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Tutor: Jakob Gustavsson

Germany, Italy and the Reform of the UN Security Council

A multi-level analysis approach

Roberto Falchi

Abstract

The point of departure of the present study is the recent debate about the reform of the UN Security Council. Two EU members, i.e. Italy and Germany, have actively taken part in such debate and have presented two contrasting reform proposals. Germany claims a permanent seat whereas Italy pushes for a system of regional representation with a view to make room for the EU after a true common foreign policy is achieved. The aim of this thesis is mainly empirical in that it seeks to shed light on the motives driving Italy and Germany to adopt conflicting positions about SC reform in the face of similar conditions, that is, among the others, being part of the CFSP mechanisms and being committed UN members. To address this problem I resort to a Foreign Policy Analysis approach and I carry out a multi-level analysis intended to explain the influence of the international environment, of domestic politics and of individual learning processes of key decision makers on a country's foreign policy action. After a careful assessment of the different weight of the factors pertaining to the three analytical levels I conclude that the conduct of Germany and Italy is influenced by a combination of international factors and how they are perceived and acted upon by decision makers, with domestic factors exercising a lesser influence.

Keywords: Foreign policy analysis; Multi-level approach; Germany; Italy; UN Security Council reform.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The point of departure of my thesis is the recent and lively debate on the reform of the United Nations Security Council (SC). Such a debate is part of the more general discussion centred on the reform of the United Nations Organization, which has been going on for some years, involving both governments and parts of the civil society.

The UN has a complex structure, designed to meet the demands of the vast number of areas of human life in which it is engaged. Yet, such structure is proving incapable of successfully tackling the challenges of the modern world. No comprehensive reform can be achieved without reviewing the composition of the SC, the UN's most prominent body, for it is the organ that deals with situations in which international peace and security is endangered and is vested with the most significant powers. The end of the cold War opened new horizons for the operations of the SC, which had until then been log-jammed by the contraposition between the two superpowers. Yet, after the initial wave of optimism following the success of the first Gulf War, the SC proved itself unable to successfully tackling the following major international crises, from the Balkan War to the slaughters in Rwanda and Somalia, from Kosovo to the recent military intervention by the US led coalition against Iraq.

There is today a widespread consensus in highlighting the lack of representativeness and decreasing legitimacy of an organ that still reflects the power balance of the post-World War II era. The various reform proposals put forward so far diverge on a number of key issues, such as how to carry out such enlargement; whether to comprehend new permanent seats and, should this option be adopted, what member states would be vested of this privileged position.

Core national interests of many states are directly affected by the possible shape that a reform of the SC could take and are heavily engaged in influencing the course of the debate. The harshness of such debate has been reflected in the work of an *ad hoc* organ, the Working Group on SC reform,¹

¹ See UN Doc. A/Res/48/26, 10 December 1993.

instituted by the General Assembly (GA) with the purpose to discuss the views of member states and come up with a general agreed proposal, which, as to date, appears to be very remote.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research question

The main interest of this thesis, however, is not the debate on SC reform as such. It is on the contrary extremely interesting to look at the possible implications that this debate can have on the EU at large. Two EU countries, i.e. Germany and Italy, have been particularly active in the reform debate. Both advocate different solutions and both lead two blocks of states supporting two conflicting reform proposals. Italy, on the one hand, pushes for the introduction of a number of new semi-permanent seats rotating among regional groups with the final goal to make room for the EU, once a truly common foreign policy is accomplished. Germany, on the other hand, relying on its economic power and the support of a number of UN member states – France and the UK *in primis* – has strongly put forward its candidacy for a permanent seat.

The SC is, within the UN, the organ vested with the more incisive powers and the highest visibility to public opinion. If the European governments are convinced that the EU should play a crucial role on the international arena, seeking membership in the SC should be a goal to achieve in the medium term, as highlighted by both the European Parliament² and the CFSP High Representative, Mr. Javier Solana,³ which have taken a strong stance in support of a permanent seat for the EU.

It is interesting to look at the positions of Germany and Italy for three main reasons. First of all, since both of them are EU member countries and are considered to be strongly pro-integrationist (Soetendorp, 1999). Second, because being both part of the common arrangements of the CFSP their actions on the international level should be constrained and oriented towards some form of coordination. Thirdly, because they both show a similar record as far as the UN membership is concerned. They both lost World War II, joined the Organization at a late stage and, through UN membership, tried to recover their international credibility. Moreover, they are two of the most involved countries in participating to peace operations and UN activities in general.

The questions that arise from these preliminary considerations are therefore the following:

² See *Resolution of the EP on the Relationships Between the European Union and the United Nations Organization*, n° 2049 (2003).

³ See *Solana Backs Fixed EU Seat on the Security Council*, source: www.globalpolicy.org, November 17, 1999, and *Solana Considers one EU Seat in UN Solution to Divisions*, March 24, 2003, source www.euobserver.com.

- *How can one explain these divergent positions?*
- *Is Germany mainly driven by national interest whereas Italy, on the other hand, by European interest?*
- *Or is the European cause used instrumentally by Italy with the intention to serve its own national interest?*

The purpose of my study is mainly empirical. I purport to carry out a theoretically guided analysis through which I will investigate the motives that led decision makers to adopt one position instead of another and I will seek to identify the factors that have been more influential. In order to address the above-mentioned questions I will resort to a Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) approach. The choice of such an approach is due to the consideration that, although many areas of EU member states' foreign policy fall within the scope of the CFSP, there are still some "ring-fenced" issues, to borrow a term used by Manners and Whitman (2000: 11), that member states want to jealously keep under control. In this respect, the SC reform constitutes a clear example of a ring-fenced issue and the behaviour of Germany and Italy regarding that issue, supports this interpretation. Scholars of FPA now agree on the fact that what influences a national position depends on a combination of factors situated at different dimensions, the systemic, the domestic and the individual (Gustavsson, 1998; Hill, 2003). Only with a combined analysis of those factors will it be possible to satisfactorily explain the foreign policy behaviour of states. Hence the present study will be focused on a multi-level analysis of the positions of Germany and Italy in order to discover what kind of factors concurred in influencing their choice of action.

1.3 Method of the study

In order to carry out a fruitful analysis, I will resort to the case study method, which, nevertheless, will not serve as a tester for theory or as a base for the development of a new theoretical approach to foreign policy. The main advantage of such a method is that the case at hand can be more accurately examined (Lijphart, 1971: 691). Conversely, by referring to one single case, the main downside will be the impossibility to make meaningful generalisations. Yet, the purpose of the present study being merely empirical, the case study method will adequately serve my research aim. To say that my study will be merely empirical does not mean that it is also atheoretical. Indeed, my analysis will be theoretically informed in that I will 'make explicit use of established theoretical propositions', by resorting to the tools extracted by FPA literature, in order to shed light on the case at hand (ibid.: 692). Therefore, following the classification proposed by the Dutch author, my case study is of the interpretative type (ibid.: 692) or, referring to Eckstein's categorization as reported in Gustavsson (1998: 8), it

possesses a “disciplined-configurative” nature. Moreover, the case study method hereby adopted has comparative connotations in that another aim of my research is that of comparing the course of German and Italian actions, with a view to consider whether the same factors influencing one country’s position will exert the same influence on the other and *vice versa*.

In order to grasp the substance of the divergence between the positions of Germany and Italy, a comprehensive explanation of the facts could not be achieved without understanding the motives triggering the actions of decision makers. In this sense I do not agree with the interpretation given by Hollis and Smith of explaining and understanding (Hollis and Smith, 1990) as separate dimensions. In their view, explaining can only be achieved by an external observer who looks at the facts from an outside position whereas understanding implies penetrating the motives and reasons of a certain action, which cannot be achieved without taking an inside position. If my aim is that of throwing light on the reasons why Germany and Italy adopted divergent position over the specific case of SC reform, I will not be able to reach my aim unless I manage to understand the motives of decision makers and the weight of the different factors influencing their decisions.

1.4 Material

The choice of the case study method entails the possibility to resort to an ample array of sources. I have benefited from this opportunity and I have utilized several types of material.

First of all, I have built the theoretical foundations by drawing on the existing literature in the field of FPA. I have therefore made large use of both books and articles published on the leading journals by the most prominent scholars in the field.

For the empirical analysis I have gathered a number of documents containing official statements by key officials of Germany and Italy given before the UN GA and before technical organs such as the Working Group on the SC reform. Moreover, I have made use of official statements underlying national positions as published on the websites of the two countries’ foreign ministers, as well as reported on paper publications. Finally, second-hand sources such as newspaper interviews and press releases have been taken into account with a view to substantiate my interpretations. With respect to the latter type of sources I am aware that the points of view expressed by interviewees might have been influenced by how questions have been formulated, let alone the fact that the content has already been filtered by those who carried out the interview. The risk to face not completely neutral information is present. Yet, since I have not been able to carry out such interviews myself, such a risk is unavoidable. Following White’s advice (1989: 8), I will therefore try to prioritize some

sources over others and seek to interpret the meaning of what often has been implied or even concealed by decision makers.

