



The Italian Debate on Defence Matters

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Abstract

This study analyzes the debate in Italy on defence matters, with regards to two main themes: international missions and military expenditures. The debate is influenced by five structural factors: the scarce public consideration for the concept of national interest and the potential need for Armed Forces to defend it; the limited Italian experience as a colonial power; the perception of an absence of threats to national security in the post-Cold War era; the impact of the Italian politico-institutional system on defence policy; the effect of the international and particularly transatlantic context. In the debate, Italy's participation in international missions is often presented by emphasizing the humanitarian tasks over the combat ones. Military expenditures are debated mainly in light of budgetary considerations, because of the austerity measures, rather than in relation with defence policy goals. Many actors participate in different ways to the debate, including but not limited to institutional and political ones.

Keywords: *Italy / Military policy / International missions / Defence spending / F-35 / Public opinion / Political parties / Parliament / Government / Media*

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Introduction

The present study aims at analyzing the defence debate in Italy, considering the structural factors that govern it, its recent developments, the weaknesses that distinguish it, and the actors that are involved in their different capacities. Within the many aspects of defence policy, the analysis is centered on two macro-themes: Italian participation in international missions abroad and national military expenditures.

The analysis is particularly complex in light of the wide-ranging political, social, historical, and communication dynamics that influence the debate. The study of such dynamics is beyond the scope of our paper. We consider them, rather, as a context whose links with the debate on defence matters should be highlighted. Accordingly, the present study does not aspire to be comprehensive but intends to design the overall framework and to encourage further thoughts on how defence issues are debated in Italy.

A number of interviews have been conducted for this study on the basis of a semi-structured questionnaire and a precise methodology. They have allowed for constructive interaction with a wide range of personalities, from the Italian institutions, the military, the media, universities, think tanks, foundations, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular. As a result, this has ensured the gathering of different points of view on the issues discussed and a deeper analysis.

1. The structural factors that influence the debate

The history of Italian defence policy is beyond the scope of this study, which is centered on the current debate and its recent developments. However, at least five structural factors need to be recalled in order to better understand the ensuing analysis of the way in which public opinion debates defence matters. These factors are: the scarce public consideration for the concept of national interest and the potential need for Armed Forces to defend it; the limited Italian experience as a colonial power; the perception of an absence of threats to national security in the post-Cold War era; the impact of the Italian politico-institutional system on defence policy; the effect of the international and particularly transatlantic context.

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In the first place, it is necessary to point out that two very important components of the Italian political culture, Catholicism and Socialism in its manifold manifestations, are internationalist by their own nature. For this reason as well, the issue of national interest, its definition and protection including with the use of military force, has traditionally found little space in the public debate. This circumstance is notably relevant in the defence debate as it has rendered the discussion on the use of force for the safeguard of national interests more problematic.¹ In other words, while in other European countries such as France and UK it has been quite normal to debate the costs and benefits of a defence policy choice in terms of national interest, in Italy such an argument is employed to a lesser degree² and it has become more common only in recent years.³ Even during historical periods when the nationalist component had had a greater weight in Italian political culture, such in the 1920s and 1930s, public opinion's interest in the use of force to defend national interests had remained limited.⁴ This is also tied with a certain attitude of coolness of feelings by the Italian public opinion with respect to Armed Forces' role, a sentiment that became stronger after the Fascist experience and the Second World War, and that persisted in the Cold War climate of ideological confrontation, in particular during the 1960s and 1970s. Such a perception of the Armed Forces has changed in the last two decades concurrently with Italian participation in international missions.⁵

Secondly, Italy's experience as a colonial power was more modest and shorter not only than that of France and UK, but of other European countries such as Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, and Belgium. This limited experience did not establish such wide and strong links between the country and other regions of the world, with the partial exception of Horn of Africa and Libya. For example, the number of immigrants to Italy from non-European countries has remained extremely low until the end of the 1990s,⁶ while other European former colonial powers have retained strong demographic, economic, cultural, and political ties with African, Asian, and South American countries. This has played a role in restricting the interest among Italian public opinion for matters relating to foreign and defence policy, including crisis occurring in extra-European theaters that may require a military intervention by the international community with an Italian participation.

Thirdly, in the post-Cold War era, the end of the bipolar conflict, the enlargement of both NATO and EU, as well as the absence in Italy of large scale terrorist attacks - contrary to what happened in UK and Spain - explain the dominant idea in Italian public opinion that there are no direct and imminent threats to national security.⁷ In part, this perception has been called into question immediately after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, but then has progressively reasserted itself until becoming prevalent in public opinion. According to data published by the European Commission in 2012,

¹ Interview 25 June 2013, Rome.

² Interview 1 July 2013 b), Rome.

³ Interview 25 June 2013, Rome.

⁴ Interview 21 June 2013, Rome.

⁵ Interview 8 July 2013 a), Rome.

⁶ In the first half of the 90s foreigners in Italy constituted about 1.2% of the population. See ISTAT Time Series Tables: http://timeseries.istat.it/fileadmin/allegati/Popolazione/tavole_inglese/Table_2.13.xls.

