The Role of Geopolitics in the Italian Risorgimento during the 1840s: An Introductory Survey[1]

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ABSTRACT

The article's goal is to introduce the thesis that not only the constitutional and socio-economic agendas of states but also international affairs strongly influence the formation of various human communities and their political programmes, and that this interaction was often no less important than these other factors in the rise of 19th century nationalism. By combining the history of international politics, international law, social history and ethics the article reveals a completely new story of the Italians' reception of and response to diplomatic affairs in the 1840s. At that time a considerable number of them felt that the heritage of the Congress of Vienna was being eroded and that the world was becoming increasingly insecure. This conviction was primarily caused by the abuse of power by the most powerful states at the expense of weaker ones in Europe as well as the former's imperialist policies in more remote regions. The increasing mistrust in the great powers' policies and in the stability of the whole structure of the post-Napoleonic states system gave rise to a conviction that the security of their own countries in the world where the rule of force dominated was to be best preserved by material strength, which also made the Italians more willing to accept whatsoever kind of political unity based upon the concept of nationality.

KEYWORDS

Italy; Geopolitics; International Relations; Risorgimento; Nationalism

The politicisation of European society during the 19th century is traditionally connected with two issues. First, disputes about the form of government, usually joined with a demand for participation in political decision-making. Second, in the socio-economic desires of people striving for improvements of their material well-being. The resulting political and economic demands depended on social origins, world views and other variables, but it can be summarised that in the case of the middle class in towns as well as in rural areas its members generally struggled for politi-

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cal liberalisation aimed at obtaining constitutions granting them fundamental freedoms and civic rights, a fair and functioning administration and a guarantee to conduct their economic and personal lives undisturbed. Since all these aims were also adopted by nationalist movements, the same movements became very attractive for a significant number of Europeans. Unsurprisingly, historians dealing with the history of 19th century nationalism have paid considerable attention to these political and socio-economic topics.

There is one more issue, as equally important as the two mentioned above, which has largely been omitted by scholars: the interaction between international relations and the shaping of the people's political ideas. Of course, a great deal has been written on diplomatic history and no less on the impact of nationalism and imperialism on the relations among nations and states. However, international politics and the development of European society are still predominantly regarded as two more or less independent areas. The contemporary focus on the more popular topics of a social, economic or cultural nature rather than the more traditional one of foreign affairs has considerably contributed to this state of research whereby diplomatic history seems to have been side lined.

The goal of this article is to revive the attractiveness of international relations in historical research by introducing an original and up-to-date approach: an investigation into the significant interdependence between diplomatic affairs and the development of human society. It is not about to renew the old debate about Leopold Ranke's *"primacy of foreign affairs"* but to establish — or at least strengthen — a new branch of historical studies by combining the history of international politics, international law, social history and ethics to prove the principal thesis of this article that not only the constitutional and socio-economic agendas of states but also international affairs strongly influence the formation of various human communities and their political programmes, and that this interaction was often no less important than these other factors in the rise of 19th century nationalism.

To be able at least to reasonably introduce this thesis if not prove it, the traditional theme from the Italian Risorgimento has been chosen: how the uneasy position of Italian countries within the post-Napoleonic states system in Europe influenced the desire of the Italians for national unity or even unification. Contrary to traditional scholarly writings on the history of the 19th history national movements and nationalism, however, the article introduces a method adopted from political science: the concept of security.[3] An evaluation of the Italians' nationalist aspirations through the

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3   W. BAIN (Ed.), *The Empire of Security and the Safety of the People*, London — New York 2006; D. A. BALDWIN, *The Concept of Security*, in: Review of International Studies, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1997, pp. 5–26; B. BUZAN, *Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations*, in: Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1984, pp. 109–125; E. CONZE, *Konzertierte Sicherheit: Wahrnehmung und Wirkung des Wiener Kongresses im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, in: Journal of Modern European History, Vol. 13, 2015, pp. 439–446; E. CONZE, *Geschichte der Sicherheit: Entwicklung, Themen, Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2018; J. JACKSON-PREECE, *Security in International Relations*, London 2011; E. A. KOLODZIEJ, *Security and International Relations*, Cambridge 2005; A. SCHNEIKER, *Sicherheit in den Internationalen Beziehungen: Theoretische Perspektiven und aktuelle Entwicklungen*, Wiesbaden 2017.

desire to ensure their sufficient security against external threats enables one to exceed the narrow limits of nationalist perspective and see the formation of the Italian nationalist movement from all-Italian as well as all-European angles. The advantage of this delimitation of the presented theme is that while restricting the analysis to Italian society offers a reasonable scale allowing the historical probe, the focus on security opens the door to European contextualization. This is not only the most fitting but also the only way to understand the important process of the politicisation of Italian society owing to the generally decreasing faith in justice in a world that was increasingly perceived by the Europeans as predatory.

