

Italy – Foreign Policy

Italy's membership in NATO, the Group of Seven (G-7), and the European Community (EC), as well as its geographic proximity to the Middle East and North Africa, have been major determinants of Italian foreign policy.

A staunch supporter of NATO, Italy was one of the first allies to deploy cruise missiles on its territory – in Sicily in 1984.

Italy's coalition government is continuing the tradition of Ostpolitik (policy for the East). Soviet President Gorbachev made his first state visit to Italy in December 1989 and Mr. Andreotti has recently visited Moscow.

Italy has pledged large sums to assist emerging democracies in Poland and Hungary; and it plans to be a full participant in the European Bank for Reconstruction Development (EBRD).

Italy is also part of the recent "Pentagonale" initiative for stimulating greater economic cooperation between Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

Italy strongly supports greater political and economic integration of the European Community and the move toward a single market by 1992. Italy played an active part in having Spain and Portugal admitted to the Common Market in 1986.

Occupying the presidency of the European Community from July through December 1990, Italy has further opportunity to press ahead with economic, monetary and political union, and with necessary institutional reforms – notably in the context of conferences planned for December.

Italy's special relations with the Middle East and the Arab world reflects its Mediterranean orientation, history and economic realities. Ethiopia, Somalia and Libya were all former Italian colonies.

More than 90% of the country's oil comes from the Middle East. Italy also has major commercial contracts with the Middle East, especially in the areas of construction, equipment and high technology.

Italy favours an international peace conference under the auspices of the United Nations to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. In the current Persian Gulf crisis, Italy has joined the international blockade by sending two frigates and a supply ship, as well as Tornado aircraft.