Italy became a crucial participant in the implementation of the dual-track decision at the Guadeloupe summit, the meeting held by the American, British, French, and German leaders between 5 and 7 January, 1979. It was a paradoxical result to some extent, in as much as Rome had been patently excluded from the consultations and the bilateral talks which had occurred in the previous years especially between Bonn, London, Washington and even Paris. Italy’s relatively marginal position was determined by different factors; one of them – namely, its status of non-nuclear weapon state – was bound to turn into a source of political relevance within North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) over the next decade. The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight to what extent such a status helped Rome to enhance its stance as an Atlantic partner, once Italy committed itself to deploy theatre nuclear systems of the new-generation.

The idea of a quadripartite summit was put forward by US President Jimmy Carter, who, during the Fall of 1978, was becoming increasingly worried about the faltering NATO cohesion, deeply affected by what in most European countries was perceived as the US lack of leadership. The West German government, in particular, lamented a dangerous mismanagement of the process of modernization of the Alliance’s military capabilities that had reached its peak with the neutron bomb affair. The related discus-

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1 Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, Georgia, USA (hereafter JCL), digital collection, NLC 128-9-15-12-1, subject: My meetings with President Giscard, Chancellor Schmidt and Prime Minister Callaghan, October 4, 1978; Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Dr. Z. Brzezinski in the Imperial Hotel, on Wednesday October 4 at 10:00 hours, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK (hereafter TNA), PREM 16/1984.

ions developed among NATO partners had emphasized that there was not yet a coincidence of intentions, as the key allies were concerned, in somewhat different ways, about the consequences of the growing disparities in long-range theater capabilities between the Soviet bloc and the Western alliance in Europe. Those disparities were progressively perceived as the source of a further risk of decoupling between West European defense and the US strategic capabilities, whose credibility was already under scrutiny because of the tenet of essential equivalence implicitly affirmed through the negotiating process concerning the strategic arsenals of the two superpowers.

On the Caribbean island, therefore, the American President tried to obtain a clear indication of European allies’ willingness to accept either the neutron weapons, the ground launched cruise missiles (GLCM), or the Pershing II, which might help to meet the SS-20 and backfire aircraft threats. According to Carter, if the next round of negotiations with the Soviets on Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) III had to include limitations of theatre nuclear forces (TNF) in Europe, the alliance had to show its determination to deploy medium range missiles. Such a determination was expected inter alia from Bonn, whose participation in the modernization program was definitely crucial. At the Guadeloupe summit, the German chancellor eventually acceded but pointed out that he would “take GLCMs on German soil provided at least one other European NATO ally did the same”. That was the so-called “non-singularity” clause, a condition West Germany had urged would be met no matter what nuclear modernization process NATO was carrying out. Then, after the January 1979 summit, the West German consent to host, on its territory, new theatre systems was refined with a further requirement: the deployment had to involve other non-nuclear countries, which meant that the expected modernization of the United Kingdom deterrent was not considered as complying, while Belgium and the Netherlands were mentioned as natural candidates for the developing Alliance plans.

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5 President Jimmy Carter’s personal brief notes on the Guadeloupe summit meeting, January 12, 1979, JCL, digital collection, NLC 128-4-12-3-9.


8 Brief from the Secretary of the Cabinet on Grey Areas, March 8, 1979, TNA, PREM 16/1984.
If these were the conditions urged by Bonn, the White House was now unquestionably supporting NATO modernization in Europe and, with that goal in mind, was trying to get a clear commitment on the part of its Atlantic partners. The government in Rome, after having voiced its indignation for its exclusion from the quadrupartite summit,\(^9\) was involved in a series of bilateral consultations first with its American counterpart. David Aaron, the US Deputy National Security Advisor, went to Italy first in March 1979. At that time, however, the Italian domestic scene seemed to imply at least a troubled participation of the country to the TNF deployment.\(^10\) The strong Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI), which eventually had accepted Italy’s Western alignment, was expected to resist any decision envisaging an Italian involvement in the expansion of NATO’s nuclear deterrent, inevitably bound to renew Cold War tensions with the Soviets.\(^11\) Yet, the elections of June 1979 turned out to be critical to significantly reduce the role the PCI had played during the years of the *compromesso storico* (the so-called historic compromise), when the Communists’ implicit support in Parliament had been crucial in keeping the Cristian Democrats (DC) in control of the executive power. Now it had become possible to set up a government that could dismiss such an indirect support, anticipating to some extent the *pentapartito* (five party) formula of the mid-1980s.\(^12\)