At the purely Italian level this method also helps to answer the question still unresolved despite the enormous amount of attention paid to it by the many historians dealing with the Risorgimento: Why did the Italians actually strive for political unity or even unification? The same historians usually agree that the social-economic aspect of the nationalist movement was in this case unimportant; as for the constitutional issue, it definitely played an important role, but it can hardly explain why the people in the Apennine Peninsula, traditionally and deeply divided by municipal, regional and state loyalties as well as mutual animosities, were willing to submit themselves to the authority of one larger, so-called national state, or at least to agree on the idea of federal bonds.[4]

These same historians sometimes see the answer in the Italians' animosity towards Austria as well as the other great powers' interferences in Italian affairs and they are partly right.[5] Nevertheless, there is more behind this enmity: the above-mentioned general loss of trust in fairness in world politics, caused by the abuse of power at the expense of Italian countries in the 1830s and 1840s and leading to the geopolitical debates about the position of Italy in Europe and its states system, the consequence of which was the Italians' desire to establish their own powerful confederation or nation state, both offering sufficient protection against not only Austria but also other European powers threatening the security of the Italian people.[6]

4   For the fundamental surveys on the Risorgimento history see A. M. BANTI — P. GINSBORG, *Il Risorgimento*, Torino 2007; G. F. H. BERKELEY, *Italy in the Making, 1815–1846*, Cambridge 1968; G. F. H. BERKELEY — J. BERKELEY, *Italy in the Making June 1846 to 1 January 1848*, Cambridge 1968; D. BEALES — E. F. BIAGINI, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*, Harlow 2002; G. CANDELORO, *Storia dell'Italia moderna 3: La Rivoluzione Nazionale*, Milano 1960; M. CLARK, *The Italian Risorgimento*, Harlow 2009; J. A. DAVIS, *Italy in the Nineteenth Century, 1796–1900*, Oxford 2000; C. DUGGAN, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*, London 2007; M. GRAZIANO, *The Failure of Italian Nationhood: The Geopolitics of a Troubled Identity*, New York 2010; H. HEARDER, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento 1790–1870*, London 1986; L. RIALL, *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*, London, New York 1994; A. SCIROCCO, *Il Risorgimento italiano*, Milano 2004; S. WOOLF, *A History of Italy 1700–1860: The Social Constraints of Political Change*, London 1979.

5   See also M. COLLIER, *Italian Unification 1820–71*, Edinburgh 2003, p. 30; R. CUNSOLO, *Italian Nationalism: From Its Origins to World War II*, Malabar (Florida) 1990, p. 23; G. PÉCOUT, *Il lungo Risorgimento: La nascita dell'Italia contemporanea (1770–1922)*, Milano 1999, pp. 126–127.

6   For at least partial evidence of this claim see M. ŠEDIVÝ, *The Decline of the Congress System: Metternich, Italy and European Diplomacy*, London 2018; M. ŠEDIVÝ, *The Path to the Aus-*

This complex topic of geopolitical security debates is explained under three sub-headings in the following pages. In the first one a brief survey is offered; the second one introduces the methodological aspect, especially the problems of obtaining the necessary primary sources; the third and last chapter touches on the importance of the proposed approach not only for the research of a period of time in the more or less distant past but also for a better understanding of what actually happens in human society at the present time.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

The states system established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 was to ensure the enduring preservation of peace in Europe. The crucial pillar of this order was the legal framework contained in the Final Acts of the same congress according to which the relations among the states were to be peacefully managed, with full respect for the equality of rights regardless of their territorial size or military power. According to other agreements concluded at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the conflicting affairs were to be solved by negotiations at congresses and conferences. Although there were people dissatisfied with the new order already in 1815, the overwhelming majority was happy to see the peace restored after almost a quarter of century of fierce fighting.[7]

