

On the defence of antifascist Italy in Alcide De Gasperi's 1946 speech to the Paris Peace Conference

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Abstract

Faced with the gradual rise of neofascist parties in Europe, the present paper looks back at the past to analyse a speech delivered by one of the founding fathers of the European Union, namely Alcide De Gasperi. The investigation is part of a broader project on the analysis of Italian antifascist discourse. The speech that De Gasperi delivered at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference is reconstructed with the help of the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion, focusing on the passages in which the speaker dealt with Italy's non-fascist identity and its wrong perception by the audience. Emphasis is laid on the argumentative pattern underlying De Gasperi's discourse and the argumentative style characterising his address. Moreover, reference is made to the notion of argumentative equivalence to examine the translation of De Gasperi's speech into English; published in the *New York Times* the day after he delivered his address, it cast a shadow over the impartiality of the drafters of the English version of the speech, which nevertheless managed to go down to history as an argumentative classic.

Keywords

Argumentative pattern, argumentative style, De Gasperi, ideal model of critical discussion, strategic manoeuvring, translation

To be sure, he needs some of the knowledge of the past, which gives the truest basis for conjecture as to the future. (Gaskell, 2008 [1854]: 167)

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Introduction

The victory by Giorgia Meloni and her right-wing nationalist party *Fratelli d'Italia* ('Brothers of Italy') in the 2022 Italian elections can be viewed, on the one hand, as a typically Italian 'leopardesque change'. The adjective *leopardesque* in this noun phrase refers to the novel *The Leopard* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, in which the author epitomised Italian political profiteering by having one of his characters claim that 'If we want everything to remain the same, then everything is going to have to change'.¹ Though referred to the situation in Sicily in the mid-19th century, this famous sentence has come to represent Italian politics in general and also best describes the recent elections, as a relatively new 'face' of Italian politics disguised the presence in the electoral lists of long-standing ministers from the previous Berlusconi government that collapsed in 2011 (Cardone 2011); including, among others, Ignazio La Russa and Giulio Tremonti, this group gathers several stale members of Parliament who are now widely known to belong to the *caste* of Italian politics.

On the other hand, though, the results of the recent elections are far more frightening, because they mark the first victory of a far-right and neo-fascist party (Bosworth, 2021: 304; Somma, 2020: 86) since the 1922 march on Rome. A century after the rise to power of Mussolini's party, then, Italy has also ratified 'the successful reframing of the far right that took place through the marriage of fervent nationalism presented as authentic civic values' (De Búrca, 2018: 348). In this respect, the victory by *Fratelli d'Italia* is best seen as the umpteenth contribution to the apparently irreversible process that Wodak (2010) labelled 'the Haiderisation of Europe'.

In the light of this gloomy national and continental political landscape, the present paper looks back at a more glorious past, namely the 'Renaissance' of Italian politics after the Second World War, to examine a speech delivered by a politician who could hardly be compared to his contemporary counterparts, that is, Alcide De Gasperi. Renowned for his 'political savvy' (White, 2020: 3), 'the very modesty of his person and the sensibility of his aims' (White, 2020: 163), the founder and leader of the Christian Democratic Party could indeed be considered the antithesis of today's political caste for a variety of reasons, including the following. During a visit to the United States in 1947 'to improve his standing and, possibly, to gain some financial aid' (Canavero, 2019: 105),² De Gasperi was reported to have borrowed an overcoat from one of his ministers, as he did not possess a decorous one for his visit to the White House (Rizzo and Stella, 2007: 30). That coat became the symbol of an epoch (Rizzo and Stella, 2007: 30), a phase of Italian politics characterised by moral restraint and seriousness, and embodied by the first Prime Minister of the Italian Republic.

Although the story of the coat is still surrounded by mystery and its truthfulness debated (Palma, 2020), the moral caliber and political reputation of he who wore it remain indisputable, as De Gasperi is universally considered – together with Pietro Nenni and Palmiro Togliatti – one of the founding fathers of the Italian Republic (White, 2020: 2) and – together with Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer – one of the founding fathers of the European Union (Canavero, 2019: 19).

This paper focuses on the examination of argumentation in the speech that De Gasperi delivered at the Paris Peace Conference on 10th August 1946, more than one year after

the collapse of the fascist regime, to explain his country's views on the draft peace treaty before the representatives of the victorious Allied powers. This investigation is part of a broader project on the speeches delivered by illustrious Italian politicians who stood up against fascism in the 20th century. The single case studies aim at heeding the advice given by the fictional character quoted in the epigraph (namely Mr Hale in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South*) to inform the turbulent present with wise and brave words from the past. The project was inaugurated with the analysis of argumentation in the parliamentary speech delivered in 1924 by Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti (Brambilla, 2022), who was later assassinated by the fascists for his memorable invective, in which he denounced the violence surrounding the recent parliamentary elections that had brought the fascist party to power.

De Gasperi was also a strenuous opponent of fascism who, following Matteotti's murder, joined the *Aventine Secession* boycotting parliamentary work. During the regime, he was 'forced to hide, living under a false name in Milan and then in Rome [. . .] arrested in Florence while he and his wife were trying to get to Trieste by train' (Canavero, 2019: 73) and finally 'imprisoned for sixteen months' (White, 2020: 3).

However delivered *after* the collapse of the fascist regime, De Gasperi's speech at the Paris Peace Conference still had to do, albeit partially, with fascism and antifascism; the following sections will illustrate that, from the point of view of topical selection (Van Eemeren, 2010: 93), the speaker chose to attack the audience's perception of the identity of the Italian people as fascist and defend the antifascist roots of the embryonic Italian Republic.

