

Marco Mariano

IS ITALY AN “ATLANTIC” COUNTRY?*

[Italians] have always flourished under a strong hand, whether Caesar's or Hildebrand's, Cavour's or Crispi's. That is because they are not a people like ourselves or the English or the Germans, loving order and regulation and government for their own sake....When his critics accuse [Mussolini] of unconstitutionality they only recommend him the more to a highly civilized but naturally lawless people.

(Anne O' Hare McCormick, *New York Times Magazine*, July 22, 1923)

In this paper I will try to outline the emergence of the idea of Atlantic Community (from now on AC) during and in the aftermath of World War II and the peculiar, controversial place of Italy in the AC framework. Both among American policymakers and in public discourse, especially in the press, AC came to define a transatlantic space including basically North American and Western European countries, which supposedly shared political and economic principles and institutions (liberal democracy, individual rights and the rule of law, free market and free trade), cultural traditions (Christianity and, more generally, “Western civilization”) and, consequently, national interests.

While the preexisting idea of Western civilization was defined mainly in cultural-historical terms and did not imply any institutional obligation, now the impending threat of the cold war and the confrontation with the Communist block demanded the commitment to be part of a “community” with shared beliefs and needs, in which every single member is responsible for the safety and prosperity of all the other members. The obvious political counterpart of such a discourse on Euro-American relations was the birth of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on April 4, 1949.

Before and after 1949 American mainstream media like *LIFE* magazine and many others represented the AC as a *natural* alliance of nations and peoples which was rooted in history and whose degree of cohesiveness had now been strengthened by an international situation marked by the confrontation against Nazi and later Communist totalitarianism, but whose rationale was wider and deeper than the contingencies of cold war ideological warfare. However, I argue, the shaping of such an Euro-American AC involved a fair amount of arbitrariness and at times even “invention,” let alone political expediency. My focus on photojournalism - and specifically on *LIFE* magazine - rests on the assumption that *LIFE* strongly contributed to the shaping of the AC framework as a cultural construction and, therefore, a critical focus on that magazine allows to expose the artificial nature of such a framework more clearly than diplomatic correspondence and minutes of cabinet meetings (although the latter can offer compelling demonstrations of historical imagination as well).

Finally, I argue that the emergence of the AC not only had profound consequences on the relations between the U.S. and Italy, but it radically recast the place of the U.S. as well as Italy in the international arena. In the case of Italy, however, this process of ‘Atlanticization’ turned out to be complex and somewhat ambiguous adjustment.

The Atlantic Community and the U.S.

The influential journalist-philosopher Walter Lippmann was arguably the single individual who most contributed to the shaping of the AC. A public intellectual who came of age during the so-called Progressive Era and one of the founders of the *New Republic*, he later deserved the title of “unofficial- and often uninvited- public adviser to the makers of American foreign policy,” and through his syndicated columns became “the man that more than any other outside the government, influenced the dialogue in ‘official’ Washington.”¹

* draft – please do not quote or circulate

¹ Barton J. Bernstein, “Walter Lippmann and the Early Cold War,” in Thomas G. Paterson, *Cold War Critics*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971, 19.

Interestingly enough, he first used the expression AC in 1917, a few months before U.S. soldiers went to fight on European soil - thus putting an end to the centuries-long American isolationism. Lippmann had been an ardent supporter of the American intervention in the war and of Wilsonian idealism, that is the attempt by president Woodrow Wilson to seize the opportunity of the end of World War I to reform the international system by introducing an organization - The League of Nations - in order to introduce and enforce liberal-democratic principles and procedures in international affairs. Wilson's ultimate goal was “to make the world safe for democracy” in the wake of the self-destructive imperial inclinations of the European powers and of Bolshevik subversion (indeed, Lippmann is credited with having introduced this now classic Wilsonian formula as well). In a *New Republic* article of October 1917 Lippmann focused on the “Atlantic highway” connecting “Pan-America” to the European side of the “Western world” and accused Germany of disrupting it, thus making American intervention inevitable: “Now that [Germany] is seeking to cut the vital highways of our world we can no longer stand by. We cannot betray the Atlantic community by submitting. If not civilization, at least our civilization is at stake.”²

In a nutshell, his quest for intervention contained some of the basic assumptions that would lead to the post-World War II idea of AC: the Atlantic Ocean as a link, rather than a barrier, between America and Europe; the crucial relevance of the transatlantic link for U.S. national security; the equation between security in the Atlantic and “civilization.”

