

Italian Ambassador Terzi's Lecture at CUNY's Brooklyn College: Atlanticism and Europeism in Italian Foreign Policy

Francesca Giuliani (April 13, 2011)



The Ambassador of Italy to the United States Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata at CUNY's Brooklyn College talks about the international humanitarian crisis in North Africa and the challenges faced by the Transatlantic Partnership

Quoting the [Financial Times](#) [2]analyst Gideon Rachman, [Ambassador Terzi](#) [3]stated that the most compelling task for the Euro-Atlantic community today is to lead the world from an "age of anxiety" to an age of "renewed international collaboration," at a time when increasingly divergent interests on security, economic and environmental issues seem to dangerously weaken the appeal of international cooperation.



«Current events in North Africa and the Middle East underline more than ever how necessary it is to have a joint strategy», Terzi said. «At stake is not only the future of hundreds of millions of young people in North Africa and other countries, but the attitude and expectations of the younger generation. If they are disappointed again, the long-term relationship with an economically more developed world will be deeply affected», he added.

Terzi, who has also served as Italy's Permanent Representative to the [United Nations](#) [4], heading the Italian Delegation to the Security Council for the 2007-2008 term, dealt with major issues such as humanitarian intervention and protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Addressing the subject of the military intervention in Libya, he declared the need for an even stronger bond between [NATO](#) [5] and the [EU](#) [6], based on those common values «that explain the ethical approach of the transatlantic partnership when meeting international challenges». A bond, he added, which should marry economic support to North African countries and Libya with the respect of fundamental freedoms, human rights and the Rule of Law.

As far as bilateral relations between the US and Italy are concerned, Terzi stressed the fact that the shared values and the sense of cultural belonging which joins Americans and Italians «at an even deeper level than the political and economic one» are the reasons why Italy has always had a prominent role in strengthening the connection between the States and the European Union: «Atlanticism and Europeism are the two pillars upon which Italy developed its post-war foreign policy. The enormous impulse Italy has always ensured to the process of European integration has always corresponded to parallel initiatives aimed at consolidating the transatlantic dimension».

However, the European pillar received a severe shock two days ago, when Brussels refused to activate the European directive on the temporary protection of refugees from North Africa, which would have allowed Italy to save the southern-most island of Lampedusa from an unsustainable immigration emergency. The island, with a population of five-thousand people, was overcome in the last few weeks by a «human tsunami» of thirty-thousand illegal immigrants.

The EU, said Terzi, was unable to speak with one voice despite the fact that article 222 of the [Treaty of Lisbon](#) [7] itself contains a 'solidarity clause' indicating that the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is met with an especially serious crisis. «On this occasion, we wanted to bring up the topic of immigration in Europe as a global matter to be met together. But policy was lacking.»

Brooklyn College

Martin and Syma Mendelsohn Lectureship in International Relations

April 12, 2011

Italy-USA, The Transatlantic Partnership in a Changing World

Full text of Ambassador Terzi's Lecture

I am delighted and privileged to be here, in such a prestigious setting as the Brooklyn College, and to address such a distinguished audience.

My sincere thanks to go Brooklyn College President, Dr. Karen Gould, to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Tramontano, to the Distinguished Alumnus and Sponsor of the lecture series, Mr. Martin Mendelsohn and his wife Syma, to the Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Dr. Andrew Sillen, and to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dr. Donna Wilson, for allowing me to share my considerations on the transatlantic partnership, and on Italy and the United States in the new global context.

Gideon Rachman, one of the most important Financial Times analysts, has recently summed up changes in the international context in three great phases.

The first, which Rachman called "The Age of Transformation", went from 1978-1991 and was marked by Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernizations in China, by Thatcher and Reagan's economic revolutions, by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the impressive integration of the European market, by German reunification and, lastly, by the first Gulf War. In just over a decade a new unipolar world took shape. A world which, without question, orbited around the United States. American hegemony seemed destined to become the new center of gravity for the world. And Francis Fukuyama wrote his renowned essay - "The end of History?"

The second phase, according to Rachman, the "Age of Optimism", spanned nearly twenty years, from 1991-2008. It was a period marked by globalization and the fast deregulation of financial and services markets; information technology developed exponentially; US economic growth led analysts to believe that the persistency of growth would avoid future recessions. Nowhere as in Europe did the progress towards a supranational integration proceed so quickly.