⁷ Interview July 8, 2013 b), Rome.

only 36% of Italians declare to be very worried by the threat of terrorist attacks and a similar percentage is concerned by the possibility of armed conflicts.⁸ These figures are roughly in line with the average European data regarding both terrorist threats (29% of EU citizens declare to be very worried about the terrorist threat) and the possibility of armed conflicts.⁹ Furthermore, in 2012 only 35% of the Italian population considers China to be a military threat, again fairly in line compared to the 39% average in Europe.¹⁰ The above perception has strengthened over time despite the emergence of repeated crises in the Western Balkans, Lebanon and Libya that have seen the intervention of Italian Armed Forces. These crises, as well as the subsequent ones in Mali or Syria, are still perceived by public opinion as distant both geographically and with respect to the practical interests of Italian citizens.¹¹ This also depends on the fact that a significant part of the Italian media, particularly television, devotes little attention to international affairs, including defence matters, compared to domestic politics or other issues.¹² Another relevant factor is generational: as new generations, who have no personal memory of the Cold War, enter the debate, the absence of a direct military threat to Italy is taken for granted more than in the past.¹³

Fourthly, it is necessary to keep in mind that the Italian constitutional setup assigns a relatively limited power to the President of the Council of Ministers compared to the Heads of government of most European countries. This means that the decisional process concerning defence policy is shared by the President of the Council with the Parliament, the President of the Republic, and the Minister of Defence, bearing in mind the collegial character of the government and the specific role of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In particular, the President of the Republic is the Head of the Armed Forces and presides over the Supreme Defence Council. This is a forum that does not have an executive power, but it examines general issues and fundamental choices of defence policy by exercising some influence on the decision-making process.¹⁴ In this context, the government maintains the lead on defence matters, but this lead is largely dependent on the relative political power of the President of the Council and of Parliament, and therefore on the interaction between the two.¹⁵ Furthermore, in the last 3-4 years the parliamentary groups, as well as single lawmakers, appear to have become more independent with respect to the leadership of the parties to which they belong, particularly when these parties are in power.¹⁶ Such overall picture has an effect on the defence debate: as the responsibility of any decision-making process is shared by a plurality of subjects, an array of politico-institutional voices have their say in the debate, and often express different positions. For example, in June 2013 during

⁸ European Commission, "Civil Protection", in *Special Eurobarometer*, No. 383 (June 2012), p. 9, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_383_en.pdf.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁰ German Marshall Fund, Compagnia di San Paolo, *Transatlantic Trends 2012. Topline Data*, p. 60, <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2012/09/TT-2012-Topline-Data.pdf>.

¹¹ Interview 24 June 2013 b), Rome.

¹² Interview 10 June 2013, Rome.

¹³ Interview 8 July 2013, a) Rome.

¹⁴ The Supreme Defence Council is composed, a part from the President of the Republic, of the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Treasury, Economic Development, and the Chief of Defence.

¹⁵ Interview 20 June 2013, Rome.

¹⁶ Interview 24 June 2013 c), Rome.

the debate on the purchase of F-35 fighter aircraft, the Minister for Regional Affairs and the Deputy Minister for the Economy and Finance weighed in with their opinions, in addition to the positions expressed by the above-mentioned institutional actors.¹⁷

Finally, in a country such as Italy, which is involved in the globalization process without the power to steer its course, the debate has been swayed by the international context, specifically by the European and transatlantic frameworks. In the post-Cold War era, Italy has taken part in a significant and steady manner to the great majority of international missions led by NATO, the EU and the UN. In the 1990s, Italian participation in missions abroad continued to grow by reaching an average of 20 missions a year, which peaked at 30 in 1999.¹⁸ In the first semester of 2013, Italy was engaged in 26 missions in 27 countries, for a total of 5,745 soldiers deployed abroad.¹⁹ One can discern three successive phases in which the international context has strongly affected the Italian debate. In a first phase that took place in the 1990s, the debate on Italy's involvement in missions to Somalia, Mozambique and the Western Balkans was swayed by the international community's commitment to humanitarian interventions and human rights protection, for example in civil wars or "failed states" situations. After 9/11 attacks, the fight against terrorism has been one of the dominant characters of the debate around Italian involvement in operations such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan, although the humanitarian and human rights aspects continued to retain an important position within the public discourse.²⁰ The importance of these features began to fade in 2009, because of a greater uncertainty in the European and transatlantic debate on international missions, given the new US democratic administration's reluctance to employ armed force abroad on a wide scale. In this sense, it can be argued that the debate in Italy has been partly reactive to the more general ongoing debate within the main international organizations and alliances participated by Italy, particularly at a transatlantic level.²¹

2. The development of the debate on Italian missions abroad

The debate on Italy's involvement in international missions abroad has significantly changed in the post-Cold War era, as a substantial and steady Italian military activity has been a novelty for public opinion compared to the previous thirty years. Within the framework of Italy's traditional dimensions of foreign policy - European, transatlantic, and Mediterranean - a substantive convergence between the main progressive and conservative parties on Italy's commitment in international missions took place. A convergence that secured a certain amount of continuity in this sphere, despite the

¹⁷ "F35, Mauro: 'Governo non ha cambiato idea'. Delrio: 'Acquisto senza senso, risorse a lavoro'", in *Repubblica.it*, 25 June 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/06/25/news/f35_scontro_nel_governo-61818328.

