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## **The Left in Italy and the Lisbon Treaty**

### **A ‘political’ Europe, a ‘social’ Europe and an ‘economic’ Europe<sup>\*</sup>**

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#### **1. Introduction**

This essay examines the attitudes of the parties on the left in Italy towards the Lisbon treaty from the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002-2003 to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. In order to gather a better understanding of the Left and the treaty-making process, the analysis needs to be contextualized in two ways. First, taking an historical perspective, the evolution of the attitudes of Italian left wing parties towards the process of European integration is outlined. Second, the positions taken by the Italian government during the discussions concerning the Lisbon treaty are sketched out, together with the domestic debate concerning this matter, including the limited media engagement with this issue and the lack of public opinion interest concerning the treaty making process.

For analytical purposes, the treaty making process can be divided into two subperiods: the Convention (2001-2), the intergovernmental conference (IGC) (2003-4) and the national ratification process (2005), when the centre left coalition (and, hence, the parties on the left) was in opposition in Italy; and the re-launch of the treaty under the German presidency in 2007, as well as the 2007 IGC, when the centre left coalition was in office.

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<sup>\*</sup> I wish to thank Simona Guerra for valuable research assistance. She compiled tables 1, 2 and 3.

In the first period (2002-5), the opposition parties, including the parties on the left, limited themselves to criticize the position taken by the Italian government during the treaty negotiations. Whereas during the Convention phase no major disagreement emerged between government and opposition, except on the appointment of the Italian representatives to the Convention, the parties on the left vehemently criticized the poor performance of the Berlusconi government during the Italian presidency in the second semester of 2003. The attitudes expressed by the parties on the left on these occasions were partly rooted in domestic political competition and targeted the domestic audience. However, they were also a reaction to the less pro integration stance taken by the Berlusconi government, as compared to previous Italian governments.

During the second phase of the negotiations, when the treaty was re-launched during the German presidency in 2007, the centre left coalition was in office in Italy, hence the main parties of the left were part of the government. The treaty became a political priority for these parties and their attitudes became the official positions of the Italian government.

Both the Democratic Left, the Reconstructed Communists and the Party of the Italian Communists were against a minimal treaty, even though for different reasons and voting in different ways during the ratification process. The Democratic Left wanted to strengthen the 'political' Europe, exposing clear pro integration attitudes, which came to the fore when the former party leader and former prime minister, D'Alema, became Foreign Minister in 2007. The party supported the streamlining of the

institutional framework of the EU and the extension of qualified majority voting (QMV) to other policy areas, limiting in as much as possible opting outs and any watering down of the treaty. The prevailing attitude exposed by the Reconstructed Communists was the desire to develop the ‘social’ Europe, that is the social policy and welfare provisions, downplaying the ‘economic’ Europe, based on free market project. Unlike the Democratic Left, the Reconstructed Communists voted against the ratification of the Constitutional treaty. The Party of the Italian Communists also emphasized the need of a ‘social’ dimension as well as strengthening the ‘political’ dimension and hence supported the ratification process. For all three parties, the attitudes towards the Lisbon Treaty mirror the broader attitudes towards the EU and European integration.

## **2. Overview of the parties on the left in Italy**

Nowadays, there are three main parties on the left in Italy which are represented in the EP (see Table 1): the Democratic Left (*Democratici di Sinistra*); the Reconstructed Communists (*Rifondazione Comunista*) e Party of the Italian Communists (*Partito dei Comunisti Italiani*).

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

However, before moving to the analysis of contemporary events, it is useful to take an historical perspective, in order to gather a better understanding of the relationship between left wing parties in Italy and the EU. The attitudes of the left towards European integration have substantially changed in Italy over time, more than in other

countries, such as France and Spain (for a comparative historical analysis of Euroscepticism amongst communist parties in these countries see Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). The Italian Communist party (PCI) started off as a hard Eurosceptic party, subsequently moderating its scepticism in the late 1960s and 1970s (Maggiorani 1998), abandoning completely its eurosceptic tones in the 1980s (Bosco 2000, Sassoon 2001).

The Italian Communist Party's trajectory towards the EU was due to a combination of international, national and party-specific factors. During the early decades of European integration, international factors, first and foremost the relationship with Moscow, contributed to the Euroscepticism of Western Communists, including the PCI (Bell 1996). Nevertheless, as with other party families and types, the Communists have responded to vote- and coalition-seeking opportunities (Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). Differently from the communist party in France and Spain, the Italian Communist Party and its successor, the Democratic Left have always been the largest party of the left, excluded from government (before 1996), whose aim, by the early 1970s, has been both vote- and coalition-seeking. The priority given to these objectives shifted over time; however, the position on Europe was a key component of the Italian Communist Party's overall strategy towards reaching those goals. This party first and the Democratic Left later used pro-Europeanism for its legitimation (Bosco 2000).

