

# Perspectives on TTIP-style deals and Italy's foreign policy. The case of Movimento 5 Stelle

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## Abstract

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the European Union and the United States. Considering this a simple free-trade treaty diminishes its significance. TTIP is the prototype of a new generation of trade deals (or TTIP-style deals) which, through the so-called "regulatory cooperation", reduce standards across the board on the basis that they are "obstacles to trade". Furthermore, TTIP is the most significant case in which the Council of the EU gave the European Commission the "power to negotiate" a comprehensive economic and trade agreement in secret. In this article we will try to join these two pivotal points and the Italian debate about TTIP, its potential influence on foreign policy and, in particular, the positions to this regard of the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S).

Keywords: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), Italy's foreign policy, Movimento 5 Stelle, International relations, Multilateralism

## Introduction

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the European Union and the United States. As a bi-lateral trade agreement, TTIP is about reducing the regulatory barriers to trade. But considering this a simple free-trade treaty diminishes its significance. The issues facing the negotiators go far beyond a simple reduction of tariffs and customs duties, which are already quite low between the EU and US. The issues that are the subject of heated discussion concern the removal of non-tariff barriers and consist mainly in the definition of common safety and sanitary regulations, standards on intellectual property protection, greater openness to foreign investment and reciprocal facilities for participation in public procurement. The arrangement is about big business, issues such as food safety law, environmental legislation, banking regulations and the sovereign powers of nation states. One of the main aims of TTIP is to open up Europe's public health, education and water services to US companies. According to opponents, this "openness" could essentially mean the privatisation of national health services. Another controversial point is that TTIP's regulatory "convergence agenda" seeks to bring EU standards on food safety and the environment closer to those of the US. But US regulations are much less strict, with most of processed foods sold in the US containing genetically modified ingredients. Furthermore, one of the main aims of TTIP is the introduction of the Investor-State Dispute Settlements (ISDS), which allow companies to sue governments if regulatory policies cause a loss of profits (Williams 2015). There are still a lot of

uncertainties about TTIP. The first one is related to Brexit, i.e., the United Kingdom leaving the EU. The last TTIP round of negotiations was held in Brussels in July 2016. The UK was part of those talks as a member of the EU's single market system. But the outcome of the British referendum held in June is expected to influence future financial and trade negotiations and it is very likely that no final TTIP agreement will be signed. On July 5, a few days before the fourteenth round of negotiations, the Italian industry Minister Carlo Calenda – one of the major supporters of TTIP – declared: "I think the TTIP has broken down because the negotiation has dragged on too long" (Ansa 2016). But the TTIP's sister deal between the EU and Canada, the so-called CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement), was approved in June 2016 by the European Commission, and it is now awaiting ratification (Dearden 2016). The European Commission proposed the signing of this trade agreement to the Council of the EU. Following the decision by the Council, CETA will fully enter into force with the consent of the European Parliament and through different national ratification procedures. It is currently not possible to predict neither the outcome of the ratifications nor the effect of this process on the TTIP. However an important step has already been taken. Despite all the uncertainties, also fueled by the unexpected election of Donald Trump at the US presidency, TTIP deserves further investigation. As we shall see, this is particularly true after the Brexit vote for two reasons: 1) TTIP is the prototype of a new generation of trade deals (or TTIP-style deals) which, through the so-called "regulatory cooperation", reduce standards across the board on the basis that they are "obstacles to trade"; 2) TTIP is the most significant case in which the Council of the EU gave the European Commission the "power to negotiate" a comprehensive economic and trade agreement in secret. In the following pages we will try to join these two pivotal points and the Italian debate about TTIP, its potential influence on foreign policy and, in particular, the positions to this regard of the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S).

