected leading US think tanks.⁹ Then the reflection expanded to other Western countries and beyond, by following the significant diffusion of these actors: in 2015, an international survey counted 6.846 think tanks worldwide, including 1.685 in the US and 1.770 in Europe.¹⁰
- 5 Beside the analysis of think tanks' organization,¹¹ these actors have been often considered in order to understand the broader role of experts in policy-making related to international affairs. Accordingly, analytical categories such as “policy community”, “advocacy coalitions” and “epistemic communities”¹² have been utilized to understand why and how ideas do matter in the larger context of political coalitions and power arrangements.¹³ The literature continues to debate about the influence exerted by think tanks on policy-making. Some authors focus on their ability to set the terms of the debate, define problems and shape policy perceptions as a way to influence the political system they are part of.¹⁴ Others underline the importance of the way think tanks interact with “policy networks”, because these networks incorporate actors from both inside and outside government to facilitate decision-making and implementation, often in an informal and open way.¹⁵ Within these networks, think tanks provide “intellectual resources” and act as “policy entrepreneurs” by promoting ideas on the public agenda and by engaging actors in the policy systems on these ideas.¹⁶ A key linkage is between on the one hand think tanks and on the other hand institutions, public bodies and bureaucracies which have a dialogue with “experts”. Moreover, political parties and interest groups have often established formal and informal ties with think tanks, because the latter are a source of policy ideas and have a kind of intellectual authority that can give additional credibility to policy positions.¹⁷ At the

same time, relations are often built between media and think tankers, as the former looks for “expert” source of information and commentary and the latter are keen to have their ideas disseminated by the press, radio or television.

- 6 Such role of experts in policy-making takes place at both national and international levels. International organizations such as UN, WTO, IMF and WB have also worked with think tanks by sustaining the “market of ideas” with their funding for research and analysis activities. The EU is a prominent example in this regard, since its institutions and agencies have traditionally mobilized experts across member states and in Brussels, by establishing close relations with think tanks and by funding substantial research programmes which have been utilized by these actors –as well as by universities and research centres. The deepening and widening of EU by itself has increased the quantity and complexity of policy-making both in Brussels and at national level, thus fuelling the growth of think tanks covering a wide spectrum of policy issues¹⁸ –including foreign, security and defence policy. As the policy-makers demand in terms of time and expertise becomes greater, there is an increasing need for specialist knowledge, new ideas and policy alternatives.¹⁹ Moreover, the variety of access points and target audience for experts implies a broader constituency for think tanks at EU level.²⁰
- 7 In the post-Cold War period, NATO has also increased its contacts with think tanks, because of the growing political dimension of the Alliance and its efforts in terms of partnerships, enlargement and crisis management operations. Indeed, in this context think tanks perform important functions such as building up confidence between international actors and making their professional know-how (i.e. information, analysis, proposals) available²¹ for NATO, its members and partners. The goal to achieve civil-military cooperation and the greater emphasis on public diplomacy by NATO have contributed to fuel this engagement with funding of think tanks.
- 8 In this context, as a member of EU, NATO and the aforementioned international organizations, Italy has been involved in the larger trend in favour of think tanks and experts role in policy-making related to international affairs. However, the literature of non-state actors based in Italy and working on foreign and defence policy is rather limited. Some recent works on Italian foreign policy do consider certain domestic non-state actors such as large defence²² and energy²³ companies. Other studies focus on civil societies organizations as relevant non-state actors in Italy.²⁴ Within this landscape, the literature on Italian think tanks working on foreign policy is even more limited. In 2002, Lucarelli and Menotti²⁵ provided a useful mapping of the variegated ensemble of university departments, think tanks and political/cultural foundations which deal with foreign affairs. In 2004, Lucarelli and Redaelli²⁶ deepened the study of Italian think tanks, for example by addressing the effectiveness of their action in the field of European studies. In 2009, Diletti offered a synthetic analysis of think tanks in Italy, by noticing that in the post-Cold War period political parties have experienced constant changes that have made also the landscape of think tanks quite fluid.²⁷ In this context, few realities –including IAI– have managed to adapt from the Cold War reality to the current one, by adjusting their agenda to the new political, cultural, institutional and economic context.²⁸