World War II presented Lippmann, and America, with a somewhat similar scenario: another “European” war, and Great Britain, now the only major liberal democracy left in the continent, urging American help in the name of common interests and, to some extent, Anglo-Saxon kinship. Except that now the bitter legacy of the late 1910s, when Wilson had won the war and “lost the peace,” made the divide between isolationists and internationalists even deeper. Furthermore, World War II was an ideological, as well as a geopolitical conflict: what was at stake now was clearly much more than the old European balance of power. The threat of Nazism forced the U.S. to

² Walter Lippmann, “The Defense of the Atlantic World,” *New Republic*, February 17, 1917, 73.

reconsider its place in the world, specifically its relations with Central/Latin America on the one hand and with Europe on the other. Not surprisingly, such a re-consideration was particularly intense and explicit in geography and cartography.

After the lost peace of Versailles (1919) and the defeat of Wilsonian idealistic universalism, the U.S. returned to isolationism and “hemispherism,” that is the belief that national interests were best served by a geopolitical focus on the American hemisphere. In terms of American foreign policy, this meant a revival of the Monroe Doctrine (1823), which postulated reciprocal non-interference both on the part of the U.S. in European affairs and on the part of European countries in the Western hemisphere. Even Franklin Roosevelt, an internationalist who had to wait Pearl Harbor (December 1941) in order to be able to convince the American people to enter the World War II, in previous years was very cautious in abandoning the dogma of hemispherism.³ However, before Japan’s attack, cartographers and geographers were already redefining U.S. position vis a vis the Atlantic Ocean and, consequently, Europe.

What is interesting here is that we might assume that as far as maps are concerned, we can count on a high degree of “objectivity,” but this is not actually the case. Indeed, the very definition of a “Western hemisphere” was far from unproblematic as its canonic Eastern (i.e. Atlantic) limit - set at 20 West and 160 East - cut across or bordered islands which were historically and politically tied to European countries, like Cape Verde and the Azores (Portugal), Iceland and Greenland (Denmark).

Map 1 is taken from an article published in July 1941 in *Foreign Affairs*. It includes the Danish possessions, but not the Portuguese ones, in the Western hemisphere.⁴ The political implications were obvious: Denmark had invaded by Germany in April 1940, therefore those who favored American intervention had a clear interest in presenting the fall of Denmark as a violation of the Western Hemisphere and consequently as a threat to U.S. security. Under the pressure of World War II, geography – and specifically the mid-Atlantic line dividing the America and Europe - came to be a matter of interpretation.

³ John L. Harper, *American Visions of Europe. Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1994.

⁴ Francis Pickens Miller, “The Atlantic Area,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 19 n.4, July 1941.

FDR took part in this contest of cartographic imagination by re-drawing this line so as to include the Azores as well as Iceland and Greenland, and sent his sketch to Winston Churchill to provide him with a picture of the eventual American range of action under the constraints of enduring isolationism.⁵ **[Map 2]**

If the outbreak of World War II had blurred such a dividing line, Pearl Harbor erased it, thus paving the way to the idea of a Euro-American AC. In the age of airpower, hemispheric isolation could not deliver security anymore; on the other hand, the alliance with Great Britain, and consequently the Atlantic “highway,” was now of vital importance for the U.S. In the words of Helen Hill Miller of the pro-intervention National Policy Committee, “Instead of thinking of our continent as a body of land surrounded by water, we are coming to think of the Atlantic [and the Pacific] as bodies of water surrounded by land, of which our shores are a part.” And the great British geographer Sir Harold Mackinder referred to the Atlantic as the “Midland Ocean.”⁶

It must be stressed that this ‘Atlanticization’ of America was by no means confined to academia, elite circles, and policymakers. Large circulation magazines like *LIFE*, *Fortune*, and *Colliers* played a crucial role in popularizing this new vision of America’s place in a unified world by distributing maps, world atlases, globes as supplements, usually with a fairly good commercial success given the widespread popular interest in the events of the war. **[Pic 1]** Such a need for a visual understanding of what was at stake in the war seemed to be so urgent that FDR in one of his most celebrated radio broadcast “fireside chats” explained the Anglo-American war strategy to the American people by constantly asking them to “look at the map,” in what turned out to be an unprecedented presidential lesson in geography.⁷

However, the AC was not simply a matter of geography or geopolitics. Let’s go back to Lippmann. Like during World War I, he was among the staunchest supporters of

⁵ Alan K. Henrikson, “The Map as an Idea: The Role of Cartographic Imagery during the Second World War,” *The American Cartographer*, Vol. 2 N.1, 1975, 29.

⁶ quoted in Henrikson, cit., 32-33.

⁷ *LIFE*, “How To Assemble the Globe,” March 1 1943; Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On Progress of the War,” February 23, 1942, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/022342.html>.