## Different or complementary perspectives on TTIP-style deals

It seems licit to wonder what kind of impact will spring from the TTIP-style deals on the future of international relations, in particular taking into account that the actual world is globalized and to a certain extent post-hegemonic. One of the perspectives from which the TTIP-style deals may be seen is the *multipolar* order. Nowadays, the international system seems to be in transition from a unipolar to a multipolar

world: on the one hand, the United States keeps on boasting their primacy in terms of military capacity; on the other hand, the main driving forces for multi-polarity originate from the social and economic spheres. The plan for a free trade agreement between the two shores of the Atlantic already came into existence in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War and its aftermath called many certainties into question. According to Andrew Gamble (2015, 13), “the United States became increasingly irritated and frustrated with many of its European allies, accusing them of free-riding on the US security guarantee and not being prepared to make the hard choices to defend themselves and the West”. With the passage of time, the perspective of the European Union as a new economic player questioned the relevance of military and security issues. However, economic optimism failed with the 2008 financial crisis. On the one hand, the Obama administration tried to remain the global leader and the only one able to shape the international order. On the other hand, the US tried to obtain this goal through a new system of economic governance. Therefore the American giant, aware of its role, decided to keep on moving ahead with the TTIP negotiations that were launched in 2013.

This multipolar perspective seems to be confirmed by the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), another trade agreement bargained by the US with its allies in Asia. Signed in March 2016, TPP joins the United States and eleven Pacific states. According to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, TPP writes the rules for global trade that will help to increase Made-in-America exports, grow the American economy, support well-paying American jobs, and strengthen the American middle-class (USTR 2016). Moving from this foreword, the final aim of the United States seems to be clear: to strengthen relationships with allies in East Asia, excluding China. To this regard, TPP can be associated to TTIP-style deals since TTIP’s aim is to strengthen US relationships with European allies excluding Russia. From this overview, it is possible to consider that behind the economic intentions of the US there are firstly geopolitical purposes. Besides, the United States has kept out from its negotiations the BRICS and the so-called MINTs (Nigeria, Mexico, Indonesia and Turkey).

These choices return in the geopolitical strategy of the United States. In particular, within an emerging multipolar world the EU should be controlled and, as a consequence, the TTIP is the most relevant treaty deal. According to Gamble (2015, 13-16), this multifaceted scenario can be framed as a “new medievalism” and the European Union seems to be the main centre of US attentions because of its many-sided and

variegated structure in terms of placements, authorities and judicial powers. In a fragmented context like this, fuelled by the 2008 financial crisis and its consequences, a commercial harmonization seems to be desirable for the US.

A different way to see the TTIP is to frame its impact into a *multilateral* perspective, with a specific focus on international economy and trade regimes. The analysis of TTIP starting from multilateralism can show the potential consequences of this agreement in terms of economic governance. The concept of counter-multilateralism or contested-multilateralism, as elaborated by Robert Keohane and Julia Morse, refers to “the situation that results from the pursuit of strategies by states, multilateral organizations, and non-state actors to use multilateral institutions, existing or newly created, to challenge and to change the rules, practices, or missions of existing multilateral institutions” (Keohane, Morse, 2015, 17). The basic conditions to generate this output are: a defined issue area; a group of actors dissatisfied with the *status quo*; the ability of the dissatisfied coalition to attain outside options as an essential condition for a successful new multilateralism. In the light of what can be argued about counter-multilateralism, it is clear that this phenomenon lets issues of institutional change emerge. In the current post-hegemonic era, when interdependence among states is high, the role of multilateral institutions is essential for states and non-state actors. The outcome is not only a different configuration of multilateralism, but rather another kind of multilateralism which could best achieve long-term objectives.

The TTIP, if successful, would entail relevant implications for the World Trade Organization (WTO). The sphere of trade is the heart of the analysis from the multilateral perspective, since it attempts to show the potential effects of the TTIP in economic and commercial terms. From this point of view, the outcome of the TTIP could be twofold: it could make the global trade regime stronger or, by contrast, it could challenge the existing institution governing the transatlantic trade relationships, namely the WTO. The first scenario is supported by those that consider the TTIP and the TPP as two components of a larger US-centered “Big Three”, i.e., the triumvirate of strategic neoliberal trade deals being advanced by the Obama administration and that includes the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA). The TiSA can help break the deadlock in multilateral negotiations (namely the Doha Development Round) conducted under the WTO. Together, the three treaties form not only a new legal order hospitable for transnational corporations and a new economic grand enclosure which excludes China and all other BRICS countries. Even more, the TTIP-style

deals enable to pave the way for a *new* counter-multilateralism. On the contrary, the second scenario is open to a different outcome, that could slow down the neo-liberalism trend led by the United States through new forms of *alternative* counter-multilateralism, that could be fielded by new international forces or actors.