1.5 Limitations of the study

With the present study I do not claim to explain the entire range of foreign policy behaviour of Italy and Germany. The aim of my thesis is more modest in that my attention will be limited to a specific aspect of those two countries' actions on the international level. Focusing on a single aspect, the losses in comprehensiveness my study might suffer will be compensated by the gains of a more accurate analysis. Although one could argue that studies of this kind run the risk of being overtly descriptive and therefore tedious, I believe that relying on solid theoretical basis and by conducting my analysis in accordance with a clear theoretical framework, I will be able to avoid that risk.

1.6 Plan of the study

The present thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter sets the theoretical foundations. After having presented FPA as the main approach that will inform my research project, the section will be divided into three parts according to the different levels of analysis considered, i.e. the international level, the domestic level and the individual dimension.

The second chapter will be dedicated to present the two case studies, the national positions of Italy and Germany with respect to the debate on SC reform. To outline these positions official statements will be considered as well as the personal views of the main actors involved in the debate. Particular attention will be paid to the work of the *ad hoc* Working Group on SC reform, which has been for many years the main platform for discussion on the matter.

In the third chapter I will analyse the actions of Germany and Italy benefiting from the theoretical tools presented in chapter one. Once again, my analysis will follow the division into different levels of analysis as introduced in the first chapter.

Such division will be respected also in the concluding chapter, which will summarise the main findings of the research and will try to weigh the different factors influencing the national positions taking into consideration the different phases of a foreign policy action, i.e. the formulation, the promotion and implementation phases. Some concluding remarks will then be dedicated to how further developing the present research.

2 A theoretical framework for a multi-level analysis approach

For the diplomatic battle undertaken by Germany and Italy over SC reform pertains to their national foreign policies, a fruitful way to shed light into the reasons why these countries have adopted conflicting positions is to resort to a FPA approach.

FPA as a sub-system of IR emerged from the recognition by some scholars that, to grasp the many nuances of such a thing like foreign policy, grand theories or comprehensive approaches trying to explain all aspects of external action of all countries at any point in time were not sufficient. FPA tries to address this problem (Gerner, 1995). It emerged in reaction to the typical realist vision of the international system as characterised by a state of anarchy in which the principal actors – states, seen as unitary actors – had to act accordingly in order to defend their national interests (Gerner, 1995; Hill: 2003). FPA challenges this view as it analyses the different aspects of the decision making process leading to certain external actions and puts them in context in order to reach a comprehensive explanation.

The validity of FPA rests on the awareness since the international system possesses the same characteristics for the actors that operate within it, the reason of their sometimes different responses has to be found in other dimensions, i.e. domestic, bureaucratic or that of the individual decision maker (Gerner, 1995; Hermann, 1995; Gustavsson, 1998). Since no single theory is able to make sense of such a complexity, FPA benefits from a variety of approaches, ranging from IR theories to cognitive approaches focused on individual choices; from approaches aimed at highlighting the political dynamics between a government and its opposition to those tailored to give meaning to organizational behaviour (Rosenau, 1987).

The study case under investigation in the present work constitutes an excellent field of analysis for the adoption of a FPA framework as both Germany and Italy act within the same international framework, have similar incentives and share the same constraints. Thus the answer for their divergent positions lies somewhere else than the international level alone. Different factors pertaining to different dimensions play a role, exerting pressure and influencing decision makers' choices.

FPA scholars however disagree on the fundamental question of which dimensions are to be considered relevant in shaping a country's action or position (Buzan, 1995). Without entering this debate, what I will do here is to clarify that my view of the levels of analysis is epistemologically rather than ontologically oriented. With this I mean that I will make use of them as

explanatory tools from which I will derive the different sources of explanation, instead of considering them as the reality that is to be described.

My analysis will be divided into three levels: the international, the domestic and the individual. This choice is due to practical considerations. I am aware that other level of analysis can be taken into account, i.e. the bureaucratic, intended as the sum of individuals engaged in an issue area, a foreign ministry for instance. Social forces, pressure groups and organized interests also play a crucial role in steering government decisions. Yet, I have decided to group these potentially different dimensions into a single one, believing that what will be lost in terms of accuracy and comprehensiveness of analysis will be compensated by a greater simplicity and brevity of argumentation.

I will consider the international level in terms of incentives and constraints and the domestic level in terms of constitutional structure, nature of the political regime and the role played by the constituencies. Then, I will try to address the problem of how individual decision makers perceive the inputs stemming from those dimensions and take their decisions.

2.1 The international level

The first dimension I am going to analyse is, as described by Hill (2003: 159), ‘the milieu in which every state is located’ and that not only is constituted by states but also comprises a ‘web of institutions, rules and expectations’ that constrain state actions and that shape ‘their foreign policy orientations’. The analysis carried out in the following paragraph is not aimed at addressing the international system per se. Rather, it will purport to depict the main traits of the “playing field” in which states interact. In doing so it will be beneficial to first look at the main theoretical approaches in International Relations that have tried to make sense of what goes on in world politics.

2.1.1 The nature of the international environment

For reasons of limited space I will limit my discussion to summarize the terms of the mainstream debate in IR on the nature of the international system, i.e. that opposing realism and its variant neorealism to liberal institutionalism. Yet, it is important to point out that there have been streams of thinking outside such debate as the social constructivist perspective proposed by Wendt (1992), for instance, clearly demonstrates.

Since the end of World War II the international system has undergone epochal transformations, investing not only the political but also the economic and the social spheres (Rothgeb, 1995: 36). Theories trying to

address its nature and its functioning have been competing over what categories best explain such developments. The main debate has occurred between realists and liberal institutionalists. The former emphasize the role of states as primary actors in an anarchic system characterized mainly by security concerns and the improbability of international cooperation. The latter contest this position highlighting the complexity of a system where a host of actors, not only states, play a role and in which there is no rigid hierarchy among issues. Moreover, they are less pessimistic about the prospects of cooperation among states and therefore pay attention to the proliferation of international regimes and the increasing role of international institutions.⁴

Both approaches have a particular focus on the concept of power. Being a crucial element in all social relations and especially in politics at large and international relations in particular, we cannot escape here a clarification about what will be meant with power when this concept is brought up in the next sections. Power can have multiple aspects (Rothgeb, 1995; Keohane & Nye, 2001; Hill, 2003). Yet, I will here refer to power as resources, mainly of economic nature, that a country possesses.

The anarchical nature of the international environment, however it is intended, does influence the behaviour of states. Yet, given its large complexity, no single theoretical approach can satisfactorily explain what goes on in international politics. This is all the more true with respect to the case under investigation here. Pure realist perspectives are not suited to account for the actions of Germany and Italy vis à vis the SC reform as the reasons they put forward to substantiate their claims are not influenced by security reasons nor are they grounded in their military strength. On the contrary it is their economic strength, the support to international values and the degree of participation to international institutions that play the key role. However, in the quest for a SC seat some patterns of “realist” logic are discernible in that both Italy and Germany see the potential victory over SC reform as a way to strengthen their international clout. Moreover, such a quest is a typical example of a zero-sum game, for the two reform proposals go in opposite directions and the adoption of one would entail the rejection of the other.

Following these considerations, the next step will be that of explaining how the international system influences the behaviour of Italy and Germany over the issue of SC reform. I will try to address this question by highlighting the incentives for actions and the constraints that limit the choices. In doing so, I will further make a distinction between political and economic factors.

⁴ The realist view has in Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* (1954), its seminal work whereas the main ideas of liberal institutionalists can be found in *Power and Interdependence* by Keohane and Nye (2001).

2.1.2 Incentives and constraints in the quest for a seat on the UN Security Council

Germany and Italy are both part of a web of institutions that limit their actions at the international level and that sometimes present incentives to carry out certain actions.

I will consider one type of incentive, i.e. the possibility to acquire a seat on the SC. A place on the SC is particularly looked-for by any state because of the great international visibility it entails as well as international prestige. Here a clarification is nevertheless required. The goal of Germany is, in fact, to acquire a permanent seat whereas Italy pushes for a system of regional representation in which it will be one of the members to rotate more frequently among the would-be new category of semi-permanent seats.

Of the different types of constraints imposed by the international environment I will here focus on being part of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) machinery. Although a European foreign policy can also be a source of opportunities for member states, as Manners and Whitman point out (2000), I will here consider its impact as an entity that member states have to take into account when carrying out their national foreign policies in ring-fenced issues. Even if its loose constraints permit certain room of manoeuvre in some issue area – that of the UN SC reform is clear example in this respect – the CFSP machinery plays a role, as Sandholtz argues, in that member states define their interests in a way that would be different if the EU did not exist (1993). Although we cannot compare the scope of the CFSP to the comprehensiveness reached by the EC external action, the former does pose certain limitations, as is, for instance, the practice of coordinating EU member states' national positions and voting in international organizations (Hill, 1996: 6).