During the following years, however, the number of those discontented increased for many reasons. One of these, and especially from the 1830s onwards, was the dissatisfaction with the functioning of the European states system, dominated by the Great Powers who quarrelled among themselves and from time to time exploited their power at the expense of weaker countries. This contributed to the decline of the same system that seemed to be less stable and fair. Leaving aside military interventions against the revolutions in other states at the formal requests of the latter's legitimate rulers, which was strongly criticised by European liberals and democrats but usually regarded as legal by European conservatives including the majority of the liberal Powers' leaders, there also were indisputable violations of some countries' rights. The most striking were the French occupation of the Papal town of Ancona in 1832 against the pope's wishes, the British use of naval force against the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the so-called Sulphur War eight years later and the annexation of the Free City Cracow by Austria in 1846.[8]

tro-Sardinian War: The post-Napoleonic states system and the end of peace in Europe in 1848, in: European History Quarterly, Vol. 49, 2019, pp. 367–385.

7   For the latest surveys on the Congress of Vienna see W. D. GRUNER, Der Wiener Kongress 1814/1815, Stuttgart 2014; M. JARRETT, The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon, London 2013; R. STAUBER, Der Wiener Kongress, Wien 2014.

8   N. JOLICOEUR, La politique étrangère de la France au début de la monarchie de juillet: de la non-intervention à la contre-intervention (1830–1832), in: Revue d'histoire diplomatique, No. 121, 2008, pp. 11–29; D. W. THOMSON, The Sulphur War (1840): A Confrontation between Great Britain and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the Mediterranean, Ann Arbor 1989.

The above-mentioned and many other affairs of a similar nature gave rise to debates in European society throughout countries, social classes and political parties about the stability and fairness of the international system established in 1815. More and more people began to believe that the system manifested deficiencies which could jeopardize the security of not only the smaller states but of all countries and finally lead to another general war in Europe. This apprehension was further strengthened with the egotistic policies of the Great Powers overseas: the Europeans attentively observed the British aggression against China in the First Opium War, Russia's expansion in the Caucasus and especially all the great powers' struggle for predominance in the Near East at the expense of the decaying Ottoman Empire. The last issue was regarded as extremely important by the same Europeans since the Near Eastern affairs had negative consequences for the good relations among the Great Powers: in the 1830s they caused a significant chill in the relations between Russia and Great Britain, and in 1840 a crisis within the Ottoman Empire even caused a war scare across Europe from Scandinavia to Italy during the so-called Rhine Crisis.[9]

The increasing aggressiveness in the actions of the Great Powers, their exploitation of their strength at the expense of weaker states, the violations of the precepts of international law — all this led to a widespread and deep anxiety in European society. The security of individual states — not only of their sovereignty but also economic interests, and the peaceable coexistence within the family of European states and nations (an expression widely used before 1848) — seemed thus to be at stake. The logical outcome were the ideas or even elaborate plans for the improvement of the existing states system that was regarded by many as untenable. The conservatives usually suggested more binding alliances and new legal guarantees of justice and peace in the relations among the countries; the participants of the peace movement, on the rise since the early 1840s, claimed that the best remedy was international arbitrage, a European counsel or even a European parliament.[10]

However, besides the plans which were in compliance with the 1815 order and aimed at its improvement there also existed more radical projects which were less compatible with it. What was common to the latter was the conviction that if the written law did not suffice to ensure the security of states, then it was necessary to put trust in the law of material force, in other words the belief in the force of arms (*Faustrecht*). This shift to a more pragmatic or, as it was later termed, realist approach to international relations encompassed such a great number of Europeans in the 1840s that it is possible to talk about a significant shift in the collective mentality, of which the inevitable result was the firm belief in the material strength of states and nations: the ideal was a state with well defendable frontiers, a functioning and effective economic system and a large and well-armed army and navy. This was

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9 M. ŠEDIVÝ, *Crisis among the Great Powers: The Concert of Europe and the Eastern Question*, London 2017, pp. 174–240; ŠEDIVÝ, *Decline*, pp. 107–123.