In 1991, the PCI was transformed into the Party of the Democratic Left, experiencing an internal split, with a group of harder line and nostalgic Communists forming the Party of the Reconstructed Communists. The Party of the Democratic Left became an

explicitly social democratic and 'catch-all' party, consolidating its pro-European position. The party was one of the staunchest supporters of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in Italy, once Maastricht was agreed in 1992, also because this was deemed to be the best way to prove that it was a responsible democratic governing party. With the implosion of the Italian Socialist party due to the Tangentopoli corruption scandals, the Party of the Democratic Left moved quickly to occupy the political space that the Socialists had vacated (Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). The party was admitted to the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists in 1993. Indeed, in the EP, the Democratic Left sits in the socialist group. The Party of the Democratic Left was the main party in Romano Prodi's Ulivo government following the 1996 elections. The centre left coalition lost the election in 2001, but it was voted back in office in 2006, when the Democratic Left also emerged as the main party of the coalition.

The Reconstructed Communists were formed in 1991, when the Italian Communist Party was transformed in the Party of the Democratic Left and experienced an internal division, whereby a group of hard liners formed the Party of Reconstructed Communists. Although the Euroscepticism tendencies in this party still exists, the electoral competitors of the party on the left and the pro-European attitudes of Italian public opinion explain why the Reconstructed Communists have generally downplayed Eurosceptic positions, using mainly economic arguments (Benedetto and Quaglia 2007). As elaborated further below, public opinion and electorate in Italy largely remain pro-integration. The Reconstructed Communists sit in the United left group in the EP, together with the Party of Italian Communists.

In 1998, the leadership of the Reconstructed Communists divided on the question of voting noconfidence in the government led by Romano Prodi on the question of Italy's entry into the euro. Consequently, a more moderate Party of Italian Communists was formed by one of the historic former leaders of the old Italian Communist Party, Armando Cossutta, specifically to offer 'Communist solidarity' to the Centre-Left.

An analysis on the 2004 European Election Study (table 2) shows that among the electorate of political parties, the main opponents to further European integration were the Northern League voters, as 15.9 per cent of them thought that the process of unification had gone too far. On the contrary, the Democrats of the Left (in the list of the Olive Tree) and the Communist Reconstruction voters were the most in favour, together with the Italian Communist, asserting that European unification 'should be pushed further'.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Concerns about the process of European integration (table 3) did not affect the electorate of the left in that 80.1 per cent of the Olive Tree and 63.1 per cent of the Reconstructed Communists considered EU membership as a good thing, as did 77.8 per cent of the Italian Communists. Dissatisfaction towards the EU and the process of integration was mainly expressed by the right and protest parties (only 50.7 per cent and 50 per cent of the Northern League and the Greens voters thought the EU was a good thing for Italy).

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

### **3. The positions of the Italian parties on the left during the treaty making process**

#### *The Convention phase and the draft Constitutional treaty*

Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Forza Italia and of the centre right coalition, was the Italian prime minister from 2001 to 2006. The centre left coalition was in opposition in Italy during the 2002-3 Convention and the 2003-4 IGC. Hence, the positions of the parties on the left on the Constitutional treaty were not clearly articulated and the parties kept a low profile on this issue.

The Italian government was represented in the European Convention by the deputy prime minister Gianfranco Fini (the leader of the National Alliance), whose alternate was Francesco Speroni (Northern League) (on negotiations in the Convention see Magnette and Nicolaidis 2004). Fini's appointment as a member of the Convention was somewhat controversial, not only because he was the leader of the right wing party, the National Alliance, but also because the Italian government insisted that Italy should have a government representative in addition to Giuliano Amato, a political figure of the centre-left, who had been appointed as deputy president of the Convention by the European Council. When Amato made it clear that he was unwilling to represent the centre-right government and that he regarded his role in the Convention as *super partes*, the other member states agreed that Fini would be allowed to represent the Italian government.