Some final words are necessary in order to identify what factors might influence these two countries in perceiving the incentives and constraints highlighted above and in acting upon them. The first type of factors are of political nature. I will here concentrate on the end of the Cold War and the opportunities this event opened up both in terms of the possibility of SC reform and in terms of the chances to play a bigger role on the international scene for those countries, like Italy and Germany, that where up till then overshadowed by the logic of the bipolar world and the competition between the two superpowers.

The second type of factors are of economic nature. I will here consider the country's economic size and the contribution to the UN both in terms of financial contribution and in terms of participation and support to UN missions and programmes around the world. These factors are all the more important since they represent the fundamental requisites set forth in the main reform proposals presented so far.

2.2 The domestic level

When adopting a foreign policy position decision makers are not only attentive to the external environment, to the constraints it imposes and the incentives it presents. They also look inward to the domestic dimension, taking into consideration those factors belonging therein that might constrain their decisions (Hill, 2003: 220). Robert Putnam has brightly depicted this situation with the metaphor of the “two-level game” that sees politicians dealing with foreign affairs as simultaneously engaged in two tables in which they face their international counterparts and those representing domestic interests. Their actions are thus influenced by the necessity of reaching certain international objectives without, at the same time, losing the support of national constituencies (Putnam, 1988).

So much for the neo-realist vision of the international environment as the main cause of states’ foreign policy behaviour, that the domestic and international dimensions in foreign policy are entangled and often so tightly interconnected that it is difficult to discern the primary cause of a certain foreign policy decision or action is nowadays widely recognised by much of the literature (Hagan, 1995: 118; Hill, 2003: 229). Yet, scholars not only diverge on what domestic factors matter most but also on the question of how domestic sources are linked to the external actions of governments (Hagan, 1995: 121). Several factors have been taken into account by the scholarship, ranging from social and economic national attributes to the type of political regime and from bureaucratic structures to the type and role of domestic constituencies. What I intend to do here is to categorize the factors that I consider to be most relevant in such a way so that they will be easily operationalised in the subsequent analysis. I have therefore identified three categories: the constitutional structure, the nature of the political regime and the constituencies of a government.

2.2.1 The constitutional set up

The constitutional structure, i.e. the allocation of the roles and competencies of who is in charge of making the relevant decisions, is of great importance in influencing a country’s foreign policy. In this respect, as Hill suggests (2003: 230), the elements that matter most are those concerning the relationship between the government and the legislature. According to how this relationship is framed he identifies five different types of constitutional model: the federal type; the executive in a multi-party legislative chamber; a unitary state with powers divided between the legislature and the presidency; *de facto* dominance by a single party within a democratic structure; one party systems. Another aspect of a country’s constitutional structure to take into account is the relationship within a government cabinet between the prime minister and the foreign minister. Such an aspect might

have a decisive influence in that certain decision makers can exploit the room of manoeuvre allowed by institutional rules to advance their pet-proposals, as it was the case, as we will see later on, of German foreign minister Klaus Kinkel.

2.2.2 The nature of the political regime

A dimension that is tightly connected to the constitutional structure of a country is the nature of its political regime. Here regime, as a synonym for government, is intended as the 'set of roles in which inheres the power to make authoritative policy decisions (Salmore & Salmore, 1978: 110). The importance of such a dimension lies in its being a bridging category linking constitutional characteristics to the implementation of a certain policy. The types of political regime are categorised by Hagan according to two measures: regime fragmentation and regime vulnerability (1987). Fragmentation stands for the degree of internal political division of a government's central political leadership and the single leader's ability to dominate his immediate political environment (ibid.: 345) whereas vulnerability is a measure of the likelihood that the leadership will be removed from office (ibid.: 348).

To what extent do the constitutional structure and the political regime of a country affect its foreign policy behaviour? As Hagan suggests, decision makers are constantly involved in a "dual game" facing different forms of opposition in multiple arenas (1995: 121). They respond to such challenges by building coalitions and trying to retain political power. The long term political survival is a core objective of any political group and foreign policy, in this respect, can be seen in some cases as being a tool to gain or maintain political support (ibid.: 124). The dynamics of this dual game influence the foreign policy behaviour of a country in that it drives decision makers to act in response to the challenges. In doing so, they might adopt different stances, one of which, in those highly vulnerable and fragmented regimes, is to resort to an accommodating strategy based on conflict avoidance and on carrying on actions based on a wide support. In this way governments seek to keep the opposition quiet by not embarking on politically risky actions that can provoke public debate over the leadership's policies and its ability to lead the country. (Hagan, 1987: 349).

2.2.3 The constituencies of foreign policy decision makers

Another significant aspect of every foreign policy endeavour is the role played by the constituencies. Democratic decision makers are, in fact, always aware of their responsibility towards the general society. Such responsibility is multifaceted in that it concerns not only the constituencies that brought those politicians to power, but also the electorate at large as

well as the other colleagues in the government and the political opposition within the parliament. (Hill, 2003: 250). That of responsibility is tightly linked to the more stringent question of accountability, i.e. the capacity to make someone answerable for their actions and to impose a penalty in case they do not fulfil the agreed mandate (ibid.: 252). Since the primary objective of every elected decision maker is to retain political power and support, their actions will be somehow constrained by the shadow of accountability (Salmore & Salmore, 1978). Accountability is projected on political leaders in two ways: through parliamentary control and through the electoral verdict (Hill, 2003: 252).

On the one hand, executives often enjoy a relatively wide room of manoeuvre vis á vis national parliaments in foreign policy matters (Salmore & Salmore, 1978). First, because politicians often prefer looking at internal problems, which are likely to be more relevant for the voters. Second, because in almost all democratic regimes there is the widespread opinion that government and opposition, as far as international issues are concerned, should seek solutions that meet the agreement of the highest number of political parties so not to impair the national interest (ibid.: 107).

On the other hand, public opinion is most of the times less concerned with external issues since they have a minor impact on people's daily lives. Moreover, elections usually occur in time spans of some years and campaigns are conducted over issues of domestic nature, such as tax or welfare (Hill, 2003: 258). It follows that a sub-optimal result, or even a failure, in a certain foreign policy action will be unlikely to cause the fall or to prevent re-election of a government. Yet, the importance of electoral rewards to foreign policy choices cannot be completely discarded in that a successful action on the international level boosting national prestige can be used by politicians as a powerful electoral card. Viewed under the lenses of political accountability, foreign policy is thus a "comfortable" path for decision makers to follow since it can present the opportunities of reaching the goal of retaining political power through successful actions, yet without the downsides of being too sensitive an area, where a faulty step can cause a fatal loss of political support.

2.3 The individual level

In order for the factors belonging to the international and domestic dimensions to have an impact on foreign policy, they have to be perceived and acted upon by those individuals that are responsible for the country's external action. Decisions, even in a complex setting such as that of foreign policy, are ultimately taken by individuals. This is why, to complete the picture of what leads to any foreign policy decision, it is necessary to unfold what goes on in a decision maker's mind, so to say, to "open the black box" (Powell et al., 1987). The awareness of the importance of the individual in

any decision making process has triggered a vast amount of research focusing on the different aspects of how individuals perceive of reality. Due to the limited space allowed here I will not make a distinction among the various lines of research, limiting myself to generally labelling those studies as “cognitive approaches”.

Cognitive approaches move from the same starting point, i.e. the challenge to the view of decision makers as rational actors that, in order to reach their goals defined in terms of personal interests, respond to the stimuli coming from the external environment following a cost-benefit calculation (Powell et al., 1987; Rosati, 1995). Scholars in this field investigate the psychological nuances of decision makers positing that their world view is affected by how they process information. This, in turn, depends on an individual’s set of beliefs, values and other personal characteristics (Vertzberger, 1990; Rosati, 1995; Vogler, 1989).

However, a limitation of most of the literature focusing on cognitive approaches is that it has been mainly preoccupied with addressing conflict situations and, at times, individuals’ decisions in crises situations. Yet, crises situations, as Vertzberger acknowledges (1990: 11), are activities that take place in a short or finite time. Because of this peculiarity cognitive approaches are not very suited to address long term situations and developments lying on a relative long time span as it is the case with the present study. To resort to classic models such as those of “operational code” or “cognitive maps” developed respectively by George and Axelrod some decades ago (and reported in Powell et al., 1987; Vogler, 1989; Rosati, 1995), for instance, would not be productive. What is needed here is a more dynamic approach that allows me to address the role of individual decision makers in a long and evolving process of foreign policy making.