¹⁸ Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 1205 (September 2012), p. 4, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1205.pdf>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Riepilogo delle missioni/attività internazionali in corso*, updated 24 May 2013, <http://www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/Documents/SIT.%20ANNO%202013%20al%2024%20maggio%2013.pdf>.

²⁰ Interview 12 June 2013 a), Rome.

²¹ Idem.

alternation of opposite political coalitions in positions of power and albeit with different styles by different political leaders.²²

At first, the debate centered on the legitimacy of the use of force, an undercurrent that has always been important to Italy's political forces and public opinion. The Italian involvement in NATO military intervention in Kosovo and Serbia in 1999, undertaken by a progressive government, was an important watershed in the public debate, in particular within the Italian left.²³ Indeed, a clash occurred between traditional pacifist position and those progressives ready to consider the use of armed force in the event of extreme mass violence, in order to protect civilian population and put an end to conflict or crisis. In the following fifteen years, Italy's involvement in missions abroad authorized by the UN Security Council, and with the wide support of the international community, has witnessed the decline among the public opinion of the opposition based on the principle that Armed Forces should not be used for any purpose other than self-defence.²⁴

A significant exception was the Second Gulf War in 2003. Although Italy adopted a non-belligerent position with respect to US-led invasion of Iraq, and eventually sent a military contingent only on the basis of a UN resolution, Italian participation was bitterly disputed mainly - but not only - on the grounds of international legitimacy. As a result, Italy's participation in this mission garnered a lower consensus among public opinion compared to previous missions which saw Italian military involvement. According to data published by *Transatlantic Trends 2012*, only 40% of Italians declare that the international intervention in Iraq had been the right thing to do,²⁵ while in 2004 56% of the Italian population supported Italy's involvement in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)²⁶ deployed in Afghanistan. After the Iraqi case, the public opinion continued to consider international legitimacy to be a paramount criterion for Italian involvement in international missions. The legitimacy provided by UN resolutions and by the international community as a whole was considered to be sufficient in the case of Lebanon (2006) and Libya (2011), when there was no longer a strong opposition in principle to the use of force²⁷ - but rather a debate on its purposes.

However, the Italian involvement in missions abroad has been debated from a peculiar perspective. By using quite often the term "peace mission",²⁸ and by foreshadowing a sort of "Italian way of peacekeeping", the humanitarian aspect of the interventions has been highlighted in many operational theaters. The Italian effort to assist the civilian population, the Armed Forces' capacity to dialogue and interact with local society and the commitment on socio-economic reconstruction have been greatly emphasized.

²² See, among others, Alessandro Marrone and Federica Di Camillo, "Italy", in Heiko Biehl, Bastian Giegerich, Alexandra Jonas (eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent*, Potsdam, Springer VS, 2013, p. 193-206.

²³ Interview 19 June 2013 a), Rome.

²⁴ Interviews, 19 June 2013 a) Rome, 12 June 2013 a), Rome, and 18 June 2013, Rome.

²⁵ German Marshall Fund, Compagnia di San Paolo, *Transatlantic Trends 2012. Key Findings*, p. 34-35, <http://trends.gmfus.org/files/2012/09/TT-2012-Key-Findings-Report.pdf>.

²⁶ German Marshall Fund, Compagnia di San Paolo, *Transatlantic Trends 2004*, p. 14, http://trends.gmfus.org/files/archived/doc/2004_english_key.pdf.

²⁷ Interview 24 June 2013 c), Rome.

²⁸ Interviews 5 July 2013 c) Florence; 8 July 2013 b), Rome.

Such aspects have been - and still are - part of a certain types of missions abroad in which Italy has participated and is participating. Yet they have obscured in the public debate other combat tasks that the Italian military has sustained on a par with other NATO troops.²⁹ For instance, the Italian Armed Forces participation in multinational air operations that envisaged ground attacks was officially called “fleet protection” in the case of the First Gulf War (1991), “comprehensive defence” in Kosovo (1999), “reconnaissance” in Afghanistan (2009-2013), and “civilians’ protection” in Libya (2011).³⁰ On one hand, this has played an important role in improving the perception of the Armed Forces compared to the Cold War period.³¹ On the other hand, such a perception taints the present debate on both Italian involvement in missions abroad and military expenditures. First, the facets and risks of combat tasks are not openly debated, thus making the understanding of the context and reasons of Italian casualties more difficult. Second, as far as military expenditures are concerned, the acquisition of advanced and multi-role weapons systems are frequently justified mainly by Italy’s commitment to “peace operations”.