10 A. ADOLF, *Peace: A World History*, Cambridge 2010, p. 135; P. BROCK, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, Princeton 1972, p. 386; M. CEADEL, *The Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730–1854*, Oxford 1996, pp. 280–292; S. E. COOPER, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914*, New York — Oxford 2014, pp. 13–23.

generally regarded as a better guarantee of its inhabitants' security then ephemeral legal rules.[11]

The desire for military strength as the necessary prerequisite for survival in the "brutal world" became peculiar to the movements desiring the unification of several states together: the Scandinavian movement striving for the political unity of Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well as the Germans for a Germany with a stronger central power than the existing German Confederation actually possessed after 1815. It is no coincidence that the articles, pamphlets and debates of the supporters of Scandinavian and German nationalism covered many geopolitical topics; and it also was no coincidence that in the Germany of the 1840s not only the question of national unification arose but also the need for land as well as naval armament, colonial expansion and the vision of a large German Central Europe extending to the western Black Sea coast — long before the end of the 19th century for which these topics are better known.[12]

Geopolitics also fuelled the Italian national movement during the same decade. In fact, for centuries the Italians resented the fact that owing to the political disunity of their own princes and republican governments, the Great Powers viewed the Apennines as a pawn in their geopolitical games. Particularly France and Austria were criticised for their struggle for hegemony, with negative consequences for peace and stability in the peninsula. In this respect the new 1815 order changed very little in the two Great Powers' quest for predominant influence, merely moderating it in form but not removing it at all. The French occupation of Ancona in 1832 was another chapter in the history of this power struggle.[13]

While criticism of the 1815 order always existed among a small group of revolutionaries, their objections were for a long time limited to intellectuals desiring first political liberalisation and then — though much less often — national unification. It is not possible to perceive how the decay of the post-Napoleonic European states system influenced Italian society until the beginning of the 1830s and particularly the 1840s. The conservative monarchs, ministers and diplomats watched with increasing displeasure the threat represented by France, namely its principle of non-intervention through which the government in Paris attempted to limit the independence of some Italian

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11 ŠEDIVÝ, *Decline*, pp. 142–169.
12 E. I. KOURI — J. E. OLESEN, *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia: 1520–1870*, Vol. 2, Cambridge 2016, pp. 928–933; M. MALMBORG, *Neutrality and State-Building in Sweden*, Basingstoke 2001; J. ANGELOW, *Von Wien nach Koniggratz: Die Sicherheitspolitik des Deutschen Bundes im europaischen Gleichgewicht (1815–1866)*, Munich 1996; F. L. MÜLLER, *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform, 1830–63*, Basingstoke 2002; J. INAUEN, *Brennpunkt Schweiz: Die süddeutschen Staaten Baden, Württemberg und Bayern und die Eidgenossenschaft 1815–1840*, Freiburg 2008; D. LAAK, *Über alles in der Welt: Deutscher Imperialismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 2005, pp. 35–55; F. L. MÜLLER, *Imperialist Ambitions in Vormärz and Revolutionary Germany*, in: German History, Vol. 17, 1999, pp. 346–368.
13 N. JOLICOEUR, *La politique française envers les états pontificaux sous la monarchie de juillet et la seconde république (1830–1851)*, Bruxelles 2008, p. 86; R. MARCOWITZ, *Großmacht auf Bewährung: die Interdependenz französischer Innen- und Außenpolitik und ihre Auswirkungen auf Frankreichs Stellung im europäischen Konzert 1814/15–1851/52*, Stuttgart 2001, p. 123.

countries and the occupation of Ancona violating the pope's sovereignty. All this weakened the Italian monarchs' sense of security. Their uneasiness is demonstrated in the example of Ferdinand II, the ruler of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, who proposed in 1832–1833 the creation of an Italian Confederation to improve Italy's defence against the Great Powers' interference in its own affairs. In the north — in Turin — Sardinian King Charles Albert went from having confidence in the political-legal guarantees formulated at the Congress of Vienna to believing in the right of the more powerful: he wanted to have enough military power to be able to expel the Austrians from Lombardy and Venetia and establish a powerful North-Italian kingdom, ensuring greater security to him and, at the same moment, also to the rest of Italy.[14]