I have therefore decided to resort to the analytical model of learning proposed by Jack Levy (1994). In Levy’s words, learning is defined ‘as a change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one’s belief) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience’ (ibid.: 283). The model constructed by Levy is rather flexible since, first of all, it does not assume an automatic link between learning and change in foreign policy. This, applied to my case, is particularly important in understanding the behaviour of Chancellor Schroeder who, without changing the national position developed by his predecessors, prompted a harsher international campaign for a SC permanent seat compared with the previous administration.

According to Levy, “learning” is a two-stage process in which a change in behaviour is triggered by an individual’s observation and interpretation of his experience. He distinguishes between “causal learning”, i.e. changing one’s beliefs through an enquiry of the causes of events and making sense of them; and “diagnostic learning”, i.e. a change in beliefs stemming from an assessment of the conditions, preferences, intentions and actions of other actors (ibid.: 285). Both types can take place at two different levels: “simple learning” is a change in means without a

reassessment of one's ends whereas "complex learning" is of deeper nature in that it entails a change in both means and goals (ibid.: 286). Finally, to answer the crucial question of when the learning takes place, Levy considers primarily the impact of past experience, failures or successes concluding that, although a change in beliefs can be caused by both, the most likely to trigger substantial learning is a situation involving a failure that was not predictable (ibid.: 304-5).

3 Germany, Italy and the reform of the Security Council

3.1 The position of Germany

The position of Germany relatively to SC reform was rendered official in 1993 through a written comment in response to the questionnaire circulated by the Secretary General pursuant to a resolution of the GA.⁵ The comment did not constitute a proposal as such. Rather, it was the first official step with which Germany posed its candidacy for a permanent seat.⁶ At that time, the main promoter of the German bid was the foreign minister Klaus Kinkel, head of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) that, together with the Christian Democrats of chancellor Kohl, held the federal government. Although Kohl was not enthusiastic of such campaign (Keller, 2004), the following years were characterised by the attempt to gather the necessary consensus among the UN membership.

A number of countries openly advocated the election of Germany as permanent member,⁷ often coupled with the other economic super power, Japan. The first attempt by Germany to push the GA for a vote on its reform proposal came in 1998, on the wake of an extensive campaign protracted for a few years during the sessions of the 53rd GA. Yet, particularly due to the resistance of the movement of the Non-aligned countries and of those member states, led by Italy, that formally opposed the option of new permanent seats, the attempt failed.⁸

A second campaign was carried out in the aftermath of the Iraqi crisis in 2003. At that time Germany – the government of which was now held by a coalition formed by the Social Democrats and the Greens with Gerhard

⁵ See GA resolution 47/62, 11 December 1992.

⁶ See UN Doc. A/48/264, page 44.

⁷ Particularly important has been the support over the years given by the UK and France. Other European Countries supporting the position of Germany have been Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia (see UN Doc. A/49/965, 18 September 1995 and UN Doc. A/51/47, Annex III, 8 August 1997); The Netherlands (although the position of this country has changed), Romania, and Sweden (UN Doc. A/48/264); and Poland (UN Doc. A/51/47, Annex X).

⁸ A detailed account of those events can be found in the hearing of Ambassador Fulci before the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee on 20 October 2004. The file is available at the webpage of the Italian Radical Party Radio: <http://www.radioradicale.it/?q=scheda&id=178887>.

Schroeder at the chancellery and Joschka Fischer as foreign minister – was holding a non-permanent seat on the SC and, together with France, actively contrasted the resort to military force against Iraq (Winkelmann, 2003: 37).

In the wake of those events and as the sign of a more assertive role played on the international scene (ibid.: 40), the Schroeder administration decided to increase the voice of Germany's claims for a permanent seat (Kleine-Brockhoff, 2005). The motives on which the German candidacy rested have not changed over time, i.e. the acknowledgement that the current composition of the SC does not reflect the overall UN membership and therefore does not guarantee the legitimacy necessary to carry out the delicate tasks to which the organ is entrusted. Moreover, Germany firmly believes it deserves a permanent seat since it is the third largest contributor to the UN budget, after the US and Japan, and given its ever increasing involvement in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian aid.⁹

In order to garner the necessary support Germany, this time together with its closer allies Brazil, Japan and India forming the so called "G-4", led a harsh diplomatic battle culminating into a new draft resolution presented before the 59th GA.¹⁰ This draft resolution proposed the enlargement of the SC from the actual fifteen members to twenty five, including six new permanent seats, not entitled of the right of veto, to be distributed in the following way: two seats to African states; two seats to Asian states; one seat to Latin American and Caribbean states; one seat to Western Europeans and Other states. This last attempt did not have better fate than the one launched in 1998. Once again, due to the harsh opposition by the "Uniting for Consensus" group led by Italy and because of the veto posed by the group of African states, the G-4 proposal failed and this provoked, among the others, the exit of Japan, in search for more feasible solutions, from the G-4 (Hoffman, 2006).

3.2 The position of Italy

Italy has been, in the last fifteen years, at the fore of the efforts to reform the SC. The first official position of the Italian government – which was at that time held by a coalition of four parties: the Christian Democrats (DC), the Socialists (PSI) the Socialdemocrats (PSDI) and the Liberals (PLI) – was spelled out in a speech addressed to the 46th GA in 1991 (De Michelis, 1991). Foreign minister Gianni De Michelis of the PSI endorsed the

⁹ To compare the German position at the beginning of the '90s and that of the present see: UN Doc. A/47/264, page 43 and the statement delivered to the last GA by Ambassador Gunter Pleuger, 10 November 2005; that of Fischer to the 59th GA, 23 September 2004; and that of Schroeder to the Federal College for Security Studies in Berlin, 19 March 2004 all available at www.auswaertiges-amt.de.

¹⁰ See UN Doc. A/59/L. 64, 6 July 2005.

expansion of the SC with respect to both permanent and non-permanent seats, without extending to the former the right of veto. He went on saying that the choice of the future permanent members was to be made following objective criteria such as size of the country's population and GDP. Although not explicitly, the Italian foreign minister was proposing Italy as natural candidate for a permanent seat.

However, in a few months the terms of the Italian proposal changed significantly acquiring a shape that, apart from some slight modifications in the course of the years (Venturini, 1997: 116), and despite the alternation of a host of governments of different political colours, would be the definitive version. In the written comment submitted pursuant to the questionnaire circulated by the Secretary General in 1993,¹¹ Italy advocated the introduction of a new category of semi-permanent members to rotate more frequently.¹² This new system would have given the possibility of representation to both medium powers and small countries that, up till then, did not have the chance to serve on the SC.¹³

A distinctive tenet of the Italian position is the longstanding support for a permanent seat on the SC for the EU. The desirability of such an option has repeatedly been pointed out by Italian leaders.¹⁴ In light of this, the Italians argue, a permanent seat granted to Germany would certainly hamper such a possibility (Romano, 2004). The risk would be that, instead of working for the European interest, France, the UK and Germany, would promote their national interests forming a *directoire* and preventing the EU to speak with a single voice.¹⁵

In order to avoid such a possibility Italy has been working with alacrity towards the creation of a vast consensus. A key figure in this respect has been the Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN, Ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci who, in the mid '90s, created the so called "Coffee Club", a lobby group composed of diplomats from like-minded countries (Pocar, 1995). Such an endeavour, being particularly successful in the course of the years, has developed into the wider movement "Uniting for Consensus" (UFC).¹⁶ To contrast the attempt put forward by the G-4 in the summer 2005 the UFC countries have circulated a draft proposal, which to a

¹¹ See A/48/264, page 51.

¹² Such a proposal was formulated by the former foreign minister Beniamino Andreatta (DC), part of a government of "technicians". See Verzichelli & Cotta, 2000.

¹³ See UN Doc. A/51/47, Annex XIII, 8 August 1997.

¹⁴ See the speeches of former foreign minister Frattini to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, 27 August 2004 and 29 September 2004, as well as the report presented by the current foreign minister Fini to the Foreign Affairs committee of the Senate, 26 January 2005. These documents are all available at <http://foreignpolicy.it>. See also the calls for a seat for the EU by the President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, in a note published on *Corriere della Sera*, 24 September 2004, p. 13.

¹⁵ See *L'Italia non sarà esclusa dalla riforma dell'Onu*, interview of the former foreign affairs minister Frattini, in *Corriere della Sera*, 17 August 2004.

¹⁶ Such a movement gathers those UN member states that oppose the enlargement of the organ to new permanent members. Among the members of the group we find: Argentina, Canada, Mexico, Pakistan, Colombia, Spain and Turkey.

large extent, reflects the original position held by Italy.¹⁷ Such a proposal, discussed in the 60th General Assembly, aims at widening the composition of the SC to embrace new semi-permanent members (or, as some have called them, “permanent rotating members”) to be attributed to regional groups (Hoffmann & Ariyork, 2005). Due to the lack of consensus among the parties, it was nevertheless impossible to put neither of the proposals to a vote, with the result that, once again, the debate over SC reform has come to a stalemate.

