

CFSP WATCH 2004 – Italy – by Michele Comelli¹

1. What are the priorities for your government in CFSP in 2004? What are the key issues for your country in 2004 (after EU enlargement, after the Iraq conflict)?

Since the end of World War II, Italian foreign policy has been based on Europe and its developing institutions on one side and on the United States as a guarantor of security on the other and there has never been any visible tension between these two pillars². The equal importance of these two pillars of Italian foreign policy has been reaffirmed by the Italian government led by Silvio Berlusconi. As the former Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Franco Frattini³ said, “Italy strongly supports the process of European integration, at the same time endeavouring to safeguard and strengthening the Euro-Atlantic partnership. For us, the twin prospect of a closer European Union and of a stronger transatlantic alliance are not alternative propositions”⁴. However, it should be noted that in some important cases the Italian government and, in particular, the Prime Minister Berlusconi has preferred the relationship with the United States to other traditional European partners, such as France and Germany. The most important case was the Italian decision to politically back up the American intervention in Iraq (even if the Italians did not fight the war) and to send 2,800 troops there to contribute to the security of the country. During the course of 2004 the Italian government has constantly reaffirmed its decision to maintain its military presence in Iraq. The government support for the US intervention in Iraq was opposed by the centre-left opposition which, however, could not find a common position on the presence of the Italian troops in Iraq.

It is also important to underline the very good personal relationship between Berlusconi and George W. Bush, which adds to the good relations between the two countries.

Whereas the importance of the transatlantic relationship has never been questioned by the parties in power, some aspects of the Italian participation in the European project have been at times strongly criticised, especially by the Northern League, which has voiced its criticism vis-à-vis the Euro, the powers and competences of the European institutions, notably in the domain of Justice and Home Affairs. However, the other

¹ Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

² J. Walston, The Shift in Italy’s Euro-Atlantic Policy, *The International Spectator*, vol. 39, no. 4 (October-December 2004), p.116.

³ After the appointment of Franco Frattini as European Commissioner in November 2004, his place has been taken over by Gianfranco Fini.

⁴ Speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 21 June 2004 <http://www.esteri.it>.

parties in the government have in many cases adopted a Europeanist stance, in line with the Italian tradition.

The pro-American stance of the Italian centre-right government has also been reflected in the Italian position vis-à-vis the Middle East conflict. Departing from the traditional Italian pro-Arab stance, the Berlusconi government has often called for a more balanced stance that takes the Israeli point of view into account. A sign of this change of attitude is the fact that one of the first official trips of the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianfranco Fini has been to Israel, where he had already been twice in his former position of Deputy Prime Minister. On one of these occasions Fini also sort of justified the building of the Wall in the Occupied Territories.

Italy has also supported the US efforts to launch the vaguely defined "Greater Middle East Initiative" aimed at tackling the terrorist threat by promoting the democratisation of the regimes in the arab-muslim region that was presented at the G8 Summit that took place in Sea Island (USA) in June 2004.

With regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Italian government has pushed for the enhancement of the Mediterranean dimension, in order to have a more balanced policy. In addition, Italy has been one of the strongest supporters of the decision to set a date for the starting of negotiations for the entry of Turkey into the European Union. The centre-left opposition also backed the Italian pro-Turkish stance, while one party from the government, the Northern League remains openly against Turkish accession. However, it has to be noted that the Turkish issue has been mostly discussed by experts and not sparked a public debate comparable to the one that has taken place in other countries, such as France or Germany.

Another priority of the Italian foreign policy in 2004 has been the reform of the composition of the United Nations Security Council. The Italian government, as well as the centre-left opposition, is against the model A proposed by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change which provides, among other things, for the extension of six permanent seats into the UN Security Council and favours the model B proposed by the High Level Panel which provides for, among other things, the institution of other non-permanent seats. Italy motivated its critiques to the model A that would result in a seat for, among others, Germany and Japan, also with the need to leave open the possibility of a future EU seat the Security Council.

Finally, the Italian government has tried to upgrade its political relations with China, that is a very important trade partner for Italy. During a visit to China in December 2004, also the Italian President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi has made it clear that Italy strongly supports the intention of the EU to lift the embargo on arms sales to China. However, some political figures of the Northern League, as well as the

influential former Economy Minister Giulio Tremonti⁵, have made numerous calls to take defensive measures, going as far as to an unfeasible protectionism, in order to reduce the mass Chinese exports to Italy that threaten Italian textile sector.