The foundation of IAI

- 9 IAI was founded in 1965 by Altiero Spinelli, who wanted to create in Italy a new actor aimed at elaborating and promoting reflection on international affairs, bearing in mind the example of Chatham House established in London in 1920. Since its foundation, IAI has represented a fabric of knowledge, expertise and influence in relation to Italy foreign policy.
- 10 The foundation of IAI is due to the will of a few key personalities who pursued a significant cultural initiative, and looked for the economic support of stakeholders interested in supporting such an endeavour. Spinelli's role was paramount in this first phase. He was a cultural and political entrepreneur, who conceived IAI as a tool for a cultural and political initiative. Such an initiative was about the development of an autonomous centre to analyse international affairs, in order to spread the knowledge of European and transatlantic integration and raise the cultural level of Italian political elites and intellectuals. The Spinelli endeavour took place in the political context of governments including Christian Democrats, Liberal, and Social-Democratic parties, and it aimed to contribute to the reflection by these parties on international affairs, defence issues and transatlantic relations. It should be noticed that the Institute was not neutral in political terms: IAI had –and still has– an explicit manifesto which has contributed to characterize its cultural and political profile. Indeed, the first article of the Institute's statute affirms explicitly that its goal is to promote the understanding of international affairs, as well as to “contribute to the promotion of European integration and to increase the prospects for all countries to move towards some forms of supranational organization and to pursue democratic freedoms, economic development and social equity.”²⁹ The IAI researchers have maintained over time the commitment to this vision, with obvious differences among single personalities working at the Institute, by creating a new community of intents in Italy. IAI is not only a research centre, but also a place where political visions are shared among like-minded intellectuals. Such a sense of belonging to a cultural family with a political vision –still valid– contributes to explain the IAI solidity and persistence over time.
- 11 IAI was created almost twenty years after the crucial choices made by Italy at the end of World War Two, namely the participation in NATO and the European Communities, and built upon them: the “Atlanticist” and “Europeanist” perspectives were two strategic guidelines for IAI, although they might diverge from time to time. The idea was to kick off the revival of thinking about Italy's positioning in the international context, after such reflection was somehow abandoned because of the diffidence about power politics linked to the Fascist regime. The first funds received by IAI illustrated the aforementioned strategic guidelines, as the Institute was financed by the US Ford Foundation and by Italian private companies or foundations in favour of European integration such as FIAT and Fondazione Olivetti.³⁰ At that time, the US was interested in spreading Western culture and values in allied countries west of the Berlin Wall, and favoured those initiatives to enlarge the consensus for the transatlantic Alliance and the fundamental choices made by European allies, also to counter similar cultural initiatives promoted by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.
- 12 The Italian actors supporting IAI considered its privileged relationship with US interlocutors also as a driver for cultural modernization, knowledge acquisition and competencies development, through the dialogue with American cultural elites in a

period when US-influenced social sciences entered the Italian academia –a crucial role was played in this regard by the *Associazione Il Mulino*). It should be noticed that in the 1920s and 1930s North America hosted several Italian intellectuals which had to escape from the Fascist regime, and this contributed to creating a dialogue between US and Italy after World War Two. In this context, IAI was deemed a useful cultural initiative by both Italian/American funders and the Spinelli group. Such an initiative aimed to create an autonomous expertise in the field of foreign policy did inevitably provoke a reaction from the other actors already part, *de iure* and/or *de facto*, of the Italian foreign policy community.

A vacuum vis-à-vis MFA, MoD and academia? IAI and the Italian foreign policy community

- 13 Today IAI is chaired by the former Ambassador Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, previous Head of Italy's delegation at the EU, Head of Cabinet of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and EU Commissioner for Industry. Such an example epitomizes the proximity between IAI and Italian diplomatic service. However, this was not the case in the 1960s. At that time, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (recently renamed *Ministero Affari Esteri e Cooperazione Internazionale*, MAECI) was quite sceptical about IAI researchers, considered somehow newcomers and amateurs talking about Italy's foreign policy. Quite often diplomats did not deem useful someone else that could promote a public debate on foreign affairs out of the MAECI building –the so-called *Farnesina*– since they considered to have a kind of monopoly on such reflection. It took some years to develop a cooperative relation between IAI and MAECI, and tights progressively grew up as new generations of diplomats came into office. Such growing cooperation included a dialogue at a politico-strategic level between the Institutes' experts and Ministries or Deputy Ministries, as well as a structured working relation with conferences, seminars and research projects jointly managed by the two partners.
- 14 Another important IAI intuition was to immediately start the study of security and defence issues. Out of the military, the reflection on these matters was rather limited in Italy at that time: it was quite fragmented and stove-piped through, and it was dealt either an international law's point of view or through the history of treaties, without taking into account the contemporary political and strategic context.³¹ As for geopolitics, defence issues were somehow perceived in Italy as linked to the war-prone Fascist regime, thus they did not deserve attention and importance at that time. Strategic thinking with long-term perspective was neither cultivated within the Italian Ministry of Defence (MoD), also because of the scarce internationalization of Italian military, coupled with the kind of education and training they received. In this context, IAI filled a vacuum by developing strategic studies out of the MoD and through a dialogue with military and civilian stakeholders.³² Such circumstances contribute to explaining the good relations immediately established between the Institute and the MoD, as the military did not perceived the new actor as a direct “competitor” within the foreign policy community. Furthermore, IAI expertise was projecting Italian armed forces on an international scenario, an approach which was particularly appreciated by Navy and Air Force, keen in developing the projection of capabilities.
- 15 Moreover, while today the study of International Relations (IR) is widespread across Italian universities, in 1965 the academic focus on that subject was embryonic –is not