¹⁷ See the letter sent to the President of the GA by the Italian Permanent Representative on behalf of the UFC countries, 27 May 2005, available at www.italyun.org.

4 Analysing the positions of Germany and Italy

4.1 Germany and the international arena

To acquire a permanent seat on the SC has been a remarkable incentive for Germany to lead its ongoing diplomatic battle. Since its accession to the UN in 1973 Germany has served as non-permanent member on the SC four times, the last term being in the biennium 2003-2004 (Winkelmann, 2003). From the experience accumulated during those terms, German politicians as well as German public opinion realised the importance of being part of such an organ (*ibid.*: 31-2). Together with the higher degree of visibility and national prestige connected to the status of permanent member, other important factors concurred in strengthening Germany's awareness of its readiness to take up the responsibilities stemming from that status. In this respect, I will make a distinction between political factors and economic factors.

The political factors are all somehow related to the end of the Cold War and the new opportunities this presented. Firstly, the shift of the international balance of power following the end of West-East tensions, opened up the possibility for the SC to play the key role envisaged by the drafters of the UN Charter. Yet, the increasing activity of the SC during the early '90s uncovered all the flaws in a machinery that for more than forty years had been practically untouched. This rendered a radical reform of its composition and procedures unavoidable. Second, the merger of the two Germanys into the Federal Republic enjoying full sovereignty, made it finally possible for the new Germany to play a more assertive role in international politics (Ash, 1994; Zelikow & Rice, 1995;).

The second type of factors pushing to action German leaders are of economic nature. After unification, Germany has grown to be the biggest European country in terms of population while retaining the primacy as to GDP and economic power in general. Speaking globally in terms of economic strength, Germany is nowadays one of the world's biggest powers (Ash, 1994; Hellmann, 1998), as well as the third largest financial

contributor to the UN budget with a share of 8,7% on the total amount paid by UN members.¹⁸ It is under the old principle “no taxation without representation” that Germany has repeatedly denounced the under-representativeness of the SC stressing the fact that, being one of the main financial contributors – as well as the second largest contributor to UN field operations (Winkelmann, 2003) – should be rewarded with a permanent presence in its most powerful organ. The sincere confidence of Germany in its economic strength and its preparedness to use economic tools to reach political goals can be depicted by what David Baldwin labels “economic statecraft (as reported in Hill, 2003: 148). Not only does Germany support its claims by referring to its significant financial contribution but it also uses economic incentives and, for that matter, threats, as alleged by Italian top officials in several situations,¹⁹ in order to convince less developed countries to vote for its proposal in the GA.

Although the activities of Germany with respect to SC reform are an exclusive national competence, over the actions of German leaders hangs the shadow of the EU. The CFSP is still governed in an inter-governmental fashion and decisions are mainly taken by unanimity. Yet, even in its embryonic form, the CFSP limits the freedom of actions of member states in international politics. The main question here is to what extent this is so (Manners & Whitman, 2000: 10). However strong the constraints imposed by the CFSP on member states, its existence certainly explains the need of Germany to “excuse” itself for the search for a permanent seat on the SC. In fact, German leaders have repeatedly claimed that its membership will not impair the interests of the EU but, on the contrary, will enhance the possibility that the European voice would be heard on matters of international concern.²⁰

4.2 Italy and the international arena

Compared to the German case, the position of Italy is rather different in that the goal in the medium term is to enter the SC as a semi-permanent member whereas in the long run a permanent seat for the EU is auspicated.

Despite such different views, it is possible to extend to Italy the same considerations made for Germany as far as the incentives to take its national position are concerned. In fact, should Italy manage to see its proposal

¹⁸ See the UN annual scale of assessment for 2006. UN Doc. **ST/ADM/SER.B/668**, 27 December 2005.

¹⁹ See the statement of the current Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN Marcello Spatafora to the GA, 26 July 2005, available at www.centerforunreform.org.

²⁰ See, *Invece di ostacolare la Germania Roma dovrebbe chiedere un seggio*, the interview to Joschka Fischer, in *Corriere della Sera*, 25 September 2004 and the views expressed by chancellor Schroeder and reported in *Corriere della Sera*, 18 August 2004.

accepted by the GA, the doors of the semi-permanent membership would automatically open. Since its proposal contemplates two such seats for Western countries, to be distributed according to the level of contribution to the work of the UN and since it is, after Germany, the country in the Western group that contributes most, Italy has therefore high stakes in the debate over SC reform.

As to the political factors influencing its position, Italy decided to embark in its diplomatic endeavour in the aftermath of the Cold War. Like in Germany, Italian leaders saw in the new international balance of power the opportunity to gain a position of prestige on the international arena and considered the SC as a strategic locus in which concentrating their efforts. In addition, Italy felt that its contribution to the UN should deserve international recognition, also in light of the fact that, from the point of view of financial contributions, Italy ranks in sixth position with a share of 4,9%.²¹ The financial contribution to the UN budget is calculated on the economic size of a country, the main indicator being its GDP. Italy, in this respect has less economic power than Germany. Hence, if economic power was taken as one of the main requisites to be granted permanent membership, Italy would have had few chances to win over Germany in a potential quest for a permanent seat.

This might partly explain the decision of the Italian government to aim at a different target, i.e. semi-permanent membership, and to base its campaign on rather different motives from those informing the German position. In light of this, the support for a EU seat was a natural consequence of a country with a strong record as European integration advocate and with too little economic clout.

It follows that the “shadow of the EU” did not constitute for Italy a real constrain. Quite the contrary. Italian leaders and diplomats managed to transform what in origin could have been perceived of as an obstacle to the national foreign policy into the Italian stronghold. Indeed, Italy has always been at the fore of European integration when it came to contribute to the development of Communitarian institutions and its position in support of the European case in the SC reform debate has been particularly coherent throughout the years, no matter which government was in charge. As a consequence, such a coherence has been prized over the years by an increasing support for the project.

4.3 Germany and its domestic politics

²¹ See UN Doc. **ST/ADM/SER.B/668**, 27 December 2005.

In choosing their country's course of action and in carrying it on over the years, German leaders had to account for a number of factors belonging to their domestic environment. These factors have been classified in three categories: the constitutional structure, the nature of the political regime and the constituencies to which decision makers are accountable. The following sub-paragraphs will reflect such distinction.

4.3.1 The constitutional set-up

Germany is a federal state founded on its "Basic Law" (*Grundgesetz*). Of the various constitutional aspects that can somehow influence its foreign conduct, I will here concentrate on the relationship between the government and the parliament and then I will briefly consider how the competences over the country's foreign policy are distributed.

An important aspect at this stage is to what extent the German parliament is able to influence the conduct of the executive. With respect to foreign policy, where the *Bundestag* has specific powers is in ratifying international treaties and in deciding whether to deploy the *Bundeswehr* for certain operations abroad (Krause, 1998). This last competence is relevant in the case at hand since the German candidacy to a permanent seat rests also upon the ever increasing engagement of German troops in UN led missions. Should Germany acquire a permanent seat, it will not be able to shy away from the heavy responsibilities connected to such status, as, for instance, in those cases in which the SC should decide to carry out a military action. This could complicate the action of the federal government since, as pointed out by Janes (2003), voting in the SC is a prerogative of the chancellor whereas the use of German troops has to be decided by the *Bundestag*.

In the case of Germany, the responsibility of a foreign policy action is usually shared between the chancellor and the foreign minister. The chancellor possesses a sort of primacy towards the other ministers in the cabinet – who are irremediably tied to him in that if the chancellor falls, the whole government falls – and wields the prerogative to set up the main political guidelines (Saalfeld, 2000). However, ministers maintain the main responsibility for all matters within their departmental ambit (*ibid.*: 51). It is particularly interesting to take a look at the possible dynamics occurring between the chancellor and the foreign minister in such a case as that of SC reform. In fact, when Germany presented its bid in 1993, that was mainly an initiative of foreign minister Klaus Kinkel. Chancellor Kohl was not very keen on that, preferring to play the card of the committed pro-European (Keller, 2004). The relative success of Mr. Kinkel both in promoting its personal agenda and in keeping the position for long time without the clear support of his prime minister can thus be explained by looking at the institutional rules from which we can assume that he managed to exploit the fairly wide room of manoeuvre that the constitutional set up grants to each

federal minister.²² Moreover, being the leader of a pivotal party, the FDP, for the government coalition (Saalfeld, 2000: 41) he certainly enjoyed a rather large bargaining power to promote his agenda.