It is difficult to predict which multilateral scenario is more likely. If the end of the Cold War led to the belief that the Western liberal democracies had spill-over effects all over the world, today this hope, or better, this sureness has proved illusory. For instance, democracy has not settled in Africa or in most of Central Asia. Emerging powers such as Brazil and India are liberal democracies but they do not take up the Western path of democracy. Therefore, several evidences prove that emerging powers, both democracies and non-democracies, are not willing to accept the Western liberal order. The phenomenon of globalization has involved a re-allocation of international wealth and a spread of power that is not leading to ideological convergence, but rather to ideological differences. Besides, the US and the EU are still suffering the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and this event has contributed to lessen the Western values and rules. But exactly in this general context of fragmentation and divergence in terms of values and international order, the TTIP or, better, the TTIP-style deals, could come into play as a new form of multilateralism. According to the European Union and the United States, negotiators are trying to liberalize and reform the global economic system through the standardization of rules with respect to environment, work, investment and state-owned enterprises. This attempt can be considered similar to the US efforts after the Second World War to re-establish the international economic order (Di Nolfo 2016).

However, some political forces and international actors believe that TTIP-style deals are working at the expense of democracy, especially from the view point of European states. Not by chance, the British decision to leave the EU confirms this point. The fact that unelected EU bureaucrats have pursued TTIP in open defiance of public opposition has been a standard complaint in most of the referendum debates over Brexit. Considering TTIP as a threat to society, or critical comments over its inherent assault on democracy, were arguments and beliefs shared by the pro-leave political forces. Although the TTIP focuses on common safety, sanitary regulations, standards on intellectual property protection, greater openness to foreign investment, reciprocal facilities for participation in public procurement, etc. the main critical point was about the EU role in a secret negotiation not con-

trolled by national governments. The strengthening of these considerations may favor the emergence of the second scenario, namely that of the alternative counter-multilateralism.

To conclude, the TTIP-style deals could entail knock-on effects on the multipolar order and on the international trade regime, according to respectively a *multipolar* perspective or to a *multilateral* one. But these two approaches may not have to be necessarily seen as two distinct perspectives, but rather as complementary. The most suitable way in order to pinpoint this complementarity is to see multi-polarity and counter-multilateralism as two sides of the same geopolitical coin. This conclusion lies in the nature of the TTIP as prototype of a new generation of trade deals. On the one side, the transatlantic treaty aims to establish, or better, to strengthen Western stability in a world composed of various poles, according to the multipolar perspective; on the other side, the TTIP, if successful, will act within the international trade regime, potentially as a form of a second generation of multilateralism. These two implications do not exclude themselves reciprocally, rather they strengthen each other. Such a complementarity is confirmed by the transatlantic will to spread Western rules and values within a world that is both multipolar and multilateral. But the emergence of an alternative counter-multilateralism could challenge this output.

### The case of M5S and Italy's foreign policy

In Italy, the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) is the most obstinate opponent of TTIP. Even a hasty reading of its political program would allow one to pick up some reasons of the basis of its opposition to TTIP. For instance, with regards to transparency, the program indicates that information is a cornerstone of democracy against multinational corporations and big economic stakeholders (M5S 2016). One of the main concerns of TTIP's opponents is the following: the only ones who will benefit from the agreement are multinational corporations, whereas local producers will succumb to a new deregulated trade regime. The online magazine *Beppe Grillo's Blog* deals with the TTIP issue reporting interviews and articles from which clearly emerges the point of view of the Movement and its supporters (M5S s.d.). One of the main issues dealt with in this online document concerns the potential problems for small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). In the course of an interview that took place last October, Tiziana Beghin, MEP of M5S and Member of International Trade Commission, declared that in the best-case scenario nothing will change for

small-medium sized enterprises because every potential enhancement would be only business-like and not relative to the system (Balestreri 2015).