De Gasperi's speech: Contextualisation and analytical methodology

De Gasperi's rhetorical style can be said to be characterised by distinctive ethotic traits. White (2020: 28) reports the politician's words, clarifying the origins of his 'pragmatic and down-to-earth oratory' (Canavero, 2019: 61):

I remember quite clearly how at a certain point in my political youth . . . horrified by the disastrous effects of excessive rhetoric, I resolved to speak and write simply and concretely, aiming to convince rather than entrance, to persuade rather than receive applause (White, 2020: 28).

Canavero (2019) also comments on De Gasperi's style, outlining his aversion for 'bombastic speeches and resounding statements' (Canavero, 2019: 46) and his 'desire for tangible results [. . .] and trying to win over those starting from different ideological approaches' (Canavero, 2019: 62).

The Paris Peace Conference or Conference of the twenty-one nations 'opened on July 29, 1946 [. . .] to provide the other Allied nations with an opportunity to express their views on the draft peace treaties for Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland' (Office of the Historian, 1970). In particular, it 'was charged with considering and recommending changes in the draft treaties which had been prepared by the Council of Foreign Ministers during its sessions at London and Paris, January 18–July 12, 1946'

(Office of the Historian, 1970). The Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) had been formed at the 1945 Potsdam Conference and was tasked with preparing the peace treaties:

The CFM presented the peace treaty with Italy at the Paris Peace Conference [. . .] where the Italian Delegation was admitted with merely consulting functions (Cattaruzza, 2017: 224).

The Italian delegation was led by Alcide De Gasperi, who ‘was to speak to the Assembly of the Twenty-One on the afternoon of 10 August’ (Canavero, 2019: 102). Canavero (2019: 102) specifies that ‘the preceding days were occupied by lengthy meetings at the Embassy to decide on the main lines of speech’. However, the delegation was aware that ‘the Italian negotiating position in Paris was rather weak’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 225).

Any hope that the existence of the Resistance and the fact that Italy had ultimately fought on the same side would make Italy’s prospects less bleak soon proved to be unfounded. The talks between the ‘Four’, i.e. the USA, the USSR, the United Kingdom and France, which had preceded the Conference had not been promising (Canavero, 2019: 102).

Despite its status of co-belligerent from 1943, Italy was indeed ‘considered an ally of Germany’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 225) and ‘treated as a defeated state’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 289).

Throughout the course of these events, Italy was subjected to decisions taken by others and shaped by power relations at the international level, and it was condemned to what has been defined ‘the politics of impotence’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 4).

Actually, in Paris ‘it was not so much a treaty that was being discussed as the imposition of a diktat on Italy’ (Canavero, 2019: 103), which was eventually sanctioned and forced ‘to give up almost all the territories on the Adriatic Sea that had been conquered in World War I’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 3), as the position that had emerged during the negotiations of the CFM were confirmed (Cattaruzza, 2017: 228).

As the leader of the Italian delegation, De Gasperi had to bear the brunt of Italy’s ‘politics of impotence’.

Paradoxically, a man who had suffered under the Fascists was now having to pay the debts of his persecutors (Canavero, 2019: 103).

Aware of his country’s uncomfortably subordinate position in the political arena, De Gasperi nevertheless tried to express Italy’s standpoint on the terms of peace, and he did so by producing a trailblazing ‘European’ speech.

‘I consider’, he said to members of the delegation, ‘that we should also get across the fact that we want to make a positive contribution to world reconstruction, taking what we say in the debate beyond Italy’s interests alone and into the realm of ideas. We need to put forward a European programme; we must give the clear impression that we are firmly on a democratic

track. We must therefore say something new which will enable us to reach out to world public opinion. If we return home defeated, we must do so with dignity' (Canavero, 2019: 102).

In light of the contextual and institutional preconditions in which the speech had to be delivered, the paper explores *strategic manoeuvring* (Van Eemeren, 2010: 93) in De Gasperi's address to investigate how he simultaneously pursued rhetorical effectiveness and dialectical reasonableness in order to strenuously defend his country's non-fascist identity and induce the audience to reappraise and reconsider the sanctions to impose on Italy. As De Gasperi uttered approximately 3500 words, a thorough analysis of the speech in its entirety would exceed the limits of the present paper. This investigation, therefore, focuses on the first and last portions of the address, those in which the speaker dealt with antifascist Italy and that make up approximately 1500 words.

The 'hidden dialogicality' (Bakhtin, 1984: 197) of De Gasperi's speech will be taken into account, as the opinions expressed in his monologue were influenced and determined by the presence of a 'silent audience' (Van Eemeren, 2010: 115) that had already reached a conclusive decision on the matter at stake. Hence, argumentation will be reconstructed *dialogically* (Van Eemeren, 2010: 115) with the help of the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion (Van Eemeren, 2010: 9; Van Eemeren, 2018: 33); understood as an ideal model aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits, it is 'a valuable tool for analyzing argumentative discourse' (Van Eemeren, 2010: 9) that is 'used for heuristic, analytical and evaluative purposes' (Van Eemeren, 2010: 4).

Reference will also be made to the pragma-dialectical notion of *argumentative style* (Van Eemeren, 2021) to illustrate how the speaker, despite his reputation of being a calm and clear-eyed leader (White, 2020: 2), produced a speech that was not devoid of elements qualifying his style as 'engaged' (Van Eemeren, 2021: 21).

