

CFSP Watch 2005 – Italy – by Michele Comelli¹

- 1. What are the priorities for your government in CFSP in 2005? What are the key issues for your country in 2005 (especially with regard to the negative referenda on the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands; after the recent EU enlargement and on behalf of the perspective of the upcoming accession round(s))?**

Traditionally, Italian foreign policy has revolved around two axes: European integration and alliance with the United States. These have constituted the two main pillars of Italian foreign policy and they continue to be so. However, it is a fact that the Berlusconi government, in charge since June 2001, has been above all keen on maintaining a close relation with the United States, which meant supporting some difficult US foreign policy choices, such as the decision to intervene in Iraq. Italy has currently almost 3000 troops engaged in the military operation “Antica Babilonia”, aimed at the stabilisation of Iraq. The Italian government has several times reaffirmed the reasons for the Italian military presence but, at the same time, has started to withdraw some of its troops. During 2006 Italy will continue to downgrade its presence in Iraq and, depending on the situation, it might also decide for a complete, although gradual withdrawal². The centre-left coalition, in the case of a victory in 2006 Italian political election has declared that it would no doubt withdraw the Italian troops in Iraq. Although some sectors of the centre-left coalition would like to follow the example of Spanish Premier Luis Zapatero, it is most likely that the withdrawal will be decided in agreement with the Iraqi and American governments.

The much supportive attitude of the Italian government towards the US foreign policy has in any case not avoided a few divergences concerning the co-operation in Iraq and in the fight against international terrorism. The most important example is the controversy over the Calipari case. An Italian intelligence agent was shot dead by the Americans in Iraq in early March. According to the report released by the US, it was nothing but a tragic accident. However, according to the Italian report, the Americans were to be considered responsible for the killing. A second divergence concerned the question of the so called “extraordinary renditions”, the alleged taking of terrorist suspect in European countries that are then brought to their native countries in order to be interrogated, in some cases under torture. Last June, a Milan-based Italian judge ordered the arrest of 13 CIA agents accused of having taken a terrorist suspect and brought him to Egypt, where he apparently faced torture. The Italian government denied any involvement in the fact, as it was suggested by an article appeared on the Washington Post. The centre-left opposition put the government under pressure in order to shed light into what really happened.

¹ Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome.

² The Deputy Premier up against some demanding foreign policy deadlines, Interview to Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini, La Stampa.

With regard to the main issue of European policy in 2005, that is the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, Italy ratified the text through a vote of the Parliament. The lower chamber of the Parliament (the Chamber of Deputies) adopted the government's draft ratification law on January 25, 2005, the upper house (the Senate) adopted it on April 6. Approval was almost unanimous, with most parties from both the government and the opposition voting in favour, and only two relatively small –although influential within their respective coalitions – parties voted against the ratification: the devolutionist Lega Nord (Northern League, 3.9 per cent of votes in the last general election), which is a part of the governing coalition, and the opposition radical left-wing Rifondazione Comunista (PRC – hard-line communists, around 5% of the votes). While both parties demanded that a popular referendum on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty be held, their reasons were different. On the one hand, the Northern League argued that voters ought to be given the right to express their views on the (supposed) substantial further limitations on Italy's national sovereignty introduced by the text. In October 2004, the ministers belonging to the Northern League voted against the government's draft ratification law but were isolated within the cabinet since all other ministers voted in favour. On the other hand, the PRC blamed the Treaty for (supposedly) being inspired by a "liberal philosophy" which does not give adequate guarantees on basic social rights.

On the very same day of the ratification, the Italian Senate asked the government to maintain its commitment to promote recognition of the Union's Christian roots – which Italy and to safeguard the concept of family as it was described by the Italian Constitution.

Last but not least, another priority for Italian foreign policy during 2005 was the reform of the United Nations, which was the main point on the agenda of the UN Summit that took place in New York from 14 to 16 September. The Italian government supported the draft of the Final Declaration prepared by the President of the UN General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon Jean Ping. It supported the emphasis placed "on the need for an overall UN reform that tightly links development, security and human rights aspects as the "indispensable foundations" of collective security"³. While EU Member States held common positions on most of the issues, from the set up of a Human Rights Council to the need for a commonly agreed definition of terrorism, they split on what was perhaps the most politically sensible issue that is the reform of the composition of the UN Security Council. The Italian government, with the support of the opposition, was contrary to the institution of new permanent members into the Security Council proposed by Brazil, Germany, India and Japan (the so-called G4) and supported by nine EU Member States (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal). Italy considered this option to be "entirely outdated now that the system of international relations has evolved, and