American intervention in the European theatre. In his syndicated columns⁸ and in other writings he called for the recognition of the AC as an entity that shared cultural and historical bonds as well as geopolitical interests. In the process, he contributed to the ongoing fascination with geography by writing in a *LIFE* magazine article in June 1940 that “it is manifest that in seeking to separate ourselves from the great wars of Europe, we cannot rely upon the Atlantic Ocean. It has never been a barrier in the involvement in wars. Our geography books are as misleading as our history books.”⁹ He articulated his vision of an AC in *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (1943), in which he reiterated the familiar arguments about the key role to be played by the wartime alliance between the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain, and then dealt with the issue of the membership of the AC: France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway, as far as continental Europe was concerned. Lippmann was thus able to conclude that such a “system of security” was based on solid historical grounds: “The nations of the New World are still vitally related to precisely those nations of the Old World from which that originated... The original geographic and historic connections across the Atlantic have persisted. The Atlantic Ocean is not the frontier between Europe and the Americas. It is *the inland sea of a community of nations allied with one another by geography, history, and vital necessity*.”¹⁰

One of the issues I am dealing with in this research is the peculiar relation among the “English speaking peoples” as the core of the AC. Fearing that his call for a transatlantic entity could be seen as a British-American “plan of domination or scheme of empire,” Lippmann introduced the idea of Community as a way to emphasize the relative degree of freedom and equality enjoyed by its members more than their reciprocal obligations and its hierarchical structure.

⁸ “Today & Tomorrow,” Lippmann’s column for the *New York Herald Tribune*, was syndicated to as many as 200 newspapers, with a combined readership of more than 10 millions, see Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, Boston: Little, Brown, 279-80.

⁹ Walter Lippmann, “America in the World,” *LIFE*, June 3, 1940.

¹⁰ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1943, 134-35 (emphasis added).

Again, the influence of Lippmann’s and others’ arguments was not limited to elite foreign policy circles; on the contrary, it was part of a national conversation of America’s place in the world: *U.S. Foreign Policy* jumped on top of the bestseller list, an abridged version of it was distributed by the *Reader’s Digest*, and the *Ladies’ Home Journal* transformed it in a seven-page cartoon strip.¹¹

The Atlantic Community and Italy

What is the place of Italy in this context? In the war years, as we have seen, the quest for an AC turned out to be intertwined with the wider interventionist, anti-isolationist campaign that urged the U.S. to live up to its responsibilities in world affairs, therefore it implied the expansion of American influence abroad. However, the very idea of AC also implied a *spatial limitation* of American involvement in world affairs, which was absent in classic Wilsonian idealism as well as in other visions of the American role in the world that emerged in the 1940s, whose distinct universalistic thrust finally led to the creation of a new world government: the United Nations (1945).¹² Lippmann, disappointed by the failure of Wilson’s League of Nations, had turned to hard-line *realpolitik*. As Allies’ victory approached and planning for the postwar world became an issue in international politics, he dismissed the idea of a world government as hopelessly naïve and called for a postwar order based on mutual recognition and negotiations among “spheres of influence,” one of them being of course the AC. This brings us back to both the membership and the historical-political boundaries of the AC and, consequently, to the ambiguous place of Italy in it.

Italy had been generally considered a “Western” and of course a “European” country, as so much of its history, art, and culture laid at the heart of canonic definitions of “Western civilization.” However, at a time when the West was being defined in Atlantic and liberal-democratic terms, Italy’s geography and the legacy of Fascism were

¹¹ Steel, *Lippmann and the American Century*, 406. Individuals and organizations advocating American aid to Britain and intervention in the war had been making similar arguments, notably William Allen White’s Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies and the Century Group, which had Henry Luce among its members.

¹² the most influential of them was Henry Luce’s *The American Century*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.

obvious liabilities. Furthermore, its poor performance in the two world wars did not contribute to its reputation as a strong ally, and in the aftermath of the war the influence of Communists and pro-Soviet Socialists made it a permanent source of worries in London and in Washington. Finally, in sectors of the wartime American foreign policy elite there were remnants of an old Anglo-Saxonist, racialized view of the world which postulated a positive correlation between people’s “whiteness” and their attitude to democratic self-government. While seldom voiced openly, this mind-set lingered, and arguably had some consequences on American attitudes on Italian affairs, given the fact that the whiteness of Italian immigrants in America, let alone their fitness to self-government, had been quite a controversial issue in previous decades.¹³

In the final part of the paper I will deal with the way in which this ambiguity regarding Italy permeates American public discourse. But the uncertainty about Italy’s Atlantic status deeply affected politics and diplomacy as well, especially in 1949 when the loose AC framework found an institutional counterpart in the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). From an Italian point of view, we are usually concerned with the “choice” of the Italian government to join the Atlantic Alliance, or with American interference and hegemonic policies toward Italy. But from an international perspective the real issue at stake was the *acceptance* of Italy. Secretary of state Dean Acheson listed the pros and cons of the Italian inclusion in NATO in a memorandum to president Truman. Among the eight “arguments against inclusion” are the following:

“Italy is not physically on the North Atlantic Ocean.