The Italian chamber of deputies was represented by Marco Follini (the leader of the Christian democratic party), whose alternate was Valdo Spini (Democratic Left). The senate was represented by the former prime minister Lamberto Dini (*La Margherita*, a centrist party), whose alternate was Filadelfio Basile (*Forza Italia*). From the EP, the Italian members were Antonio Tajani (*Forza Italia*), Cristina Muscardini (National Alliance) and Elena Paciotti as alternate (Democratic Left). Beside the vice president of the Convention, Giuliano Amato, another Italian member of the Convention not representing Italy was Paolo Ponzano for the Commission. Although the Italian members of the Convention came from across the political spectrum, the parties on the left were not well represented in the Convention in that there was only one national MP from the Democratic Left and one MEP also from the Democratic Left (both alternates), whereas the Reconstructed Communists and the Italian Communists were not represented.

Spini and Paciotti from the Democratic Left, called for federalism, for greater use of QMV, for social policy to be a shared competence in the EU, for the EU to be given exclusive power over structural and cohesion policies, financing over the budget and the definition and conduct of foreign policy and common security (for a more detailed account see Fabbrini 2004). Spini also supported the creation of a Union Foreign Minister and proposed that the convention should work on an article for the repudiation of war, to be inserted in the treaty (Scott and Vergara Caffarelli 2005). On the issue of the expansion of competences of the EU, to be precise the measures to be taken by the EU and for which the Constitution has not provided the necessary powers, Spini and Paciotti also introduced a 'more supranational flexibility clause than the intergovernmental one that was adopted' (Fabbrini 2004: 240).

The impression is that political parties, in particular opposition parties, did not follow closely the working of the Convention, and did not develop any specific strategy to deal with it and coordinate their positions. An exception was the Convention seminar of the Party of European Socialists, held in Florence in 2003 and attended by leaders of left wing parties and members of parliament with a view to work on common positions (Scott and Vergara Caffarelli 2005). The domestic debate in the press and amongst public opinion was also very limited in Italy.

At the end of the Convention, like France, Germany and the Benelux countries, Italy approved the draft Treaty produced by the Convention, regarding the document as a good basis for negotiations in the IGC. This position of the Italian government was supported by the opposition. Italian public opinion was generally in favour of the Constitutional Treaty (EB 59 Italy, 2003) registering the highest percentage among those asserting the EU needed a constitution (77 per cent, the average in the EU15 was 63 percent, and 10 per cent against), and the lowest percentage opposing a constitution (5 per cent) (EB 59, 2003). Yet, Italians displayed a limited knowledge about the EU, and when asked about the composition and the work of the convention, only 36 per cent answered they were informed (EB 59 Italy, 2003). Over time, the Italian consensus slightly declined, it was 69 per cent in the Autumn 2006, but it increased to 72 per cent six months afterward (EB 67 Italy, 2007), in line with the EU27 average (from 64 to 69 per cent).

### *The 2003-4 IGC and the Constitutional treaty*

Although opposition parties (as well as parties in office) had mostly taken a low profile during the Convention, they devoted considerable attention to the Constitutional treaty during the Italian presidency of the EU in the second semester of 2003, which presided over the opening of the IGC.

In preparation for the rotating presidency of the EU for a semester, there was an attempt to forge a bipartisan consensus on this issue (*Sole 24 Ore*, 7 March 2003, *La Repubblica*, 3 July 2003), so as to avoid the politicisation of the Italian presidency for domestic (party politics) reasons. However, such bipartisan position was short lived. It had already begun to unravel when the leader of the Democratic Left criticised the positions taken by deputy prime minister Fini in the Convention for being in favour of a 'minimal Europe' (*europa minima*) (*Sole 24 Ore*, 7 March 2003). The sentence 'no to a minimal Europe' became a leitmotiv when the centre left took office in 2007 and fully engaged in the treaty negotiations.

The attempt to forge a bipartisan approach fell apart at the very beginning of the presidency, when Prime Minister Berlusconi presented the presidency's programme before the EP in July 2003. During the stormy session, after facing criticisms from several MEPs, the Italian Prime Minister likened a German MEP to a 'concentration camp guard', damaging the institutional relations between the EP and the presidency in office. The Democratic Left pointed out that Berlusconi's behaviour was detrimental to Italy's credibility in Europe (*La Repubblica*, 3-4 July 2003). This debacle was strongly criticised not only by the centre left coalition, though but also by some of Berlusconi's allies, first and foremost the leader of the National Alliance and deputy prime minister Gianfranco Fini (*La Repubblica*, 3 July 2003). Subsequently,

Berlusconi's performance as president of the EU, especially his role in the 2003 IGC, was also strongly criticised by the centre left coalition for failing to reach an agreement and his ineffective performance as a mediator in the negotiations was singled out (*La Repubblica*, 14 December 2003).