³ Address by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gianfranco Fini at the joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate on the United Nations Security Council Reform.

seriously harmful to the perceived legitimacy of the Council and its decisions”⁴. Together with other countries, Italy started up the “Uniting for Consensus” movement that circulated its own draft resolution on Security Council reform in New York as an alternative to that of the G4. Starting from the assumption that the reform of the Security Council “can only take place on the basis of solutions with broad-based consensus”, in order to prevent a crisis of legitimacy, the “Uniting for Consensus” resolution called for the enlargement of the Security Council to 25 members, with the creation of ten new seats with a two-year mandate. The new seats would be assigned to the UN’s current five geographic groups, which would be free to decide their own procedures for election/re-election and possible mechanisms for rotating the new seats.

Finally, the UN Summit did not manage to approve a reform of the Security Council. In any case, Italy considered in a positive way the fact that the reform proposal of the G4 was not carried. That would have resulted in a relative marginalisation of Italy. In addition, as it was on many occasions emphasised by both the government and the opposition, the failure to create new permanent members leaves open the way to an increasingly active participation of the European Union in the Security Council, with the prospect of an eventual single seat for the European Union in mind. However, this prospect is very unlikely, considered that neither France nor the UK want to give up their own seat at the UN Security Council and Germany – and particularly the former Schroeder government – was very eager to acquire one for itself.

2. Does your country adopt a more pessimistic or optimistic stance regarding the ratification crisis of the Constitutional Treaty? How might the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands influence the ratification debate in your country and also have an impact on the outcome of the referendum?⁵

First of all, the debate in Italy concerning the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty was basically limited to political leaders and experts and failed to reach a broader public. This was due to a number of different reasons, including the fact that the Constitutional Treaty was ratified by the Parliament without resorting to a popular referendum. The parliamentary ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in early April received little attention from both the press and the TV.

On the contrary, the ratification crisis that followed the French and Dutch referenda on the Constitutional Treaty received much more attention by the mass media.

As far as political leaders are concerned, the reactions to the ratification crisis were generally not excessively alarming, with the exception of Romano Prodi, leader of the opposition and former President of the European Commission, that declared that a no vote in the two countries would

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ For a more detailed account and analysis of the ratification debate and the reactions to the negative outcome of the French and Dutch referenda, see EU-25 Watch 2005 – Italy by Flavia Zanon (Istituto Affari Internazionali): The text is available at www.eu-consent.net

mean “the fall of Europe”. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Gianfranco Fini suggested adopting a counterbalanced stance concerning the crisis, neither too pessimistic nor too optimistic.

In an interview with the Italian newspaper “Il Giornale”, he acknowledged that “The meaning and consequences of the May 29 French vote are not to be underestimated... Nor must they be cause for self-chastising visions of catastrophe”⁶. In another interview for the Italian main daily, *Corriere della Sera*, Fini also said that “The trauma of the Treaty’s defeat in France could become one more reason for reinforcing a loftier notion of Europe in the minds of its peoples, one not solely of common rules but of common values, with more policy and less administration”⁷.

The victory of the no in the two referenda was attributed in Italy to a number of different reasons, having to do with both European and domestic politics. While very few politicians and commentators linked the outcome of the referenda to the Treaty itself – which was in any case generally considered to be too long and complicated to be understood by citizens -, most of them, including the Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini, identified the following causes: economic stagnation, the growing fears related to the recent enlargement, the lack of transparency of Union institutions and the increasingly anti-European rhetoric of some political leaders.

The Italian President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi also stressed the expectations of citizens vis-à-vis the EU. According to him, “the outcome of the referenda in France and the Netherlands showed that many citizens feel that European policy falls short of their expectations” and that “they feel excluded both from decisions of major importance for their future and from those which impact their own every day life”⁸.

The ratification crisis was also a topic for intellectual and academic debate. Ettore Greco from the Rome-based Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Gianluigi Tosato from the University La Sapienza in Rome published two papers on this issue. In the first one that appeared in November 2004 they envisaged the possibility of the entry into force of some of the innovations of the Constitutional Treaty even before the ratification of the Treaty itself. In the second paper, that came out in May 2005 they suggested that the ratification process proceed even in the event of a rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in some countries. Also Lucia Serena Rossi from the University of Bologna dealt with the problem of the ratification crisis and explored the ways out available on the basis of the EU law.

⁶ France flunks the Treaty, not Europe”, *Il Giornale*, 1 June 2005, English version available at www.esteri.it

⁷ “No becomes a veto, *Corriere della Sera*, 31 May 2005, English version available at www.esteri.it

⁸ “United for Europe”, joint article by the President of the Italian Republic and the President of the Federal Republic of Germany together with the Presidents of Austria, Finland, Latvia, Poland and Portugal.