absent at all. Indeed, this discipline was included in university courses only with the 1968 reform. In 1975 Luigi Bonanate, Umberto Gori and Antonio Papisca became the first three full professors of International Relations,³³ and then it took many years before the establishment of IR Degrees within Italian universities. As a result, IAI benefitted from a relative vacuum also in the academic fields with regards to foreign policy. It is not by accident that Bonanate, in his mapping of the state of the art of Italian studies on foreign affairs, considered IAI foundation in 1965 and the first IR courses set up in 1968 the two symbols of the raise in Italy of a more nuanced and structured interest in international affairs.³⁴

- 16 In this context, Spinelli's idea was to go beyond the Italian university circles, which at that time he considered relatively obsolete and insulated from international academic debate.³⁵ He rather wanted to establish contacts with American research centres such as the Center for International Affairs established at Harvard University in 1958. The connection with US academia was part of a Spinelli's pragmatic vision of intellectual exchange aimed to improve quality and competitiveness of IAI research, in line of the importance of the American interlocutor previously mentioned in this paper. In contrast, the *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale* (ISPI) in Milan and the *Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale* (SIOI) in Rome, which pre-existed IAI, did focus on institutional initiatives and/or training, without developing the capacity for autonomous research which was the main goal of IAI funders. Undoubtedly, the transformation into a non-profit organization in 1972 marked a re-launch of ISPI, which later on initiated activities somehow similar to IAI ones. The parallel development of IAI and ISPI did generated a form of competition, but above all various examples of cooperation such as the joint yearly publication on Italy's foreign policy – as well as some attempts to merge the two institutes, never realized.
- 17 Regarding Italian politicians and political parties' experts, at that time they worked on international affairs through a "party's foreign policy" approach, that means mainly by engaging parties with similar ideology in other countries. They did not developed a reflection on international affairs and Italy's foreign policy as such. Also with regards to Italian politics, IAI filled a relative vacuum by creating a specific expertise.
- 18 The 1960s and 1970s did represent a pioneer period for IAI, characterized by Spinelli's drive and the Institute growth in this new field of policy-oriented research on international affairs and Italy's foreign policy. Despite the Cold War, IAI took roots not only in Italy but also abroad within the networks of think tanks and via specific cooperation with other similar institutes, particularly in Western Europe and North America. For example, in 1974 IAI was one of the founding members of the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA). In these years, IAI assumed a feature which will characterize the Institute's history: IAI is the usual Italian partner for international networks working on foreign affairs and strategic studies. This has ensured a form of double legitimacy to the Institutes, which has continued to be the only Italian voice in a series of international networks, and the only member of these networks within Italy's foreign policy community.
- 19 The research activity performed by IAI in these pioneer years was extremely important. In 1965 the Institute establishes the peer-reviewed academic quarterly "*Lo Spettatore Internazionale*", in Italian, which in 1983 became the "The International Spectator: the Italian Journal of International Affairs", in English –today published by Routledge. Since 1969, this IAI review does publish articles analysing with a critical

view Italy's foreign policy. In 1973, IAI began to publish the yearly book "*L'Italia nella politica internazionale*" (Italy within international politics).³⁶ From 1969 to 1980 IAI published with the publishing house *Il Mulino* first the "*Quaderni*" series and then the "*Collana dello spettatore internazionale*" one. In that period, IAI also organized important public conferences, such as "*La politica estera della Repubblica italiana*" (Italian Republic Foreign Policy) in 1967, which marked the public renaissance of the debate on Italy's role on the world stage,³⁷ or in 1977 "*La politica estera italiana: autonomia, interdipendenza, integrazione e sicurezza*" (Italy's foreign policy: autonomy, interdependence, integration and security).