In two world wars Italy has shown herself to be an ineffectual and undependable ally. having switched sides in both wars.

¹³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a different color: European immigrants and the alchemy of race*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998. On race and U.S. foreign policy see, among many others, the seminal work of Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1987 and Gerald Horne, “Race from Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of White Supremacy,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 23 n.3, summer 1999. Specifically on the U.S. and Italy see Marco Mariano, “From Anglo-Saxonism To Cold War Democracy: World War II and Race According to Clare Boothe Luce,” *Prospects* (forthcoming, 2004).

In 1940 Italy stabbed France and the UK in the back.”¹⁴

Finally, Italy was accepted as a member of NATO precisely because of its weakness: Especially Americans feared that keeping Italy out would only strengthen its neutralist, if not pro-Soviet, forces. As for another architect of postwar American foreign policy, George Kennan, he opposed the creation altogether, on the grounds that it was much preferable to have “a sort of intimate Atlantic union, prompted by ‘the logic of history,’ between the United States, Canada, and Britain” allied with a separate “Western European federation.” In any case Kennan had more sympathies for Antonio Salazar’s Portugal than for the mess of postwar Italy.¹⁵

If a geographic definition of AC was questionable, ideas about its history, tradition, and culture were even more so. Exposing the “ideological” nature of the AC is particularly important when we look at Italy, as I argue that precisely these ideological elements – ideas of history, tradition, culture - played a key role not only in the specific issue of Italy’s inclusion in NATO, but more generally in its enfranchisement and re-integration in the international community after Fascism and the defeat in World War II. In the above-mentioned memorandum to president Truman, one of the arguments for the inclusion of Italy in the Atlantic Alliance was that “Italy is by race, tradition, and civilization a natural member of the Western European community.”¹⁶

The Atlantic Community and Photojournalism: *LIFE*

This is the reason why the empirical side of my research focuses on popular magazines and specifically on photojournalism, which I consider an extremely influential medium in promoting mind-sets, national identities, and visions of the world and of other nations. Arguing that the notion of AC reshaped post-war American national identity is an over-statement of my case. However, America’s new position as the leader of the AC

¹⁴ Memorandum by the Secretary of State, March 2 1949, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. IV, Western Europe, 1949.

¹⁵ Anders Stephanson, *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989, 138. The best account of the relation between the United States and Italy during these years is Mario Del Pero, *L’Alleato scomodo. Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)*, Rome: Carocci, 2001.

¹⁶ Memorandum, *cit.*

came to be one of the multiple identities of post-war America. In his work on national identity Benedict Anderson argues that print capitalism – the novel, the newspaper – “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation.” If this is true for the advent of printed matters, it is even more so for the news magazines and photojournalism of the 1940s and 1950, relying heavily on pictures. As Wendy Kozol points out in her study of *LIFE* as a vehicle of patriotism in postwar America, “visual media have even greater capacities to visualize social norms and ideals that form national identities... They construct an imagined community of the ‘free’ and ‘Western’ world with shared concerns about the Cold War.” While photographs have been widely regarded as a guarantee of detached, factual objectivity, in fact their success in journalism, and especially in the popular press, since the early 20th century is largely due to their ability to satisfy the emotional needs of significant sector of the public opinion challenged by modernization and displaced by the decline of traditional community ties.¹⁷

Furthermore, magazines – while rather overlooked as a source for historical inquiry – were still the primary source of information for Americans, besides radio, at a time when television was still on its way to control the media market and, most importantly, did not dedicate many resources to news programming (*LIFE* alone had a readership of about twenty millions).

Finally, Henry Luce’s publishing empire – Time Inc. - is an interesting case for a study in international history. *Time*, founded in 1923, was the first modern news magazine; *Fortune* (1930) dealt mostly with business issues and targeted a more specific and conservative segment of the American readership; *LIFE* (1936) was the blueprint for photojournalism in the United States and, later, abroad. An Oxford-educated Anglophile who in his own way rediscovered Europe during and after World War II, Luce did not hesitate to enlist his magazines in foreign policy crusades, as it is shown by the intense Time Inc. interventionist campaign in the years 1939-41. Later, although he frankly

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1991, p. 25; Wendy Kozol, *LIFE’s America. Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism*, Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1994.

detested FDR and the Democrats, he was nonetheless an open supporter of FDR and Truman administration’s internationalism and engagement in the European theatre. Given his inclination to choose journalists who saw the world the way he saw it, it is not surprising that *Time* in its first issue of 1950 elected Winston Churchill as “Man of the Half Century.” His magazines became an influential actor in the popularization of the “Atlantic community.”