In addition to problems concerning SMEs, the TTIP summary elaborated by M5S deals with other criticalities related to data protection. The secrecy with which TTIP negotiations have been conducted does not allow for the monitoring of the ongoing bargaining works. Consequently, this secrecy impedes political forces, who are not directly involved at the negotiations table, from providing their contributions. In spite of such secrecy, M5S believes that some evaluations and considerations are possible to elaborate upon. A majestic agreement such as the TTIP will have deep impacts on financial, industrial and commercial systems. The main risk is that a huge transatlantic free trade area could jeopardize European welfare. The EU is regulated by social protections that are more restrictive than the American ones. Indeed, the US system is based on deregulation. A potential harmonization between the two systems could be difficult and it could entail benefits and upsides for big firms and multinational corporations to the detriment of small-medium sized enterprises. In addition, some specific commodities sectors in the EU and in the US show marked differences, for example, both production and consumption of genetically-modified organisms, which are forbidden in the EU, are “on the agenda” among American citizens. It is not clear how a consumer of GMOs would be safeguarded after the conclusion of the agreement.

An article available on Grillo’s blog is particularly illustrative with regards to this issue. The article *TTIP: if you know it, avoid it* was posted in December 2014 focusing on some controversial issues from Made in Italy to ISDS (M5S 2014). The main criticisms that emerge from this article concern some potential negative consequences of TTIP, such as a possible lowering of productive standards in several sectors. The most alarming risk is to devitalize Made in Italy, in favour of a homogenization of production. Besides, it inveighs against the ISDS clause, able to increasingly foster the power of multinational corporations. According to M5S, the most bewildering element of this clause is that the lawsuit would take place in a court of “arbitration”, where judges and attorneys are probably the same.

From these first critical considerations, it is interesting to analyse the perspective of M5S according to our theoretical introduction: does the M5S’ perspective on TTIP emerge with specific regard to multi-polarity or (counter-)multilateralism? Of course, the reasons behind TTIP opposition conducted by M5S seem to be strictly bound to its idea of international trade regime,

with a specific look to WTO. To this regard it is worth noting an article uploaded onto Grillo’s blog in 2011 and titled *WTO and the global slave* (M5S 2011). The article argues that the World Trade Organization and democracy travel on two parallel tracks that will never meet. WTO is seen as another organization able to decide on behalf of citizens, who have no control over it. According to Grillo, the WTO, along with the most powerful lobbies and multinational corporations, has established the rules of international trade. This organization became more powerful and ruthless in its goals since China joined in December 2001. WTO was the big enemy not only of M5S but also of no-global associations close to the Movement. On the basis of what it was uttered until now about M5S and its point of view, it is possible to state that it would seem to position itself within an alternative counter-multilateralism stand. Indeed, the goal of M5S is to challenge and change rules, practices and missions of the actual international trade regime, once dictated by the WTO and now oriented towards TTIP-style deals. A potential form of counter-multilateralism is required by the M5S, but it does not correspond with the TTIP-style deals, that are contested in all their aspects much more than the WTO.

There is another Italian party that seems to completely disagree with the TTIP: the Lega Nord and its leader Matteo Salvini. Lega Nord is distinguished by its deep position against immigration and a multicultural society, and a strong euro-scepticism. Its regionalist and euro-sceptical approach is emphasized in its political program, in which the seventh point is specifically dedicated to the TTIP. Salvini states in his program: “To spread further Italy out to international competition would mean to deliver the finishing blow to our economy, whereas our agriculture and our livestock have been turned on its head” (NCS 2015). In this sense, the main dread of Lega Nord is caused by the possibility of entering into more and more huge free trade areas, with the downside of a currency that is overestimated. This issue is strictly connected to the European one, that is highlighted in the first point of the Lega Nord political program. According to this, the internal demand has been demolished by taxes and reductions, that have aimed to counterbalance trade, constantly in deficit because of the Euro, seen as a too powerful currency for our economy. Another reason for which Salvini disagrees with TTIP is over the fact that the agreement would be in favour of multinational corporations and to the detriment of small-medium sized enterprises. In the Lega Nord perspective, small and medium firms are a strong point of Italy, that have kept on producing in Italy without outsourcing. A successful conclusion of

TTIP would imply a failure of smaller firms and, at the same time, significant economic upsides for bigger enterprises, multinational corporations and some European stakeholders.