During the IGC in 2002-3, the preferences of the Italian government on the reform of the EU institutional framework were similar to those of the other large member states, particularly, Germany and France, and were by and large shared by the centre left parties, as it became evident when the latter took office in 2006. These preferences concerned the following points: the downsizing of the Commission; the minimum threshold of four MEPs per country; the establishment of the double-hatted Union Foreign Minister; the principle of the double majority; and, with less intensity, the appointment of the President of the European Council for a fixed term in office.

It should however be noted that certain sectors of the centre right government either did not consider EU institutional reforms as a core priority, or privileged those institutional reforms related to the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), namely, the establishment of a double-hatted minister, or with an intergovernmental connotation, such as the creation of a semi permanent president (Hine 2004). The pro-integrationist centrist parties in the government coalition, as well as some of the main opposition parties, supported all the institutional reforms as well as the extension of QMV.

Besides the two episodes mentioned above, the parties on the left paid limited attention to the 2003-4 IGC. The situation partly changed during the 2007 IGC that culminated with the signing of the Lisbon treaty, when the centre left coalition was in

office and hence the positions of the Italian government largely reflected those of the parties on the left, in particular the largest party, the Democratic Left.

### *The ratification of the Constitutional treaty*

In Italy the Constitutional treaty agreed in 2004 was subject to parliamentary ratification in 2005. A referendum was never envisaged. The parliamentary debate was brief and low key, and it did not elicit much public attention or media coverage.<sup>1</sup>

During the parliamentary debate, the Democratic Left took a very positive stance in favour of the ratification of the treaty, which was regarded as a step towards a 'political' Europe. Many speakers recognised the inherent limitations of the treaty, arguing that it was not ambitious enough. However, they were also aware that the European project could only be achieved gradually and that there were limits to what could be agreed during the treaty negotiations, taking into account the positions of other member states: compromise was inevitable. Yet, the treaty contained some improvements as compared to the status quo. Finally, the Democratic Left argued against the defence of the national interest, postulating that the latter was better safeguarded in a multilateral context, internationally and in the EU. The party voted in favour of the ratification of the treaty.

The Reconstructed Communists were critical of the treaty, which was seen as an expression of neo liberal Europe and an undemocratic project, lead by national

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<sup>1</sup> See, Legislatura 14° - Senato, Resoconto stenografico della seduta del 06/04/2005

Legislatura 14° - Camera, Resoconto stenografico della seduta del 25/01/2005

executives, without consulting citizens. The party declared itself in favour of a 'social' Europe and 'peoples' Europe' (*europa dei popoli*), where society prevails over market, promoting participative democracy and international peace. The treaty was regarded as too far apart from these aspirations and therefore the Reconstructed Communists voted against its ratification.

The Italian Communists recognised that the treaty was not ambitious enough, in particular if compared to the text drafted by the Convention. However, the party saw it as a political mistake to vote against the ratification of the treaty, because this would slow down the integration process and could cause a political crisis in Europe. Such an outcome would serve the interests of those in favour of a purely economic Europe, based on market logics. The treaty was seen as a step forward towards a 'political' Europe, outlining a set of common values and rights, giving the EU legal personality.

### ***The 2007 IGC and the Lisbon treaty***

The second centre left Prodi government took office in June 2006 and therefore it followed the discussions on the re-launch of the Constitutional Treaty. The position taken by the centre left government elected in 2006 was much more pro-integrationist and supranationalist than the centre right government in 2003-4 had been. The treaty and its content became a priority for the Prodi government, whereas this had not been the case for the Berlusconi government. Within the centre left coalition, the parties on the left, in particular the Democratic Left, had a considerable influence in shaping the position of the Italian government, even though, besides issues concerning religion and family law, the (pro-European) positions of the Democratic Left largely coincided

with those of the (pro-European) centrist parties. The Reconstructed Communists were less vocal in their support for the Constitutional treaty, later renamed Lisbon treaty.

Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema of the Democratic Left, in a speech given at the European University Institute on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2006 argued that<sup>2</sup> Italy did not oppose a re-naming of the draft treaty of policies of the EU, for example, as a 'Fundamental Treaty of the European Union', nor a simplification of Part III of the treaty, provided that the most important innovations introduced in areas such as CSDP and judicial cooperation were maintained. However, for Italian policy-makers the starting point of the new round of treaty negotiations should be the text agreed in 2004 and not the Treaty of Nice. They feared that if Nice had been the starting point then the end product would be nothing more than 'Nice plus' or a 'mini treaty'.