Today, Rachman believes we are in a third phase, "The Age of Anxiety": each State, or each player in global issues represents increasingly divergent interests and tends to clash on matters of security (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan), of the economy (US, EU, China) and the environment (climate change, carbon dioxide emissions and diversification of energy sources).

In other words, we are at a time when the appeal of a logic cooperation may become less strong and we incur a serious risk of entering a context, once again, typical of international relations in the Cold War. In short, we may once again witness the revival of the "zero-sum" game: the rule according to which each participant in this game is rewarded or punished if he is not able to compensate losses or gains obtained by opponents. During the Cold War, this rule found its application in, for example, the East-West balances: the "containment" policy of the soviet empire was a gain for the West to which the communist bloc opposed a direct support to pro-communist regimes in Africa, the repression of democratic movements in eastern Europe and expansionism in North Korea and in Vietnam. Whenever there were gains for the communist bloc, the game had to be re-balanced on another level. The final and most effective rebalancing took place, in the end, with the greater competitiveness and efficiency of western Europe's economic model, which ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

What is it that makes us fear that this logic will once again prevail? How can the transatlantic partnership transform the "Age of Anxiety" into an Age of re-found international collaboration?

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Despite the success of China, India, and other emerging countries, the Euro-Atlantic community continues to be the main economic powerhouse on the world scene by far. The US-EU partnership ranges from defense to security, from science to culture, from trade to economy. It has not only ensured peace and stability, but also development and economic welfare to both sides of the Atlantic.

Our public opinions share the idea of a common destiny. Polls show that 70% of Americans and 67% of Europeans state that they share the same values and that we must cooperate in the international arena. 66% of Europeans hold a very positive opinion of the United States (Italy ranks among the top in this group), and 60% of Americans have an equally positive opinion of Europe.

Data show that this perception corresponds to economic reality:

- The United States and Europe are the two largest economies in the world, with a GDP equivalent to 54% of the global total.

- Each year, EU and the US trade goods for five trillion dollars - nearly a third of American GDP.

Fourteen million people on both shores of the Atlantic owe their employment to trade between the E.U and the US.. Europe is the primary foreign source for jobs in the United States and vice-versa.

- We are each other's principal investors: Europe in the United States and the United States in Europe. Between 2000 and 2009, American firms invested 29 billion dollars in China, which is less than that invested at the same time in Belgium and just a third of American investments in Ireland.

- Each day Europe and the United States exchange goods and services for a total of about two billion dollars: 40% of world total.

A more important political dimension must be added to the economic-financial one. NATO is the

clearest example. The Atlantic alliance's history is one of a great success. In over 50 years, it has ensured the freedom of Western Europe through the permanent involvement of the United States in Europe; it has provided a decisive contribution to set the whole world free of global war; it has broadened its space to include Greece and Turkey in 1952 and Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999; it has attained, above all, the objective for which it was created in 1949: to neutralize the Soviet threat.

NATO succeeded precisely because of its specific, unique characteristics which other alliances seem to lack. First and foremost, its homogeneous values: democracy, freedom and rule of law.

Can we consider the transatlantic community, in its ethic, security and economic dimensions, to be truly ready for the new global context? Conditions have deeply changed over the last ten years:

- China and India are growing exponentially;
- Russia has re-emerged on the world scene;
- global economy is in the throes of financial uncertainty;
- agricultural productivity is growing less than in past decades, thus adding an element of tension in countries with food scarcity and subsequent occasional social explosions in poorer countries;
- insufficient action on climate change entails a deteriorating environment.

Globalization has shifted our spatial-temporal coordinates. It has injected new categories of problems which expand at a pace which was unthinkable just a few years ago. It has progressively shrunk the "local" dimension in favor of the "global" one. There are certainly some positive aspects: societies tend to be more transparent; knowledge and information is shared by many more and instantaneously, and growth opportunities flourish. But the impact of imbalances grows too. Never as today do they have such a global and multi-thematic reach.

Let me mention migrations. They have taken on many new dimensions:

- a social one (pertaining to the impact immigrants have on demographic assets of destination countries);
- an economic one (an increasingly important role for the economies of the destination countries);
- one of cooperation for development (need to deal with migration causes at their source);
- a public order dimension (such as the control of external borders, fight on illegal immigration, repression of occurrences such as racism and xenophobia) and, naturally,
- a security dimension (terrorist infiltration in migratory flows).