2. National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP/ESDP Issues in 2004

a) The perceived success and/or failure of CFSP/ESDP (e.g. taking into account current developments like the Iraq conflict)

Italy is traditionally a strong supporter of further developments in the fields of European foreign, security and defence policy. However, the current government is also a staunch ally of the United States, which it backed on the occasion of the military intervention in Iraq, over which the EU was very much divided among its member states.

In general, Italy has supported all the initiatives aimed at making CFSP and ESDP more coherent and efficient. However, Italy is critical of any attempt to set up ad-hoc directories in foreign policy⁶ and would like these developments to be brought back into the normal institutional procedures of CFSP.

b) The position of your country towards NATO after enlargement (in relationship with the ESDP), as well as NATO's role in Afghanistan and in Iraq

The Italian government strongly supports the role of NATO, both as a military alliance and a forum for political consultation.

Italy is in favour of a working co-operation between NATO and ESDP; they should be complementary rather than competitive. Italy is also in favour of a single set of forces that meet the necessary requirements and can be used by both NATO and the EU.

Italy is also engaged in the training of the Iraqi security forces: 44 Iraqi officials are currently trained in Italy. In the future, if the situation improves, Italy might train the Iraqi security forces directly in Iraq.

⁵ Tremonti, a member of Forza Italia, the party of the Prime Minister Berlusconi, , resigned from his position of Economy Minister in July 2004 because of clashes with other parties of the government coalition.

⁶ Hearing of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianfranco Fini before the Italian Parliament, 14 December 2004. The text is available at the following address:
http://new.camera.it/chiosco.asp?cp=2&position=Documenti|barraindietrolResoconti%20parlamentari|barraindietrolBollettino%20Giunte%20e%20Commissioni&source=http%3A//new.camera.it/Docesta/312/6201/6202/documentotesto.ASP&content=/_dati/leg14/lavori/bollet/200412/1214/html/03c03/frame.htm
http://new.camera.it/_dati/leg14/lavori/bollet/200412/1214/pdf/03c03.pdf

With regard to Afghanistan, Italy contributes to the NATO ISAF mission with around 600⁷ troops. The NATO command of the operation, currently exercised by Turkey, will be taken over by Italy starting from the 1st of July. Within the ISAF mission, Italy has declared its willingness to take over the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) of Herat, in Western Afghanistan. Some 250 men will be involved in this initiative.

Italy also takes part in the operation “Enduring Freedom” aimed at tackling international terrorism in Afghanistan. The participation of Italy to this operation amounts to 240 troops. Italy considers that a future integration between the two above mentioned missions is possible as far as it does not make the commitment against terrorism weak.

c) The role of the EU in crisis management e.g. in Europe and Africa

As the Foreign Affairs Minister Gianfranco Fini said, “The Balkans continue to represent a priority region for Italy”⁸ from both the political and economic point of view. Italy is very much interested in keeping stable and secure such an important region. Instability in that area could indeed have dangerous spill-over effects for Italy.

Italy counts on a big military presence in the EU and NATO operations in the Balkans: 1200 troops are engaged in the EU Military Operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina “EUFOR-Althea” and 40 in the EU Police Mission in Bosnia –Herzegovina (EUPM). In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 5 Italian troops take part in the police mission EUPOL Proxima.

The Italian participation in the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) amounts to 2500 troops.

Italy is in principle less interested in Africa than in the Balkans . However, it sent troops for the EU Artemis operation in the former Democratic Republic of Congo. It should also be noticed that many Italian NGOs, especially Catholic ones advocate for an active role of Italy in Africa, let alone the fact that Italy had colonies in Africa, and in the past intervened there, as was the case of Somalia in early 1990s.

d) The perceived impact of EU enlargement on CFSP/ESDP (old versus new Europe?)

The current Italian government, as well as previous ones have supported enlargement and found no contradiction between deepening and widening of the EU. Italy also

⁷ This and the following figures regarding the participation of the Italian troops to multinational missions abroad are drawn from the website of the Italian Ministry of Defence <http://www.difesa.it/NR/exeres/6F1D2705-009F-40BC-97E7-C0695FF351BC.htm> The information is updated to 15 March 2005.

⁸ Hearing of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gianfranco Fini, cit.

supports the European Neighbourhood Policy, with a stress on the need to have a balance between its Eastern and Southern dimensions.

With regard to its position on the US military intervention in Iraq, Italy has been aligned with the so called “New Europe”, even though on other issues related to CFSP and ESDP Italy was basically in line with the positions of France and Germany.

e) The view of the European Security Strategy (ESS) as a 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 has backed the drafting of the European Security Strategy, that was in fact finalised in December 2003 under its Presidency of the EU. The challenges identified by the Italian Ministry of Defence for 2005⁹ reflect very much the challenged identified by the European Security Strategy: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts and their possible spill-over effects; failed states; organised crime.