- 20 In 1970, Spinelli's appointment as Commissioner of the European Commission (EC)³⁸ marked an evolution for IAI. Researchers such as Riccardo Perissich, Gerardo Mombelli, and after a while Massimo Bonanni, did follow Spinelli in Brussels. At the same time, the IAI team and leadership was renewed, also through the hand over of the Institute direction from Spinelli to Cesare Merlini. The designation of the first IAI director to the EC was the first example of a series of IAI personalities called to shoulder political responsibilities: Stefano Silvestri has been Undersecretary for Defence of the Italian government led by Lamberto Dini in 1995-1996; Ferdinando Nelli Feroci has been European Commissioner for Industry in 2014. These examples point out that IAI responsibilities have constituted a form of legitimacy factor in the field of foreign affairs and defence vis-à-vis Italian political elites.
- 21 Merlini has represented a strong element of continuity in IAI history. Indeed, he has been director from 1970 to 1980, then President until 2001, and he is still part of the Institute governance.³⁹ Merlini did anchor IAI to the Turin private sector circles, since his family chaired the UTET publishing house, and he had contacts with both the Agnelli family (at that time owners of FIAT) and the Compagnia di San Paolo (the foundation of the large Italian bank San Paolo). Moreover, Merlini enhanced IAI transatlantic relations, as he created the *Consiglio per le Relazioni tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (Council for the US and Italy) in 1982, and he has been for long time fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC.
- 22 In the 1970s IAI increased its activities and fund-raising, it went beyond the start-up funds provided by Ford Foundation, FIAT and Olivetti Foundation, it diversified its portfolio of donors and developed the autonomous capacity to create and manage research projects.
- 23 Such growth of the Institute did not translate into a stabilization of full time researchers, at least until the late 2000s, because since the beginning IAI was conceived of as the breeding ground for Italian elites meant to work in the public administration, private sector, academia, media, etc. According to Spinelli's view, the researchers after a while should leave the Institute and bring their IAI expertise to other contexts. It is not by accident that over the decades a number of former IAI fellows found their way into a broad range of offices: Pier Virgilio Dastoli, Roberto Zadra, Radoslava Stefanova, Raffaele Farella, Emiliano Alessandri, Valérie V. Miranda, Alessandro Giovannini, Giovanni Faleg into national and EU institutions or international organizations; Giovanni Casa in the media; Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi in the academia; Lucia Marta and Chiara Rosselli in other European or Transatlantic think tanks and foundations; Isabella Falautano, Raffaello Matarazzo, Federica Moroni, Anna C. Veclani into large companies. Such vision to disseminate the expertise developed at IAI was also a source of problems, since it limited the size of the stable team of full time, in

house researchers, and constrained the professional expectations of some researchers in the past –also with a protest made by IAI personnel in 1972.

- 24 Another important aspect of IAI's activities from the 1970's is the opening of the dialogue with selected members of the Italian communist party (*Partito Comunista Italiano* - PCI).⁴⁰ Following the cooperative trend set by the historical compromise between the PCI and the Christian Democrats, IAI engaged several key members of the communist party to develop a dialogue about international issues, specifically insisting on transatlantic and European policies. This specific effort has never ceased and, for example, IAI did co-promote the visit in the US of the PCI member of Parliament Giorgio Napolitano –then President of Italian Republic from 2006 to 2015. The involvement of Italian communists within an international policy debate, even when their official positions would be quite far from IAI ideas, gives another example of the Institute's cultural action, which has always tried to promote debate about international issues across the Italian political spectrum.

The 1980s: Italian socialist governments, a mainstream IAI and Stefano Silvestri's role

- 25 In the 1980s the IAI's role increased in Italy, as the Institute reached a certain threshold of maturity. The IAI policy of cultural penetration among Italian institutions and elites initiated to achieve results, with a further recognition of IAI competences by national policy-makers. Such evolution had both internal and external reasons. First, the continuity and quality of IAI analysis, which was considered more and more as a prominent Italian voice on international affairs and strategic studies. The Institute did elaborate a number of publications in both English and Italian, by bringing Italy's views at the European and transatlantic levels as well as by making international debate accessible to domestic readers. Such developments ensured greater stability to IAI activities and fund-raising, and its evolution towards a *modus operandi* less dependent on a single charismatic leader as it was with Spinelli.
- 26 In the 1980s Italian institutions and political parties became more keen to look at IAI analysis because of the changes in both the international environment and domestic politics. On the one hand, world bipolar confrontation initiated to allow greater room of manoeuvre for mid-powers. On the other hand, a new generation of Socialist leaders came into power and countered the communist influence on the Italian left also by rediscovering national symbols and history. In this context, the Italian establishment and particularly the governments led by the Socialist leader Bettino Craxi attached greater importance to the idea of national interests to be promoted on the world stage. In the 1980s there were solid relations between IAI high-level personalities and Socialist politicians,⁴¹ which built on the basis of the 1960s joint activities of Spinelli and Pietro Nenni, leader of the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano* - PSI). At the same time, the aspiration towards political, institutional and economic modernization of Italy put forward by PSI and its interest on Italy's foreign policy meet the expertise provided by IAI. Socialist governments also devoted specific attention to the Mediterranean region, while IAI worked on two politically relevant elements of it: the political economy of the Arab world, and the necessity to launch a broad political initiative by Italy and Western Europe towards the Mediterranean area.⁴² This set of circumstances created a dual-track relation. On the one hand, the personal contacts

between Institute's personalities and Socialist politicians. On the other hand, more importantly, PSI political vision evolved in parallel with IAI analysis. This situation is epitomized by the role of Stefano Silvestri, at that time Director of IAI.