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The Euro-Atlantic community – NATO and the European Union – has responded with vigor to today's dynamic and multi-dimensional world. The former has done so with the "New Strategic Concept"; the latter with the Lisbon Treaty. The Strategic Concept looks not only at new threats, but also at how NATO must evolve in order to accomplish its new tasks. The Lisbon Treaty is a crucial political turning point. It increases the Union's powers in matters of internal security and justice, defense and foreign affairs, trade and service regulation and environmental protection. Also, for the first time the EU has committed to manage energy market and energy security better.

The above shows how NATO and the EU adapt vis-à-vis their growing complementarity.

Let us return to the example of migrations. European strategy is based on two pillars: a social one and the other connected to security. Among its main goals is the fight on terrorism and organized crime. The mission established by the "European Security Strategy (ESS)" sets up a direct link with NATO, specifying: "This is not only in our bilateral interest but strengthens the international community as a whole. And NATO is an important expression of this relationship".

In the last few months the integration of immigrants has increasingly become a feature in the political debate in Europe – particularly, in Italy – also in view of our societies' security. We have experienced one of the largest increases in foreign resident, which has reached nearly 4.2 million – almost 8% of its entire population. Twenty-five thousand North African immigrants have landed on Italian shores in the last three months, mainly from Libya and Tunisia.

It was last June that the Italian Government approved a “Plan for a safe integration” which is also consistent with the social dimension of our Country. Integration, security and legality are the starting point of a process including rights and duties, responsibility and opportunities, which Italy wishes to promote and give priority to.

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At this point, I would like to refer to some of the most critical international issues which we have been facing, to stress the point that the transatlantic venue is the best means to enable us to respond to this international context appropriately.

Let me start with Libya. Our countries, together with select number of NATO partners, played a pivotal role in bringing together international consent: they did this first by encouraging the Arab League to set the fundamental political framework for Libya, and then by paving the way for the approval of UN Security Council Resolution n. 1973 whose overall objective is to ensure the highest level of humanitarian protection. American determination to take the concerns of some of its closest allies into consideration, starting with Italy, and to thus insist with NATO to bring the whole operation under allied command and control, was a particularly significant step for the credibility of the entire Atlantic alliance.

From a more general point of view, current events in North Africa and the Middle East underline more than ever how necessary it is to have a joint strategy. At stake is not only the future of hundreds of millions of young people in North Africa and other countries but the attitude and expectations of the younger generation. If they are disappointed again, the long-term relationship with an economically more developed world will be deeply affected.

Aside from the Middle East and North Africa, other priorities in our respective international relations range from economy to climate to China, which belong to a first cluster I will dwell on, and others to Afghanistan, Europe integration and Russia, which are part of a second cluster I will mention. There are certainly also many other points which cross the whole spectrum of international relations, such as nuclear proliferation, terrorism and, as I mentioned before, migratory flows. However, these points, at least conceptually, seem to be “sub-systems” of the overall scenario in which a deeper transatlantic partnership should be, and remain, engaged.

Economy, climate and China are part of the first cluster because these issues are intrinsically connected. Should a trend to privilege “national logics” prevail over a multilateral and cooperative one, a zero-sum game could well emerge on three fronts:

- a) on the economic one, by ignoring the need for a more coordinated growth and for countering protectionist impulses;
- b) on the climate front, by pursuing national policies instead of aiming at a qualitative leap, and by ignoring the need for global and binding agreements against global warming;
- c) on the overall relationship with China, by underestimating the need for a better collaboration on essential issues and delaying confidence -building measures in regional security in Asia and the South China Sea, leaving the status-quo.

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As for the other regional crises, the transatlantic alliance has been the backbone of the intervention of the international coalition in Afghanistan and indispensable in each regional crisis which the international community faces (except, perhaps, for North Korea). We are all perfectly aware that many destinies cross in Afghanistan. The crux of the issue is not only to deal a significant blow to terrorism, but also to ensure a positive result of our efforts towards NATO building and the revitalization of transatlantic relations.