The lack of trust in the fairness in the Great Powers' conduct developed further in 1840 when, first, the British exploited their military superiority against the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the Sulphur War and then Europe seemed to be on the verge of a new large-scale war during the Rhine Crisis — at that time it was evident that if such a war broke out, the Great Powers would pay little attention to the Italians' wish to remain neutral and, therefore, Italy would be dragged into it. These two affairs seemed to confirm the conviction of the conservative Italian elites that it was necessary to be strong enough to be able to avert the dangers threatening Italy from abroad and that this strength could hardly be achieved without pan-Italian solidarity.[15]

Geopolitical considerations also became more striking in the case of the educated middle class around 1840. The fact that Italy was exposed to foreign interventions had actually been a cause for concern in the past, and especially the liberals and democrats hated Austria for its interventions against Italian revolutions in 1821–1822 and 1831–1832. Later, however, criticism of Austrian, French and British incursions became part of a more sophisticated and gradually also more widespread debate across the Apennines, provoking a strong sense of solidarity among the inhabitants who were otherwise divided by traditional and deep animosities. For example, in response to the Sulphur War the public in other Italian states sharply rejected the British aggression and at the same time posed an important question: if Great Britain behaved in such an appalling way towards one Italian country, would it sooner or later not behave in the same way towards all of them? Consequently, many concluded that this was not merely a Neapolitan matter, but an Italian one.[16]

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14 P. GENTILE, *Carlo Alberto in un diario segreto: Le memorie di Cesare Trabucco di Castagnetto 1832–1849*, Turin 2015, p. 125; N. RODOLICO, *Un disegno di Lega italiana del 1833*, in: Archivio storico italiano, No. 93, 1935, pp. 232–243.

15 ŠEDIVÝ, *Decline*, pp. 107–143.

16 For more on the Italian solidarity in the Sulphur War see these information sources: Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Naples, Ministero Affari Esteri 4130, Ludolf to Scilla, Rome, 18, 21, 27 and 30 April 1840, Ramirez to Scilla, Turin, 14, 17, 18, 26 and 30 April 1840, Grifio to Scilla, Florence, 11 April 1840; Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, Ministerium des Äußern, Sardinien 2884, Olry to Ludwig I of Bavaria, Turin, 21 April 1840; Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, Bern, Korrespondenz des Geschäftsträgers in Paris an den Vorort 1898: D0#1000/3#1195*, 1833–1848, D.1.3.2, Meuricoffre to Muralt, Naples, 25 April 1840; Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Hauptabteilung III, Ministerium des Auswärtigen I, HA III, MdA I, 11621, Buch to Frederick William III, Rome, 28 April 1840.

In the following years geopolitical themes like the functioning of the legal-political order in Europe, the position of Italian countries towards the Great Powers, the latter's behaviour towards the Ottoman Empire and in other regions of the world became increasingly important in the Italians' nationalist discourse. These geopolitical topics were adopted by the pro-monarchic liberals and the republican democrats and were even discussed in conservative governmental circles. What all the groups agreed on was the necessity for Italy to have greater security in the so-called predatory world. In their opinions, this was to be achieved by a greater unity among the rulers and their subjects and, simultaneously, among all Italian states.

Where the same men differed was the extent of national unity they desired: while the moderate liberals wanted an Italian (con)federation, the republicans desired an Italian republic. Nevertheless, under the given conditions this difference was less important than their common willingness to improve Italy's position in world affairs; the external threats which they regarded as common to all of them made them prepared to cooperate regardless of their national (e.g. Sardinian or Tuscan) and social origins and political sympathies. Consequently, the geopolitical platform served as a perfect means to ensure the Italians' unity and as powerful amplifier of their pan-Italian feelings.[17]

Since Austria was the Great Power most directly involved in Italian affairs owing to its territorial possessions of Lombardy and Venetia and therefore the one most disliked, the Italians easily agreed that the first step towards Italy's greater security was the expulsion of the Austrians beyond the Alps; and for this reason the war against Austria started by Charles Albert in March 1848 won such broad popular support among the Italians.[18] The next step was, as the majority of Italian patriots desired, a federation formed by the states of the Apennines. On behalf of their material strength the states were also to establish a strong army and fleet to protect themselves against not only Austria but also the other Great Powers. To be able to obtain sufficient financial means, a collective commercial shipping policy was to be pursued and some Italians even contemplated an active colonial policy.[19]

