Europeanism and Atlantism in the Italian Foreign Policy: Focused on Continuity and Change

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Abstract

This paper will try to examine the significance, role and co-relations of Europeanism and Atlantism that has been two axes of the Italian foreign policy from the end of the 2nd World War to the present. Through the research, this paper will make clear that Europeanism and Atlantism were in complimentary relations and were good instruments to achieve national interest, a substantial goal of Italian foreign policy. Europeanism and Atlantism have been preserved with continuity in Italian foreign policy. Even after the Cold war, they merely had changes in the style of conducting the center-right and center-left governments. As for the co-relations between Europeanism and Atlantism, the two orientations have been supplementary in pursuing national interests of the country.

Key Words: Italy, European integration, Atlantism, Europeanism, Italian Foreign Policy

I. Introduction

At about the same time of the Italian general election of April 2006, there were hot debates on Europeanism and Atlantism of the Italian foreign policy, not only in the country but in her European partner countries.¹ The debate regarded Silvio Berlusconi's preference for the US, and Romano Prodi's preference for the EU.² And it was expected that Italian foreign policy would be directed towards Europe, if the Center-left coalition won the election.³ The victorious Prodi government pulled the Italian troops, sent by Berlusconi government, out of Iraq. And he reconfirmed his loyalty to European integration asking for the re-launch of the European Constitution of which France had refused ratification in 2005. He showed, thus, that the prediction of the spectators had proved true. But the Center-left government continued its efforts not to let go of the string of Atlantism, reserving the withdrawal of its troops stationed in Afghanistan.

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The debate on Europeanism and Atlantism has, for long ago, been the central subject of the discourses on the Italian foreign policy. That regards where puts on the centrality of the Italian foreign policy between Europeanism and Atlantism. But the answer is already clear. It is not difficult to find out that it has been on the latter, although the two principles have had the same importance in the Italian foreign policy. But setting aside this centrality, it is interesting to question how has been the co-relations of the two principles and if these two have had continuity in the Italian foreign policy even after the cold war.

This paper will try to examine the significance, role and co-relations of Europeanism and Atlantism which means choice and support to European integration and Atlantic Alliance that has been two axes of the Italian foreign policy from the end of the 2nd World War to the present. Through the research, this paper will make clear that Europeanism and Atlantism were in complimentary relations and were good instruments to achieve national interest, a substantial goal of Italian foreign policy.

II. Backgrounds and methods of research

Europeanism and Atlantism are basically opposite concepts in their aim and purpose: Europeanism tries to make Europe an enormous actor of international politics with autonomy acquired by integration of Europe, but Atlantism accepts the American world order subjugating the autonomy of Europe under the Atlantic Policy of the United States. Therefore, Europeanism and Atlantism are like ‘Janus’, having the same body but with two different faces towards the opposite. Most European countries, however, are executing their foreign policies with both Europeanism and Atlantism. Italy is one of those counties that are loyal to both of the two courses.

After the war, Italy has been carrying out the foreign policy on the basis of the two axes: Europeanism and Atlantism. But, those two principles raise two fundamental problems: One concerns the discourse about the nature of the Italian foreign policy. It pertains to the criticism that the Italian foreign policy has lost its traditional realism and its space for the foreign policy, bound by Europeanism and Atlantism. This leads to this vital question: "Does the Italian foreign policy really exist?" This question derived from the criticism on the 'low profile' policy of the Italian foreign policy in the postwar international relations. The criticism goes that the Italian foreign policy lost its independence: after Italy entered into Atlantic