As for Russia, a shared transatlantic approach is essential to maximize the positive effects of dialogue and cooperation. The reset decided by the Obama Administration proves just this, with its corollary of an improved relationship between Moscow with eastern European countries. We have to



point on a renewed agenda to be able to overcome the past approach; an agenda which looks to the future and goes beyond focusing merely on points of friction. We must also point on the future of economic trade, industrial cooperation and people-to-people exchanges in order to allow the West's soft power to unfold in all its strength.

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From what I have described up to now, we can already draw the important conclusion that the transatlantic community—from the political and economic aspects and from its security profile worldwide—is better equipped than other geopolitical areas to change/transition the 'Age of Anxiety' into the Age of Renewed International Collaboration.

But this greater capacity and attitude depends also on a fundamental aspect, based on the complex of values on which it is founded. It is our values that explain the 'ethical' approach of the transatlantic partnership when meeting international challenges.

Shortly before I gave the example of Libya. In this case, the Atlantic community intervened for a moral imperative: to prevent a massacre. This was repeated just yesterday by Minister of Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini in his address to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. When Italy was asked to do its part to stop the shocking violence the Libyan regime was inflicting on the people, the decision of the transatlantic community to act was consistent with our common values. We are not bringing war to Libya, rather we are saving lives and providing assistance to a people that is paying a high price for its desire for change.

In fact, in Libya and in North Africa our approach is more general, because we want to lay the foundations to guarantee stability, growth, and integration. We do need a stronger transatlantic bond which marries the economic support to these countries with the respect of fundamental freedoms, human rights and the Rule of Law.

And if the Atlantic Alliance plays a fundamental and differentiated role in providing such an important framework for security—think only of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue—it is up to the other pillar of the transatlantic community, the European Union, to do more. The objective of the growth of our partners on the southern shore through institution building, governance, and economic integration is attained with a revitalized leadership of Europe and its commitment in critical dossiers, such as the fight against illegal immigration, which is and must be a common issue.

And on this Brussels must certainly do more. Because of the latest events in North Africa, the island of Lampedusa, that last strip of Italian territory in the Mediterranean, was overcome in the past few weeks by 30 thousand illegals, that on an island populated by 5 thousand people. In this case, we must admit that we were expecting greater support at the European level. Just yesterday, it was decided in Brussels not to activate the European directive on the temporary protection of refugees from North African countries: Italy's proposal to activate it in order to meet the immigration emergency was rejected by the EU Council. On this occasion, we wanted to bring up the topic of immigration in Europe as a global matter to be met together. But policy was lacking. The EU was unable to speak with one voice despite the fact that article 222 of the Treaty of Lisbon itself contains a 'solidarity clause' indicating that the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is met with an especially serious crisis.

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Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to share some thoughts on Italy and on my Country's prominent role in strengthening the transatlantic bond. Atlanticism and Europeism are the two pillars upon which Italy developed its post-war foreign policy. Indeed, Italian governments, parliaments and public opinion of the last twenty years have never had any reservations, or after-thoughts, on that collaboration between the two shores of the Atlantic. The enormous impulse Italy has always ensured to the process of European integration has always corresponded to parallel initiatives aimed at consolidating the transatlantic dimension.

NATO and the European Union must develop and grow stronger, in close cooperation, with a harmony of purposes. Italy constantly strives for Europe to be at America's side in centers of crises,



in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Iran, in the war on al-Qaeda, and in the great challenges of climate, environment and the economy.

At a strictly bilateral level, I would like to recall the recent visit, here in New York, of the President of the Republic, The Honorable Giorgio Napolitano. This opportunity once again emphasized the special bonds between our Countries. President Napolitano brought to the United States the exceptional, strong message of a national unity based on the strong values of the Risorgimento - a message which is all the more meaningful this year given that Italy is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its unification. President Obama manifested his utmost respect and personal friendship for both the Italian President and Italy as a Country with his March 17, 2011 "Presidential Proclamation" on the occasion of Italy's important anniversary. This most significant proclamation was also accompanied by an additional tribute by Congress which, thanks to Leader Nancy Pelosi's initiative and the entire Italian-American caucus, approved a Congressional Record to celebrate Italy's unification.

These two important documents show full well the depth and significance of these celebrations in the United States, in particular for the vibrant and active community of Italian origin in this great Country. Above all, what emerges from these exceptional tributes is the unmatched common wealth of shared values and sense of cultural belonging which joins our two peoples at an even deeper level than the political and economic one, and the recognition of Italy's role and position in the international arena.

Thank you.

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