4.3.2 The nature of the political regime

Turning to the nature of the political regime, the two measures that will be taken into account are that of regime fragmentation and regime vulnerability. With reference to the first measure, Hagan (1987) labels Germany as a regime in which the ruling party – in the coalition led by Kohl this role was occupied by the CDU whereas in the coalition guided by Schroeder such position pertained to the SPD – shares power with one or more minor parties – the FDP and the Green Party respectively.²³ Both coalitions were characterised by a fairly high degree of stability and political cohesiveness that made it possible to maintain the position on SC reform steady over the years. Whereas the CDU-FDP coalition had been forged over an extended period of time and lied on solid foundations (Saalfeld, 2000), that composed of the SPD and the Greens was a novelty and somehow more heterogeneous than the previous ones (Prince, 1999). Yet, the latter succeeded in keeping a coherent line even in the face of mounting criticism coming from the opposition, especially directed to the means used to put forward the national position.²⁴

As to regime vulnerability, the institutional “rules of the game” (Saalfeld, 2000: 35-38) – in particular those obliging the so called “constructive vote of no confidence” and the 5% threshold to be reached by a party in order to seat on the parliament – contribute to make the German political regime a particularly stable one.

Given the nature of the German political regime, it thus can be predicted that German leaders are in general more likely to engage in rather assertive foreign policy actions. This is clearly the case as far as the German bid on SC is concerned. Such a position, emerged soon after the end of the Cold War, has in fact survived unaltered over the years and over a change in government and has been repeatedly, at times even tenaciously, put forward by German leaders.

4.3.3 The role of the constituencies

²² On the matter of SC reform, contrary to the stance adopted by his predecessor MR. Kohl, chancellor Schroeder took a more assertive position, making the success of Germany’s candidacy almost a question of personal pride.

²³ See Saalfeld, 2000.

²⁴ See the views expressed by some Christian Democrat MPs and reported in Keller, 2004.

Another determinant factor in steering a foreign policy action of decision makers is the relationships with their constituencies.

Politicians in charge of governing a country are first of all held accountable to the parliament. As far as the *Bundestag* is concerned, it does not possess formal powers to force the administration to correct its course, as, for instance, does the Congress of the US (Krause, 1998). The *Bundestag* functions primarily by means of checks on the government and through the participation in formulating policies thanks to the specialization of various committees where cross-party support is often looked for. The difficulty in determining the real influence of such committees on the executive orientations is however remarkable in that meetings are closed to the public and the minutes are kept firmly under lock (ibid.: 163). Therefore we can at this stage only presume that the recent discussions about the German position on SC reform, due to the slight criticism stemming from the CDU, might have had, at times, the traits of a harsh debate. Yet, given the rather stable nature of the SPD-Greens coalition, and given the merely examinatory role of parliamentary committees, the government still managed to have it its own way.

The debate over SC reform does not escape the generalization that depicts foreign policy issues as often neglected by public opinion. However, an interesting correlation tells us that the quest for a SC seat was utilised by German leaders as an electoral card. In fact, the two main diplomatic offensives launched in the General Assembly in 1998 and in 2005 were carried out just a few months prior to federal elections. In both cases the governing parties were in a situation of decreasing domestic political consensus and had reasons to fear an electoral defeat.²⁵ The strong attempt to gain a victory of great national prestige on the SC can thus be interpreted as a move towards gaining electoral support. Such a victory, being considerably “newsworthy”, to borrow a term from Brettschneider (1998), would have been greatly emphasised by the mass media and, given the importance of the latter’s role in influencing public opinion (ibid.: 241-3), it could have been decisive in turning a potential electoral defeat into a success.

4.4 Italy and its domestic politics

In the present paragraph I will analyse the Italian position according to the same factors that have been used to analyse the case of Germany.

²⁵ For what concerns the last elections see, for example the articles published on *The Economist: The battle of the chancellorship*, 17 September 2005; *Time for a change*, 17 September 2005. For what concerns the 1998 elections see *Germany’s election year: the race begins*, in *The Economist*, 7 March 1998.

4.4.1 The constitutional set up

The focus of my analysis here will be, once again, the relationship between the government and the parliament as well as how the responsibility for the country's foreign policy is distributed. The first substantial difference that arises as one takes into consideration the Italian political system is the high degree of instability of governments that, as Verzichelli and Cotta suggest, is the result of a combination of institutional rules allowing the parliament to exert a decisive role in determining the life or death of a government²⁶ and a highly fragmented party system, as well as a peculiar conflictual pattern in the relations among political leaders inside the coalition parties (2000). Such characteristics have not changed neither in the face of the political earthquake that hit the Italian political system at the beginning of the '90s causing the implosion of the old party system and triggering a transition that to date is not completed (ibid.: 443; Bonvicini, 1996).

The Italian Constitution provides that the main decisional organ is the Council of Ministers, in which the president of the council has a position of *primus inter pares* (Cassese, 1980). He does have the possibility to influence the foreign policy course of its government but ministers retain full responsibility of their ambit and, in light of this, the foreign minister plays a key role in proposing certain foreign policy directives and in implementing the decisions of the collegiate organ. In the Italian case the role of foreign ministers should have been decisive in promoting the Italian project. However, foreign ministers have alternated too often to leave remarkable traces of their work. This is why the main merit of having upheld the Italian position throughout political turmoil and government instability has to be ascribed to those who have the responsibility to implement foreign policy decisions, i.e. the diplomatic corps. In this respect many have indicated Ambassador Fulci as one of the main protagonists of the reform debate (Pocar, 1995; Ostellino et al., 1995: 62).

4.4.2 The nature of the political regime

The nature of the Italian political regime has always been highly fragmented and vulnerable. In 1987 Hagan labelled the Italian political regime according to the degree of fragmentation as being dominated by a single party that is itself internally divided by established political factions (1987: 345). Nowadays, that party – the Christian Democratic Party (DC) – has disappeared and its members scattered around a host of new parties. Yet, the substance of the political regime has not changed. The possibility

²⁶ The Italian parliament has the power to dismiss a cabinet with a vote of no confidence adopted by one of the two chambers. See Verzichelli, Cotta, 2000: 445.

that a leader could influence his political environment without being diminished by internal pressure and external opposition is still very scant (Verzichelli & Cotta, 2000: 495). At the same time, despite the transition to a bipolar system of opposing coalitions, governments have proved to be unable to face serious political crises without falling.

The high fragmentation and vulnerability of the Italian political regime should thus have a negative impact on the country's foreign policy actions. Influenced by the fear of losing political power, the behaviour of Italian leaders should be characterised by ambiguity and reluctance in entering substantively meaningful commitments and by the adoption of a passive diplomatic style (Hagan, 1987). Yet, although such behaviour has often been a peculiarity of Italian foreign policy, in the case at hand Italian governments have surprisingly been able to keep a strong, long lasting stance towards SC reform, managing to pursue their agenda rather effectively. The answer has to be found both in the decisive role played by key figures like Ambassador Fulci and in the shared views of the various political parties towards the national project for reforming the SC.

4.4.3 The role of the constituencies

Coming to the role of the constituencies, a first look has to be given to the role of the legislative body. As to the power of the parliament with respect to foreign policy, we find close similarities with the German *Bundestag* in that the Italian parliament, apart from the power of ratifying international treaties and allowing the deployment of troops, acts mainly as a "watchdog". In this respect, of particular importance are the foreign affairs committees of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, to which foreign ministers, in recent years, have often been called to give an account of the government official moves with respect to SC reform.²⁷ Following Cassese (1980), we can therefore conclude that the Italian parliament has always left ample room of manoeuvre to the executive for what regards foreign policy and the case at hand is no exception. Moreover, an important fact in determining the persistency of the Italian position over the years has been that the political front has always been compact in supporting the national position, as the views of two foreign ministers belonging to different governmental coalitions demonstrate.²⁸

In conclusion, as far as public opinion and the electorate at large is concerned, it is possible to extend to the Italian case what has been already said for Germany. Foreign policy issues have never been central to the

²⁷ See the hearings held by Mr. Fini and Mr. Frattini as cited in note 14.

²⁸ Compare the views expressed by Mr. Dini, former foreign minister of the centre-left coalition in *Dini: non dividete il mondo in caste*, in *Corriere della Sera*, 26 September 1997 and *Torna l'idea di un seggio per l'UE*, in *Corriere della Sera*, 17 September 1997 with those expressed by Mr. Fini, in *Fini: L'Italia può farcela, se rema nella stessa direzione*, in *Corriere della Sera*, 3 December 2004.

Italian political debate particularly because of the complexity and sometimes seriousness of domestic issues (Bonvicini, 1996). Moreover, it does not seem that Italian leaders have used the attempt to promote the national proposal on SC reform as an electoral card either, although it cannot be denied that an eventual victory would have constituted a matter of high prestige for the government and could have thus been played as a powerful tool to gain political consensus.