In July, at the time of Aaron’s second trip to Rome, the outgoing Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti simply acknowledged the United States’ invitation to concretely participate in the decision-making process leading to the modernization of NATO’s nuclear deterrent.\(^13\) But at the same time, a more explicit request was addressed to Italy by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the German leader. During a meeting in Rome with the Italian President of the Republic, Sandro Pertini, Schmidt openly solicited the Italian commitment to future TNF deployments.\(^14\) West Germany’s obsession with the “non-singularity” clause could not remain neglected as the time for decision was approaching with the critical North Atlantic Council already scheduled for December 1979. By that Fall, first the Netherlands, and consequently Belgium, had ceased to ap-

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9 Elementi del colloquio del 17 marzo 1979 fra il Ministro degli Esteri Forlani e il Vice Direttore del NSC, David Aaron, per la parte relativa al ‘modus procedendi’ delle consultazioni fra gli alleati ed all’incontro della Guadalupa, Archivio Andreotti, Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Roma, Italy (hereafter AAn), busta 595, David Aaron, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Direzione Generale degli Affari Politici.
13 Incontro dell’On. Presidente del Consiglio con il Sig. David Aaron, Consigliere aggiunto del Presidente Carter per gli affari di sicurezza nazionale – Palazzo Chigi, July 19, 1979, AAn, busta 595, David Aaron, Consigliere Diplomatico del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri.
pear as sure bets for sharing with Bonn the responsibility of increasing NATO’s nuclear deterrent capabilities in Europe, according to the plan formulated by the High Level Group (HLG). In spite of the political maneuvers and the diplomatic efforts invested in the attempt to finally find a compromise on a program that established deploying 572 long-range theatre nuclear missiles (cruise and Pershing II), the Dutch government stepped back questioning the numbers that had been so difficult to agree in the previous months.\textsuperscript{15} Conversely – and rather unexpectedly – Italy revealed a much firmer stance. Regardless of the foreseeable difficulty in gaining the support of national public opinion, the head of the new government, Francesco Cossiga, ended up embracing the idea of the TNF deployment. The concurrence eventually expressed by the leadership of the Partito Socialista Italiano (PSI) was critical to win his initial caution on that issue. In fact, once, by the end of October, the PSI leadership had made up their mind and agreed that a dual approach, combining deployment and arms control was viable,\textsuperscript{16} the Italian Cabinet gave its assent, committing the country to the modernization plans.\textsuperscript{17} With Italy’s consent the dual-track decision could be definitely adopted, in December 1979, by the North Atlantic Council, whose members had a few years to devote to negotiations before a regional nuclear build-up would be necessarily implemented.\textsuperscript{18}

The Italian government, aware of the increased responsibility of being one of the few certain deploying countries, and of the politically relevant opportunities provided by closer cooperation with its NATO partners, immediately pursued a deeper coordination with Bonn, which responded in kind. In a letter sent by the German Chancellor to Cossiga at the end of January 1980, the former confirmed his opinion that, to be considered – or implemented, for that matter – any review of the NATO modernization program already decided by the Alliance needed to be offset by real results in terms of arms control. Therefore, a firm stance on the part of the Atlantic allies was a priority that both Italy and West Germany agreed would require a coordinated action aiming

\textsuperscript{15} Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem britischen Aussenminister Carrington, October 31, 1979, AAPD, Vol. II, 1979. The Dutch political scene was so divided on the issue of NATO modernization that, on December 6, the Netherlands Parliament voted by seventy-six votes to sixty-nine in favor of a motion rejecting not only basing in the Netherlands but also Dutch support for a modernization program of any kind.

\textsuperscript{16} Mozione signed by: Craxi, Balzamo, Signorile, Lagorio, Manca, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma, Italy (hereafter ACS), Serie 15 (Consigliere Diplomatico della Presidenza del Consiglio), NATO 5/2, Camera dei Deputati, Gruppo Parlamentare del PSI.

