

The Left in Italy and the Lisbon Treaty: A 'Political' Europe, a 'Social' Europe and an 'Economic' Europe*

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Abstract: This article examines the attitudes of the parties on the left in Italy to moves towards European integration from the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002-03 to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. The analysis is contextualised by taking an historical perspective. It is argued that 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 that is being pursued at the expense 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 have a positive view of Europe on the whole, though they are particularly sensitive whenever 'Europe' touches upon matters related to Christianity. Yet, as evidenced during the Lisbon Treaty negotiations, none of the political parties seem to pay more than limited attention to the activities of the European Union.

Keywords: Lisbon Treaty, Constitutional Treaty, Political parties, Left, European Union, Treaty negotiations

Introduction

This essay examines the attitudes of parties on the left in Italy to the moves towards European integration that took place in the period running from the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002-03 to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. In order to acquire 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 parties of the left 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 interest in the treaty-making process.

For analytical purposes, the treaty-making process can be divided into two sub periods. The first comprises the Convention (2001-02), the intergovernmental conference (IGC) (2003-04) and the national ratification process (2005), when the centre-left coalition (and, hence, the parties of the left) were in opposition in Italy; the second encompasses 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.

In the first period (2002-05), the opposition parties, including the parties of the left, confined themselves to criticising 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 of the left vehemently criticised the poor performance of the Berlusconi government during the Italian presidency in the second semester of 2003. The attitudes expressed by the parties of 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. The Democratici di Sinistra (Left Democrats, DS), Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation, RC) and the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani (Party of Italian Communists, PdCI) were all against a minimal treaty, even though for different reasons and even though they voted in different ways during the ratification process.

The DS wanted to strengthen the 'political' Europe, revealing clear pro-integration attitudes, which came to the fore when former party leader and Prime Minister, Massimo D'Alema, became Foreign Minister in 2007. The party supported the streamlining of the institutional framework of the European Union (EU) and the extension of qualified majority voting (QMV) to a wider range of policy areas, limiting as much as possible opt-outs and any watering down of the Treaty.

The prevailing attitude of RC was the desire to develop the 'social' Europe, that is the social policy and welfare provisions, downplaying the 'economic' Europe, based on a free-market project. Unlike the DS, RC voted against ratification of the Constitutional Treaty.

The PdCI also emphasised the need for a 'social' dimension as well as a strengthening of the 'political' dimension, and hence supported the ratification process. All three parties' attitudes towards the Lisbon Treaty

mirrored their attitudes towards the EU and European integration more broadly.

Overview of the positions of the parties of the left in Italy

Until the elections of June 2009, there were three main parties on the left in Italy which are represented in the European Parliament (EP) (see Table 1): the DS (which in 2004 fielded its candidates as part of the Olive-tree alliance), RC and the PdCI.

Table 1: European Parliament elections, 2004

Party or electoral coalition	Votes	%	Seats
Uniti nell'Ulivo	10,105,836	31.08	25
Forza Italia	6,806,245	20.93	16
Alleanza Nazionale	3,736,606	11.49	9
Rifondazione Comunista	1,969,776	6.06	5
UDC	1,914,726	5.89	5
Lega Nord	1,613,506	4.96	4
Verdi	803,356	2.47	2
Comunisti Italiani	787,613	2.42	4
Others	4,778,582	14.70	10
Turnout	35,717,557	71.70	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=> (Accessed 29 June 2008)

However, before moving to the analysis of contemporary events, it is useful to take an historical perspective, in order to acquire 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.¹ The Italian Communist Party (PCI) started off as a hard Eurosceptical party, subsequently moderating its stance in the late 1960s and 1970s (Maggiorani, 1998), and then, in the 1980s, abandoning its Eurosceptical position all together (Bosco, 2000; Sassoon, 2001).

The PCI's trajectory with regard to 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 parties belonging to other families, the Communists responded to vote- and coalition-seeking opportunities (Benedetto and Quaglia, 2007). In contrast

with the French and Spanish Communist parties, the PCI was always the largest party of the left as was true of its successors, the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Democratic Party of the Left, PDS) and the DS. Always excluded from government, the PCI aimed from the early 1970s to achieve goals that were both vote- and coalition-seeking. The priority given to these goals shifted over time, but its position on Europe was a key component of the PCI's strategy for reaching them. This party first, and the DS later, used pro-Europeanism as a means of pursuing the goal of its own legitimation (Bosco, 2000).