The Italians' decision to wage war against Austria in 1848 was an obvious infringement of the post-Napoleonic states system in Europe since it was directed against the territorial status quo established at the Congress of Vienna; it was also one of the consequences of the Italians' diminishing loyalty to the same system. There is a clear progression from their belief in the inadequacy of the system to protect the Italian countries against abuse by the Great Powers to their fading allegiance to this system

17 D. M. SMITH, *Victor Emanuel, Cavour, and the Risorgimento*, London 1971, p. 3; N. RODOLICO, *Carlo Alberto negli anni di regno 1843–1849*, Firenze 1943, p. 48; C. VIDAL, *Charles-Albert et le Risorgimento italien (1831–1848)*, Paris 1927, pp. 135–136.

18 BERKELEY, Vol. 1, p. 38; C. GATTERER, *Erbfeindschaft Italien-Österreich*, Wien 1972, pp. 9–10.

19 F. BARBIERI — D. VISCONTI, *Il problema del Mediterraneo nel Risorgimento*, Milano 1948, pp. 91–106; F. CHABOD, *Storia politica del Mediterraneo*, Brescia 2014, p. 12; D. M. SMITH, *Mazzini*, New Haven, London 1994, p. 53; S. RECCHIA — N. URBINATI, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, Princeton — Oxford 2009, pp. 194–204.

and their reliance on the force of arms instead of public law, leading ultimately to the exploitation of Austria's weakness for their own geopolitical (security) aims.

This is where the quest for security in international affairs led Italian society and how it was adopted by the nationalist movement. Much like in Scandinavia and Germany the desire for the amalgamation of several countries was regarded even here as a response to the disintegration of the 1815 order. One can thus see that the need for greater security as well as the way the people in various parts of Europe responded to this need was identical. What was also common to them was the goal: they desired not a war of extermination but "merely" a powerful federation, nation states or even an empire, all of them strong enough to avert the existing external threats. Then, as the people hoped, a more stable and secure peace would be ensured. The problem lay in the fact that the belief in the force of arms instead of the rule of law led to the security dilemma when the desire for material power in one state inevitably caused the same aspirations in others, leading to a situation where no one felt secure. The best example of this dilemma is represented by Francesco Crispi who formed his geopolitical opinions around 1848 and then became a supporter of Italy's aggressive colonial policy and armament later in the 19th century. Somehow surprisingly, he was also deeply convinced that the best guarantee of peace was the establishment of Europe's political unity, for example in the form of a confederation. Since, however, he regarded such an option as unfeasible owing to the distrust and animosities prevailing among European nations, he refused to overcome the security dilemma by abandoning his own chauvinist political course and continued to insist on the force of arms as the only viable means for ensuring the security of the unified Italian Kingdom.[20]

HOW TO CARRY OUT THE RESEARCH?

It is of course easier to say that there was an important and deep interaction between the functioning of the international system and the development of European society in the past than to prove it. Due to the originality of the topic, only mere hints are to be found in the existing scholarly literature on the 19th century history of Europe, and mostly for the later decades of the century. Even the numerous books and articles dealing with the concept of security offer no analysis of this phenomenon, which is primarily due to the theoretical nature of the majority of relevant texts produced by political scientists.

Leaving aside the long-standing dispute among political scholars about what the concept of security actually is, for the theoretical approach to the problem it suffices to say that the desire for safety is a common and deep trait in human nature and that the existence of any state is legitimized by its role as the protector of the people living within its borders. The discussions about security in European society after 1815 unsurprisingly included arguments on behalf of the state's own independence and sovereignty because both were necessary prerequisites for ensuring its security within the post-Napoleonic European states system. However, since the security of

20   F. CHABOD, *Italian Foreign Policy: The Statecraft of the Founders*, Princeton 1996, pp. 447–450; C. DUGGAN, *Francesco Crispi 1818–1901*, Oxford 2002, pp. 556, 615 and 721.

individual states was regarded as dependent on the fairness of the same system, debates about the security of individual states as well as the security within the European states system were two sides of the same coin: if the system was stable and fair, then the countries could feel secure; if it had declined owing to the rise of egotistical abuses of power, then especially the weaker countries would have been endangered. All this explains why the Europeans attentively observed and discussed international affairs of seemingly little geopolitical value in distant regions of the Continent or even the world: any violation of international law, any abuse of power at the expense of the others could sooner or later happen to themselves.[21]