- 27 Between the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s Stefano Silvestri became known in Italy as one of the major experts of international affairs and strategic studies. In this period IAI ran several activities on defence and security issues, particularly thanks to Silvestri and Maurizio Cremasco, for example with the study on NATO "southern flank" published in 1980.⁴³ Silvestri is both a journalist and a IAI senior researcher, as well as political advisor for several Italian politicians and high-level civil servants on foreign and defence policy –although without an official recognition of such an advisory role. In 1979-1980, the circumstance of Italian decision to host US euro-missiles Pershing on its military bases epitomized the role played by Silvestri as the IAI expert regularly consulted by Italian policy-makers, particularly Socialist ones, involved in this issue.⁴⁴ In this evolving situation IAI legitimacy increased: the Institute as such was not directly and formally involved in these political advisory activities – which are slightly different than the promotion of international culture in Italy envisaged by the art. 1 of its statute– yet the "IAI experts" did perform such activities for politicians and high-level civil servants.
- 28 In 1982, a law to regularly fund think tanks working on international affairs was proposed by a Socialist lawmaker and approved by the Italian Parliament.⁴⁵ It somehow represented a political recognition of the role played by IAI, which begun to receive in this way public funding: a concrete linkage between the Institute and Italian institutions which got closer to each other in previous years.
- 29 In the 1980s the international economics programme at IAI was created and rapidly grew as an important pillar of the Institute portfolio of research activities. It should be noticed the good relations with Bankitalia, particularly with Paolo Baffi, developed by Merlini upon the suggestion of Spinelli. These relations continued over time, with Bankitalia governors or grand commis such Carlo A. Ciampi, Tommaso Padoa Schioppa, Fabrizio Saccomani, Ignazio Visco participating in IAI activities and/or in the Institute governance. For example, Ciampi is the current IAI Honorary President and Saccomanni is the IAI Vice President. In the 1980s the Institute published a number of economic studies, for example those on finance authored by Pier Carlo Padoan –today Minister of Economics and Finance in the Matteo Renzi's government– and those on international trade supervised by Paolo Guerrieri or Giacomo Luciani. The growth of IAI expertise on Italy's economic relations with other countries contributed to the experiment of the "mock-up summits" organized at the Institute to prepare Italian participation to important international meeting. Such an approach enhanced IAI cooperation with Bankitalia as well as with the Ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Defence, and contributed to augment the overall comprehension of international affairs in Italy.
- 30 The research activities on economics enabled IAI to include among its donors a number of Italian companies interested in the development of competencies on the aforementioned issues, particularly in relation with the increasing internationalization of country's private sector (i.e. in terms of exports to third markets, foreign direct investment in Italy, etc). These companies then became part of the initiative "Global Outlook" launched by IAI economic programme under the lead of Paolo Guerrieri –who today is a Senator elected within the Democratic Party. Research activities in this field

have continued up to the recent years marked by the economic crisis, whereby the IAI rationale has been to analyse the costs of such a crisis and to contribute to re-discover the benefits of multilateralism and international integration.⁴⁶

The 1990s: IAI in post-Cold War Italy

- 31 The 1990s in Italy were characterized by two systemic changes affecting the foreign policy community. On the one hand, the Cold War's end with all its implications for the international system. On the other hand, the 1992 crisis of "Tangentopoli" with the collapse of traditional Italian parties due to the corruption scandals and therefore a profound change in the domestic political system. Italy's role on world stage increased significantly, also thanks to the use of the Italian military in crisis management operations abroad, namely in Somalia, Yugoslavia, Albania and Timor Est. At the same time the domestic political situation has been very fluid and fast-changing. IAI studies and conferences on Italy's defence policy and missions abroad had begun already in the late 1980s and increased in the 1990s, yet the Institute seemed to be less influential in the Italian policy-making because of the abrupt changes in the political ruling class.
- 32 A relevant example of IAI direct political influence was the appointment of Silvestri as Undersecretary of Defence of the Dini government, from January 1995 to May 1996.⁴⁷ However, this was mainly due to the legitimacy as expert acquired by Silvestri in the 1980s, which turned out to be useful for a government made of grand commis and experts rather than of post-1992 politicians. In 1996, another example of solid IAI relations with political parties was the involvement of Gianni Bonvicini, the Institute's Director at that time, in the writing of foreign policy manifesto of the progressive candidate premier Romano Prodi. Bonvicini was officially included in the team of "seven wise man" tasked by Prodi to contribute to the development of his political platform, but after this job was performed in a few months he re-assumed the IAI direction. Moreover, both Silvestri and Michele Nones did informally contribute to the defence aspects of the political manifestos of both progressive and conservative parties. Such collaborations were informal and mainly linked to personal relations between IAI personalities and Italian politicians, without the kind of convergence of visions experienced in the previous decades. Nonetheless, they enhanced the idea of IAI as forge of ideas and expertise on Italy's foreign policy at disposal of policy-makers.
- 33 Since the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s the Institute developed a significant "Euro-Mediterranean" field of research. Since 1994 the IAI was one of the creators of the EUROMESCO initiative, the network of think tanks from Europe, North Africa and Middle East centred around the Mediterranean Sea. This network represented –and continues to represent– an important opportunity for joint reflection and debate among stakeholders in the region, and one of the most advanced process of politico-cultural dialogue ever realized in this part of the world. The IAI leading role in that field is taken by Roberto Aliboni, Head of the Mediterranean and Middle East Programme. The Institute has constantly carried on activities on the Mediterranean region and Italy's projection in this area, and overtime it has developed an important net of relations with Arab partners. Such activity did encounter the interest of important Italian stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that under the leadership of the Socialist Minister Gianni De Michelis launched the Conference on the Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea, and the ENI projected in the old