There is no such thing as a canonic definition of AC. Here I deal with fragments of ideas floating in public discourse rather than with a systematic political thought on international relations. In a 1941 *LIFE* article Lippmann focused, not surprisingly, on freedom: “for a century the nations, from Scandinavia to Argentina, which face the Atlantic Ocean have had an unparalleled opportunity to develop in freedom. Under the protection of sea power in the hand of free government the shores and the waters of the Atlantic have been the geographic center of human liberty.” A few years later, he saw the AC as defined basically in historical-philosophical terms: its members “adhere to their historic tradition: that the state exists for man, and not man for the state; that the state is under the law, not above it; and that the individual person has inalienable rights.” Then he added a religious/geographic twist:

The national differences within the Atlantic region are variations within the same cultural tradition. For the Atlantic Community is the extension of Western or Latin Christendom from the Western Mediterranean into the whole basin of the Atlantic Ocean. Its frontiers, which are a fluctuating and disputed borderland in Germany and Central Europe, still follow roughly the frontiers of the western part of the Roman Empire. Beyond the Atlantic Community lies a world which is still the heir of Byzantium. Beyond them both lie the Moslem, the Hindu, and the Chinese communities.¹⁸

LIFE’s Italy

This search for a usable past in defining the AC is all the more evident with regards to Italy. In its editorials, reports, and pictures *LIFE* magazine relied heavily on the legacy of

¹⁸ Walter Lippmann, “The Atlantic and America,” *LIFE*, April 7 1941; ID, *U.S. War Aims*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1944, 86-87.

ancient Rome and of Catholicism, and to a lesser extent on the Renaissance and later periods, so as to portray modern Italy as one of the main historical and “spiritual” sources of the AC. However, its coverage of current Italian affairs frequently pushed back Italy toward, if not beyond, the borders of the AC, due to its less than impressive democratic record, ongoing political instability, and poverty. Finally, the focus on Italian art, culture and glorious but vanished past, while intended to foster a sense of shared values and traditions, to some extent ended up reinforcing old attitudes and mind-sets about Italy as a somewhat exotic place, fundamentally different from the core of the AC, which was provided by the “English speaking peoples” of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The enduring strength of the Anglo-American “special relationship” in the 1940s is aptly exemplified by the veneration of Winston Churchill. Luce, a Republican, obviously preferred the conservative Churchill to the liberal FDR. However, apart from reasons of political expediency, the English statesman, son of the American Jenny Jerome, came to embody the Anglo-American kinship.

He enjoyed an immense personal prestige for Britain’s resistance to Germany’s aggression. When in March 1946 he delivered his famous “Iron Curtain” speech at Fulton, Missouri, in which he outlined its vision of Europe divided by a line running “from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic,” *LIFE* portrayed him while looking at a statue of George Washington. **[Pic 2]** Coupling the statesman who doggedly defended British imperial rights and the hero of American independence had a particular meaning at this defining moment of the cold war. Although Anglo-American “reapproachment” in international affairs dated back to the end of the nineteenth century, it assumed a deeper meaning in post-World War II transatlantic relations, notwithstanding the partially unresolved issue of the British colonies. In mid-April 1948, when the Italian elections marked one of the peaks of cold war tensions, *LIFE*’s cover featured Churchill in military uniform as an introduction to the first installment of his war memoirs, which came complete with a photo-essay on “Mr. Churchill’s Background” emphasizing both his aristocratic rank and the continuity of British international power and prestige.¹⁹

¹⁹ *LIFE*, “Churchill Speaks,” March 18 1946; “Mr. Churchill’s Background,” April 19 1948.

Churchill’s myth was by no means the only channel to convey the idea of Anglo-American kinship. A January 1945 photo-essay featured an “Anglo American Romance,” where the encounter between an American soldier and a British young woman is re-enacted as to evoke *natural* family ties between the two nations, as well as to make clear the new hierarchy in the international arena. **[Pic 3]** However, such a “fraternal association,” frequently referred to in terms of “blood” and “race,” now had to be framed in the wider Atlantic context.²⁰

On the contrary, Italy in the 1940s provided a striking contrast between its glorious past and its troubled present. Time Inc.’s magazine tried to make sense of this contradiction, but in so doing made it to some extent more blatant. A poverty-stricken nation with no firm leadership, marred by political violence and social conflict, and for obvious reasons a *paria* in the international community, *LIFE*’s Italy qualified as a fully Western/Atlantic nation basically as the home of the Catholic Church, the heir of ancient Rome, and the land of inestimable art treasures.