The concept of security offers thus a common value — the general desire for safety — through which it is possible to study the public response to the real or alleged decay of the European states system and with this also the decline in security anywhere in Europe. This fact is all the more important owing to the above-mentioned lack of scholarly literature and the consequent need for an exhaustive study of the primary sources, as will be explained below. An important methodological approach is formed by comparison: since the people across Europe and political and social classes shared the same desire for safety, they were also sensitive to violations of international law and ideas of increasing the security of their states or nations when they came to believe that the world was becoming a dangerous place to live in. Therefore, similar or even the same fears, ideas and hopes can be discovered among the inhabitants of Italian as well as German, Scandinavian and other countries in Europe, and the same can be said about the members of the higher, middle and sometimes even the lower classes in urban as well as in rural areas.[22] Although the details always varied according to each country's own specific geopolitical situations, animosities and needs — and all this must of course be taken into account, at the same time all the international debates on the issue of had identical bases. Consequently, a holistic — all-European — approach enables a better understanding of the nature of these debates in particular regions like Italy.

This contextualisation through comparison is the first methodological prerequisite for success. The other is a thorough study of primary sources, which is a demanding task for two principal reasons. First, to be able to understand the opinions of all society including the less prominent social classes it is necessary to study an immense number of different sources from official and private correspondence, records of parliamentary debates, newspaper articles, political books and pamphlets to diaries, memoirs, travel books and even town chronicles. Second, censorship was rigorously applied for long periods in a considerable number of countries, which automatically precluded the existence of sources like a free press and the records of parliamentary debates. Since the parliament and free press are the two most natural information sources on public opinion, their absence makes the relevant research more difficult. A principal methodological question that must be answered is: How is it possible to learn public opinion in a milieu without the freedom of speech? The answer is all the more important for Italy in the 1830s and 1840s since the concept

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21   For the relevant literature on the concept of security see the first footnote.

22   ŠEDIVÝ, *Crisis*, pp. 174–240; M. ŠEDIVÝ, *The Austrian Empire, German Nationalism and the Rhine Crisis of 1840*, in: Austrian History Yearbook, No. 47, 2016, pp. 15–36.

of free press was introduced only during 1847 and the elected parliaments were not established until early 1848.

It is definitely a more difficult but not at all impossible task to ascertain the Italians' response to the assertive and often aggressive policies of the European powers before 1847.[23] Besides some primary sources like personal correspondence, memoirs and diaries as well as the political texts published outside Italy or anonymously within it, there still are two more primary sources of some use. First, there are the police reports on public opinion which, however, have not been preserved in great numbers and are actually housed in the Austrian State Archives for Lombardy and Venetia.[24] Second, there is the considerably more helpful correspondence of foreign representatives accredited at the courts of Italian countries. This sort of primary source has not been exploited much because it is traditionally considered to be a product of the members of a social-political elite who lived separated from the "common people". Another reason for the prevalent distrust of the contents of diplomatic despatches is the partiality of their authors caused by their origins and personal world views.

As for the latter source, diplomatic correspondence, it is necessary to explain its usefulness as an important source of knowledge with regard to the attitudes of the general public. An ambassador, envoy or chargé d'affaires were instructed not only to negotiate with local officials but also to gather the information on the state of affairs in the country, including public opinion because this represented an integral part of diplomatic despatches (and the same holds for the political correspondence of consuls). Therefore, every diplomat served as a correspondent. This task was eased by the fact that he was not alone in fulfilling his duty: he could take advantage of his subordinates — the employees of his representative office. While the newspapers had only individuals as reporters in foreign countries, there a group of educated people with close relations with local inhabitants, of course mostly from higher classes, functioned as an intelligence service. The information they gathered during conversations with the natives and by reading local printed material including anonymous (and mostly prohibited) political pamphlets was used for writing diplomatic reports addressed to superior ministers and rulers. Consequently, the reports often contained complex and detailed news about public opinion, sometimes even that of the lower classes.