\textsuperscript{17} Nuti, “The Nuclear Debate”, 237-38; see also Lagorio, L’ultima sfida, 30-38.

\textsuperscript{18} The final communiqué of the NATO Special Foreign and Defense Ministers meeting is available on the page: www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b791212a/htm, last accessed February 18, 2016.
Italy’s Role in the Implementation of the Dual-Track Decision

at bringing “also Belgium to overcome its previous reservations toward the stationing of the missiles”. 19

The Soviet reaction to the dual-track decision and the subsequent North Atlantic Council (NAC) Communiqué, that in mid-December 1979 advanced the Atlantic alliance offer to start TNF negotiations, was utterly negative. Moscow basically responded that no negotiations would be opened unless NATO countries overtly renounced their modernization program. Indeed, the Kremlin’s uncompromising stance arose from the ill-founded conviction that, again, as had happened at the time of the neutron bomb debate, it would be enough for the Soviet Union to fan the flames of European citizens’ fears for mobilizing a large majority of Western public opinion against the new plans for the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) on the other side of the Iron curtain. 20

All in all, in the early days of 1980, arms control appeared to be founded on rather shaky bases. The Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan and consequently the ratification of SALT II by the US Congress was doomed, as well as what still remained of détente between the two superpowers. Indeed, there was no immediate prospect of SALT III negotiations and no obvious forum for TNF arms control discussions. Rather, the Soviets had rejected the US offer to open talks on theatre nuclear systems and were seemingly in favor of enhancing their ultimate negotiating position by continuing their SS-20 deployments. For the Western Alliance, however, the US arms control offer had to remain on the table and NATO had to proceed with the preparation of its position for negotiations. To pursue that goal, the Carter administration was working in particular with the United Kingdom, West Germany and Italy to establish, within the NATO framework, the High-level Special Consultative Group (SCG). The rationale of confirming, after the results achieved with the Special Group in 1979, 21 a consultation

19 Letter from Helmut Schmidt to Francesco Cossiga, January 28, 1980, ACS, Serie 15, NATO 5/1. Both the two leaders took very seriously the reservations expressed by Belgium and the Netherlands at the December 1979 NAC meeting and agreed to “start first with Belgium, that by the end of June is expected to decide about the completion of the program”.


21 The so-called Special Group had been set up in April 1979, on the principle that modernization and arms control goals had to reinforce one another. West Germany acted as front runner to establish such a group whose main purpose was to formulate objectives and principles related to any arms control negotiations involving theatre nuclear systems; still, its creation followed intensive US-UK-FGR consultations, see: Marilena Gala, “NATO Modernization at the Time of Détente: a Test of European Coming of Age?”, Historische Mitteilungen 24 (2011): 115-18.
process across the Atlantic arose from the awareness, shared in Washington and West European capitals, that “SALT III negotiations involving TNF will include issues which have an especially direct and substantial impact on the security of the Alliance”. The group would receive its mandate from the NAC and would consist of high-level officials from NATO governments, while its spelled out purpose was to allow the United States to “consult with its allies on the approach to be taken by the US on arms control issues involving LRTNF [long-range theatre nuclear forces] in SALT III, based on the objectives and principles approved by Ministers on December 12, 1979”.22

In spite of the advisory mechanism created for the sake of NATO cohesion, over the next half of the year, the prospects of re-launching arms control negotiations remained definitely poor. Only in June 1980, during a meeting with Chancellor Schmidt, Leonid Brezhnev finally indicated Soviet willingness to enter into exchanges on INF without preconditions.23 As a result, the US Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, met with Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrej Gromyko, and agreed to begin talks. Then, in Geneva, the heads of the two superpowers’ delegations met on October 17 to start the first round of negotiations that lasted for the next month. The two parties exposed the main elements of their respective negotiating approaches. From an American perspective, Moscow was “putting forth a proposal which would codify the Soviet monopoly in long-range land-based theater nuclear missiles, and indeed allow their build-up of SS-20s … to continue”. Clearly, the “Soviets’ primary objective” remained to block the NATO modernization program. Nonetheless, “despite the not unexpected differences in approach”, the same report concluded, “the Geneva meetings constituted a constructive first step in arms control involving TNF. They were serious and substantive with each side playing out major elements of its approach”.24 At the conclusion of this preliminary round a date for resumption of the talks in the next year had still to be set through mutual Soviet-American consultation. This could possibly have been one of the first issues on the agenda of the outgoing administration, if it were re-elected. Instead, the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, won the elections and became the new President of the United States.