LIFE’s report on the foundation of NATO **[Pic. 4]** implicitly located Italy on the borders of the Atlantic space. Not included among the eight founding members of the treaty, Italy had “requested membership in Atlantic group,” the caption said, while the two pictures portray the statesmanlike posture of the founding members of the AC on the one hand and the Communist-provoked “riots” in Rome on the other.²¹ Indeed, the persistent fear of pro-Soviet subversion and, even worse, of a legitimate victory of the Communist and Socialist left at the polls- at least until April 18, 1948 – strongly contributed to place Italy out of the Atlantic space in American mental maps. In March 1946 a *LIFE* editorial denouncing Soviet “aggression” quoted senator Vandenberg wondering: “What is Russia up to now? ... We ask it in Manchuria, we ask it in Eastern

²⁰ *LIFE*, “LIFE Records an Anglo American Romance,” January 1 1945; “England. Its Old Schools Bred a rare race of rulers,” June 3 1940. For Anglo-American relations as transatlantic relations see Lippmann and, among others, John Jessup, “America and the Future,” *LIFE*, September 20 1943. On the long-term cultural premises of the Anglo-American wartime alliance see Stuart Anderson, *Race and Reapproachment. Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904*, Rutherford, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1981.

²¹ *LIFE*, “The Atlantic Nations Unite for Self-Defense,” March 28 1949.

Europe and the Dardanelles. We ask it in Italy... We ask it in Iran. We ask it in Tripolitania. We ask it in the Baltic and the Balkans. We ask it in Poland... We ask it in Japan.”²²

In the late 1940s the cold war was waged with economic as well as ideological weapons. Time Inc. had been an outspoken advocate of the Marshall Plan, and frequently displayed a typically Republican, pro-business attitude: investments of American corporations abroad were the best way to generate jobs, create wealth and stop Communist influence. In another *LIFE* editorial, Italy seemed to belong to a context of extra-European, developing nations suited for “colonial” development policies. The comment praised American investments in the Milan-based chemical plant SniaViscosa for reducing unemployment and the danger of subversion (“maybe there are a few less Commies in SniaViscosa today”), then went on illustrating the potential for American business in Venezuela and Liberia, and finally concluded on a blatantly paternalistic note: “Our businessmen are following the trail blazed by American colonial policy at its best, as in the Philippines - tutelage, not domination. Let us cheer them on and pray they have time to spread wealth wherever wealth is wanted.”²³

Paternalism, not exactly a blueprint for relations among members of the civilized AC, was indeed of some use in the Italian case. Writer John Hersey, in Sicily with the American troops in the summer of 1943, wrote of the American mayor of Licata “bringing some American democracy,” like many other Americans had done in the past in other areas of the world. Hersey emphasized “American idealism and generosity bordering on sentimentality, the innate sympathy of common blood that so many Americans have to offer over here.” Here Italian-Americans’ “blood” provides the grounds for a “special relationship” which is of course much different from the Anglo-American one. Meanwhile, in the same issue, the photographs of Robert Capa offered

²² *LIFE*, “‘Getting Tough’ with Russia,” March 16 1946 (Vandenberg’s concerns included Canada and the U.S. as well, but only as targets of Soviet espionage). Zachary Karabell’s *Architects of Intervention. The United States, the Third World and the Cold War, 1946-1962*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1999 finds analogies in U.S. policies toward Greece, Italy and extra-european countries like Iran, Guatemala, Lebanon, Cuba, and Laos.

²³ *LIFE*, “‘Capitalist Imperialism’ at Work,” April 12 1948. The article also mentioned similar investment plans in France, although very briefly.

images of American hegemony and benevolence, both in the public and in the private sphere.²⁴ [Pics 5a/5b]

While rescued from Fascism, Italy was still lacking a strong, dependable, pro-Western political leadership. The Savoy dynasty enjoyed British, but not American sympathies, and the June 1946 referendum ousting the monarchy offered the opportunity for an unequivocal historical appraisal. Blaming the Savoy for making Italy a “third class empire” and precipitating the nation into “moral, military and economic collapse,” *LIFE* stressed that “despite bullying tactics, the army of the House of Savoy invariably bit the dust: Adowa (1896), Caporetto (1917), Guadalajara (1937), Greece (1940), Africa and Sicily (1940-43)”²⁵ in words which anticipated Acheson’s 1949 remark on the flawed Italian military record as an argument against Italy’s inclusion in NATO.

Nor pro-Western parties and leaders, namely the Christian Democrats and De Gasperi, raised *LIFE*’s enthusiasm. An alarmed “Pre-Election Report on Italy” of April 1948 dedicated the smallest photographs to rival leaders Palmiro Togliatti (PCI) and Alcide DeGasperi (DC), and described the latter as “utterly honest and sincere, painfully humorless and uninspiring... A shrewd party leader, a weak orator and a fair parliamentarian, his appeal to the Italian people is essentially negative, based on the fear of alternatives to his victory.” By contrast, the story carried a one page and a half picture of Pope Pius XII at the balcony in Easter Sunday, while at the beginning of a long chapter on the “Catholic Action” the text made clear that, notwithstanding “superstition” and Madonnas popping up almost everywhere in pre-election days, “There remains only one faith and force in Italy powerful enough – perhaps – to deny Nenni and Togliatti their Roman triumph. This is the Catholic Church.” A few page later, the “Picture of the Week” showed Secretary of State George Marshall praying in the cathedral of Bogota’, Colombia. In the same vein, in a later article on the Italian elections, pictures emphasized the massive contribution of priests and nuns during election day.²⁶ [Pic 6]

²⁴ *LIFE*, “AMGOT at Work,” and “The Surrender of Palermo,” August 23 1943.