The non-negotiable issues for the Italian centre left government were the creation of a European Foreign Minister, who would preside over the Council of Foreign Ministers and be a member of the Commission (so-called 'double-hatting'). This post was seen as strengthening EU's stance in foreign policy and it also had a federalist/supranational connotation. Italian policy makers strongly endorsed the creation of a semi-permanent president of the European Council, once his/her tasks had been delineated so as to prevent potential conflicts with the president of the Commission. The figure of the semi-permanent president of the European Council was seen as having a symbolic and pragmatic function: it was an emblem of European

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<sup>2</sup> Parts of this speech were reproduced by the Italian press, including an article written by the Foreign Minister in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica in October 2006.

unity and s/he would provide continuity to the European council (interview, November 2007).

The Italian government vehemently supported the extension of QMV, in order to speed up the EU decision making process, especially to areas of foreign, security and defense policy, as well as immigration policy and certain parts concerning judicial cooperation. It supported the principle of the double majority, because, at least as initially drafted by the Convention, it would have made the voting system clearer than it was after the convoluted compromise reached at Nice, even though the new system did not substantially changed Italy's voting power in the EU. It also had a federalist connotation that resonated well with the Italian government. Finally, Italy endorsed a clear division of competences and legislative norms and the inclusion of the Fundamental Charter in the treaty, so as to make it both legally binding and judicially enforceable. The Italian government was also adamant to limit the number of opting outs (interview, November 2007).

The Italian government was one of the friends of the Constitution, namely the group of countries that had already ratified the treaty and that, led by the Spanish government, actively took part in the debate to prevent major steps backs in the treaty. The group also aimed to shield the German presidency from the pressure of Eurosceptic countries. Thus, the Italian strategy was similar to those of the countries that had already ratified the treaty with a large majority: to defend the existing text, limiting changes to the bare minimum (interview, November 2007).

When the road map for the re-launch of the treaty was being discussed in May 2007 as well when the IGC formally opened in October 2007, Italian policy makers tried to limit the concessions sought by some member states, first and foremost, Poland and the UK. The priority for the Italian government was to prevent any major dilution of the content of the treaty, limiting the concessions to countries that asked for significant changes (or opting out).

Besides trying to avoid any further dilution of the content of the treaty in October 2007, another point raised by the Italian government concerned the redistribution of seats in the EP, as part of the reform aimed at reducing the number of the overall seats in the assembly. The Italian government opposed the proposal elaborated by the EP, which would have reduced the number of Italian MEPs from 78 to 72, whereas France was allocated 74 seats and Germany 96. Italy argued that it should be entitled to the same number of MEPs as France and the UK, it had been the case in the past. In the end, Italy was allocated an extra seat, reaching 73, as the UK.

The main parties on the left did not coordinate on matters related to the Constitutional treaty first and Lisbon treaty later. During the Berlusconi government, the parties on the left broadly supported the positions of the Italian government in the negotiating process, even though some criticisms concerning the conduct of the Berlusconi government were voiced from time to time. The Reconstructed Communists lamented the lack of a stronger social dimension in the European project. Once in office, the left wing parties devoted increasing attention to the treaty, which became a priority for the centre left government.

#### **4. Policy matters raised by the Lisbon treaty**

The content of the Constitutional treaty signed in June 2004 made some important changes to the institutional structure and policies of the EU. Many of these changes were the object of protracted negotiations, because the member states had different preferences and priorities. Certain issues discussed and temporarily settled in 2004 were re-opened for negotiations in 2007, even though, in the end, the changes agreed in 2004 mostly found their way in the Lisbon treaty.

The institutional framework of the EU was modified, and advances were made in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and judicial cooperation. A new voting formula was introduced, albeit to be phased in later on, and the scope for qualified majority voting was expanded in sensitive areas, such as asylum and immigration. The Charter of Fundamental Rights was inserted into the treaty. The Constitutional treaty first, and the Lisbon treaty later, did not envisage significant changes concerning economic policy or social policy. The reference to god and Christianity in the preamble was also subject to heated political discussions. Let us look at these sets of issues in more detail, as this is necessary in order to explain the positions taken by political parties, in particular parties on the left, in Italy (part of the material in this section is drawn from Phinnemore 2004).