In 1991, the PCI was transformed into the PDS, experiencing an internal split, with a group of harder line and nostalgic Communists forming RC. The PDS 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 PDS 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 DS sat in the Socialist group. The PDS was the largest party in Romano Prodi's Ulivo government following the 1996 elections. The centre-left coalition lost the election in 2001, but was voted back into office in 2006, when the DS again emerged as the largest party of the coalition.

Although Eurosceptical tendencies in RC still exist, the presence of electoral competitors also of the left and the pro-European attitudes of Italian public opinion, have led the party generally to downplay Eurosceptical positions, and to rely mainly on economic arguments as a spearhead for its criticisms of the EU (Benedetto and Quaglia, 2007). As elaborated further below, the Italian electorate remains largely pro-integration. Until the 2009 elections, RC members of the European Parliament (EP) belonged to the United Left group, together with the PdCI. In 1998, the leadership of RC divided on the question of whether or not to support the government of Romano Prodi on a confidence motion that was not unrelated to the question of Italy's entry into the Euro. The disagreement led to the emergence of the – on that issue – more moderate PdCI, under the leadership of the high-profile former PCI spokesperson, Armando Cossutta, whose explicit aim was to offer 'Communist solidarity' to the government of the centre-left.

An analysis of data drawn from the 2004 European Election Study (Table 2) shows that among ordinary voters, the main opponents of further European integration were the supporters of the Northern League, 15.9 percent of them thinking that the process of integration had gone too far. In

contrast, supporters of the DS (whose candidates appeared on the ballot as part of the single Olive-tree alliance) and RC voters were the most in favour, together with supporters of the PdCI, asserting that European integration 'should be pushed further'. Concerns about the process of European integration (Table 3) did not affect the electorate of the left in that 80.1 percent of Olive-tree alliance supporters and 63.1 percent of RC supporters considered EU membership a good thing, as did 77.8 per cent of supporters of the PdCI. Dissatisfaction with the EU and the process of integration was expressed mainly by supporters of the right and protest parties (only 50.7 per cent and 50 per cent of supporters of the Northern League and the Greens thought the EU was a good thing for Italy).

Table 2: Attitudes towards European integration by party voted for, 2004

Party voted for	Gone much too far, (%)	Gone somewhat too far (2-5), (%)	Should be pushed somewhat further (6-9), (%)	Should be pushed much further, (%)
Uniti nell'Ulivo	4.2	22.3	49.8	18.0
Forza Italia	9.7	31.5	41.6	10.9
Alleanza Nazionale	8.9	36.2	37	12.3
Rifondazione Comunista	7.9	30.2	36.6	19.0
UDC	7.2	28.9	37.6	13.0
Lega Nord	15.9	37.7	27.5	11.6
Verdi	11.5	42.3	34.5	3.8
Comunisti Italiani	-	20.0	50.0	20.0

Source: 2004 European Election Study

Note: Percentages answering 'don't know' and percentages for the smaller parties omitted.

Table 3 Whether EU membership is good for Italy by party voted for, 2004

Party voted for	Good thing (%)	Bad thing (%)	Neither (%)
Uniti nell'Ulivo	80.1	1.1	14.9
Forza Italia	58.0	6.3	29.8
Alleanza Nazionale	57.5	8.9	30.1
Rifondazione Comunista	63.1	7.7	20.0
UDC	60.6	7.0	26.8
Lega Nord	50.7	11.6	30.4
Verdi	50.0	15.4	19.2
Comunisti Italiani	77.8	-	2.0

Source: 2004 European Election Study

Note: Percentages answering 'don't know' and percentages for the smaller parties omitted.

Positions of the Italian parties of the left during the treaty-making process

The Convention phase and the draft Constitutional Treaty

Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Forza Italia (FI) and of the centre-right coalition, was Prime Minister from 2001 to 2006. The centre-left coalition was thus in opposition during the 2002-03 Convention and the 2003-04 IGC. Hence, the positions of the parties of the left on the Constitutional Treaty were not clearly articulated and the parties themselves kept a low profile on the issue.