The argument that the diplomatic correspondence was influenced by the diplomats' personal world views is definitely correct, but this can be said about any kind of correspondence. Moreover, the accuracy of the contents of the diplomatic despatches was highly valued, and for their authors it was necessary not to be led astray too far by their own prejudices and sympathies; consequently, many diplomats displayed surprising impartiality. In any case, even this problem can be easily solved by the word "comparison" so useful in the research on the presented topic: one can compare the despatches of different diplomatic agents residing in one country. Since these agents originated from countries with different political regimes, cultures and last

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23 For the research of public opinion in a country with strong censorship see ŠEDIVÝ, *The Austrian Empire*, pp. 15–36.

24 M. CHVOJKA, *Situačné správy: Archívny zdroj medzi kritickou a idealizujúcou reflexiou skutočnosti*, in: Nové historické rozhľady, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2011, pp. 77–99.

but not least also with different and often contradictory interests in Italy, with this method it is possible to come closer to "reality", especially if the diplomatic correspondence is compared with other primary sources.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The loss of faith in the stability and security of the European states system and the consequent belief in the use of armed force had important consequences for the Italians' attitude towards both the European states system and Austria: they became less inclined to show any loyalty to the political-legal order established in 1815 and more willing to exploit the internal problems of other counties for their own benefit. It was then easy for them to feel freed from any legal obligations towards the states system when they found it advantageous to do so and, from a practical point of view, feasible owing to the internal problems of Austria.

With this so to speak geopolitical or security approach towards the development of affairs in Italy in the 1840s, it is easier to understand what actually contributed to the hatred of Austria, the dislike of other Great Powers and the desire for political unity or unification. There is yet greater justification for applying the concept of security in the research of the public response to international relations during the 19th century. It enables one to overcome the dichotomous evaluation of modern nationalism where its early phase is regarded as positive and only its later stage is connected with symptoms of chauvinism. As is evident from the example of the Italian nationalist movement in the 1840s, in response to the abuse of power in the European states system a belief in the rule of force prevailed and emphasis was laid on possessing a strong army and navy and, to a limited extent, on colonial policy. The identical process occurred in Germany at the very same time. Europe's imperialistic and colonial fever during the later decades of the 19th century evidently had its roots in the first half.

Another advantage of the proposed approach is the overcoming of the dichotomist evaluation of diplomatic history from the restoration of peace in 1815 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Despite the considerable number of scholarly works on international relations of that era the question that remains to be answered is what actually happened to bring Europe and the world into the abyss of the first Armageddon of the 20th century. The existing literature offers a picture of strong discontinuity from the first decades after 1815 during which almost a golden age seemed to occur in European diplomatic history when the countries were allegedly ready to limit their egotism because of their feeling of pan-European responsibility, while the half century preceding 1914 is regarded as a period when tensions, mistrust and animosities among the countries seized with imperialist ambitions grew quickly. What actually caused the transition from the former to the latter is insufficiently explained; a turning point is usually sought as an answer, sometimes in the Crimean War 1853–1856 since it was the first war among the Great Powers since 1815, but more often in the unification of Germany in 1871 because it destroyed the balance of power in Europe. With the use of a more complex evaluation combining the history of diplomacy, international law and society it becomes evident that the answer is connected with

the development of European society in general that witnessed an important shift in collective mentality already at the end of the first half of the 19th century. The path from 1815 to 1914 therefore appears to be more complex and continuous than one had previously presumed.

Finally, understanding the logic as well as the importance of the interaction between international affairs and human society can help us to comprehend better Europe's current situation. The thesis introduced at the beginning of this article — that it is necessary to perceive international relations not only as an issue for the governing elites but also as matters of concern observed by the broader public that reacts not only to constitutional and socio-economic but also international affairs — is also applicable today when Europe is facing a considerable number of external challenges like China's ambitions, Russia's annexation of Crimea and interference with the internal affairs of Ukraine and the unstable situation in the Near East and North Africa. All these and many other affairs influence the situation within the European Union as well as Europe in general. The logical outcome is a heated debate about the EU's position in the changing world that is becoming less secure for the Old Continent than it seemed to be in the 1990s. The increasing apprehension and mistrust primarily caused by the loss of confidence in the strength of international law — especially after Russia's aggression in the Crimea — move governments, often with the consent of their citizens, to accentuate military force as the best means for ensuring states' and simultaneously the collective security. One cannot help but think that the situation from the mid-19th century is repeating itself.