The negotiations concerning the EU institutional framework can be subsumed under five main headings. The reform of the Presidency, as envisaged by the treaty drafted by the Convention, implied the establishment of the figure of the 'President' of the

European Council, to be appointed for a fixed period. An agreement was reached on this in the IGC in 2003-4 and it was not amended in the Lisbon treaty. The creation of the position of the Union Minister of Foreign Affairs (re-named High Representative in the Lisbon Treaty), according to the formula of the 'double-hat' proposed by the Convention, combined in one post the responsibilities currently falling to the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations. A third institutional issue was the Convention's proposal to downsize the Commission, whereby the latter would be composed of fifteen voting members and ten non-voting members. These changes were maintained in the Lisbon treaty.

The last controversial institutional issue was the reform of the voting system. The draft treaty of the Convention innovatively proposed that all Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of Ministers would be settled on the basis of a double majority, comprising half of the member states representing 60% of the population, instead of the convoluted system provided for in the Nice Treaty. The reform of the voting system was negotiated in the IGC 2003-2004, indeed, it was one of the main causes that led to the break down of the negotiations under the Italian presidency in December 2003. In June 2004, under the Irish presidency, an agreement was eventually reached. As envisaged by the Constitutional Treaty agreed in June 2004, a 'double majority' voting system was supposed to replace the existing complex system of weighted votes in 2009, with a transitional phase.

According to the new system, for the Council to adopt a measure based on a Commission's proposal, the support of 55% of the member states representing 65% of the EU's population will be necessary. Moreover, the proposal will have to command

the support of at least 15 member states. Equally, a blocking minority must include at least four member states. Where the Council is not acting on the basis of a Commission proposal – such as in the areas of justice and home affairs, the common foreign and security policy, economic and monetary policy – a qualified majority requires the support of 72% of the member states representing 65% of the EU's population. When the negotiations that led to the Lisbon treaty were re-opened under the German presidency in the first semester of 2007, this was one of the main issues on the table. In the end, it was agreed that the new voting system will not enter into force until 2017.

A substantial part of IGC discussions concerned the CSDP which was regarded as ‘an integral part of the CFSP’. There were two main issues. First, the mutual assistance clause contained in the Convention draft envisaged an obligation of aid and assistance if a member state is victim of armed aggression. Second, permanent structured cooperation referred to as ‘structured cooperation’ in some articles, which allows a core of EU states to develop closer military cooperation. The Convention draft of the treaty stated that only the member states of this *avant garde* would decide on the establishment of structured cooperation, as well as on the admission of new members, according to pre-established ‘military criteria’. By contrast, the establishment of the ‘Armament Agency’ was readily accepted by all the member states.

The negotiations concerning judicial cooperation centred on: the creation of the European public prosecutor; the extension of the role of Eurojust; and greater cooperation in criminal matters. The European public prosecutor would be responsible for ‘investigating, prosecuting and bringing to judgment ... the perpetrators of, and

accomplices in, offences against the Union's financial interests'. The role of Eurojust (European Judicial Cooperation Network) was expanded so that in addition to its existing activities (promoting cooperation between national authorities) it would be able to initiate criminal investigations and prosecutions to be carried out by the competent national authorities, particularly where offences against the financial interests of the EU are concerned. The treaty expanded the list of crimes subject to judicial cooperation. In the re-negotiations that preceded the signing of the Lisbon treaty, the UK and Ireland obtained an opt out from these provisions, especially in the penal field.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights had been signed and proclaimed by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on behalf of their institutions in December 2000 in Nice. It contained a range of rights concerning dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice. After a protracted debate in the Convention first and in the IGC later, the Charter was inserted in part II of the Constitutional treaty, changing its formal status, as it became legally binding and subject to interpretation by the Court of Justice. The Charter has been incorporated as a protocol in the Lisbon treaty, which does not change its juridically binding status. However, the UK and Poland managed to insert a protocol stating that the charter cannot be used to challenge their national laws, even though for very different reasons. In the UK, there was the concern that this would affect the trade unions' right to strike. By contrast, in Poland as well as amongst catholic forces in Italy, there were concerns about the implications that the expansion of certain rights (such as gay right rights) would have for family law in some countries. Poland issued

a protocol on this, whereas in Italy this issue was raised by Catholic centrist parties, but it did not go further.

Another issue raised by countries with a strong catholic tradition was the reference to god and Christianity in the preamble of the Constitutional treaty. Some countries, first and foremost, France, and some political forces opposed the inclusion of such reference in the preamble. In Italy, whereas Catholic centrist parties called for an explicit reference to god and Christianity in the preamble, the parties on the left did not support such a move.