Another aspect that has entered the debate is Parliament’s role in the launch of an international mission.³² Its role is often limited to the adoption of periodical decrees to finance the mission, and entails a procedure that does not require a strategic assessment of the rationale and efficacy of the mission itself. The periodical parliamentary discussion is a fitting opportunity to nourish and deepen the debate. Yet, it often centers on technical details - which should rather be evaluated by the Armed Forces - and not sufficiently focuses on the political purposes of the mission and the link with the national interest.³³ Without a clear vision of the rationale for Italian missions abroad it is also difficult to link it with the national interests at stake.³⁴ The decision, taken in 2012, to establish quarterly hearings of the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs entirely devoted to the Italian involvement in missions abroad, at the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees of both the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate, is a significant and positive development in this regard.³⁵

²⁹ For an in-depth study on this issue see: Piero Ignazi, Giampiero Giacomello and Fabrizio Cotichia, *Italian Military Operations Abroad. Just Don't Call it War*, Houndmills and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

³⁰ Mario Arpino, “Introductory Greeting”, in Paola Tessari and Elena Cesca (eds.), “A Defence Under Attack: Costs and Benefits”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 1306E (October 2013), p. 3, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1306e.pdf>.

³¹ Interview 5 July 2013 c), Florence; 8 July 2013 a), Rome.

³² For an in-depth study on this issue see: Federica Di Camillo and Paola Tessari, “Italian Missions Abroad: National Interests and Procedural Practice”, in *IAI Working Papers*, No. 1397 (February 2013), <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiw1397.pdf>.

³³ Interview 22 July 2013, Rome.

³⁴ Paola Tessari and Elena Cesca (eds.), “A Defence Under Attack: Costs and Benefits”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 1306E (October 2013), p. 6, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1306e.pdf>.

³⁵ Interview 24 June 2013 c), Rome.

3. The development of the debate on the acquisition of F-35 aircraft

With respect to the theme of military expenditures, the case of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter³⁶ deserves a specific focus because of the different ways the Italian participation in the multinational procurement program has been debated before and after 2012.

The decision to participate in the program was taken in 1998 by the progressive government led by Massimo D'Alema. It was confirmed in 2002 by the Silvio Berlusconi's conservative government with a 1.038 million euros investment. In 2007, it was re-confirmed by the progressive government of Romano Prodi with an expenditure of 904 million euros.³⁷ In 2009, the decision was made to build a plant in Cameri (Province of Novara, northern Italy) for the assembly of the aircraft acquired by Italy - and perhaps other European F-35 - and their maintenance over the anticipated 40 years of service. In the same year, the Parliament approved the acquisition of 131 F-35 aircraft, then reduced to 90 by the Mario Monti's government in 2012, as part of a wide-ranging set of austerity measures. To sum up, from 1998 to 2012, the main conservative and progressive political leaders did constantly support the Italian participation in the acquisition program, which has survived so far also the austerity measures due to the financial crisis.

The arguments made in favor of such a commitment, particularly among experts and practitioners, can be classified into four categories.³⁸ First, the military rationale: 90 F-35 aircraft are needed to replace approximately 253 aircraft built between the 1970s and 1980s and no longer able to carry out their tasks, including those in the framework of international missions. Second, there is the industrial rationale according to which, given the need to modernize the air fleet of both Air Force and Navy, the involvement in the production of the aircraft entails a greater return in terms of employment and technological know-how compared to the commercial off-the-shelf purchase of aircraft entirely constructed by foreign firms.³⁹ Third, the multinational rationale: the involvement of ten allied or friendly countries in the program⁴⁰ increases the interoperability of the Italian Armed Forces with these militaries in the event of multinational operations. Finally, the transatlantic rationale, according to which the participation in the F-35 program comes under the heading of retaining strong relations between Italy and the United States, being the latter the principal ally of Italy in the field of defence policy.

³⁶ The F-35 JSF is a multirole/ground attack fifth generation fighter with stealth capacity.

³⁷ For an in-depth study of the F-35 program see: Michele Nones, Giovanni Gasparini and Alessandro Marrone, "Europe and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program", in *IAI Quaderni. English series*, No. 16 (July 2009), http://www.iai.it/pdf/Quaderni/Quaderni_E_16.pdf.

³⁸ For an analysis of the four categories see Alessandro Marrone, "Italy and the F-35: Rationales and costs", in *International Journal*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Winter 2012-13) [Special issue: The international politics of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter], p. 31-48.

³⁹ A similar debate took place at the time of the acquisition of the F-16 aircraft at present used by the Italian armed forces. The decision was made not to participate in the production of the aircraft, but to buy off-the-shelf or lease them. At the end of the day, it was spent an amount of funds similar to what was required to enter into the procurement program, but without any return in terms of employment or technology transfer.

⁴⁰ Australia, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, United States and UK are partners from the beginning of the program. Japan and Israel are buying F-35 through Foreign Military Sales process.