3. National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues in 2005

Please describe key positions and perceptions in your country with regard to EU foreign policy, taking into account:

- **The perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP**

With the notable exception of the ratification crisis and the Euro, Italian political leaders and mass media did not generally devote much attention to European issues, including developments in CFSP and ESDP. Academics and think tank researchers debated these issues, noting that while many progresses have been made during 2005 in the security and defence field, what is still lacking is a coherent and effective governance structure in these sectors. The ratification crisis has been seen as a hurdle in the further development of CFSP and ESDP, because many important institutional reforms, such as the European Union Foreign Minister and the EU External Action Service were frozen. On the other hand, some researchers – such as Ettore Greco and Gianluigi Tosato – have argued that some of these reforms can be carried out even without the entering into force of the Constitutional Treaty.

- **The role of the EU in crisis management e.g. in Congo, Georgia, Darfur**

Italy supported the role of the EU in crisis management in Congo, Georgia and Darfur. Italy has currently 214 troops in Sudan (UNMIS and EU support to the AU-led AMIS mission) and only 2 in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

With the exception of the Middle East – notably Iraq – the area where Italy has more troops is the Balkans, even though most of these troops are part of NATO-led KFOR mission in Kosovo. In fact, as Foreign Minister Fini said, the Balkans is “a region that is close to us in more than just a geographic sense, and for this reason ranks among the very highest of Italy’s foreign policy priorities”⁹.

- **The perceived impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP**

The Italian government has been in favour of past enlargements, and is also very much in favour of future enlargements to Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

A constant focus of the Italian government, that also characterised previous Italian governments, was putting a stress on the need to have a balance between the Eastern and the Southern European dimensions.

⁹ Gianfranco Fini, “The future of Kosovo: the European Road to the Balkans”, Corriere della Sera, 30 April 2005. English text available at www.esteri.it

- **The view of the European Security Strategy (ESS) as an instrument for enhancing coherence in the EU's security policy; how does your country view the ESS and which issues are of particular importance?**

Italy supported the European Security Strategy, whose final draft was in fact approved under the Italian Presidency of the Union in December 2003. The challenges identified by the Italian Ministry of Defence for 2005¹⁰ reflect very much those identified by the ESS: terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts and their possible spill-over effects; failed states; organised crime.

- **European Neighbourhood Policy and its implications**

With regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Italian government constantly tried to balance the Eastern dimension with the Southern one and supported a flexible approach to conditionality.

Even though the ENP is a recent initiative dating back only to 2003, it has been the object of quite much research, both by universities and research centres. Most studies have welcomed the attempt to forge a new ambitious foreign policy initiative but also stressed its many shortcomings (single framework for both Eastern and Southern dimension; the problem of involving Russia; which benefits are to be offered to neighbouring countries to get them to better co-operate with the EU and make political and economic reforms at domestic level? Very few resources for this policy).

- **The creation of battle groups and their role for ESDP**

Italy, together with France, Spain and the UK, is at the forefront in the creation of battle groups. Only these countries did commit themselves to contributing a battlegroup of their own. Italy also committed itself to contributing other two battlegroups: one together with Hungary and Slovenia, and the other with Greece, Portugal and Spain. The first battlegroup will basically rely on the Multinational Land Force, a highly operative infantry unit composed of Italian, Hungarian and Slovenian troops. The second will somehow rely on Euroforce and Euromarfor, which are respectively an aero-naval and an aero-naval and amphibious rapid reaction force. Italy participates in these two reaction forces together with France, Portugal and Spain.

4. The Constitutional Treaty and its future – National perceptions concerning a “plan B”?

Official positions on the Constitutional Treaty provisions on CFSP/ESDP and external relations?

So far the Italian government has not already presented any official position with regard to the future of the Constitutional Treaty provisions on CFSP/ESDP and external relations after the French and Dutch rejection of the Constitutional Treaty.

¹⁰ Italian Ministry of Defence, Nota aggiuntiva allo stato di previsione per la Difesa per l'anno 2005, March 2005.

Constitutional Treaty or some version of “Nice Treaty plus”?

Describe briefly the position of your country on the following key issues and the possibility of their realisation without a Constitutional Treaty as a “plan B”, “C” or “D”?