Another fear, tied in with the previous, is that the partnership would pave the way to mass production of genetically-modified organisms, which would represent a real threat to the quality of life and food safety. The American food products, especially the ones customarily used in fast food, could easily worm their way onto our tables and they would turn into the favourite dish of McDonalds or Burger King lovers. Consequently, these kind of consumers would be increasingly subjected to sanitary risks. In particular, Stefano Allasia of Lega Nord disagreed with the idea that TTIP would be a great opportunity for Italian production: "If the trade agreement between the EU and the US was successfully concluded, it would risk to damage Italian excellence and local productions, whose value is based on certificate of origin. For this reason, it is necessary that the Italian government obtains the exclusion of certificates dop, doc and other labels from the agreement, since nowadays they protect our products from an unfair competition of Chinese and American products" (LN 2015). Furthermore, Lega Nord is strongly against the introduction of ISDS clause into the agreement, that would be detrimental to democracy and national sovereignty. In the website "Noiconsalvini.org" the ISDS issue is dealt with in the article *TTIP: the next phase of austerity programme* (NCS 2014) which argues that democracy and national sovereignty have been further jeopardized by TTIP negotiations that have been secretly conducted. It means that citizens are in the dark about political decisions do not have the opportunity to oppose them and consequently this mechanism implies a relevant reduction of citizens' sovereignty.

On the whole, we can assert that TTIP's detractors had the same motivations in support of their dissenting opinion. The "hottest" reasons behind a strong opposition against TTIP, supported by both M5S and Lega Nord, may be summarized in a few points: 1) relevant upsides for multinational corporations to the detriment of small-medium sized enterprises; 2) risks for the Italian food sector, whereas American junk food and genetically-modified organisms would come into play; 3) problems with national sovereignty and democracy because of the potential introduction of ISDS into the agreement. At first glance it seems that M5S and Lega Nord fight the same battle, or the same shared enemy which is the TTIP. But beyond this *sinfonia* between them, there is a basic reason that contributes to diversify their points of view. With respect to the perspectives that we analysed previously, Sal-

vini's point of view could be better positioned within the perspective of multi-polarity. From his perspective, TTIP would not account for a suitable solution in order to make European nations stronger within a world-system which is increasingly multipolar, globalized and interdependent. To a larger extent, the Lega Nord remains on a neo-nationalist track already traced by centre-right governments since the 1990s (Diodato 2014, 144-150; Diodato 2015).

It should be remembered that the pro-TTIP forces in Italy are represented by the current Premier Matteo Renzi and his Minister Carlo Calenda. Both have unconditionally trusted a successful conclusion of the agreement. During a public event on TTIP that took place in Rome on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2014, Calenda highlighted the need for the European Union to foster its relations with the United States. According to his perspective, transatlantic relations would account for the basis of the second phase of globalization, that is, the EU as a powerful protagonist of the globalized world. In order to achieve this privileged position, it was necessary to successfully strengthen the transatlantic partnership (MSE 2014). During the same event, Matteo Renzi declared: "TTIP has an unconditional and total support of the Italian government (...) every day that passes it is time-wasting, TTIP is a jump in quality, it is not easily a trade agreement but rather a strategic and cultural choice for the European Union" (*ibidem*). Calenda and Renzi considered TTIP not as a goal-in-itself, but rather as an essential tool in order to achieve a greater European objective. All the criticisms and the controversial issues that have sprung up in the course of TTIP negotiations were not taken into account, or, better, Renzi and Calenda tended to minimize them while emphasizing economic studies predicting an increase in size of the EU economy (see, for example, EC 2013). Since M5S and Lega Nord share a common enemy, i.e., Matteo Renzi and his government, their points of view may appear more similar than they are in reality. Beyond some analogies between M5S and Lega Nord in terms of TTIP objection, are there other reasons that contribute to diversify their points of view? In order to understand the perspective of M5S more deeply, it is worth throwing some light on both the ways of opposition to TTIP and the main actions undertaken by the Movement. First of all, we should recall that the M5S was the first political force that brought the TTIP issue to the attention of the Parliament, by articulating the various phases of this process. In November 2013, that is five months after the launch of the negotiations, a M5S's spokesperson, Filippo Gallinella, asked a question on behalf of M5S, aimed at expressing its doubts about a potential deregulation stemming from a successful conclu-