To a certain extent, these arguments were also presented in the Parliamentary proceedings leading to the decisions taken by the relevant Committees or by the Parliament itself.⁴¹ However, they have had little resonance among public opinion, not only between 1998 and 2012 when the issue was largely neglected in the public debate, but also in the following period in which it garnered a greater attention. Indeed, the acquisition of the F-35 aircraft pushed its way into the political campaign for the general elections of February 2013,⁴² and it was later subject to different motions presented by several parliamentary groups⁴³ in a crescendo which has seen the active involvement of virtually all actors of the defence debate. In June 2013, the debate led to the approval by the Parliament of a motion on military expenditures and in particular on the procurement of F-35 aircraft,⁴⁴ followed by a formal statement by the Supreme Defence Council.⁴⁵ In the period when the public debate paid more attention to the F-35 issue, the arguments that were most frequently aired did not refer too much to the military needs that led to procurement program nor to the international context. They rather referred to the cost of the aircraft, considered by its critics as a waste of public funds. The inefficiencies of the project and the deficiencies of the aircraft have also been regarded as an issue. Finally, some have recalled Art. 11 of the Italian Constitution and have claimed that the purchase of F-35 is contrary to Italy's constitutional rejection of war.⁴⁶

In this context, the recent re-assessment of Parliament's powers of oversight on defence procurement, which is part of the law on military reform approved on 16 December 2012, constitutes a significant novelty in this respect,⁴⁷ which could potentially trigger a wider parliamentary and political debate on the subject of military expenditures.

⁴¹ Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, *Comunicazioni del Governo sullo stato di attuazione del programma pluriennale relativo allo sviluppo del velivolo Joint Strike Fighter-JSF*, 16 January 2007, http://legxv.camera.it/_dati/lavori/stencomm/04/audiz2/2007/0116/INTERO.pdf; Defence Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, *Audizione del Ministro della Difesa Giampaolo Di Paola sulle linee di indirizzo per la revisione dello strumento militare*, 15 February 2012, http://leg16.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/stencomm/04c04/audiz2/2012/0215_RS/INTERO.pdf; Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, *Audizione del Segretario generale della Difesa e Direttore nazionale degli armamenti, generale di squadra aerea Claudio Debertolis sullo stato di avanzamento del programma d'armamento Joint Strike Fighter*, 5 December 2012, http://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg16/lavori/stencomm/04/audiz2/2012/1205/pdf001.pdf.

⁴² "Bersani: 'Rivedere spese per gli F-35, la nostra priorità è il lavoro'", in *Repubblica.it*, 22 January 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/01/22/news/no_bersani_f35-51075159.

⁴³ Chamber of Deputies, *Mozione 1/00051*, presented by Giulio Marcon (SEL) on 23 May 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtml.asp?highLight=0&idAtto=171&stile=8.

⁴⁴ Chamber of Deputies, *Mozione 1/00125*, presented by Roberto Speranza (PD) on 26 June 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtmlNew.asp?highLight=0&idAtto=3052&leg=1.

⁴⁵ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Napolitano ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo di Difesa*, 3 July 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=15294>. See also "F35, monito dal Consiglio supremo di Difesa. 'Parlamento non ha diritto di veto'", in *Repubblica.it*, 3 July 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/07/03/news/consiglio_difesa_f35_no_veto_parlamento-62316450.

⁴⁶ For an in-depth study of the interpretation of art. 11 of the Constitution see Natalino Ronzitti (ed.), *L'articolo 11 della Costituzione. Baluardo della vocazione internazionale dell'Italia*, Napoli, Editoriale scientifica, 2013.

⁴⁷ Valerio Briani, "Parlamento più forte sugli armamenti", in *AffarInternazionali*, 12 December 2012, <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=2205>.

4. The weaknesses in the Italian debate on defence matters

Mainly because of the above-mentioned structural factors, the Italian debate regarding both military expenditures and the Italian involvement in missions abroad appears at present to be marked by four main weaknesses: it is not sufficiently in-depth; it is not adequately constant; it is quite ideological; it is overly influenced by budget considerations at the expense of the strategic outlook.

The debate on defence matters is not sufficiently in-depth partly as a result of structural factors such as the perception of the absence of threats to national security in the post-Cold War era and Italy's limited experience as a colonial power. Another relevant factor is the scant media coverage of international affairs. These are issues that gain traction in the traditional media only in conjunction with striking events that are often presented out of context with respect to the global situation or the operational theatre. A typical example are the missions abroad in which Italian troops are involved, whose developments are largely ignored by the traditional media⁴⁸ except in the event of accidents or attacks that cause the death of Italian soldiers. When this happens, the event is usually reported in details but the report is centered on the facts of the case, the life history of the victim, and the emotive aspects of the story, without a clear link to the overarching context of the mission in which the event itself occurred.⁴⁹ In this sense, the media act as multipliers of the emotive aspects of the news⁵⁰ rather than as a source of information and analysis. At the same time, particularly in past decades, the relative lack of institutional sources on the subject of military expenditures, compared with other European countries, had made it difficult even for experts on Italian defence policy to analyze and disseminate information among the public.⁵¹