## **5. The future of Europe – visions, concerns, general views,**

In Italy, there is a general positive view of Europe. Some concerns that were raised in other countries with reference to certain issues touched upon by the Lisbon Treaty, - such as matters related to identity and citizenship; Christianity vs secularism; the Charter of Fundamental Rights - found little echo in Italy.

The juxtaposition between national and European identity in Italy has never come to the fore. The Italian collective identity seems to have a distinctive European component. In a survey concerning the perception of European and national identity amongst EU citizens, 5% of the Italians sampled mentioned only their European identity (and not their national one), 69% referred to their national and European identities. Only 25% of the people in the sample mentioned their national identity only. In the EU 15 on average 41% of the people sampled referred to their national

identity only (Eurobarometer N 53 2000). In this respect, it is possible to speak of Europeanised identity.

The European identity has never been questioned in Italy, where it has traditionally had positive connotations. The widespread acceptance of a European identity coexisting with the national one was partly the effect of the dramatic experience of the fascist, the search for modernisation (Europe was seen as a synonym of modernisation, especially from an economic point of view) and the attempt anchor the country firmly into the western sphere of influence (Ammendola and Isernia 2005). Although this image evoked by Europe has partly faded away after the end of the Cold War and the move from the first to the second republic, it remains a powerful counterbalancing force against Eurosceptic tendencies in Italy.

Perhaps a more salient issue that is indirectly related to the national identity is the juxtaposition between Christianity and secularism. During the negotiations on the Constitutional treaty first and the Lisbon treaty later, Italy was one of the countries, together with Spain and Poland, calling for inserting a reference to god and Christianity in the preamble of the treaty. This preference was partly underplayed during the Italian presidency in 2003, following a common practice whereby the presidency should refrain from pushing forwards its preferences (Quaglia 2007). This was a priority for parties on the right and centrist parties, which have a consolidated catholic tradition, whereas it was of limited importance for parties on the left.

Similarly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights is an issue in Italy only in so far as some catholic and conservative political forces consider it as threatening family rights,

expanding the rights of persons in same sex relationship. It should however be said that none of these three themes (identity and citizenship; Christianity versus secularism; Charter of Fundamental Rights) has had much resonance in Italy during the (very limited) discussion on the Lisbon treaty. It is unlikely they will be prominent themes in the future.

What is striking about the Italian case in comparison to other countries is the very limited attention paid by political parties, mass media and public opinion to the Constitutional treaty first and the Lisbon treaty later. This trend, besides making it rather difficult to identify and extrapolate the attitudes of parties on the Left towards the Lisbon treaty, is in itself an issue worth investigating. Three main complementary explanations can be given for it.

First, in Italy, from the 1980s onwards, there has always been a broad domestic consensus amongst political parties, interest groups and public opinion about European integration. This statement is supported by the very limited number and the electoral size of Eurosceptic parties (Quaglia 2008) and by public opinion support for European integration and EU membership, as evidenced by Eurobarometer surveys. Such public support has been declining since the 2000s, however it is still relatively high if compared to other countries.

Second, and partly related to this, from the 1980s onwards, Italy's EU policy has mostly been bipartisan and it is not been the object of domestic political competition. It has hardly been a salient issue for political parties. In other words, provided that Italy took part to European initiatives and that the positions expressed by Italian

policy makers were broadly pro integration, no further attention was devoted to the matter and to the shape that the EU would take. Indeed, the only period in which the EU made the headline in Italy almost daily was in approaching the final stage of EMU, when there was a concrete risk that Italy would not be able to join the single currency. There was not this sort of risk as far as the Lisbon treaty is concerned.

Third, with specific reference to the Lisbon treaty, it was known from the beginning that Italy would adopt parliamentary ratification, without a referendum. It was also expected that such ratification would proceed without any problem. Hence, unlike other countries that envisaged the prospect of having a referendum and hence witnessed a lively domestic debate on treaty related issues, this was not the case in Italy. Furthermore, partly for the reasons mentioned above, mass media devoted very limited attention to the Treaty in Italy.

## **Conclusions**

This essay has examined the attitudes of the parties on the left towards the Lisbon treaty, starting off with an historical perspective and contextualizing such positions in the domestic arena. It has also highlighted the main innovations introduced by the Lisbon treaty and the impact that these issues had (or, in most of the cases, they did not have) on political parties, media and public opinion in Italy.