sion of the agreement. Among the priorities pointed out to the government, there was the need to declassify the negotiation documents. Despite several requests on behalf of not only M5S but also STOP-TTIP movements, the negotiating mandate was declassified only on the 9th October 2014. Other documents succeeded this parliamentary question, such as a question time n. 791 in April 2014 and the motion n. 490 in June 2014 (AC 20114). This motion accounted for a tool in order to request: 1) to keep the Parliament up to date with the development of negotiations periodically; 2) to review the agreement terms and conditions in order to exclude any circumstance that could contain the Italian laws, with specific regard to the ISDS clause; 3) to introduce within the agreement suitable arrangements in order to safeguard EU agriculture; 4) to keep some fundamental issues out, such as: the management of both integrated hydro-service and local public services, sanitary, phytosanitary and environmental matters; 5) to carry out suitable public consultations, through working groups, in order to inform and involve civil society about the potential effects of TTIP on the other commercial partners, including BRICS; 6) to introduce suitable safeguard mechanisms of Member States' manufacturing interests, if the European Central Bank decided to increase the euro-zone's interests rate; 7) to request, according to the article 218 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, the opinion of the Court of Justice of the EU about the compatibility of TTIP provisions, if successful, with the ones of the treaty. The government has satisfied these requests only partially, in that it has kept the Parliament up to date with regard to the progress of negotiations. In addition to these actions and requests, recently the Movement has also translated in Italian, and made available, the 248 pages of TTIP negotiations that were published by Greenpeace Holland. During a press conference that took place at the European Parliament in Strasbourg the 8th June 2016, the M5S's spokesperson dealt with this unprecedented publishing of leaked documents, known as "TTIP leaks": it is half of TTIP text's drafts, written until April 2016, before the beginning of the thirteenth round of negotiations. The translation of TTIP leaks, the motion, the question-time and the parliamentary question were the main significant actions undertaken by the Movement, aimed to make civil society aware about the TTIP issue. According to M5S, the crucial question is if a limit to the free flow of goods should exist. In particular, the M5S refers to a leading study carried out by CEPR, known as Reducing Transatlantic Barriers for Trade and Investment. This analysis shows a comparative evaluation of the impact on the European GDP in 2027, em-

phasizing that, in the case of a full free trade area, the upside would correspond only to 0.48% more than the actual GDP. Furthermore, the M5S made reference to some data provided by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (CDC 2014). According to it, about 48 million of people in the USA are damaged by foodborne illness each year, i.e. diseases caused by unsafe food. According to these data and evaluations, M5S took another step in its anti-TTIP battle. We interviewed the M5S politician Filippo Gallinella who provided us with significant information about some relevant issues concerning the position of M5S with respect to a significant question: why the US really wants the TTIP? The Movement holds to be true that the answer may be easily extrapolated by reading the Executive Order 13534, dated back to 2010 and signed by the President Obama. This document, titled National Export Initiative (TWH 2010), let the M5S bring up a crucial consideration that allows us to position the M5S's point of view within a more multi-polar perspective than only to the multilateral one. But this reallocation enables us to further differentiate the position of the Movement from the Lega Nord. Indeed, according to the M5S the Executive Order allows to focus on the double nature of TTIP, that is not only economic but also geopolitical: by virtue of the potential geopolitical effects of TTIP, M5S considers the trade agreement as a sort of "Economic NATO" (Gallinella 2016). This vision, supported by other TTIP opponents too, contemplates "a high risk to spark off a tie with the dollar by US will, since nowadays the euro is jeopardizing the American economy" (ibidem). It is exactly these key words, namely Economic NATO, geopolitics and tie with dollar, that allow us to frame the M5S's point of view within a complementary multilateral-multipolar perspective. According to this viewpoint, the European Union as single pole within a multipolar and globalized world, would yet again be subjugated to the American power, that would want to create a tie with the dollar geared toward geopolitical goals. The tool in order to reach these aims would be the TTIP, seen as an Economic NATO. This is the reasoning that distinguishes the M5S's viewpoint and lead us to locate it within a multilateral perspective complementary to the multipolar one, from which it emerges another relevant consideration, that is a marked anti-Americanism since it is a no-global stand and, to some extent, also an anti-capitalist one. These inclinations, both anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism, differentiate the position of the Movement from that of the Lega. They can be recognized with reference to another issue, or better to another ill-famed agreement, i.e., the TiSA. As already stated, this acronym designates another trade