At the White House, now, there was a leader who openly rejected the concept of détente both on political and moral bases. With détente, he also opposed the arms con-

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23 Glitman, The Last Battle of the Cold War, 48.

control process carried out throughout the 1970s, which had led to the SALT agreements. Conversely, for Europeans détente was still of critical importance. As the Italian Foreign Minister Franco Maria Malfatti had declared, on October 31, 1979, during the parliamentary debate about the government’s assessment on the problems of security and disarmament, “détente is and must remain the essential goal of Italian foreign policy”.

In other words, for the American NATO allies the decision taken in December 1979 had to be implemented not just in terms of nuclear build-up but also – if not especially – in terms of negotiations to dismantle the arsenals targeted against European countries.

A few weeks after the official settlement of the Reagan administration, the new head of the Farnesina, Emilio Colombo, was in Washington to meet with some of the administration’s most important members, including the President. To Secretary of State Alexander Haig the Italian Foreign Minister clearly said that his country “had made a commitment to TNF modernization but it was necessary to comply with the second part of the [dual-track] decision”. Haig concurred and acknowledged the need for consultations “especially with those allies directly concerned in the TNF modernization decision”. Yet, he also pointed out that for President Reagan and himself, “to proceed with the Russians along the track of ‘functional dialogue’ … without an assurance that the Russians intended to respect a certain line of conduct in international affairs would be against the interests of the United States and of the West”.

Indeed, Italy, the United Kingdom and West Germany did intend to keep their word and remain committed to TNF deployments. Those European governments had even worked on a paper focused on general concepts and criteria to be used in the next steps of NATO discussions in order “to maintain the momentum of the HLG during the post-election period in the US”. Yet, they could not easily align to the attempt to introduce the linkage approach that the new US government was advocating. As Colombo underlined to his American counterpart, before making policy announcements, the Reagan administration had “to take account of repercussions in Europe and

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27 Telegram from Washington to FCO, February 13, 1981, TNA, FCO 46/2759, TNF: visit of Foreign Minister Colombo.

to consult with the Europeans beforehand”.29 The quest for transatlantic cooperation was at the center of the talks between the West German and Italian Foreign Ministers in mid-March 1981. Both Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Colombo agreed that the European allies had to work together and in close collaboration with Washington to resist the Soviet propaganda campaign aimed at creating a cleavage between the two sides of the Atlantic. They also confirmed the common commitment to the modernization program, whose wavering could be prevented only if Bonn and Rome managed to proceed together.30 Such a determination had been reasserted to the US President by West Germany Foreign Minister a week earlier. On this occasion, the European leader had openly praised the Italian government for “being at least as firm as Germany, in spite of the more difficult domestic situation it had to deal with”, and announced its intention to try to convince “also their other European friends” whose commitment to the modernization program had been postponed or openly rejected.31

In order to be continued in the medium term, the firmness displayed in Rome and Bonn toward the nuclear build-up track of the December 1979 decision needed to be boosted by combining with negotiations. Instead, since the first months of his term, the US President had patently refrained from embracing the dual-track decision inherited by the previous administration. Only at the North Atlantic Council held in Rome in early May 1981, did the White House eventually accede and, together with the other NATO countries, “reaffirm their commitment to that [dual-track] decision”.32 Still, the impression prevailing in the European capitals was that the Americans would seek to give priority to the modernization process and therefore to establish full Department of Defense influence over the TNF negotiations with the Soviets, which, according to the US representative to the HLG, were due to begin in the next Autumn.33

The American government had undertaken a thorough review of the US arms control policy and in mid-1981 was still striving to formulate a set of proposals that would reconcile its wary approach toward the Soviets with the need to commit, before the world, to reducing the risk of a nuclear holocaust. While its NATO partners lamented