The Italian government was represented at the European Convention by the deputy Prime Minister, Gianfranco Fini, leader of Alleanza Nazionale (the National Alliance, AN), whose alternate was Francesco Speroni of the Northern League.² Fini's appointment as a member of the Convention was somewhat controversial, not only because the party of which he was leader was the 1990s heir to the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement, MSI) but also because the Italian government insisted that Italy should have a representative in addition to Giuliano Amato, a political figure of the centre-left, who had been appointed as Vice-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, leader of the Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro (UDC, Union of Christian and Centre Democrats UDC), whose alternate was Valdo Spini (DS). The Senate was represented by the former Prime Minister Lamberto Dini (of the centrist Margherita), his alternate being Filadelfio Basile (FI). From the EP, the Italian members were Antonio Tajani (FI) and Cristina Muscardini (AN) with Elena Paciotti (DS) as alternate. Besides Giuliano Amato as Vice-president of the Convention, there was another Italian not representing his own country: Paolo Ponzano for the Commission. Although the Italian members of the Convention were drawn from parties from across the political spectrum, the parties of the left were not well represented in the Convention in that there was only one national MP and one MEP from the DS (both alternates) while neither RC nor the PdCI had any representatives.³

Spini and Paciotti from the DS 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, and for the definition and conduct of a common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Spini also supported the creation of a Union Foreign Minister and proposed that the Convention should work on an article, to be included in

the Treaty, repudiating war as a means of resolving international disputes (Scott and Vergara Caffarelli, 2005). On the issue of expansion of the competences of the EU, and specifically the EU measures for which the Constitution did not provide the necessary powers, Spini and Paciotti proposed 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 the Convention deliberations closely; nor did they develop any specific strategy or coordinate their positions. The Convention seminar sponsored by the Party of European Socialists and held in Florence in 2003 – which was attended by the leaders of left-wing parties and members of Parliament with a view to agreeing common positions (Scott and Vergara Caffarelli, 2005) – was an exception. The debate in the press and amongst the public was also very limited.

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 was supported by the opposition. Italian public opinion was generally in favour of the Constitutional Treaty (Eurobarometer no. 59 Italy, 2003), registering the highest percentage among those agreeing that the EU needed a constitution – 77 per cent were in favour (the average for the EU15 being 63 percent) – and the lowest percentage opposing a constitution – 5 per cent (the average for the EU15 being 10 percent) (Eurobarometer no. 59, 2003). Yet Italians displayed limited knowledge of the EU, and when asked about the composition and the work of the Convention, only 36 per cent replied that they felt they were informed (Eurobarometer no. 59, Italy, 2003). Over time, Italians’ support for a constitution declined slightly – to 69 per cent in autumn 2006. However, it rose to 72 per cent six months later (Eurobarometer no. 67, Italy, 2007) in line with the average for the EU27 (which went from 64 to 69 per cent).

The 2003-04 IGC and the Constitutional Treaty

Although opposition parties (as well as the governing parties) 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 coincided with the opening of the IGC (Di Quirico, 2003).

In preparation for the presidency, there was an attempt to forge a bipartisan consensus on the issue (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 7 March 2003; *la Repubblica*, 3 July 2003) so as to avoid the risk of domestic party-political conflict damaging Italy’s incumbency. However, agreement was short lived. It had already begun to unravel when the leader of the DS criticised deputy Prime Minister Fini for taking positions in the Convention that were indicative of

support for a 'minimal Europe' (*Europa minima*) (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 7 March 2003). The slogan 'no to a minimal Europe' became a leitmotiv when the centre-left took office in 2006 and fully engaged in the treaty negotiations.

The attempt to forge a bipartisan approach fell apart at the very beginning of Italy's incumbency, when Prime Minister Berlusconi presented the presidency's programme to the EP in July 2003. During a stormy exchange, and after facing criticisms from several MEPs, the Italian Prime Minister likened a German MEP to a 'concentration camp guard', damaging relations between the EP and the presidency. The DS pointed out that Berlusconi's behaviour was detrimental to Italy's credibility in Europe (*la Repubblica*, 3-4 July 2003). However, Berlusconi was criticised not only by the centre-left coalition, but also by some of his allies, notably Fini (*la Repubblica*, 3 July 2003). Subsequently, Berlusconi's performance as president of the EU, especially at the 2003 IGC, was criticised by the centre-left coalition for its failure to lead to an agreement among the participants; and his ineffective performance as a mediator in the negotiations was singled out for special criticism (*la Repubblica*, 14 December 2003).