²⁵ *LIFE*, “Italians Send Their King Packing,” June 24 1946.

²⁶ *LIFE*, April 12 1948; “An Aroused Italy Chooses Freedom,” May 2 1948.

During and after the war, the Pope emerged in *LIFE* magazine as the most prominent spiritual leader of the Atlantic world, almost like a religious counterpart to Churchill. It was the reflection of an unprecedented, multidimensional shift in the relations between America and the Catholic world, which had began in 1939 when FDR appointed Myron Taylor as his “personal representative” in the Vatican, thus putting an end to the long-lasting, deep distrust between Washington and Rome. Roosevelt’s move, which caused widespread outcry in the U.S., was aimed basically at securing a source of information in a sensitive, if unofficial, meeting point for international diplomacy. When Allied victory was approaching and it became gradually clear that the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union would soon turn into the next “clash of civilizations,” cooperative relations with the Vatican became an asset for American foreign policy and postwar planning. Meanwhile, in the home front, American Catholics found themselves among the more enthusiastic participants in the anti-Communist crusade that culminated in McCarthyism, thus partially overcoming decades of religious, and ethnic, prejudice. And in universities, American Catholics like the Columbia historian and former Ambassador to Spain Carlton J. Hayes were among the most outspoken proponents of a devoutly Christian AC.²⁷

Given the persistent Vatican’s skepticism regarding individual rights, capitalism, and representative democracy, that is some of the very pillars of the AC (let alone Catholic Church’s all-out, enduring opposition to the penetration of the secularized, consumer-oriented American way of life in Europe and Italy), this unusual American-Vatican harmony was largely a marriage of convenience based on cold war imperatives. However, the Pope - and Rome - became now a familiar presence for *LIFE* readers, and Italy came to be recognized as one of the great sources of Western/Atlantic spirituality. Immediately after the liberation of Rome the pompous ceremonies in St. Peter’s, which not long before were seen as the stylistic trademark of Papist absolutism, were now regularly featured in photo-essays which magnified Vatican’s *grandeur* as well as its

²⁷ Ennio Di Nolfo, *Vaticano e Stati Uniti (1939-1952). Dalle carte di Myron Taylor*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1978. On American Catholics and the cold war see among others Alfred Hero, *American religious groups view foreign policy: trends in rank-and-file opinion, 1937-1969*, Durham: Duke UP, 1973. Carlton J. H. Hayes, “American Frontier – Frontier of What?” *American Historical Review*, 51/2, 1946. See also Ross Hoffmann, “Europe and the Atlantic Community,” *Thought*, 20, 1945.

increasing openness to America the Anglo-Saxon world. A frequent co-protagonist of *LIFE* stories was Cardinal Spellman of New York, a key figure in the shaping of an ethnic/ideological cold war coalition in postwar America.²⁸ [Pics 7a/7b]

The fact that Henry Luce, the son of a Protestant missionary, was himself a man of strong religious convictions, also contributed to this religious revival, which involved the Protestant churches as well. *LIFE* frequently carried stories of meeting among religious leaders mobilizing “for peace,” and expressions like “mission” and “faith,” come to be commonly associated with foreign policy analyses. An article by the hawkish John Foster Dulles, later Secretary of State in the Eisenhower administration, was introduced by a full page photograph of a Congregationalist mass in, of all places, Plymouth, Massachusetts while the caption found the way to relate “religious rededication” with “individual freedom” as an “inalienable right of man.”²⁹ [Pic 8]

The Catholic Church, an apparently timeless presence in Italian history, epitomized continuity and tradition. This brings us to another source of a usable Italian past: ancient Rome as one of the great inspirations of Western civilization and the AC. Americans’ fascination with the classic world and particularly republican Rome has a long story dating back to the revolutionary period of the 1770s. In the early cold war years this fascination became more explicit: as the U.S. was assuming a somewhat imperial role in world affairs and was facing what was being defined as a mission to defend and lead the AC, the Italian past provided an excellent repository of symbols and historical precedents, which helped the American public opinion to make sense of the unprecedented American involvement in international affairs. In this respect, the inclusion of Italy in the AC proved to be a very helpful resource.