Mare Nostrum. In this case IAI did not participated directly in the decision making, but contributed to stimulate the Italian debate and deepen the analysis of certain issues, for the benefit of opinion-shapers and decision-makers. Such activities on the Mediterranean region also illustrates the solid working relation between the Institute and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as diplomats usually actively participate as speakers in IAI seminars and conferences – a rather different situation with respect to the 1960s. This research area has been further developed by recent and current studies on Euro-Mediterranean policies and politics, including on European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and on the EU relations with Gulf Countries – an activity significantly re-launched in the second half of the 2000s.

The 21st century: IAI model between collective and individual influence

- 34 IAI developed since its establishment a specific expertise on strategic studies. Yet such expertise significantly broadened to the defence industry issues only after 1996 with the arrival of Michele Nones at the lead of Institute's Security and Defence Programme. Since the 1990s IAI promoted a number of research, studies and conferences on the transformation of the Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB) in Italy as well as at European and transatlantic levels. Such a comprehensive approach to defence including political, strategic, institutional, military, technological, industrial and economic aspects, proved to be successful. The Security and Defence Programme at IAI gradually increased in terms of projects, budget and personnel, and today can rely on 12 full time researchers and 3 scientific advisors. Since the late 1990s and through the 2000s, under Nones' lead a specific expertise has been developed on the interplay between policies and technologies in the security and defence field, including their legal and regulatory aspects at national and EU levels. Such an approach and expertise has renewed the interest in IAI activities by Italian major companies in the aerospace, defence and security sector, from national institutions such as the Ministry of Defence, the Presidency of the Council of Minister (*Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*, PCM – the Italian equivalent of Prime Minister Office) and the Parliament, as well as from the European Commission. In this context, IAI developed a new original field of research on space policy and technologies, including civil and military ones, becoming one of the very few think tanks in Europe mastering such expertise.
- 35 Despite the growth of research projects, in the 1990s the IAI financial situation has become more precarious because public funding has been shrinking dramatically in both absolute and relative terms. For example, the MAECI funds constituted 40% of IAI budget in 1993 and around 3% in 2014, while Italian MoD has had no budget available for research in the last 25 years. Such a drastic decrease of resources coming from Italian public bodies forced the latest generation of IAI researchers to pay attention to new potential sources of funding, such as the research programs from European Commission, European Parliament (EP), European Defence Agency (EDA), European Space Agency (ESA). This new funding channel has also produced new research requirements, as EU projects are granted via bidding procedures and demands very specific deliverables and activities: a very different approach from the kind of broader institutional donation previously ensured by Italian authorities. Over the years the Institute, starting with the Security and Defence Programme, has won calls for tender

issued by the European Commission from the 6th Framework Programme (FP6), the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) and Horizon 2020 (H2020), through consortium with European think tanks, universities and private companies. The research projects on space policy pioneered this path in 2004 with “Astro+” PASR,⁴⁸ rapidly followed by the first bids won on FP6 and FP7 security theme. In the meanwhile, key Italian private companies such as *Finmeccanica-Leonardo* sustained the IAI Security and Defence Programme.