As De Gasperi delivered his speech in Italian, a few comments regarding the translation of his words into English are in order. An official translation could already be found on 11th August 1946 – the day after the speech was delivered – on *The New York Times* (NYT). The article showing the translation was retrieved through the Library System of the University of Trieste, providing all its users with free access to the American newspaper and its archives. The same translation can also be found in the US Government *Office of the Historian* website,³ 'which provides in-depth information to the public on the history of US foreign policy'.⁴

Defined as 'source-text induced target-text production for a third party' (Neubert, 2000: 10), translation involves change by definition and often brings about an alteration of source-text argumentation. In this paper, De Gasperi's words will be regularly shown together with their NYT translations into English, occasionally to point out disputable translation choices. To analyse argumentation in a translational perspective, reference will be made to the notion of *argumentative equivalence* (Brambilla, 2020). Formulated on the basis of the pragma-dialectical notion of *strategic manoeuvring* and understood as 'the co-occurrence in the [target text] of topical coherence, presentational coherence and respect for audience demands' (Brambilla, 2020: 200), it will be used as an analytical tool favouring the examination and description of how De Gasperi's argumentative strategies were translated into English to inform or, sometimes, misinform the American and the broader anglophone and international audiences.

De Gasperi's defence of antifascist Italy: Analysis of argumentation

Despite his reputation of being 'a centrist politician and coalition builder' (White, 2020: 25), as soon as De Gasperi took the floor on 10th August 1946 he addressed his audience outspokenly.

- (1) Prendendo la parola in questo consesso mondiale sento che tutto, tranne la vostra personale cortesia, è contro di me: e soprattutto la mia qualifica di ex nemico, che mi fa considerare come imputato e l'essere citato qui dopo che i più influenti di voi hanno già formulato le loro conclusioni in una lunga e faticosa elaborazione. Non corro io il rischio di apparire come uno spirito angusto e perturbatore, che si fa portavoce di egoismi nazionali e di interessi unilaterali?

Figure 1 displays the picture of the original NYT translation of Excerpt (1).

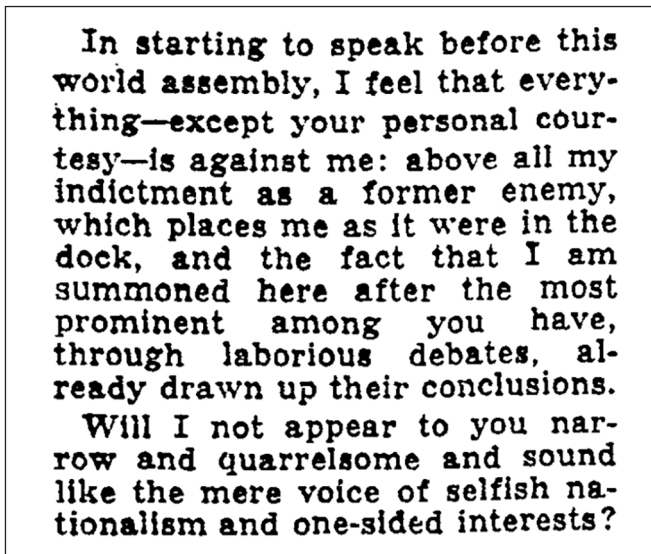


Figure 1. Translation of Excerpt (1) in the NYT.

In pragma-dialectical terms, Excerpt (1) corresponds to the *confrontation stage*, that is 'the initial situation that manifests itself in those parts of the discourse in which it becomes clear that there is a standpoint that meets with real or projected doubt or contradiction, so that a difference of opinion arises or may be expected to arise' (Van Eemeren, 2018: 36). At this stage, the controversial standpoint had not been specified yet, although the fact that it had to do with the nature of the peace treaty could be (and probably was) inferred from the context of speech delivery; De Gasperi's standpoint, verbalisable as 'The peace treaty should be amended', would be defended implicitly throughout the whole speech.

In Paris, it was clear that ‘Italy, as a member of the Axis Alliance, was among the defendants’ (Cattaruzza, 2017: 271). By explicitly verbalising his awareness of being seen as a former enemy (*ex nemico*) and a defendant (*imputato*), De Gasperi deliberately situated discourse in the field of judicial argumentation right at the outset of his address, explaining that the opinions of the audience had already led to a decision that was not shared by the arguer. By resorting to a rhetorical question, he then recognised the risk of appearing a ‘narrow and quarrelsome *spirit*’ who only cares for national and unilateral interests. Interestingly, the noun *spirito* was not translated into English in the NYT article, leading to a certain loss of evocative power and suggesting a certain inaccuracy or partisanship in the translation; indeed, the noun *spirito* was seldom translated, although it appears as an iterated and pivotal presentational device in the speech, occurring six times to qualify either the atmosphere in Paris (as in this case) or the democratic aspirations of Italy.

Owing to contextual constraints, the peace treaty was the thematic core and bone of contention in De Gasperi’s speech. Before starting to discuss the matter in greater detail, though, the speaker verbally insisted on presenting the contours of his political figure and revealing the identity of the Italian people.