- **External Representation: What is the final position of your country on the European Foreign Minister and the President of the European Council? Will/should there be a post resembling that of the Foreign Minister based on the Nice Treaty (something like an enhanced High Representative?) How could this be realised?**
- **Basic structures of the European External Action Service have already been developed. Now that the Constitutional Treaty might not enter into force, is your government in favour of developing such a body in order to support the High Representative?**

The idea of an early implementation of some parts of the Constitutional Treaty was taken into consideration by some Italian political leaders. The Foreign Affairs Minister Gianfranco Fini did not rule out this possibility. This idea was put forward also during the hearings of the Italian members of the European Parliament before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lower House of Parliament (Chamber of Deputies).

Also Giuliano Amato, former Vice President of the European Convention and a senior political leader from the centre-left opposition, argued on many occasions that it would be possible to implement some innovations, such as – among others – the European Foreign Minister. However, Amato ruled out this possibility in the event of a domino effect of the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in the ratification process¹¹.

The early entry into force of some parts of the Constitutional Treaty – including important CFSP innovations, such as the EU Foreign Minister and the European External Action Service – even before or despite ratification also came up in the academic and intellectual debate. One of first contributions that put forward this option was a paper appeared in December 2004 by Ettore Greco from the Rome-based Istituto Affari Internazionali and Gianluigi Tosato from the University La Sapienza in Rome.

- **Decision-making: does your country opt for an extension of qualified majority voting in the field of CFSP? Will the Nice provisions be sufficient for an efficient CFSP-ESDP decision-making within the enlarged EU?**

Italy supported the extension of qualified majority voting in the field of CFSP both during the European Convention and during the subsequent Intergovernmental conference.

- **Crisis management: what is the official position on expanding the Petersberg tasks and making reference to tasks that involve military resources? Which region does your country consider as particularly promising for EU crisis management?**

¹¹ Giuliano Amato, “Carta Ue, due opzioni e il coraggio delle riforme”, Il Sole 24 Ore, 5 June 2005.

Italy is in favour of expanding the Petersberg tasks and making reference to tasks that involve military resources. Italy supports EU crisis management in all regions where it is needed. Italy is particularly interested in the Balkan region, for which it strongly supports a future in the EU.

- **Defence: what is your country's position towards the establishment of the civilian-military cell at the EUMS? Was your government in favour of creating a full-fledged operational EU headquarters?**

Basically, the decision to establish a civilian-military cell at the EUMS in Brussels was taken during the Italian Presidency of the EU in late 2003. While the Italian government supported this decision, it opposed the set up of a full-fledged operational EU headquarters that might emerge as an alternative to SHAPE. As Italian Minister for Defence Antonio Martino said, the cell "will increase the planning capabilities of the EU for the conduct of autonomous military operations, without going as far as to establish a real headquarter likely to be a permanent structure, with competences and size such as to work as a European competitor vis-à-vis the existing NATO structures (that is SHAPE)"¹²

- **Is your country in favour of realising provisions such as the permanent structured cooperation even without the Constitutional Treaty? What measures would be preferred?**

Italy is in favour of realising these provisions even without the Constitutional Treaty. As an example, Italy was in the forefront in the creation of the battlegroups. However, some problems might be posed by the further decrease in the defence spending down to around 0.80% of the budget for 2006.

- **Would your country support the creation of core groups inside or outside the EU in CFSP/ESDP if the Constitutional Treaty finally failed?**

Italy would support the creation of core groups provided that they are open to all countries that are "willing and able" to contribute. Core groups should be inclusive, not exclusive, and the participation should be based on objective criteria.

¹² Antonio Martino, "L'Italia e la PESD", La Comunità Internazionale, Vol. LIX, n. 2/2004, p. 205.

5. Mapping of activities in CFSP-related Research

- Please indicate major experts, universities and research institutions working in the CFSP field in your country.

Research centres

Aspen Institute Italy

www.aspeninstitute.it

Marta Dassù

Roberto Menotti

Centro Alti Studi per la Difesa (CASD) and Centro Militare di Studi Strategici (CeMiSS): Vincenzo Camporini

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)

www.cespi.it

Rosa Balfour

Alessandro Rotta

Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

www.iai.it

Stefano Silvestri

Gianni Bonvicini

Ettore Greco

Michele Nones

Giovanni Gasparini

Michele Comelli

Istituto Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI)

www.ispionline.it

Serena Giusti

Universities

University of Bologna – Filippo Andreatta; Lucia Serena Rossi

www.unibo.it

University of Catania – Fulvio Attinà

www.unict.it

University of Firenze – Luciano Bozzo

www.unifi.it

University Statale (Milan) – Alessandro Colombo

www.unimi.it

University La Sapienza (Rome) – Gianluigi Tosato – Alessandra Mignoli

www.uniroma1.it

University LUISS (Rome) – Carlo Jean

www.luiss.it

University of Pavia – Marco Clementi

www.unipv.it