

Book Reviews

Section edited by Stefania Panebianco

FABRIZIO COTICCHIA, *Qualcosa è cambiato? L'evoluzione della politica di difesa italiana dall'Iraq alla Libia (1991–2011)* (Pisa, Italy: Pisa University Press, 2013). 265 pp., €18,00 (paperback), €14,50 (ebook), ISBN: 9788867412143

Contemporary armed conflicts tend to be characterized by greater complexity than traditional armed conflicts. They are mostly intrastate and occur in weak states with multiple centers of power, internal fragmentation, as well as an erosion of vertical and horizontal legitimacy. They are fought by a variety of actors (regular and irregular troops, cells of various types including terrorist groups) that do not respond to a central authority and are often funded through illegal activities. In contemporary armed conflicts, frontal clashes between the fighting groups are limited; however, both rebels and governmental groups tend to use violence against civilians. Bringing an end to this type of conflict is particularly difficult. Nevertheless, the international community intervenes in these conflicts and its operations have become increasingly intrusive. As Richmond reminds us, traditional peacekeeping operations were characterized by consent of the parties to dispute for establishing the mission, non-use of force except in self-defense, and voluntary contributions of contingents from small neutral countries and impartiality. The end of the Cold War led to the idea that the United Nations (UN) should play a more active and decisive role, and that its operations should become more “robust.” Starting from the 1990s, a new generation of peacekeeping operations emerged, characterized by the willingness to restore peace and security by defending one party (victims of aggression) from another (aggressors). Contemporary interventions tend to lack consent and impartiality, and they use force in enforcement actions often legitimized and authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This results in an increasing use of military instruments, at times in the presence of combat operations. In this new era of peace-keeping operations, the rhetoric of peace operations may clash with the situation in the field, making it difficult for contributing countries to justify their presence and for troops in the field to operate.

Fabrizio Coticchia's book focuses on Italy's choices to intervene with military instruments by looking at how the country tried to play a role in this new security

environment, while maintaining the use of the frame of peace and humanitarianism to justify its interventions. In particular, the book traces the evolution of the use of military instruments in Italian foreign policy, identifying its characteristics over the past two decades under the hypothesis that, despite structural changes (in particular the end of the Cold War), there are some constant factors in Italy's defense policy in relation to regional crises, intrastate conflicts, and humanitarian crises, which are related to Italy's strategic culture. Coticchia identifies the following constant factors: 1) the search for a multilateral framework within which the Italian intervention should take place; 2) bipartisan support; 3) the rhetoric of peace and humanitarianism; 4) lack of transparency and information regarding the operations; 5) the multidimensional nature of security challenges; 6) a "low profile" military approach (p. 14). The author verifies the existence of the identified factors by analyzing strategic documents and military missions since 1991 and by using discourse analysis.

The first chapter analyzes the context of Italy's defense policy by examining the transformation of contemporary armed conflicts and military operations, the transformation of the structure and composition of military forces, and the concept of strategic culture. The second chapter analyzes various strategic documents that the author deems useful to explain the evolution of Italy's defense policy from the 1977 *Libro Bianco* [White Book] until the 2013 Ministerial Directive. The third and fourth chapters analyze the most important Italian military operations (involving more than 1,000 soldiers for a period longer than three months) since the 1990s, starting with Desert Storm and ending with Libya; IFOR, SFOR and Althea in Bosnia are excluded because, in the author's opinion, their similarity to operations in Kosovo and Albania would not offer any additional insights (p. 106). However, the analyzed operations belong to different categories. While it adds variety to the analysis, it also makes the comparisons appear overstretched. Overall, operations in seven countries are analyzed (Iraq [Desert Storm and Antica Babilonia], Somalia, Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Libya); the operational context and political debates are discussed for each case. The final chapter recaps the main argument.

The book successfully sheds light on military operations of which very little is known, and calls attention to both the contradictions between the rhetoric used to justify the operations and the situation in the field, and the lack of a proper debate on the use of military instruments. In particular, the book highlights the ancillary role played by the Parliament in all the operations and the intentional ambiguity of Italian governments, who prefer to be seen as playing the role of the executor of multilateral bodies rather than to take responsibility for their political choices. Interestingly, the military dimension is removed even when operations become combat operations, and important restraints in the use of force are constantly imposed on Italian troops. Maybe underestimating the possibility that restraints are intentionally imposed in order to keep operations consistent with the idea of "peace operations" and with the Italian model of intervention as identified in the book, the author supports the possibility that the domestic political context made it impossible to even discuss war. The book also contributes additional insights regarding the

“Italian approach,” here described as “low profile,” that strenuously and constantly promotes a non-intrusive and non-militarized presence, even at the cost of clashing with important allies like the US or with mandating institutions like the UN.

Considering the main argument and the importance attributed to the end of the Cold War, the book might have benefitted by giving more importance to other elements of the context within which Italian political choices have been made. Among them, it may have been worth mentioning the role Italy was willing to play in the “new world order” as well as in the decision-making processes of the “Western coalition,” the greater and more intrusive role played by the UN and NATO as a result of input provided by Western countries, and the constraints imposed by a European strategic culture in the making. Furthermore, a comparison with other European countries might have helped to identify factors in the “Italian model” that are uniquely Italian as a result of domestic processes, and factors that Italy shares with other countries as a consequence of international processes. Finally, analyzing operations before and after the Cold War, rather than before and after September 11, 2001 may have helped to better highlight continuities of a model that, according to Coticchia, had already emerged during the Cold War. However, these factors need not be considered as missing elements in the book, as it clearly states its interest in explaining the “how” rather than the “why” of the Italian model of intervention and its intention to adopt a more descriptive approach (p. 64).

In sum, this book represents an interesting contribution to an underexplored subject and is effective in reminding readers of the consequences of the lack of a debate on the topic.

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ROSITA DI PERI AND RAFFAELLA GIORDANA (EDS.), *Revolutions without revolutions? The challenges of the tourism sector in Tunisia* (Bologna, Italy: Emil, 2013). 176 pp., €15,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788866800705

In December 2013, Mehdi Jomaa was appointed as the new Prime Minister, following several months of a political stalemate. Tunisia’s economic crisis was undeniably the greatest challenge facing the new Prime Minister. An increase in tourism advertising immediately unveiled that the tourism sector would receive the greatest support and be the flagship of governmental activities.

The volume edited by Rosita Di Peri and Raffaella Giordana is a timely book. Beginning with an analysis of this strategic sector, the book retraces the events leading to the Jasmine Revolution and questions the conceptual underpinnings adopted by analysts to describe Bourguiba’s and Ben Ali’s Tunisia. The common thread underlying the contributions is whether the focus on tourism is part of a strategy contributing towards democratic development or another *myth about Tunisia*.