- (2) Signori, è vero: ho il dovere innanzi alla coscienza del mio Paese e per difendere la vitalità del mio popolo di parlare come italiano; ma sento la responsabilità e il diritto di parlare anche come democratico antifascista, come rappresentante della nuova Repubblica che, armonizzando in sé le aspirazioni umanitarie di Giuseppe Mazzini, le concezioni universaliste del cristianesimo e le speranze internazionaliste dei lavoratori, è tutta rivolta verso quella pace duratura e ricostruttiva che voi cercate e verso quella cooperazione fra i popoli che avete il compito di stabilire. [Gentlemen, true enough, I must speak as an Italian, because it is my duty to defend the life of my people, but I also feel the responsibility, and have the right to speak as an anti-Fascist and a Democrat. I lift my voice as the representative of a new republic which blends the humanity of (Giuseppe) Mazzini’s vision with the universal aims of Christianity and the international hopes of the working class, a republic striving toward that lasting and constructive peace which you are also seeking, and toward that cooperation between nations which it is your task to establish.]

Excerpt (2) could be said to correspond to the *opening stage*. As he was invited to provide his country’s opinions on the draft treaty and, possibly, reply to the Allied decisions, De Gasperi could be seen as the *antagonist* in the critical discussion, that is, the arguer who ‘assumes the obligation to respond critically to this standpoint and to the protagonist’s defence’ (Van Eemeren, 2018: 36); yet, he could also be considered the *protagonist*, as he undertook the obligation to defend a standpoint that would be critically responded to by the audience at a later moment. In this respect, the speech provides an example of ‘a mixed difference of opinion, where two parties have advanced contradictory standpoints [and] each party has an obligation to defend his own standpoint’ (van Eemeren, 2010: 218).

To inaugurate the opening stage of his argumentation, De Gasperi replied to his own rhetorical question by specifying that the positive answer (*Gentlemen, true enough*) depended on the fact that he had to speak not only as an Italian who was seeking to defend the *vitality* (rather than *the life*) of his people, but also as an antifascist and a Democrat. By quoting Giuseppe Mazzini, revealing the internationalist vision of Italian workers and evoking Christian and republican values, he ratified his ‘content-related material commitments’ (Van Eemeren, 2018: 36) to ‘determine the common stating points’ (Van Eemeren, 2018: 37) that were supposed to be shared by Italy and the other Allied forces, and that were identifiable in the struggle for peace and cooperation. In this regard, he anticipated the explicit premise of his argumentation, which could be summarised in the sentence ‘Cooperation and equality are supposed to underlie the Peace Treaty’.

From a broader perspective, the excerpt in question appears as an attempt at stressing the non-fascist character of the Italian people to the benefit of an apparently uninformed and/or biased audience. Regarding translation, the adverb *also* in ‘you are also seeking’ is a deliberate addition that does not, however, substantially modify the pragmatic meaning of the speaker’s words.

The end of Excerpt (2) marked the conclusion of the *opening stage* and introduced the audience to the *argumentation stage*, that is, the moment when the speaker starts advancing arguments to defend his standpoint and corresponding precisely with ‘those parts of the discourse in which the one party advances argumentation to overcome the other party’s doubts’ (Van Eemeren, 2010: 10). The first and main argument put forward by the Italian Prime Minister was robust and unequivocal.

- (3) Questo trattato è, nei confronti dell’Italia, estremamente duro. [This treaty is a hard treaty indeed.]

Although a more appropriate translation of Excerpt (3) would have read ‘This treaty is extremely harsh to Italy’, the version proposed in the NYT cannot be said to hamper the attainment of argumentative equivalence between the source and target texts.

The powerful comment displayed in Excerpt (3), which constitutes argument 1.1. whereby De Gasperi defended his standpoint, was immediately softened by a conditional sentence, whereby the speaker addressed the theme of ‘Italy’s application to become a member of the United Nations’ (United Nations, 1950: 127).

- (4) Ma se esso tuttavia fosse almeno uno strumento ricostruttivo di cooperazione internazionale, il sacrificio nostro avrebbe un compenso: l’Italia che entrasse, sia pure vestita del saio del penitente, nell’ONU, sotto il patrocinio dei Quattro, tutti d’accordo nel proposito di bandire nelle relazioni internazionali l’uso della forza (come proclama l’articolo 2 dello Statuto di San Francisco) in base al ‘principio della sovrana uguaglianza di tutti i Membri’, come è detto allo stesso articolo, tutti impegnati a garantirsi vicendevolmente ‘l’integrità territoriale e l’indipendenza politica’, tutto ciò potrebbe essere uno spettacolo non senza

speranza e conforto. L'Italia avrebbe subito delle sanzioni per il suo passato fascista, ma, messa una pietra tombale sul passato, tutti si ritroverebbero eguali nello spirito della nuova collaborazione internazionale.

The original NYT translation of this significant passage of De Gasperi's speech is shown in Figure 2.

deed. Yet if it were truly a constructive instrument of international cooperation, the sacrifice which my country is called upon to make might find its compensation.

Were Italy, even in sackcloth, now asked to enter under the patronage of the Big Four the portals of the United Nations, truly united in the determination to discard force according to the principles of the sovereign equality of all members proclaimed in the San Francisco Charter, were they one and all truly pledged mutually to guarantee their territorial integrity and political independence, then all this might open up a vision not lacking in hope and comfort. In that case Italy would have suffered her penalty for her Fascist past and then, the past atoned for, all of us could meet as equals breathing the new air of international fellowship.

Figure 2. Translation of Excerpt (4) in the NYT.