During the IGC, the preferences of the Italian government on the reform of the EU's 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 became evident when the latter took office in 2006. These preferences concerned downsizing of the Commission; a minimum of four MEPs to be allocated to every country; the establishment of a double-hatted Union Foreign Minister (merging the positions of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the Commissioner for External Relations, so that foreign policy in the traditional sense, and trade and development, would be dealt with by a single individual); the principle of the double majority; and, to a lesser degree, fixed terms for the President of the European Council.⁴

It should however be noted that certain sectors of the centre-right government either did not consider EU institutional reform 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 foreign minister, or with an intergovernmental connotation, such as the creation of a semi-permanent president of the European Council (Hine, 2004), as explained later. The pro-integrationist centrist parties in the governing coalition, as well as some of the main opposition parties, supported all the institutional reforms as well as the extension of QMV.

Aside from the two episodes mentioned above, the parties of the left paid limited attention to the 2003-04 IGC. The situation partly changed during the 2007 IGC, which culminated in 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 of the left, in particular the largest party, the DS.

Ratification of the Constitutional Treaty

The Constitutional Treaty agreed in 2004 was ratified by Parliament 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 (Camera dei Deputati, 2006; Senato della Repubblica, 2005).

During the debate, the DS took a very positive stance in favour of ratification, 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 pursued 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 then status quo. Finally, the DS argued against unilateral defence of the national interest, asserting that the latter was better safeguarded in a multilateral context, internationally and in the EU. The party voted in favour of ratification.

RC was critical of the Treaty, which it saw as an expression of neo-liberal perspectives and an undemocratic project, one led by national executives without consulting citizens. The party declared itself in favour of a 'social' Europe and a 'peoples' Europe' (*Europa dei popoli*), where society prevails over the market, promoting participative democracy and international peace. The Treaty was regarded as too far removed from these aspirations and therefore the RC voted against its ratification.

The PdCI argued that the Treaty was not ambitious enough, especially when compared with the text drafted by the Convention. However, the party saw it as a political mistake to vote against ratification, 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, one 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 greater legal standing.

The 2007 IGC and the Lisbon Treaty

The second centre-left government to be led by Prodi took office in June 2006 and therefore it followed the discussions on re-launching the Constitutional Treaty, later renamed the Lisbon Treaty. The Government's stance was much more supportive of integration and supra-nationalism than the centre-right government in 2003-04 had been. The Treaty and its provisions became a priority for the Prodi government, whereas this had not been the case for the Berlusconi government. Among the centre-left coalition partners, the parties of the left, especially the DS, had considerable

influence in shaping the policy of the Italian government, even though, with the exception of those concerning religion and family law, the (pro-European) positions of the former-communist party largely coincided with those of the (pro-European) centrist parties. RC was less vocal in its support for the Constitutional Treaty.

In a speech at the European University Institute on 25 October 2006, Foreign Minister and DS spokesperson, Massimo D'Alema, maintained that Italy did not oppose a re-naming of the draft Treaty, nor a simplification of Part III of the Treaty, provided that the most important innovations introduced in areas such as the CSDP and judicial cooperation were retained.⁵ However, for Italian policy-makers the starting point of the new round of treaty negotiations had to be the text agreed in 2004 and not the Treaty of Nice. They feared that if Nice were 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 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 the EU's stance in foreign policy given its 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 European Council presidency was seen as having a symbolic and pragmatic function: it was an emblem of European unity and would lend continuity to the European Council (interview, Italian diplomat, Brussels, 28 November 2007).

The Italian government strongly supported the extension of QMV, in order to speed up the EU decision-making process, especially in the areas of foreign, security and defence policy, as well as immigration policy and aspects of 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, while not substantially changing 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 powers between the Union and its components through an exhaustive listing of which competences belong to the EU and which competences belong to the member states – an issue that was clarified in the Constitutional Treaty – and inclusion in the Treaty of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, so as to make its provisions both legally binding and judicially enforceable. All these issues are discussed in more details in the next section. The Government was also insistent in wanting to limit the number of opt outs (interview, Italian diplomat, Brussels, 28 November 2007).