A second weakness of the defence debate is that it is not adequately constant, but rather linked to temporary circumstances which may not necessarily be pertinent to national security. The concept of national interest being insufficiently brought up in public discourse, Italy's limited colonial experience, the scant media coverage of international affairs, as well as the multiplicity of voices rising from the Italian politico-institutional system, have all contributed to making the defence debate not adequately constant or systematic. Often a public discussion arises only when a decision must be made on the defence budget or on the financing of an ongoing international mission, when there are Italian casualties in missions abroad, or when there is an international crisis whose echo reaches Italy. This trend is visible in other NATO countries too. In Italy, in the context of the debate on the austerity measures, cuts to defence budget have been sometimes quoted out of context as an alternative source of savings compared to proposals made in other fields.⁵² The defence debate is therefore

⁴⁸ An exception is the decision by Sky TV to keep a correspondent in 2011 and 2012 based with the NATO Regional Command West in Afghanistan, which is under Italian responsibility. He reported regularly on the mission and particularly on the actions of the Italian armed forces.

⁴⁹ Interview 8 July 2013 a), Rome, 12 June 2013 a), Rome.

⁵⁰ Interview 12 June 2013 a), Rome.

⁵¹ Paola Tessari and Elena Cesca (eds.), "A Defence Under Attack: Costs and Benefits", cit., p. 8.

⁵² As an example, Roberto Fico, the President of the Parliamentary Committee for the General Orientation and Oversight of Radio and Television services has claimed that the F-35 acquisition program should be curtailed as alternative saving to the privatization of RAI (the Italian state TV). "Fico: La Rai non si vende.

somehow out of focus, so to speak, secondary compared to other political subjects⁵³ in the agenda of different parties and political leaders.⁵⁴ That means the debate is not adequately focused on the purposes of defence policy, the different modes of utilization of the military tools, and therefore the adequacy and destination of the economic resources allocated for defence purposes.⁵⁵ Often mentioned only in terms of “costs” rather than investments, such resources easily risk to be considered merely as an unjustified expenditure and therefore an expendable one, compared to other public budget items that are considered to be more socially useful than defence.

A third weakness of the debate is its strong ideological character. Traditionally, because of the deep-rooted presence of pacifist schools of thought, a significant part - although a minority - of Italian public opinion has a prejudicially negative attitude towards the investment of significant resources in the area of defence.⁵⁶ One segment of the pacifist strand questions the very existence of the military in a context that is judged to be absent of direct threats to the citizens’ security.⁵⁷ In the conservative component of public opinion there is traditionally a greater appreciation for the role of the Armed Forces, but there is also a relative shortage of in-depth analysis on the modalities and the goals of the employment of armed force and therefore on the related military expenditures.⁵⁸ The result is frequently an ideological clash between opposing views that does not sufficiently enter into the merits of the military expenditures and the Italian participation in missions abroad.

A fourth weakness of the debate is the disproportionate prevalence of budgetary concerns with respect to the overall picture, heightened in the last years by the economic and social crisis that struck the EU and Italy following the financial crisis started in 2008. During the entire post-Cold War era the appraisal of the costs of Italian participation in missions abroad, and in general of the upkeep of the military instrument, was a stable part of the political debate. For example, political parties have traditionally paid attention to the part of defence budget dedicated to military personnel and related infrastructures such as the military bases disseminated across the national territory. The reason was, as for other sectors of public employment, that it had a bearing in terms of electoral support from that part of the population interested in the allocation of such resources.⁵⁹ However, the policy of austerity and the social-economic crisis that worsened after 2011 have drastically sharpened public opinion’s sensitivity to the manner in which the state budget is spent. As a result, the appraisal of military expenditure is done in comparison with the usefulness of other social outlays. In this comparison, given the Italian socio-cultural context, the military expenditures appear to be less justified than others in the eyes of public opinion.⁶⁰ Such dynamics are not new in Western democracies, but with the persistence of austerity policies and of the

Piuttosto tagliamo gli F35”, in *RaiNews24*, 19 June 2013, <http://www.rainews24.rai.it/mobile/news.php?id=179043>.

⁵³ Interview 20 June 2103, Rome.

⁵⁴ Interviews 8 July Rome; 30 July 2013, Milan.

⁵⁵ Interview 18 June 2013, Rome.

⁵⁶ Interview 19 June 2013 a), Rome.

⁵⁷ Interview 24 June 2013 a), Rome.

⁵⁸ Interview 5 July 2013 c), Florence.

⁵⁹ Interviews 20 June 2013, Rome; 30 July 2013, Milan.

⁶⁰ Interview 30 July 2013, Milan.

economic crisis, they have acquired greater strength in the Italian public debate. Because the debate is not sufficiently constant and in-depth but rather quite ideological, as well as because of the perception of an absence of threat to national security, the arguments relating to the “waste” of taxpayers resources in military expenditures have acquired greater traction among components of public opinion beyond those traditionally well-attested as pacifist.⁶¹

5. The actors in the debate

The debate is joined by a variety of very different actors who, within their respective role, express opinions regarding the two macro-themes of military expenditures and international missions. These actors include: the political parties, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President of the Council of Minister (head of government); the President of the Republic; the Armed Forces; the pacifist movements; the Catholic Church; the defence industry; the trade unions; the media; the experts.