Excerpt (4) and Figure 2 indicate that an evident reluctance to translate the Italian term *spirito* in the NYT article can further be observed in the translation of *nello spirito della nuova collaborazione internazionale* with 'breathing the new air of international fellowship'. They also show that, by means of a long conditional sentence, the speaker

imagined a peace treaty enabling Italy to join the UN on equal terms with the other members, and by doing so he repeated and clarified the premise of his argumentation. Yet the choice of a second-conditional sentence, which is prototypically used for hypothetical and counterfactual situations in a present or future time frame, was functional to evoking an unlikely condition that the speaker knew would not materialise. De Gasperi's vision was one guaranteeing Italy the same 'territorial integrity' and 'political independence' enjoyed by the victorious countries. He tried to anchor and actualise this vision and his hope for equality by resorting to authority argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958: 410) and quoting the UN San Francisco Charter, which guaranteed the principle of sovereign equality to all members. In so doing, he further contributed to grounding argumentation in the legal context.

In voicing these wishes of 'hope and comfort', he did not refrain from expressing his country's humility in addressing the Allies, and did so by evocatively reassuring his audience of Italy's intention to join the UN wearing sackcloth and ashes, as penitents do (*l'Italia che entrasse, sia pure vestita del saio del penitente, nell'ONU*). Although the term *penitente* was omitted in the English translation, reference to the sackcloth can be considered sufficient to conveying the image of the penitent country.

De Gasperi subsequently clarified that Italy was ready to suffer her penalty for her fascist past; the term *past* played an instrumental argumentative role, as it verbally highlighted, by contrast, the existence of a different present. Indeed, he finished his sentence with an appeal to all the participants in the conference to leave the past behind, this being the prerequisite for a future of equality. De Gasperi's choice of the idiomatic expression *mettere una pietra tombale sul passato* appears to be non-casual: literally meaning 'laying a tombstone on the past', it contributed to conveying the idea that fascism had been finally killed or, at least, that Italians were at ease with its passing. Although an equivalent expression is not present in English, the choice to translate it with the verb 'to atone for' is disputable, as it emphasised Italy's penitence rather than its wilful rejection of fascism or its tranquillity in finally living without it. In Excerpt (4), then, argumentative equivalence between the source and target texts was not achieved, especially as far as presentational coherence and respect for audience demands are concerned. In other words, the American readership did not receive a faithful rendition of De Gasperi's words and an accurate description of the character of the Italian people. This theme would be one of the most prominent in the continuation of the speech; as the following pages will confirm, the speaker repeatedly tried and convinced his audience of the anti-fascist orientation of most Italians, even during the war. Before expounding this theme, he ended the description of his vision by directly asking his audience a question regarding its actualisation:

(5) Si può credere che sia così? [Can as much be hoped for?]

He then pointed out that he believed in the good intentions of his audience but that he could not but note that 'the text of the treaty speaks a different language' (*il testo del trattato parla un altro linguaggio*). After briefly mentioning that Italy's defence was being jeopardised by the precautions laid down in the draft treaty, he stated that Italy was not worried by the text of the treaty but rather by its *spirit*, which was evident at the very

outset in the words of the preamble; in this case, the noun *spirit* appeared in the NYT translation ‘However, it is the spirit rather than the text of the treaty that disheartens us’.

Then, De Gasperi began verbalising his first argument in support of argument 1.1., which thematically focused on a slight that could not be found in the treaties concerning the other former enemies. This problematic passage of the treaty concerned co-belligerence, that is, the period when Italy joined the Allies war against Germany; notably, the term *cobelligeranza* was iterated in De Gasperi’s speech, playing a crucial argumentative role, but its translation was – for the most part – omitted in the NYT article. In pragmadiialectical terms, this translation choice frustrates the search for argumentative equivalence because it inexplicably hampers the preservation of presentational devices in the target text, jeopardising topical coherence and providing the anglophone audience with a ‘diluted’ and partially distorted version of the address. Excerpt (6) shows that the expression *che riguarda la cobelligeranza*, translatable as ‘that concerns co-belligerence’, was actually not translated.

- (6) Ma nel secondo considerando che riguarda la cobelligeranza voi troverete nel nostro un apprezzamento sfavorevole che cercherete invano nei progetti per gli Stati ex nemici. [But under the second ‘whereas’, you will find in our treaty a slur that you would seek in vain in the other treaties.]

Subsequently, De Gasperi quoted the beginning of this problematic passage of the treaty and provided his opinion about it:

- (7) Esso suona: ‘considerando che sotto la pressione degli avvenimenti militari, il regime fascista fu rovesciato . . .’. Ora non v’ha dubbio che il rovesciamento del regime fascista non fu possibile che in seguito agli avvenimenti militari, ma il rivolgimento non sarebbe stato così profondo, se non fosse stato preceduto dalla lunga cospirazione dei patrioti che in Patria e fuori agirono a prezzo di immensi sacrifici, senza l’intervento degli scioperi politici nelle industrie del nord, senza l’abile azione clandestina degli uomini dell’opposizione parlamentare antifascista (ed è qui presente uno dei suoi più fattivi rappresentanti) che spinsero al colpo di stato.

The original translation of Excerpt (7) as appeared in *The New York Times* is shown in Figure 3.

treaties. It reads as follows:

“Whereas under the pressure of military events the Fascist regime in Italy was overthrown.”

No one will question the fact that the overthrow of the Fascist regime was made possible by military events, but it is equally true that the uprising would not have been as deep and far-reaching had it not been preceded by a long conspiracy on the part of patriots who, at home and abroad, prepared the event at the cost of unmeasured sacrifices; had it not been rehearsed with the organized political strikes in the industries of northern Italy; had it not been prepared by the underground action of former prominent members of pre-Fascist parliamentary life (we have with us here one of the most active) who urged and brought on the coup d'état.