agreement that twenty-three members of the WTO, including the European Union and the United States, are currently negotiating. We have already underlined that TiSA, along with TTIP and TPP, is part of the triumvirate of strategic neoliberal trade deals launched by the President Obama. According to the Movement, "TiSA is the TTIP's wicked brother... Indeed TiSA aims to increasingly safeguard the interests of few lobbies and private corporations. The goal is always the same: to wipe out definitively the barriers to free market. And the safeguard of rights and environment along with them" (Busto 2015). The M5S asked the Italian government information about the negotiations and it is waiting for an answer (AC 2015). Furthermore, a relevant leak about TiSA occurred thanks to the action of Wikileaks that, after the first revelations dating back to 19th June 2014, released new documents concerning the ongoing negotiations. The M5S gave great importance to the leak (see WikiLeaks 2016). Among the pages of the leak, the most bewildering matter turns out to be the attempt aimed to contain the states' ability of adopting measures that could damage the financial industry's interests. Therefore, the common thread that bonds TTIP, TPP and TiSA can be summed up in few words: the hegemonic presence of the United States, the "untouchable" multinational corporations' interests and geopolitical goals aimed to exclude the BRICS from this new generation of trade deals. From the M5S's point of view, this triumvirate accounts for a real threat to democracy and state's sovereignty because of "wild deregulation and liberalization, that would compel states at the mercy of multinational corporations" (M5S 2015). For sure, a clear anti-capitalism stand leaks out from some spokespeople' declarations with regard to both TTIP and TiSA. But this stand seems to be also associated with an anti-Americanism vein, even though the politician Gallinella declared the contrary during a live broadcast with the then Vice Minister Calenda (Radio Rai 2014). The most suitable way to conclude, at any rate, is to frame the M5S perspective into a form of counter-multilateralism or, better, an alternative multilateralism able to change the rules of the game in contrast to the US prominence in a multipolar world-system. This cannot be said of the Lega Nord which maintains a more vague multipolar perspective. Such conclusion is further hastened by recent events, first of all by considering that M5S is allied with the UK Independence Party in the European Parliament. The ongoing changes that are occurring in the international system, with the reshaping of the transatlantic structure of alliances and negotiations, will probably entail adjustments of the multilateral perspective; in other words, they account for a new

challenge to the international trade regime that seems to proceed towards TTIP-style deals. The outcome of the last referendum in Britain has heightened volatility on financial markets increasing downside risks for Italy. An Italian *uscita* (exit) from the UE is not on the agenda, nor it is a political demand of the Movement. However, if the M5S will be move from its protest position to that of a ruling party, then inevitably its policy of alternative counter-multilateralism would undermine the ongoing transformation of transatlantic multipolar balance.

## Conclusion

The TTIP's supporters believe that the removal of both tariff and non-tariff barriers, that is an utter deregulation, could entail a win-win scenario, able to provide economic upsides for the involved parties. On the contrary, the opponents see the TTIP as a powerful geopolitical weapon manipulated by the American multinational corporations in order to satisfy their interests to the detriment of European democracy, civil society and small-medium sized enterprises. Beyond this dichotomy, that the election of Trump has already questioned since he wants the withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership which has not yet been ratified, it seems interesting to take another point into account. This is about the potential differentiated impact from country to country, both in US and UE. This issue lets a crucial question be raised, that is if the Italian economy will benefit from the transatlantic agreement or not. Despite the fact that it is very unlikely that a final agreement will be signed almost immediately, issues related to this point remain important considering a wider scenario in which other TTIP-style deals have already been concluded (TTP) or are under negotiations (TiSA).

It is important to consider that the Italian context, beyond some pros and cons with respect to TTIP, sticks out because of two significant elements: both a lack of consciousness among citizens and relevant organized protests (except the one that took place in Rome the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016) in contrast with what occurred in other European States such as Germany, were huge protests against the TTIP took place in Berlin the last October. However, even though relevant oppositions or protests did not occur in Italy, the M5S was and keeps on being the political force that more than others oppose the TTIP. Indeed the Movement has contributed to spread NO-TTIP requests into the political debate. Is the role of the M5S as opponent political force within the discourse about TTIP turning into a more interesting and significant issue? To answer we should take two relevant factors into account: in the first instance, nowadays the Movement

is not only a political force but also a potential ruling party; last but not least, the event of Brexit and the Trump's election allow to predict crucial changes on international level, with respect to both intra-European relations and a doubtful conclusion of the TTIP. Hence, it seems fundamental to wonder which will be the role of Italian foreign policy in the light of this new global balance that is taking shape.

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