5.1. Political parties

In recent years, defence matters have not been at the heart of political parties' attention, not least as a result of the structural factors that influence the Italian debate. Politics have been driven to deal with defence matters by two main drivers: one is internal, the other external. The internal driver is the management of the state budget, particularly of the 0.9% a year that in the last ten years has financed the Defence function.⁶² In fact, in the course of the yearly debate on the budget law, the items that come under the defence heading are the subject of discussion over possible savings or expenditure rationalizations, together with other public expenses. The external factor is represented by the Italian participation in the international community facing situations of crisis or conflict. It translates into Italy's contribution to ongoing missions abroad and in the assessment of whether to contribute to further interventions, in some cases at the request of Italy's main allies.⁶³ This contribution might also not take place, as in 2013 in Syria, but its possibility is, nevertheless, an urgent pressure on the political parties to think about defence matters. The fact that political parties deal with these issues mainly in the wake of such drivers let them somehow lagging behind the evolving reality,⁶⁴ inasmuch as there is no formal articulation of a mid-long term national security strategy.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Pierluigi Battista, “Centrodestra contro gli F-35. I pacifisti che non ti aspetti”, in *Corriere della Sera*, 12 July 2012, p. 6, http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2012/luglio/12/Centrodestra_contro_gli_Pacifisti_che_co_8_120712002.shtml.

⁶² For the series of data on the expenditure for defence function, see Alessandro Marrone, Elena Cesca, Alessandro R. Ungaro, *Defence budget and industry: tables and graphs*, Roma, IAI, July 2013, p. 18-19, http://www.iai.it/pdf/Economia_difesa/Tabelle-grafici-EN.pdf.

⁶³ Interview 5 July 2013 c), Florence.

⁶⁴ Interview 31 July 2013, Milan.

⁶⁵ Interview 8 and 23 July 2013, Rome.

In this context, it is worthy to consider the positions expressed in the last year by the main political parties present in the Parliament elected on February 2013, with respect to military expenditures and Italian involvement in missions abroad. These parties are: Democratic Party (Partito Democratico - PD), People of Liberty (Popolo della Libertà - PdL), Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle - M5S), Civic Choice (Scelta Civica - SC), Northern League (Lega Nord - LN), Left Ecology and Freedom (Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà - SEL).

Beginning with the most critical positions with respect to the above-mentioned subjects, the position of SEL harks back to the traditional pacifist stream of the Italian left. In the first half of 2013, both alone and in conjunction with lawmakers of other parliamentary groups, SEL presented a parliamentary motion to cancel the F-35 program and to withdraw Italian troops deployed abroad. Already in the “Agenda for Peace and Disarmament”⁶⁶ presented in February 2013, SEL asked to dismantle the F-35 program in order to re-allocate the funds to social policies, i.e. to support employment, for the ecological conversion of the economy and the protection of the environment. More in general, the party criticizes the defence policy of the last several years as it argues that recent military expenditures’ reductions and personnel cuts have been made to allow the procurement of last generation technologies and weaponry, without leading to a real decrease of defence spending.⁶⁷ SEL also declared to strongly oppose the conversion into law of the latest law decree for the renewal of the financing of Italian missions abroad, whose discussion in the Chamber of Deputies started on 10 October 2013.⁶⁸

The Five Star Movement, for the first time present in the Parliament, took immediate position against defence spending. For the M5S, given the current Italian situation, it would be more appropriate to re-allocate defence funds to social services, and to sustain Italy’s international prestige through diplomacy rather than with investments in the military modernization.⁶⁹ The M5S put forward a motion to withdraw Italian troops deployed abroad, arguing that the Italian presence in several operational theaters for many years now constitutes an unsustainable drain of resources. Particularly as far as Afghanistan is concerned, the request to put an end to the mission is made on the assumption that it would save human lives and avoid a war already “lost”.⁷⁰ Therefore, in addition to the economic argument, the M5S adopts the traditional pacifist arguments regarding the futility and indeed the harm of the use of force with respect to the protection of human life. The motion was put forward in the Chamber of Deputies on April 2013 and the discussion has not yet come to a close.⁷¹

⁶⁶ SEL, *Agenda per la pace e il disarmo per la prossima legislatura*, February 2013, <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/SELDisarmoPAce12Feb.pdf>.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ SEL, *Afghanistan, Sel annuncia opposizione durissima sul decreto per rinnovo missioni militari*, 18 October 2013, <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/notizie/afghanistan-sel-annuncia-opposizione-durissima-sul-decreto-per-rinnovo-missioni-militari>.

⁶⁹ Sergio Contu, “Le spese militari italiane”, in *Blog del Movimento 5 Stelle*, 12 January 2012, <http://www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/liste/genova/2012/01/le-spese-militari-italiane.html>.

⁷⁰ Chamber of Deputies, *Mozione 1-00022*, presented by Manlio Di Stefano (M5S) on 16 April 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtml.Asp?idAtto=113&stile=8.