- 36 Such a logic of innovation and specialization in research projects did apply also to European and Mediterranean fields of activities, starting with the EU-funded Microcon project in 2007. At the same time, traditional donors among Italian stakeholders such as *Compagnia di San Paolo*, as well as among US ones like the German Marshall Fund (GMF), maintained their partnership with IAI. As a whole, in recent years the Institute has strongly reoriented its fund-raising towards EU-funded research projects, by adjusting its business model to the decrease of “institutional” funding by Italy’s authorities, while maintaining strategic partnerships with a number of Italian and transatlantic stakeholders. This trend is further enhanced by the prolonged economic crisis experienced since 2008, which coupled with austerity measures further reduced the support of Italian donors to IAI.
- 37 Such a trend has produced a substantial growth of the IAI’s international networks, renewed and enlarged in comparison with the 1990s in order to successfully bid for EU-funded research projects. In this context, the professional profile of IAI researchers has changed significantly because of the need to increase management skills. As a result, a new generation of IAI researchers built up their career also on the basis of this new model and have been included in the Institute’s governance. For example, Jean-Pierre Darnis is currently Director of the Security and Defence Programme, Nicoletta Pirozzi is Responsible of IAI Institutional Relations, and Nathalie Tocci is the Institute Deputy Director.
- 38 Since the 2000s we can notice a consolidation of IAI academic profile in comparison with previous generations. This is the result of a double trend. Firstly, Italian academic system set up its doctoral courses largely during the 1980s/1990s, by pushing young researchers to achieve their PhD. Furthermore, the PhD has become a requirement for their career also out of their respective universities, and creates further opportunities of cooperation between IAI and Italian academia. In recent years, the following IAI researchers have obtained a PhD in social sciences, in chronological order: Darnis, Pioppi, Tocci, Maria Cristina Paciello, Azzurra Meringolo, Daniela Huber, Pirozzi, Eleonora Poli and Silvia Colombo. Moreover, Riccardo Alcaro, Andrea Dessì, Federica Di Camillo, Alessandro Marrone, Nona Mikhelidze, Simone Romano and Nicolò Sartori are currently PhD candidates in Italian or European universities. Beside, IAI former researchers such as Federico Niglia, Michele Comelli, Raffaello Matarazzo, Giovanni Faleg and Carolina De Simone got a PhD in recent years. IAI has always had prominent university professors among its researchers such as Natalino Ronzitti and Paolo Guerrieri. Today we can observe that Darnis and Pioppi are associate professors while a relevant number of IAI researchers are adjunct professors (Bonvicini, Huber, Marrone, Paciello, Pirozzi, Tocci), a further signal of the deepening of relations between IAI and academia.
- 39 Another interesting feature of IAI since the 2000s is the greater internationalization of its research team through the presence of full time, in house researchers with

nationalities other than Italian, namely: Darnis (French), Huber (German), Mikhelidze (Georgian). This is in line with the average internationalization of main European think tanks, and constitutes an added value on top of the long-standing praxis of non-Italian visiting fellows hosted at IAI for a certain period of time.

- 40 The aforementioned renewal of IAI expertise and networks is reflected also in its atypical links with the Italian and EU institutions. Two main examples: Nones, who has been Director of Security and Defence Programme until 2015 and is currently IAI Scientific Advisor, is the Advisor for European Affairs of Italian Defence Minister Roberta Pinotti; the IAI Deputy Director Tocci is Special Adviser of High Representative for Foreign Policy and EC Vice-President Federica Mogherini. Such a novel circumstance in the Institute's history is due to the IAI research activities carried on over time by Nones and Tocci, as well as to their individual credit in different policy-making circles out of the Institute which in turn enhances the already solid credibility as "IAI experts". As a whole, the double hat of IAI senior researchers strengthens and underlines the Institute's role within Italy and EU foreign policy community.
- 41 In this context, it is important to highlight the launch in 2006 of the IAI web magazine "*AffarInternazionali*". Four decades after the launch of *The International Spectator*, *AffarInternazionali* grasps the new potential of the web by publishing brief articles on international affairs and Italy's foreign policy. *AffarInternazionali* has published around 3,500 articles in ten years. They have been authored by a network of hundreds of contributors much broader than IAI research team, which encompasses not only researcher and academics but also journalists, politicians, diplomats and military officials.

Conclusions

- 42 It is worthy to reflect upon the Spinelli's view of IAI five decades after the Institute foundation by this political-cultural entrepreneur. For sure, the think tank has been institutionalized within the Italian foreign policy community, also through the role it plays at national and international levels. That means Spinelli's vision took roots, and has been developed by various generations of researchers by adapting its *modus operandi* through the decades.
- 43 The previous analysis of IAI funding and research evolution indicates that the model of a think tank as an actor within the foreign there are some important continuities. First, IAI has always made a "cultural promotion effort" within Italian elites and society, through a wide and ever-growing range of publications and an increasing number of public events in Rome and across Italy. Second, the Institute appears to be a strong factor of "individual legitimization" for its researches, including junior and senior ones: IAI experience and network is a resource for a career within the international relations area. This aspect is a classic feature of the US system, but it is less obvious within EU member states. As far as Italy is concerned, there are few examples of think-tankers jumping in a political career (ISPI Carlo Maria Santoro or CESPI/Aspen Marta Dassù), but only IAI seems to be able to reproduce the model among several generations of researchers. As a result, Institute's members or former members do support direct decision-making through formalized relations. In this sense, Spinelli's idea to look at the Chatham House model and build a think tank in the Italian context, *mutatis mutandis*, proved to be quite successful.