32 Telegram from Rome, May 5, 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, USA (hereafter RRPL), Sven Kraemer Files, box 91316, NATO HLG.
33 Note from David H. Gillmore, May 15, 1981, HLG Meeting: Brussels, May 13-14, TNA, FCO 46/2719; Note from the UK Delegation to NATO, July 1, 1981, Public Presentation of Nuclear Issues: HLG Follow-up, FCO 46/2756.
the lack of a real multilateral dimension in the arms control policy pursued in Washington – and even in London a negative assessment seemed to prevail about the “bipolar US vision of the world” – for the State Department the time had come “to argue more aggressively particularly on TNF” and “to turn around a largely defensive and responsive Western posture”. In shaping the Western proposals, the United States and its NATO allies had to keep in mind that “negotiability’ considerations should take a back seat to public impact”. With the beginning of negotiations in Geneva approaching, European partners seemed to agree. In fact, at the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) ministerial meeting held before the opening of the American-Soviet talks – expected to take place between mid-November and mid-December 1981 – most of NATO’s Defense Ministers showed a deeper awareness toward the so-called “public presentation matter”. In particular, the zero option was mentioned and discussed at some length. Such a formula had been circulating among NATO countries at least since October 1979, when in West Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy the need to assuage national growing concerns about the future of détente and arms control had prompted their government majorities to hint that for the modernization option “a zero deployment possibility [if the Soviets eliminate LRTNF]” existed. At the end of October 1981, this hypothesis was supported again on the principle – spelled out by the Norwegian Minister – that “although prospects for reciprocal zero option were not good, it was important to keep the option open”, and leave the onus of its possible rejection to the Soviet Union. Indeed, over the debate held in the NPG, no European high representative had questioned that “if the objective was reductions to the lowest possible level, then the ideal goal was the zero option”, as affirmed by Italian Minister Lelio Lagorio. This was a posture that offered the American administration the opportunity “to consider a bold plan, sweeping in nature, to capture world opinion”. The foreseeable results were of the kind the government in Washington had looked for since its first days in office; in fact, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger noticed that, “if we adopt the ‘zero option’ approach and the Soviets reject

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34 Note from the Arms Control and Disarmament Dept., July 21, 1981, Haig’s Speech on Arms Control, TNA, FCO 46/2772.
35 Department of State Action Memorandum to the Secretary from EUR, August 8, 1981, Western Campaign – the Next Months, RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC Records, Agency file, box 91378; Road Map, SCG Morning Session, n.d. (though by inference, Autumn 1981), RRPL, Kraemer file, box 2, NATO – SCG.
37 UK record of the 30th Ministerial Meeting of NATO’s NPG held at Gleneagles on October 20 and 21, 1981, October 30, 1981, Agenda Item II: NATO’s TNF posture, TNA, FCO 46/2757.
38 UK record of the 30th Ministerial Meeting.
it after we have given it a good try, this will leave the Europeans in a position where they would really have no alternative to modernization”.  

Thus, on November 18, at the National Press Club in Washington, Reagan announced that his government was prepared to cancel the deployment of Pershing II and GLCMs if the Soviets dismantled their SS-20, SS-4, and SS-5 missiles. It was, indeed, a bold proposal that was expected to reassert the American leadership and promote cohesion among Western countries. However, it was also a posture that more forcefully than ever meant that any success of the arms control track depended on the display of the Alliance’s determination to proceed on schedule with the INF deployments. That was a linkage implicit in the dual-track decision which the European allies had been crucial to define and defend against any American early attempt to thwart it. However, as the negotiations on theatre nuclear systems remained bilateral, Washington ended up striving to convince its NATO partners – and especially the stationing countries – that the United States was “serious about arms control”.  

Unfortunately for President Reagan, this turned out to be anything but an easy task to carry out. The Soviet Union, for its part, persisted in making arms control a major theme in its propaganda effort to prevent Western rearmament. By the end of October 1982, after the failure of the scheme conceived by the US negotiator, Paul Nitze, and known as the “walk in the wood” proposal, a crisis of confidence between the main European capitals and Washington risked accelerating. Among the countries committed to deploy cruise and Pershing II missiles, Italy had been the first non-nuclear weapon power to announce where the theatre forces were to be placed. The government in Rome had eventually decided for Comiso, in Sicily, where an airport had been built during World War II. Certainly, the level of mobilization of Italian public opinion against the stationing of cruise missiles was not as strong as that shown by the German, British, or even Dutch, electorates. Still, Rome was the capital where Eugene Rostow, the Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), first mentioned the possibility of adopting a quite different American negotiating position. Talking with Corrado Taliani, the Italian Foreign Affairs Arms Control

41 Memorandum for the President, November 14, 1981, RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC Records, Agency file, box 91356.
42 Talbott, Deadly Gambits, 117-51.
43 Lagorio, L’ultima sfida, 67; the day of the announcement was August 7, 1981.