4.5 Germany and the individual level

All the factors analysed so far acquire a meaning only to the extent that they are perceived and acted upon by individuals. The role of key decision makers is thus determinant, so in the foreign policy realm as in all other political fields. Since the limited space allowed here does not permit to analyse all the cognitive processes of the relevant personalities in the debate, I have decided to focus my attention on Mr. Schroeder. My analysis will not suffer from this decision for a simple reason, i.e. Schroeder simply took up a topic that had been on the German foreign policy agenda for some years already. Moreover, the substance of the German position was not changed. What was different compared to the previous administration was the more “aggressive” diplomatic campaign, somehow reflecting the more assertive style typical of Mr. Schroeder, who seldom missed the opportunity, during his official tours, to make a case in favour of German good reasons for claiming a SC seat.²⁹

Schroeder came into power in 1998. He was at the helm of a novel coalition composed by his party, the SPD, and the Greens. As head of the federal government, he was somewhat a newcomer, never having covered posts of relevance in any previous cabinet. Furthermore, as far as foreign policy is concerned, Schroeder could not be considered as an expert (Prince, 1999). However, since the very inception Schroeder gave to German foreign policy a new impulse, more markedly directed to the pursuit of the national interest, which, almost to make up for the heavy heritage of German past, had up till then been sacrificed.

What is then the role of Schroeder learning process with respect to the German position on SC reform? Jack Levy identified in “causal learning” one of the two types of processes through which individuals make sense of what goes on around them. This type of learning can be extended to chancellor Schroeder for what concerns his views about how Germany had to advance its candidacy for a permanent seat. A clarification is nevertheless

²⁹ See the speech delivered before the US Chamber of Commerce in Washington, June 27 2005 and that delivered before the Federal College for Security Studies, March 19 2004, both available at <http://www.germany.info/relaunch/politics/speeches/speeches.html>.

required. Levy talks about learning as a two-stage process in which one observes and interprets his own experience. This phase leads to the change in behaviour. In Schroeder's case the events under scrutiny do not strictly belong to his personal experience. Rather, the lessons he draw stem from how Schroeder's interpretation of how his predecessors handled the matter of the SC candidacy, which probably led him to consider the possible causes of the failure of the first attempt and to devise alternative strategies.

About the change in behaviour following the interpretation of experience, a question arises. What led Schroeder to modify the positions about Germany's role in the world he held at the dawn of its first mandate, when he hinted at a continuation on the traditional track of tight transatlantic relationships and a resolute and unconditioned support for European integration followed by German leaders in the previous decades?³⁰ What led him, some years afterwards, to speak about 'more independence' in German foreign policy course and to look for a more assertive role on the international arena? A decisive factor in this respect was certainly the active role played by Germany, in the quality of non-permanent member of the SC for the biennium 2002-2003, in opposing the American way of handling the Iraqi crisis. As Winkelmann notices, such an event 'further enhanced Germany's statute within the UN (2003: 31). Schroeder himself recognizes the fundamental importance of the Iraqi experience in making him more 'unwavering', as far as the role of Germany in foreign policy is concerned.³¹

Such increase in self-confidence over the role of Germany, coupled with the strong calls by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for a momentous change in the structure of the SC, opened a 'policy window', to borrow a concept formulated by Kingdon (1984), that could be exploited to provide Germany with the strongly auspicated international recognition.

Moreover, it is worth reiterating the relationship between external variables and learning. In this respect, a hypothesis emerging in the literature is that individuals learn more from failure than from success (Levy, 304). An established idea is that past failures lead to policy change. If this was always true, Schroeder should have changed the terms of the German position towards SC reform after the discouraging defeat on 1998. Yet, when external events presented a new opportunity, he did not hesitate to bring the matter back to the front of the political agenda and to start an aggressive diplomatic battle in order to gain the desired permanent seat. Following Levy's categorization, a process that leads to a reassessment of the means utilized yet without changing the fundamental goals of an action

³⁰ See the speech delivered at the Annual Reception for the Diplomatic Corps on November 23, 1998, the excerpts of which are available in *Presidents & Prime Ministers*, November/December 1998. Here Schroeder, introducing the guidelines of the incoming German presidency of the EU and charging his speech of pro-European rhetoric, mentioned the support for a EU seat on the SC. Of this proposition, nevertheless, traces will be lost in the following years.

³¹ See the interview published in *Der Spiegel* on 5 January 2004 and available at <http://www.germany.info/relaunch/politics/speeches/speeches.html>.

is labelled “simple learning”. To sum up, we can therefore conclude that Schroeder’s learning process, following the interpretation of the past experiences of his predecessors and triggered by a convergence of events opening up a policy window, can be considered as a “causal learning from previous failures”, involving a change in means of actions yet without modifying the fundamental goals.

4.6 Italy and the individual level

To pick the relevant individual is a crucial step for understanding a country’s choice of action in foreign policy. Yet, for many reasons, it is often a difficult task. This is even more so in the case of Italy. The frequency with which governments have changed and top leaders have come and gone from office makes it arduous to focus on a certain individual to which assigning the key role of shaping the Italian position. For those reasons, I have decided to concentrate my analysis on Ambassador Fulci, head of the Permanent Representation of Italy to the UN from 1993 till 1999. Two are the main reasons for such a choice. First of all, because the time in office is determinant in tracking the learning process of an individual (Gustavsson, 1998: 144). Rarely presidents of the council or foreign ministers of Italian governments in the last fifteen years have held their office for more than two years, very often they were in charge for just a few months. This made it arduous for them to leave significant traces of their work.

Second, acting as the main liaison between those in charge of the main decisions at the foreign ministry and where those decisions are implemented, i.e. the UN in New York, as well as being an experienced diplomat whose viewpoints found in Rome a fair hearing, makes him the right figure to influence his country’s conduct. We can thus describe the figure of Ambassador Fulci using the concept of the “policy entrepreneur”, a person who, because of the position he covers, the powers to which he is entitled and because of his negotiating skills and persistency, manages to advance a certain policy taking advantage of the windows of opportunity that sometimes open up (Kingdon, 1984: 189-90).

Mr. Fulci came into office in New York in 1993 when Italy had already moved its first steps in the debate over SC reform, albeit in the direction of claiming a permanent seat. When the foreign minister Andreatta exposed to him the terms of the new plan, that advocating a system of more frequent rotation for a certain category of members, he was rather sceptical (Fulci, 1995: 62). He believed that such a system, creating a category of semi-permanent members to which all the medium powers would have been assigned, would have forced the smaller states to a third-rank class, thus pushing them away from the proposal (ibid.: 62). However, knowing that all those small countries wanted was to have the possibility, inexistent up till

then, to seat in the SC, Fulci started a strong activity of lobbying (ibid.: 63). To do so, he gathered those like-minded states in the GA forming the so called “Coffee Club”.³² The following years were characterised by the effort to gather a wide consensus around the Italian proposal and, at the same time, by seeking to subvert the attempts of Germany and Japan to acquire a permanent seat. This “defensive” tactic worked egregiously until the defeat of the first attempt launched by Germany and Japan in 1998. For some years afterwards the SC debate rested under the ashes. Then, in 2003 it re-exploded following the events of the Iraqi crisis with Germany and Japan leading a new diplomatic assault. As some commentators have pointed out, a defensive tactic was not likely to be effective in contrasting this new attempt (Vaccara, 2005). Although no more in charge of the Permanent Representation in New York, Ambassador Fulci continued to play a role in the matter. Through the writing of papers and lobbying activity he pushed for a change in the course of action, favouring a modification of the language that, maintaining the substance of the proposal, would underscore the regional nature of the rotating system in an enlarged SC leaving open the door for the entry of regional organization such as the EU.³³

It follows from these facts that Mr. Fulci underwent a process of learning in which his original beliefs changed. Unlike Chancellor Schroeder, who reached the decision of changing the German tactic for a permanent seat after a cause-effect assessment of old failures, his was a “diagnostic learning” process. As Levy argues, such a process entails an evaluation of the conditions surrounding the events as well as an analysis of the preferences and intentions of other actors. This is precisely what Mr. Fulci did in his years of office. Taking part to the debates both in the GA and in the specific framework of the *ad hoc* Working Group on SC reform, he gathered the necessary information that were consequently put into practice in shaping the Italian course of action. First, he prompted the creation of the “Coffee club”, later on developed in the “Uniting for Consensus” movement, and, after realizing that a purely defensive position was not going to produce fruits, although not in office any more, he pushed for a slight change in the original proposal taking advantage of the prestige he had acquired in the years spent in New York.³⁴

³² Mr. Fulci gives a detailed account of the formation of such a lobby group in an interview for the magazine *Caffè Europa*, available at <http://www.caffeeuropa.it/attualita/107attualita-fulci.html>.