The liberation of Rome in June 1944 provided an ideal opportunity to formulate this kind of discourse. The almost contemporary D-Day in the beaches of Normandy was a

²⁸ *LIFE*, “Papal Christmas,” January 15 1945; “The Pope Creates New Cardinals,” March 11 1946. On Spellman see “Archibishop’s Travels,” September 20 1943; “The Concistory,” May 13 1946.

²⁹ *LIFE*, “Protestants Plan for Peace,” and “Getting Tough with Russia,” March 18 1946; “Western Faith,” March 21 1949; “God’s Underground. What Would Happen If It Rose in Communist Russia-and in the Secular U.S.?” April 18 1949. Henry Luce was also the husband of the fervent Catholic convert Clare Boothe Luce, later U.S. Ambassador in Italy (1953-1956).

much more remarkable achievement in strictly military terms, but the entrance of Allied troops in the “eternal city” offered *LIFE* an incomparable stage and irresistible photo-opportunities. “The strange sight of Americans capturing the city that once was the center of the world, the *Caput Mundi*” featured U.S. soldiers photographed against the backdrop of the Colosseum and Roman arches, as well the omnipresent St. Peter’s. [Pics 9a/9b] In the same issue, the editorial made clear the connection between Roman past and American present. After confirming that “the Rome that speaks more clearly to Americans today is the golden age of the ancient republic,” a chapter of the editorial under the title “Roman Law and American Freedom” singled out “the ideas of justice under the law” as Rome’s most precious legacy. Americans, “heirs of the Roman law,” had to build on that legacy in order to secure to all mankind “the idea of freedom as a natural right of all men.” This was the aim that now justified American leadership of the Western world and possibly beyond it: just like Caesar’s Rome had ruled on the Mediterranean world, after World War II “the ‘Atlantic Community’ may be similarly united under the sway of Great Britain and the U.S., which are at least as akin as Greece and Rome. As Rome transmitted Greek culture to the barbarians of Europe, so may America be destined to be the bridge between Europe and the emerging civilizations of Asia.” Similarly, although with a Hellenic twist, the landing in Sicily one year before had evoked visions of an American international mission whose lineage went back to ancient Greece.³⁰

The analogy between the Italian past and the American present relied on the Renaissance as well. The first installment of an ambitious “History of Western Culture” focused on Italy and specifically on Piccolomini, depicted as a successful self-made man comparable to present-day Americans: “Like many a successful American businessman who bequeaths public libraries or school buildings to the places where he lived and worked, Piccolomini, after he became Pope, took pride in beautifying Pienza...and

³⁰ *LIFE*, “The Fall of Rome,” June 19 1944. As for the projection of American influence to Asia, it must be remembered that Henry Luce was, unlike Lippmann, an unrepentant universalist and always retained a personal, cultural, and geopolitical interest in Chinese affairs (he was among the supporters of the ‘China lobby’ in the U.S.). *LIFE*, “Our Army,” July 26 1943.

Siena.”³¹ Analogies were found everywhere, so much so that “some of Italy looks like home to U.S. soldiers.”³² A June 1944 photo-essay intent on showing that various New York landmarks, including Columbia Low Library, had been inspired by masterpieces of Italian architecture went so far as to couple New York’s skyline with San Gimignano.

[Pic 10]

However, the emphasis on the Italian past as a source of Western/Atlantic values ended up exposing Italy’s present tragedies and coming political irrelevance. In August 1943 aerial photographs presented six Italian cities as the “world’s best stage set for great and sad deeds,” while the caption underscored that these stages “had notably failed to inspire greatness in modern Italy.” **[Pic 11]** To some extent, such emphasis on artistic and touristic landmarks also ended up reflecting and reinforcing stereotyped views of Italy that stressed its distance from the Atlantic world. When a *LIFE* editorial greeted the end of the Fascist regime in the summer of 1943, it foresaw a chance for “the Italian people...to become themselves once more...For indeed the world has almost forgotten what Italian are really like – a lovable, laughing people...They are not warriors...They are people of the sun...And this make them also the children of the arts - and, above all, of songs...They sing them under the bright Mediterranean stars, when the night is warm and heavy with blossoms...Song is to them as natural as life itself.”³³

To conclude, it is hard to measure the impact of public discourse on international relations and vice-versa, but it is even harder to ignore the existence of a link connecting the two, especially in a country like the U.S. where – perhaps more than anywhere else - the realm of foreign policy is traditionally subject to the influence and control of public opinion, the prerogatives of Congress, and the dynamics of democracy.

³¹ *LIFE*, “Reinassance Man,” March 3 1947.

³² *LIFE*, “Speaking of Pictures,” June 5 1944.

³³ *LIFE*, “Mussolini’s End,” August 2 1943.