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Chief Minister, the American Director of the ACDA said that if it turned out that there was no future for the zero option, “we would not exclude discussion of an alternative at an appropriate time in the negotiations”. He went on, then, reasoning that “for INF, an outcome providing equality at a level above zero-zero could in fact strengthen the coupling of the US and Europe in the overall nuclear context”. 44

Rostow would be dismissed by the beginning of the following year because, among other things, he had never managed to develop a close relationship with the White House. 45 However, the hypothesis he aired in Rome was to become the core of the interim solution that the Reagan administration presented to its NATO partners and to the Soviets, in the early months of 1983. 46 Indeed, an overt demonstration of flexibility by Washington was essential if the INF deployment had to preserve any good chances of proceeding according to the schedule. In other words, it was a message of cohesion and, even more, of credibility of the Alliance that all the stationing NATO countries could not fail to convey to Moscow. For those countries, and Italy among them, it was a success to hear from Vice-president George W. Bush that “the zero option was not a question of take it or leave it.” 47

The envisaging, by American negotiators, of an alternative proposal to the elimination of the TNF, however, could not avert the next failure of the Geneva diplomatic efforts. The Soviet leadership, overestimating the potential of the anti-nuclear movement in Europe, once the deployment of American missiles started, suspended bilateral talks and opted for a pressure tactic. It was a political mistake that the Politburo made out of its clear miscalculation about both the strength of the anti-missile movement and the impact the continuing deployment of the SS-20 would have on Western public opinion. 48 Without a clear understanding of how those negotiations might be resumed, the arms control talks were to wait for the advent of an unexpectedly new Soviet leader to be pursued again as a priority shared by both superpowers.

44 Telegram from AmEmbassy Rome to SecState, October 12, 1982, Rostow Consultations with Italians on Arms Control, RRPL, R. F. Lehman files, box 90710.
45 Talbott, Deadly Gambits, 167-69.
47 Telegram from AmEmbassy London to the White House, February 1983 and Vice President’s visit: Meeting with Foreign Minister Colombo, February 7, 1983, RRPL, Executive Secretariat, NSC Records, Country files, box 21, UK.
Conclusion

The dual-track decision was a compromise European NATO countries had strongly pursued as their own reconceptualization of security, in which deterrence, and the relative balance of nuclear power between the two blocs, had to be combined with détente. With its adoption by the North Atlantic Council, Western Europe had succeeded in having a say about its own security and what was discussed between the two superpowers at the arms control negotiating table. In fact, in linking arms control to the modernization of the nuclear deterrent, the decision of December 1979 inevitably enhanced the role played by the United States NATO allies which acquired a bargaining power, no matter which Soviet or arms control policies the American administrations were determined to carry out.

From the archival material available, Italy appears as a participant aware of that process of enfranchisement involving West European countries, which acknowledged that they might have a security agenda distinguishable from that pursued in Washington. Indeed, it was not a matter of renouncing the defense guaranteed by the huge American arsenal. Rather, throughout the negotiations carried out between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, that implemented in Europe became a common, steady effort to develop a real cooperation with the government in Washington, whose protection and support remained essential. West Germany was the main promoter of such an effort, as no change in the balance of forces on the territory of the old continent could be discussed or conceived without the participation of Bonn. Italy, therefore, was critical for a two-fold reason. As a stationing ally, the government in Rome exerted its constant pressure on the United States in order to promote the arms control track of the 1979 NATO decision; but, as a non-nuclear weapon country, it played an even more meaningful role in taking its place beside West Germany, and in joining any discussion about the modernization and re-balancing of nuclear forces in Europe, a real perspective from which to start negotiating for their future elimination.