The Italian government was one of the friends of the Constitution, being among the group of countries that had already ratified the Treaty and that actively sought to prevent major steps back from it. The group also aimed to shield the German presidency from the pressure of Eurosceptic countries. Thus Italian goals, like those of the other countries that had already ratified the Treaty, were to defend the existing text, limiting changes to the bare minimum (interview, Italian Diplomat, Brussels, 28 November 2007). Hence, when the road map for re-launch of the Treaty was discussed in May 2007, and when the IGC formally opened in October 2007, Italian policy makers tried to limit the concessions sought by Poland and the UK, especially in the area of opt-outs.

Besides trying to avoid any further dilution of the content of the Treaty, the Government also sought to resist – as a consequence of the reform aimed at making EP places available to new member states while limiting the overall number – a redistribution of seats to Italy's disadvantage. It opposed the proposal drafted by the EP, which would have reduced the number of Italian MEPs from 78 to 72 while allocating 74 seats to France and 96 to Germany. Italy argued that it was entitled to the same number of MEPs as France and the UK, as had been the case in the past. In the end, Italy was allocated an extra seat, bringing its total to 73 and giving it the same number as the UK.

The main parties of the left did not coordinate their action on matters related to the Constitutional Treaty or the Lisbon Treaty. During the Berlusconi incumbency, they broadly supported the positions of the Italian government in the negotiating process, even though they voiced criticisms of its conduct from time to time. RC lamented the lack of a stronger social dimension to 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.

Policy matters raised by the Lisbon Treaty

Signed in June 2004, the Constitutional Treaty made some important changes to the institutional structure and policies of the EU. Many of these changes were the object of protracted negotiations, reflecting the divergent preferences and priorities of the member states. Certain issues discussed and temporarily settled in 2004 were re-opened for negotiation in 2007, even though, in the end, the changes agreed in 2004 mostly found their way into the Lisbon Treaty.

The institutional framework of the EU was modified, and advances were made in the CFSP, including the CSDP and judicial cooperation. A new voting formula was introduced, albeit to be phased in later on, and the scope for QMV was extended to 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 discussion. Let us look at these sets of issues in more detail, as this is necessary in order to explain the positions taken by the parties, in particular the parties of the left, in Italy.⁶

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 a fixed-term president of the European Council. Agreement was reached on this at the IGC in 2003-04 and it was not amended in the Lisbon Treaty. The position of Union Minister for Foreign Affairs (renamed High Representative in the Lisbon Treaty) was created in accordance with the 'double-hat' formula proposed by the Convention; and so it 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, so that 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 reform of the voting system. The draft treaty of the Convention innovatively proposed that all issues decided by QMV in the Council of Ministers would henceforth be settled on the basis of a majority to comprise half of the member states representing 60 percent of the population, instead of the convoluted system provided for in the Nice Treaty. Reform of the voting system was discussed in the IGC in 2003-04; indeed, it was one of the main issues that led to the breakdown of 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, a 'double majority' voting system would 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 proposal, the support of 55 percent of the member states representing 65 percent 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 CFSP, economic and monetary policy – a qualified majority requires the support of 72 percent of the member states representing 65 percent 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 would not come into force until 2017.

A substantial part of the 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 were the victim of armed aggression. Second, permanent structured cooperation was 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 belonging to this *avant garde* would decide on the establishment of structured cooperation and on the admission of new members, and that they would do so according to pre-established 'military criteria'. By contrast, the establishment of the 'Armament Agency' was readily accepted by all the member states (Phinnemore, 2004).

The negotiations concerning judicial cooperation centred on the creation of the European public prosecutor, on the extension of the role of Eurojust (European Judicial Cooperation Network), and on 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 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 were concerned (Phinnemore, 2004). 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 endorsed by the presidents of the EP, 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, with the result that 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 legally binding status. However, the UK and Poland managed to insert, though for very different reasons, a protocol stating that the charter cannot be used to challenge their national laws. In the UK, there was concern that this would affect trade unions' rights 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 those concerning gays) would have for family law. Poland issued a protocol on this whereas in Italy the issue having been raised by Catholic centrist parties, 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, principally France, and some political forces, opposed the inclusion of such references. In Italy, whereas Catholic centrist parties called for an explicit reference to God and Christianity, the parties of the left did not support such a move.