- 44 A third element of continuity is the participation in decision-making processes of the Institute as a whole. As mentioned before, single personalities play key roles at a national or EU level, thus contributing to the influence of a IAI policy oriented approach. But recent and current day-to-day research activities can be characterized as a “policy oriented research”, whereby IAI produces analysis, scenarios and policy recommendations that can be endorsed and put forward by decision-makers. It is very difficult to measure the level of endorsement of such input by the political and institutional actors. Some analysis have little influence on the political process, while other might feed significantly the decision-making process.
- 45 Since the mid-2000s IAI increasing activities at EU level have fostered the development of sectorial research which is then processed by EU institutions, for example the EC or EDA. Again, it is quite difficult to measure the effectiveness of a “deliverable” written by IAI on a precise topic, but certainly such production actively contributes to shape the agenda of the customer institutions. In other words, the shift of activity towards EU projects, pushed by financial constraints, has broadened the European policy-making channels for IAI inputs. Indeed, since its foundation the Institute has developed a classic portfolio of think tank actions, from conferences to publications, coupled with the aforementioned direct role of single researches within national or EU institutions. The very last evolution in terms of EU projects creates a specific channel to feed IAI production into decision-making, which institutionalizes the link between policy oriented analysis and EU institutions. This project-oriented does not represent a rupture with IAI traditional activities, but can be described as an important evolution where the classic “cultural promotion” & “individual legitimization” model can be mixed with an “policy-oriented research” one.⁴⁹
- 46 Moreover, IAI continuity and functioning in the Italian context prove Italy's receptivity towards think tanks action. Critics do put forward the US example whereby think tanks are structurally interlinked with political parties and administrations. However, in the European context IAI is considered on pair with main British, French and German think tanks, while being more autonomous from national institutions in comparison with other institutes substantially financed and/or controlled by public authorities. As a result, IAI is an example of a normal think tank in a normal policy-making context, whereby a research centre is able to contribute to the overall country's capacity to elaborate analysis and scenarios.
- 47 As a non-profit organization contributing to Italy's foreign policy's formulation, which always managed to keep its budget on balance, IAI is similar to other think tanks exerting influence in Europe and beyond. Nevertheless, the Institute has a specific “dual nature”. On the one hand, it is an autonomous non-state actor. On the other hand, it works in a national context whereby the foreign policy community is relatively small, and public authorities have limited in-house expertise in terms of strategic analysis and scenario making. For example, both the MAECI's Analysis and Planning Unit (*Unità di Analisi e Programmazione* – UAP) and the MoD's Military Center of Strategic Studies (*Centro Militare di Studi Strategici* – CeMiSS) currently employ a number of experts inferior to the ensemble of IAI researchers, and elaborate less papers and documents than the Institute. As a result, IAI often perform a role of “ghost writing” of some policies, by supporting public actors and/or acting as consultant. Initially, the Institute was created by Spinelli bearing somehow in mind the model of NGOs and advocacy groups, which put forward political campaign on certain issues. Overtime, the

growth of IAI competencies and the continuity of researchers' activities has increasingly connected the Institute with Italian institutions and political parties. A connection which today is particularly strong –even if not always formalized– with MAECI and MoD, but also, at international level, with EU institutions and NATO bodies. As previously said, the institutionalisation of IAI contribution to EU institutions' projects has produced a new step in terms of “policy oriented” research.

- 48 In conclusion, the IAI is by definition a non-state actor but it has somehow “hybrid” nature in terms of activities performed in close cooperation with national and EU decision-making. Indeed, currently the Institute combines a “cultural promotion” effort, an “individual legitimization” effect, and a “policy oriented research”. Such a “hybrid” nature makes the Institute an interesting case study to analyse the role of non-state actors in the Italian foreign policy community.

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ABSTRACTS

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is an example of a think tank working in the field of Italy's foreign and defence policy since its establishment in 1965. This paper presents an empirical analysis of the IAI's activities, working from the Institute's archives and interviews with its founding members and leading personalities. This paper also draws from existing literature on think tanks, in order to understand how a non-state actor like the IAI can contribute to shaping a state's foreign and defence policy.

L'Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) représente un exemple de centre analyse (« think tank ») actif sur les sujets de la politique étrangère et de défense de l'Italie depuis sa fondation en 1965. Cette contribution représente une analyse empirique des activités de l'IAI se basant sur l'exploitation de sources originales (archives de l'Institut et entretiens avec les membres fondateurs ainsi que les personnalités principales). D'autre part, la référence aux travaux sur les think tanks permet de formuler des hypothèses pour comprendre l'action d'un acteur non gouvernemental comme l'IAI dans le cadre de l'élaboration d'une politique étrangère et de défense étatique.

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Mots-clés: Italie, politique étrangère, politique de défense, acteur non-gouvernemental, think tank

Keywords: Italy, foreign policy, defence Policy, non-state actor, think tank

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