Apathy (or with a less negative connotation, ‘permissive consensus’ cf Sbragia 2001) prevailed amongst public opinion and media. Amongst political parties and policy makers, on the whole, the mainstream views on the future of Europe remain in favour

of closer integration, underpinned by supranational institutions, using QMV and expanding EU policies. However, this pro-European vision is weak amongst certain parties of the centre right coalition, such as Forza Italia and the National Alliance, whereas the Northern League is strongly Eurosceptic. The left in Italy is more pro-European, meaning in favour of closer integration, whereas Euroscepticism remains a limited phenomenon, as compared to other countries.

Overall, political parties in Italy expose different views of Europe, which came to the fore during the debate on the Lisbon treaty: a 'political' Europe, a 'social' Europe, and an 'economic' Europe. The parties of the left are strongly in favour of a political and social Europe, whereas the far left is concerned about an 'economic' Europe, depicted as a neo liberal project, at the expenses of a social Europe. The parties of the right are by and large in favour of an economic Europe, but are lukewarm towards a political Europe. Centrist parties display an overall positive view about Europe, even though they are particularly sensitive whenever 'Europe' touches upon matters related to Christianity. Yet, all political parties seem to pay limited attention to the activities of the EU, and this also came to the fore during the negotiations of the Lisbon treaty. Perhaps this is one of the main open issues concerning Italy in the EU.

**Table 1: 2004 European Parliament elections**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>
<b>Uniti nell'Ulivo</b> <i>(Olive Tree)</i>	10,105,836	<b>31.08</b>	25
Forza Italia	6,806,245	20.93	16
Alleanza Nazionale <i>(National Alliance)</i>	3,736,606	11.49	9
<b>Rifondazione Comunista</b> <i>(Communist Reconstruction)</i>	1,969,776	<b>6.06</b>	5
UDC <i>(Christian Democratic Union)</i>	1,914,726	5.89	5
Lega Nord <i>(Northern League)</i>	1,613,506	4.96	4
Verdi <i>(Greens)</i>	803,356	2.47	2
Comunisti Italiani <i>(Italian Communists)</i>	787,613	2.42	4
Others	4,778,582	14.7	10
<i>Turnout</i>	35,717,557	71.7	78

Source:

<http://elezionistorico.interno.it/liste.php?tp=E&dt=12/06/2004&cta=Y&tpEnte=A&tpSeg=C&numEnte=0&sut1=&sut2=&sut3=&descEnte=&descArea=ITALIA%20+%20ESTERO&codTipoSegLeader=>  
(Consulted 29 June 2008)

**Table 2 Attitude to European unification by electorate**

<b>Political party</b>	<b>Gone too far (%)</b>	<b>Rather far (2-5) (%)</b>	<b>Can rather be pushed further (6-9) (%)</b>	<b>Should be pushed further (%)</b>
<b>Uniti nell'Ulivo (Olive Tree)</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>49.8</b>	<b>18.0</b>
Forza Italia	9.7	31.5	41.6	10.9
Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)	8.9	36.2	37	12.3
<b>Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Reconstruction)</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>19.0</b>
UDC (Christian Democrats Union)	7.2	28.9	37.6	13.0
Lega Nord (Northern League)	15.9	37.7	27.5	11.6
Verdi (Greens)	11.5	42.3	34.5	3.8
<b>Comunisti Italiani (Italian Communists)</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>

Questions: party voted for in the 2004 EP election\*attitude to European unification. The table does not report the percentage of the answer 'don't know' and the figures on the smaller parties.

Source: 2004 European Election Studies

**Table 3 Whether EU membership is good for Italy by electorates**

<b>Political party</b>	<b>Good thing (%)</b>	<b>Bad thing (%)</b>	<b>Neither (%)</b>
<b>Uniti nell’Ulivo</b> <i>(Olive Tree)</i>	<b>80.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>14.9</b>
Forza Italia	58.0	6.3	29.8
Alleanza Nazionale <i>(National Alliance)</i>	57.5	8.9	30.1
<b>Rifondazione comunista</b> <i>(Communist Reconstruction)</i>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>20.0</b>
UDC (Christian Democrats Union)	60.6	7.0	26.8
Lega Nord <i>(Northern League)</i>	50.7	11.6	30.4
Verdi <i>(Greens)</i>	50.0	15.4	19.2
<b>Comunisti Italiani</b> <i>(Italian Communists)</i>	<b>77.8</b>	/	<b>2.0</b>

Questions: party voted for in the 2004 EP election\*EU membership good or bad for Italy. The table does not report the percentage of the answer ‘don’t know’ and the figures on the smaller parties.

Source: 2004 European Election Studies

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