The future of Europe: visions, concerns, general views

In Italy, there is, generally, a positive view of Europe. Some of the 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 contrast between national and European identity has never come to the fore in Italy where national identity itself seems to have a distinctive European component. In a survey concerning perceptions of European and national identity amongst EU citizens, five percent of the Italians sampled mentioned only their European identity (and not their national one), while 69 percent referred to their national and European identities. Just 25 percent of the people in the sample mentioned their national identity only. In the EU15 an average of 41 percent of the people sampled referred to their national identity only (Eurobarometer no. 53, 2000). In this respect, it is possible to speak of a 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 and its existence alongside the national one is partly the effect of the dramatic experience of the Fascist period; partly the consequence of the search for modernisation (Europe being seen as synonymous with the latter, especially from an economic point of view), and partly the result of the attempt to anchor the country firmly within the western sphere of influence (Ammendola and Isernia, 2005). Although this image evoked by Europe has partly faded away since the end of the Cold War and the move from the First to the Second Republic, it remains a powerful counterweight to Eurosceptical tendencies in Italy.

Perhaps a more salient issue, one indirectly related to national identity, is the contrast between Christianity and secularism. During the negotiations leading up to the Constitutional Treaty first and the Lisbon Treaty later, Italy was one of the countries, together with Spain and Poland, calling for insertion of a reference to God and Christianity in the preamble of the Treaty. This preference was partly underplayed during the Italian

presidency in 2003, following the convention whereby the presidency should refrain from pushing forward its own preferences (Quaglia, 2004). This was a priority for parties on the right and for 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 the status of the traditional family by expanding the rights of persons in same sex relationships. It should however be said that none of these three themes (identity and citizenship; Christianity versus secularism; the Charter of Fundamental Rights) has had much resonance in Italy during the (very limited) discussion of 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, the mass media and public opinion to the Constitutional and Lisbon treaties. This trend, besides making it rather difficult to identify and extrapolate the attitudes of parties of 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, since the 1980s, 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 electoral size of Eurosceptic parties (Quaglia, 2009) and by public support for European integration and EU membership, as evidenced by Eurobarometer surveys. Such support, though declining since 2000, is still relatively high compared to other countries.

Second, and partly related to this, since the 1980s Italy's EU policy has been mostly bipartisan and has 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 in European initiatives, and provided the positions expressed by Italian policy makers were broadly pro-integration, no further attention was devoted to the matter or to the shape that the EU would take. Indeed, the only period in which the EU made the headlines in Italy was during the final stages leading up to EMU, when there was a real risk that Italy would not be able to join the single currency in the first wave. 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 ratify the agreement without a referendum. It was also expected that such ratification would proceed without any problems. Hence, unlike other countries, which envisaged 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, the mass media devoted very limited attention to this issue.

Conclusion

This article has examined the attitudes of the parties of the left towards the Lisbon Treaty, beginning with an analysis of the historical context and the domestic significance of the parties' positions. It has also highlighted the main innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and the impact that these issues had (or, in most cases, did not have) on political parties, the media and public opinion in Italy.

Apathy or less negatively a 'permissive consensus' (Sbragia, 2001) prevailed amongst public opinion and the media. Amongst political parties and policy makers, on the whole, mainstream views on the future of Europe remain in favour of closer integration underpinned by supranational institutions, using QMV and expanding areas of EU competence. However, this pro-European vision is weak amongst certain parties of the centre-right, such as FI and AN, while the Northern League is strongly Eurosceptic. The left in Italy is more pro-European, meaning that it is in favour of closer integration, with Euroscepticism remaining a limited phenomenon as compared to other countries.

Overall, political parties in Italy manifest three 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 being pursued at the expense 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 have a broadly positive view of Europe, even though they are particularly sensitive whenever integration touches upon matters related to Christianity. Yet no political party seems to pay more than limited attention to the activities of the EU, and this also came to the fore during negotiations leading to the Lisbon Treaty. Perhaps this is one of the main open issues concerning Italy in the European Union.

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¹ For a comparative historical analysis of Euroscepticism amongst communist parties in these countries, see Benedetto and Quaglia (2007).

² On negotiations in the Convention, see Magnette and Nicolaïdis (2004).

³ For a more detailed account, see Fabbrini (2004). See also Greco and Matarazzo (2003)

⁴ For a theoretical analysis of Italy's approach to negotiations of the Constitutional Treaty during the 2003-4 IGC, see Quaglia and Drachenberg (2007).

⁵ Parts of this speech were reproduced in the Italian press, including an article written by the Foreign Minister for *la Repubblica* on 27 October 2006.

⁶ Parts of the material in this section is drawn from Phinnemore (2004).