Figure 3. Translation of Excerpt (7) in the NYT.

The translation of *opposizione parlamentare antifascista* ('antifascist parliamentary opposition') as 'pre-fascist parliamentary life' stands out in the English text, casting a shadow over the commitment and impartiality of the drafter(s) of the translation. Their choices actually shifted the reader's attention from the crucial and dangerous *opposition to fascism in Parliament* to a vaguer, safer and idler *life in Parliament before fascism*. Therefore, a doubt arises as to whether an intention to conceal Italy's antifascist movement to the anglophone and international audiences was the rationale underlying the English version of the speech.

As to De Gasperi's words, mentioning the sacrifices of Italian patriots was functional to underlining that co-belligerence should have been acknowledged to a greater extent in the treaty. To strengthen his argument, he subsequently resorted again to authority argumentation by recalling and referencing the Potsdam Declaration of 2nd August 1945, which specified that 'Italy was the first of the Axis Powers to break with

Germany, to whose defeat she had made a material contribution, and has now joined with the Allies in the struggle against Japan. Italy has freed herself from the Fascist regime and is making good progress toward the re-establishment of a democratic government and institutions'. After uttering this quote from the Potsdam Statement, De Gasperi openly asked why those words had not been heeded during the drafting of the treaty, and he did so strategically, by means of an *argument from cause to effect* challenging the treaty provisions.

- (8) Tale era il riconoscimento di Potsdam. Cosa è avvenuto perché nel preambolo del trattato si faccia ora sparire dalla scena storica il popolo italiano che fu protagonista? [Such were the words spoken at Potsdam. [. . .] Why does the preamble of the treaty now cancel the Italian people from the historic scene in which they played their prominent role?]

As shown in Excerpt (8), De Gasperi implicitly stated that the formal recognition of Italy's role as a co-belligerent was expected to be the effect of the Potsdam Declaration, while this role was actually neglected. The preamble could indeed be criticised for being in logical contradiction with the Declaration. By eliciting 'the basic critical question of causal argumentation (Does action X indeed lead to result Y?)' (Van Eemeren and Garsen, 2020: 19), the illogicality of this part of the treaty was strategically brought to the fore; in this regard, the argument from cause to effect played an instrumental role in De Gasperi's argumentation in favour of a revision of the treaty, as it showed that the Potsdam Declaration had been virtually ineffective.

After implying that the Potsdam provisions should have been followed, De Gasperi blamed the treaty drafters for proposing a 'reticent and niggardly definition of Italy's co-belligerency' (*la formulazione così stentata ed agra della cobelligeranza*), which was described in terms of 'Italian armed forces took an active part in the war against Germany' (*delle Forze armate italiane hanno preso parte attiva alla guerra contro la Germania*). As a partitive article, the Italian *delle* introducing the nominal expression *forze armate* 'is an indefinite determiner for mass and plural count nouns' (Giusti, 2021: 33). No partitives can be observed in the corresponding English sentence (United Nations, 1950: 127), but the partitive article *des* stands out in the French version of the treaty (*des forces armées italiennes*) (United Nations, 1950: 5). From a grammar point of view, a nominal expression introduced by a partitive determiner does not have a definite interpretation (Giusti, 2021: 38) and De Gasperi harnessed this construct to argue against the alleged partiality of the treaty drafters, as shown in Excerpt (9).

- (9) Delle Forze? Ma si tratta di tutta la marina da guerra, di centinaia di migliaia di militari per i servizi di retrovia, del 'Corpo Italiano di Liberazione', trasformatosi poi nelle divisioni combattenti e 'last but not least' dei partigiani, autori soprattutto dell'insurrezione nel nord.

Figure 4 displays the original NYT translation of Excerpt (9).

Why not say the Italian armed forces? Did not the entire Italian Navy join the Allies?
Did not hundreds of thousands of Italian service troops cooperate?
Nor can we forget the Italian liberation corps, transformed later into combat divisions. And, last but not least, the partisans who fought and finally carried out the insurrection in the north.

Figure 4. Translation of Excerpt (9) in the NYT.

To express and highlight his discomfort at the treaty, the speaker resorted to an *echo question* (*Delle Forze?*). Understood as ‘the repetition (full or partial) of someone else’s utterance in direct response to it’ (Pinchevski, 2022: 91), this rhetorical strategy is used to ‘convey complete amazement’ (Pinchevski, 2022: 91) and was exploited by De Gasperi to stress the controversial character of the concise description of co-belligerence. The NYT translation does not do justice to the rhetorical effectiveness of this argumentative strategy, as no partitive was reproduced in English and the elliptical form of the echo question was not preserved. Indeed, a more appropriate translation would have read: ‘Some forces?’. Excerpt (9) further indicates that, as an answer to this question that mockingly echoed the treaty’s words, De Gasperi listed all the forces that actually made up Italy’s effort as a co-belligerent, stressing the role of partisans at the end of his remark.

To strengthen his argument, he also specified the number of casualties suffered by Italy in the resistance war against Germany and pointed out that this war lasted eighteen months. Italy’s dedication to the Allies’ cause was then reaffirmed by quoting Churchill and Stimson (the American War Secretary during the conflict), who had respectively blamed ‘one man, and one man alone’ for the war and publicly praised Italy for defying the Germans.