3. The Results of the Intergovernmental Conference 2003/2004 on the Constitutional Treaty

a) Have there been any official contributions or proposals brought to the IGC by your country’s representatives with regard to External relations, CFSP and ESDP?

Actually, Italy held the Presidency of the European Union in the second semester of 2003. For this reason, the contributions that it brought to the IGC were documents presented in this capacity, and thus aiming at finding a compromise among the different positions of the Member States. As an example, the Italian Presidency’s proposals for the Naples ministerial conclave of November 2003 also dealt with the following CFSP/ESDP issues:

Minister of Foreign Affairs: the Italian Presidency supported its creation;

Common Foreign and Security Policy: the Presidency suggested the extension of qualified majority voting to the Council decisions on proposals from the Minister for Foreign Affairs;

Defence: the commitments under the mutual defence clause should not prejudice existing commitments under NATO.

⁹ Ministry of Defence, Nota aggiuntiva allo stato di previsione per la Difesa per l’anno 2005, March 2005.

Describe (briefly) the position of your country in the following key issues¹⁰:

b) External Representation

The position of Italy has been in favour of both a double-hatted European Foreign Minister that chairs the Foreign Affairs Council and the President of the European Council. In particular, the Italian government has also supported the definition of Foreign Affairs Minister instead of the Union's External Representative, that initially met the favour of other Member States.

c) Decision-making

Italy was among the fiercest defenders of the extension of qualified majority voting in the field of CFSP. In particular, when it held the rotating Presidency of the EU it supported the resort to the QMV also in the case of a proposal submitted by the Foreign Minister.

d) Crisis management

Italy is in favour of an expansion of the Petersberg tasks to all the tasks that "may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories".

e) Defence

The Italian Presidency in late 2003 helped forging the decision to establish a civilian-military cell at the EUMS in Brussels. Italy was contrary to the set-up of full-fledged operational EU headquarters that might emerge as an alternative to SHAPE. As Italian Minister of Defence Antonio Martino says, 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 permanent structure, with competences and size such as to work as a European competitor vis-à-vis the existing NATO structures (that is SHAPE)"¹¹. Thus, Italian reaction to the so-called "mini-defence summit between Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg of the 29 April 2003, where the set up of an autonomous EU headquarter was called for, was dismissive."¹²

¹⁰ For a better overview of the Italian positions at the Intergovernmental Conference see: Convention Watch, second issue, October 2003, edited by Istituto Affari Internazionali, in cooperation with the Trans European Policy Studies Association. The study is available at < <http://eucon.europa2004.it/>>

¹¹ Antonio Martino, L'Italia e la PESD", La Comunità Internazionale, Vol. LIX, n. 2/2004, p.205.

¹² See Michele Comelli and Giovanni Gasparini, Italy, ESDP and the avant-garde, CFSP Forum, Volume 2, issue 2, p.10, www.fornet.info

f) Permanent structured co-operation

Again, the final provisions for permanent structured co-operation were adopted in late 2003 under the Italian Presidency, that helped achieve a compromise. In particular, Italy took into consideration the requests by some Member States to set up objective criteria that a Member State has to meet in order to participate in structured cooperations. In fact, some countries were concerned that structured cooperation were an exclusive and not completely transparent initiative, not potentially open to all the EU countries “willing and able”.

With regard to the mutual defence clause, Italy, in its capacity of country detaining the Presidency of the EU, worked to achieve a compromise that, among other things, contained provisions for both NATO-members and non-allied countries. In particular, Italy was concerned about the need to safeguard the role of central role of NATO for the defence of Europe.

Italy also supports the European defence agency and is basically in favour of a future possible role for it in procurement.

4. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research

Major experts, universities and research institutions working in the CFSP field in your country.

Research centres

Aspen Institute Italia

www.aspeninstitute.it

Marta Dassù

Roberto Menotti

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)

www.cespi.it

Rosa Balfour

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

Filippo Andreatta (University of Bologna) www.unibo.it

Fulvio Attinà (University of Catania) www.unict.it

Luciano Bozzo (University of Florence) www.unifi.it

Alessandro Colombo (Università Statale, Milan) www.unimi.it

Carlo Jean (Università LUISS, Rome) www.luiss.it

Lucia Serena Rossi (University of Bologna) www.unibo.it