³³ See the papers published in the journal *Affari Esteri*: Fulci, 2006a and 2006b.

³⁴ Some five years after the end of his tenure in New York he was given the honour to brief the parliamentary Foreign affairs Committee about the prospects and possible courses of action in the SC debate.

5 Conclusions

This section will be divided according to the three analytical levels taken into consideration in the present study. However, I will not divide the cases of Germany and Italy in sub-paragraphs so to be able to compare the two national positions and to weigh which factors exerted the largest influence.

5.1 Considering international factors

The international incentives for actively engaging in the SC reform debate are similar for both countries. The general framework in which the two national positions matured was that of the end of the Cold War with the opportunities that the new shift in the international distribution of power presented. The opportunity for their countries to play a bigger role in international politics was a very powerful reason for political leaders in charge at that time. Yet the positions of Germany and Italy developed into different directions. In my view, such divergence stems from a different evaluation that leaders made of their countries' economic strength and the constraints imposed on their action.

Indeed, German leaders, with the unification and the acquisition of full sovereignty after almost fifty years, counting on the fact of being the third biggest economy in the world, became, year after year, increasingly convinced that Germany had to play a more assertive role in international politics and were determined to see their status recognized. On the other hand, Italian leaders realised that Italy did not stand a chance against Germany over SC reform if they were to compete on the same field. Germany was an economic superpower and, because of that, was indicated by many countries as a legitimate aspirant to a permanent seat. Italy, conversely, was not perceived the same way.

Nevertheless, Germany, along the road to an international bigger assertiveness, had to face the constraints posed by the CFSP and the clear contradiction stemming from upholding the national interest in the SC debate while, in other fields, supporting the case for a deeper European integration in foreign policy matters. Italy, on the contrary, being in a weaker position than Germany, found in the EU a strong allied. In line with Italy's tradition of convinced supporter of European integration, Italian leaders found it relatively simple to advocate a position characterised, as a final objective, by a permanent seat for the EU. We can therefore conclude, drawing on the words of Ambassador Fulci, that the Italian position

managed to conjugate national and European interest.³⁵ We might therefore suspect that upholding the European cause has not been completely uninterested but rather it can be seen as a sort of manipulation on the part of Italy in order to strengthen its position and make it more appealing to the other actors in the debate.

5.2 The role of domestic politics

The constitutional structure of a country with respect to how the competences are allocated within a government cabinet is generally important to understand the nature of a certain decision. Foreign policy is no exception. As to the case at hand, we have noted certain similarities between Italy and Germany with respect to the relationship Chancellor/President of the Council-foreign minister. Both the *Grundgesetz* and the Italian Constitution allow a certain room of manoeuvre for the foreign minister, although without preventing the prime minister from being influential. This is particularly clear in the German case where at different times both a foreign minister, i.e. Mr. Kinkel, and a chancellor, i.e. Mr. Schroeder, actively worked to promote the German candidacy for a permanent seat. In the Italian case the frequency with which different personalities have alternated in the posts of prime minister and foreign minister make the assessment of their respective role rather arduous.

Moreover, especially in the Italian case, the political “creed” of a certain government was not determinant in shaping the national position, as the support given to the project by each government in office demonstrates. Germany constitutes a slightly different case in that the political front, contrary to Italy, was not completely united on the matter, with the CDU somehow criticizing the stance of the Schroeder’s government.

As to the role of constituencies in influencing the national positions, the analysis has demonstrated that neither the *Bundestag* nor the Italian Parliament, as far as a certain foreign policy course is concerned, have the tools to force the government in a certain direction, leaving a rather wide room of manoeuvre to the executive.

For what concerns public opinion and the electorate at large we have seen how in both countries external issues do not provoke much debate, let alone the possibility to overthrow a government in the following elections exclusively on the ground of its foreign policy actions. However, the German case demonstrates that a potential victory over SC reform constituted a powerful electoral incentive for action.

³⁵ See the interview published in *Caffè Europa*, note 35 above.

5.3 The individual level: leaders and policy entrepreneurs

The focus on Chancellor Schroeder and Ambassador Fulci has been primarily driven by practical reasons, given the impossibility, in the space allowed for the present study, to carry out a comprehensive review of all the most influential personalities in the SC reform debate belonging to both camps. The analysis of the learning processes of these two personalities leads me to draw some conclusions about the relevance of these individuals in shaping their country's positions on the issue of SC reform.

With respect to Schroeder, his learning about the past failures of the predecessors and his understanding of the timeliness to push for a permanent seat following the Iraqi crisis and the calls by the Secretary General Kofi Annan led him to modify the tactic on which the promotion of the German candidacy had been previously based. The goal of a permanent seat did not change. What did change was the methods utilized to reach that goal, i.e. a more aggressive diplomatic campaign, characterized when necessary by the use of economic incentives and threats against certain members of the UN. For what concerns Mr. Fulci, whose initial position towards the Italian plan was rather sceptical, his learning process involving an assessment of what the other actors in the debate really wanted, was fundamental for the effective promotion of the Italian project.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning here, that the position of Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Fulci are similar in that both had to deal with a situation they had not contributed to create, since Germany had already advanced its bid some years prior to Schroeder's coming into office and since Mr. Fulci, being a diplomat, had to accept the plan formulated in Rome and work for it in the face of his initial scepticism. In any case, both figures turned out to be decisive in shaping the course of action of their respective countries.

5.4 Wrapping things up

In this last paragraph I will try to make sense of the different weight that the factors considered above have had in influencing the positions of Italy and Germany. In doing so I will distinguish between two phases characterising the actions of these two countries with respect to SC reform.

In the policy formulation phase international factors acquired the most relevant position in that they triggered the opening of the "window" of opportunity that could be exploited by attentive policy makers. In favour of the prominence of international political factors and the incentives that were thereby presented lies the fact that both Germany and Italy, roughly at the same time, decided to actively engage in the debate for reforming the SC.

However, their different positions, as mentioned above, were steered by economic factors and by a different consideration of the constraints imposed to their actions.

For what concerns the phase of the promotion of the reform projects and the attempts to accomplish them, individuals take up the decisive role. Those in charge of such promotion and implementation can make a difference as the choice of a certain direction, once the policy has been formulated, very much depends on how key individuals are driven by their learning processes.

Domestic factors, in the case at hand, are important but not decisive. The dynamics majority-opposition were slightly different in those two countries, with the German political front less united than it was in the Italian case. Yet, both national positions have survived over time. Besides, institutional rules have proven to be too weak to compel the executive towards a certain direction. Finally, the influence of the electoral factor in shaping those country's national positions played a role in the German case but was not influential for Italian leaders.

In the introductory chapter I mentioned the possible implications that the debate on the reform of the SC can have on the CFSP. Furthermore, throughout the pages of this thesis we have seen how differently Germany and Italy, albeit being both fundamentally committed to the process of European integration, perceive the impact of the CFSP framework on their national positions with respect to SC reform. As we have previously noticed, a number of EU member states have taken position, lining up behind the proposal of Germany or that of Italy, the most striking example being the strong support of France and the UK to the German candidacy. The fact that two big EU countries and a number of others endorse the German attempt to gain a permanent seat, thus going counter to the common interest of struggling for an EU seat, inspires a reflection on how weak the CFSP still is. If in such an important matter like that of SC reform, where the EU as a whole could have the chance to take part into the activities of one of the main *fora* of discussion about issues of international concern, the positions among member states are so distant, it means that the power of the CFSP to influence and steer the behaviour of its members is still weak and that, when questions of national interest arise, they impair the achievement of some form of coordination and prevail over the common goal of "speaking with a single voice" on the international arena.

To conclude, it deserves spending some words on possible directions that could be taken to further develop the present study. From an empirical perspective, a point of extreme interest that, for reasons of limited space, has not been elaborated is the question about the degree of effectiveness of the positions of Germany and Italy in the course of the years. This question is very much linked to the issue of power and how these two countries have used their resources in advancing their cause. From a theoretical perspective, it would constitute a step forward in FPA to develop a model that classified the different factors influencing a national foreign policy

action according to their relevance to different stages of the policy action itself. This necessity stems from the basic consideration that no policy is ever static. Foreign policy actions develop through several stages, comprising formulation, application and the eventual modification in case of structural changes, i.e. a government turnover or unexpected external developments. For each of these stages different factors acquire a different weight and exert a different influence in determining the development and eventually the outcome of a certain action.

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6.2 Web resources

6.2.1 General websites

www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/index_html

www.centerforunreform.org

www.euobserver.com

www.foreignpolicy.it

www.globalpolicy.org

www.italyun.org

6.2.2 Specific Web-pages

<http://www.caffeeuropa.it/attualita/107attualita-fulci.html>

<http://www.germany.info/relaunch/politics/speeches/speeches.html>

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