Moreover, to reiterate that co-belligerence had not been duly acknowledged in the treaty, De Gasperi suggested that the preamble had been probably written after drafting the treaty itself, ‘like the preface of any book’ (*come la prefazione di un libro*). This meant that the drafters had to tone down ‘the meaning and extent of the Italian people’s participation in the war [. . .] in order that the preamble might somehow fit the articles which follow it’ (*e così bisognava ridurre, attenuare il significato della partecipazione del popolo italiano ed in genere della cobelligeranza perché il preambolo potesse in qualche maniera corrispondere agli articoli che seguono*).

Finally, he observed that most of the seventy-eight articles included in the treaty pertained to the Fascist war and the surrender, while not a single article recalled Italy’s war effort as a co-belligerent, as ‘it is assumed that in this regard Italy is sufficiently rewarded by the promise of admittance to the United Nations’ (*la quale si ritiene già compensata*

coll'appoggio promesso all'Italia per l'entrata nell'ONU). Whereupon, he concluded his remarks by specifying that this reward was also guaranteed to countries that had followed in Italy's footsteps.

- (10) Compenso garantito anche a Stati che seguirono o poterono seguire molto più tardi l'esempio dell'Italia antifascista. [But this reward is guaranteed also to countries which followed only much later Italy's example.]

Showing that *l'esempio dell'Italia antifascista* was translated as 'Italy's example', Excerpt (10) further sheds light on the fact that Italy's *antifascist* identity was discursively concealed or, rather, purged in the English version of the speech.

From a broader perspective, the excerpts displayed and discussed so far can be said to hinge on an argumentative pattern with pragmatic argumentation as a main argument (Van Eemeren, 2017: 22) that could be represented as follows:

- (1.) (Standpoint: The Peace Treaty should be amended)
1.1 Because: The Peace Treaty is extremely harsh to Italy
1.1.1 Because: Co-belligerence has not been acknowledged in the Peace Treaty
(1.1.1') (And: Cooperation and equality are supposed to underlie the Peace Treaty)

This argumentative pattern summarises argumentation in the first section of De Gasperi's address but cannot be said to represent the argumentation structure of the *whole* speech, as the speaker advanced three additional arguments to support argument 1.1 and enhance the defence of his implicit standpoint. Namely, he claimed that the territorial, economic and military clauses were harsh. These themes were addressed in succession and devoted varying degrees of attention. Notably, the section in which De Gasperi dealt with territorial clauses and, especially, 'the problem of Trieste', is as lengthy and significant as the section regarding co-belligerence and Italy's antifascist nature; therefore, it will be the object of a separate investigation, as the description of all the argumentative features of De Gasperi's speech could not fit the length of the present paper.

After advancing these three additional arguments, De Gasperi reverted to the topic of co-belligerence and the identity of the Italian people at the end of his address, which shows the significant role that the above argumentation pattern played in the intervention at the Paris Peace Conference.

- (11) Signori Ministri, Signori Delegati, per mesi e mesi ho atteso invano di potervi esprimere in una sintesi generale il pensiero dell'Italia sulle condizioni della sua pace, ed oggi ancora comparando qui nella veste di ex-nemico, veste che non fu mai quella del popolo italiano, innanzi a Voi, affaticati dal lungo travaglio o anelanti alla conclusione, ho fatto uno sforzo per contenere il sentimento e dominare la parola, onde sia palese che siamo lungi dal voler intralciare ma intendiamo costruttivamente favorire la vostra opera, in quanto contribuisca ad un assetto più giusto del mondo. [Gentlemen, for months I have waited in vain to be allowed to sum up before you Italy's views on the terms of peace. Appearing

here today in the position of a former enemy, a position which the Italian people never endorsed of their free will, I have tried to contain my feelings and limit my words. This I have done to prove I am not to hamper but rather lend a constructive hand to your task, in so far as it be a task of building the world.]

Excerpt (11) can be considered to mark the beginning of the *concluding stage*, in which the protagonist and antagonist ‘determine whether the [. . .] standpoint has been properly defended’ (Van Eemeren, 2018: 37). No true completion of the critical discussion was reached in actual fact, as the position that had emerged in the course of the negotiations of the CFM were confirmed at the Peace Conference, despite De Gasperi’s argumentative endeavour to lead the Allied powers to reconsider their sanctions against Italy. However, the speaker tried to resolve the difference of opinion at stake until the end of his address, when he re-stated that the figure of the former enemy had never been that of the Italian people, who were forced to live under the fascist dictatorship against their will. He also reaffirmed Italy’s determination to contribute to the aim of the conference, that is, building a fairer world order (*in quanto contribuisca ad un assetto più giusto del mondo*). Yet, this message did not cross the linguistic border unchanged, as it was altered into ‘a task of building the world’. Later towards the end of the speech, the need to perform this task re-occurred in the form *per creare un mondo più giusto e più umano*, and was more appropriately translated as ‘the creation of a just and more human world’.

De Gasperi went on explaining that, rather than anxious, he and his colleagues were faithful ‘that the new Italian democracy will emerge from the crisis of war and that the world will be renewed through valid instruments of peace’ (*la fede della nuova democrazia italiana nel superamento della crisi della guerra e nel rinnovamento del mondo operato con validi strumenti di pace*) because, rather than a phase of Italian politics, fascism had been a temporary interruption of the country’s democratic development (*prima che il fascismo stroncasse l’evoluzione democratica dell’altro dopoguerra*). For this reason, the speaker subsequently launched an appeal to the audience not to jeopardise ‘the freedom and democratic evolution of the Italian people’ (*senza correre il rischio di compromettere la libertà e lo sviluppo democratico del popolo italiano*) by means of the treaty. This appeal then turned into a prayer, ‘I ask only that our peace be framed within that wider peace which the men and women of all countries who fought and suffered for the ideal are waiting’ (*vi chiedo solo di inquadrare la nostra pace nella pace che ansiosamente attendono gli uomini e le donne di ogni paese, che nella guerra hanno combattuto e sofferto per una mèta ideale*), that is, to understand the situation of Italy and consider that most of its citizens had never been fascists. However gentle, this prayer was also accompanied with a warning to the audience, that ‘on your shoulders rests the duty of giving the world a peace consistent with war aims’ (*grava su voi la responsabilità di dare al mondo una pace che corrisponda ai conclamati fini della guerra*); moreover, imperatives were used to further challenge the representatives of the Allied powers:

- (12) Non sostate su labili espedienti, non illudetevi con una tregua momentanea o con compromessi instabili: guardate a quella meta ideale, fate uno sforzo tenace e generoso per raggiungerla. [Do not linger on the steps of transient expediency. Do

not deceive yourself that with a mere truce or unstable compromise you can achieve your aims. Look up to that higher goal. Make generous effort to reach it.]

Excerpt (12) suggests that the imperatives were either misunderstood or mistranslated in the NYT, as De Gasperi's 'do not deceive yourselves' became 'do not deceive yourself', offering a distorted picture of the relationship between the speaker and his audience. Moreover, the 'generous and steadfast effort' that was the object of De Gasperi's plea turned into a non-heterogeneous 'generous effort' (surprisingly preceded by no indefinite articles), which gave back to the target audience the figure of a beseeching man rather than that of a resolute politician who was directly asking his audience to make a brave decision.

To conclude his remarks, the speaker reformulated his invitation to *dare respiro e credito alla Repubblica d'Italia*, which is translatable as 'to give a greater sweep and credit to the Republic of Italy'; this proud statement, condensing De Gasperi's opinions on the fascist past of his country and the terms of peace, was rendered in the NYT with 'I ask you to grant a respite and moral credit to the Republic of Italy'. Although the need to give credit to Italy was preserved, its need to be recognised a certain leeway was replaced with another entreaty, that contributed to transforming proudly antifascist Italy into a contrite subject asking for a respite. This translation appears even more questionable as De Gasperi's request could be considered a final and creative verbalisation of his standpoint ('The Peace Treaty should be amended'), that had been defended implicitly up until the concluding phase of the address. As a last remark, De Gasperi restated Italy's willingness to join the Allied peace efforts to create a fairer and more human world, but his words went unheeded.

Conclusion

The analysis of argumentation in the speech that Alcide De Gasperi delivered at the Paris Peace Conference on 10th August 1946 suggests that, on the one hand, the speaker's argumentative style can be considered detached. By quoting the San Francisco Charter, referencing the Potsdam Declaration, resorting to authority argumentation and listing the events that had enabled Italy to overthrow the fascist regime with the help of the Allies, the politician based his argumentation on facts and rules, which are the cornerstone of legal argumentation (Walton, 2002: 32). Causal argumentation, which the speaker chose to build his pragmatic argumentation pattern, is also typical of detached argumentative styles (Van Eemeren, 2021: 20). On the other hand, the iteration of keywords (e.g. *spirito, cobelligeranza*), the skilful use of rhetorical and echo questions, the recourse to analogies (*like the preface of any book*), together with the choice of imperatives to challenge the biased and pre-established decisions of the audience, are all discursive elements that point to an engaged argumentative style. Apparently, then, De Gasperi did not limit himself to the choice of either a detached or an engaged style, but merged elements of both, to give life to a dialectically reasonable and rhetorically effective address that is now widely considered one of the pioneering speeches of one of the most prominent promoters of equality in the European Union.

With regard to how De Gasperi's thoughts were conveyed to the world, the analysis of argumentative equivalence between his speech and its official translation in *The New York Times* indicates that the latter was characterised by the omission of key terms (e.g.

co-belligerence, opposition) and key adjectives (*antifascist, fairer*). In particular, the noun *opposition* and the adjective *antifascist*, qualifying the character of most Italians, were not only omitted but also modified in the translation, namely in the noun phrase ‘pre-fascist parliamentary life’, which was selected as the equivalent of ‘antifascist parliamentary opposition’. These groundless and disputable translation choices, betraying the *spirit* of De Gasperi’s address, suggest that the NYT article could have aimed to conceal the antifascist character of the Italian people and discursively contribute to justifying the sanctions and harsh provisions in the Peace Treaty. In spite of that translation, De Gasperi became the ‘head of eight successive coalition governments’ (White, 2020: 2) and provided his personal contributions to moulding the EU and rebuilding that *fairer and more human world order* that had been provisionally lost, and that seems to have been lost again today, in an era populated by different politicians.

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Notes

1. This translation of the Italian original ‘Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com’è, bisogna che tutto cambi’ can be found in Mandel (1998: 250).
2. De Gasperi’s 1947 visit to the United States, known as *il viaggio del pane* (‘the bread trip’), was a success, as the relationships of trust with the United States were further consolidated (Canavero, 2019: 105) and triggered the economic and political restoration in Italy (Balzarotti and Miccolupi, 2017).
3. The translation of De Gasperi’s speech is available at: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v03/d49> (accessed 22 September 2022).
4. Available at: <https://history.state.gov/about> (accessed 22 September 2022).

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