⁷¹ Minister for Relations with Parliament, *Tabella delle mozioni presentate alla Camera dei Deputati* (09/09/2013), http://www.governo.it/rapportiparlamento/attivita/08_mozioni/index.htm.

A number of Catholics from Civic Choice party are close to the pacifist stream as well. They have supported the campaign known as “Clip Weapons’ Wings”, and considering the current times of economic hardship they argue the necessity to curb public expenditures starting from the military ones. They have stated that it would be more appropriate to put the issue of the F-35 aircraft into a European perspective.⁷² Instead, other SC members of Parliament have put forward a different opinion: they have supported the position of the current Defence Minister, Mario Mauro, elected to Parliament as a member of SC, who is in favor of the F-35 procurement program.⁷³ Notwithstanding the different opinions on the matter, at the end of the Parliamentary debate, on 26 June 2013, the SC parliamentary group voted the majority motion in favor of continuing the purchase of the military aircraft.⁷⁴

The issue of military expenses has been the subject of ample debate within the Democratic Party. During the general election campaign the then secretary of the PD Pierluigi Bersani had asserted the need to review the F-35 program so as to take into account other priorities in the current Italy’s situation that should take precedence.⁷⁵ In the first half of 2013 several members of the PD took a position that was firmly against the acquisition of the aircraft, when they tabled a motion to suspend the Italian involvement in the F-35 program.⁷⁶ Their motion proposed to move the resources allocated for the procurement program to an emergency investment plan for the security of schools and hospitals, environmental cleanup plans and urban mobility projects. Other PD members adopted a different approach and called for the F-35 to be “neither a totem nor a taboo, but the subject of a rational choice”.⁷⁷ The President of the Senate Defence Committee Nicola Latorre, in line with other PD colleagues, declared “we can’t say: let’s get rid of the F-35 and establish a lot of daycare centers [...] A modern industrial country that belongs to an international community needs to upgrade its defence system, not taking it apart”.⁷⁸ In the end, the PD gave its contribution to the majority motion that was voted on 26 June 2013, on the continuance of the F-35 program.⁷⁹ To sum up, the debate within the PD and SC reflects the ongoing discussion between the pacifist stream and those taking a different approach regarding the use of armed force, and consequently on the expenses necessary to keep the military functioning.

⁷² Giorgio Beretta, “Senatore Oliviero, cosa ne pensa degli F35?”, in *Unimondo*, 24 June 2013, <http://www.unimondo.org/Guide/Economia/Finanza-e-armi/Senatore-Oliviero-che-ne-pensa-degli-F-35-141427>.

⁷³ “F35, Domenico Rossi (Scelta Civica): ‘La Difesa ha le sue esigenze’”, in *Repubblica.it*, 26 June 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/06/26/news/intervista_domenico_rossi-61862804.

⁷⁴ Chamber of Deputies, *Seguito della discussione delle mozioni 1-00051, 1-00118, 1-00120 e 1-00121 sulla Partecipazione italiana al programma di realizzazione dell’aereo Joint Strike Fighter-F35*, 26 June 2013, p. 53-79, <http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/resoconti/assemblea/html/sed0041/stenografico.pdf>.

⁷⁵ “Bersani: ‘Rivedere spese per gli F-35, la nostra priorità è il lavoro’”, cit.

⁷⁶ Senate, *Mozione 1-00057*, presented by Felice Casson (PD), 6 June 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtml.Asp?idAtto=184&stile=8.

⁷⁷ Translated from the Italian. See Federica Mogherini, “Senza totem né tabù: così si cambia la difesa”, in *l’Unità*, 7 January 2012, <http://www.partitodemocratico.it/doc/228712/senza-totem-n-tab-cos-si-cambia-la-difesa.htm>.

⁷⁸ Translated from the Italian. See “Latorre spiega la demagogia dei populistici anti F-35”, in *Il Foglio*, 27 June 2013, <http://www.ilfoglio.it/soloqui/18800>.

⁷⁹ Chamber of Deputies, *Mozione 1/00125*, presented by Roberto Speranza (PD) on 26 June 2013, cit.

The Northern League has expressed slightly different positions over time with respect to the two macro-themes. Concerning military expenses, on the one hand the LN has acknowledged their economic return in term of industrial output, technology and employment, particularly for the production plants located in northern Italy, such as Cameri.⁸⁰ On the other hand, in the last few years, LN leaders have adopted more critical positions with respect to defence expenditures in light of economic crisis and cuts to social services. In the debate on F-35 procurement, the LN has voted against the motion to cancel the program, put forth by SEL and M5S, but also against the motion presented by PD, SC and PdL.⁸¹ As far as Italy's involvement in missions abroad is concerned, in June 2013 the secretary of the LN shifted his position concerning the Italian commitment in Afghanistan, claiming, contrary to the previous years, that the economic and human costs of the mission make a withdrawal necessary, not least because the overly prolonged international mission is not producing the desired effects.⁸²

The People of Liberty party has constantly supported Italian participation in missions abroad, both when it was in power and during the times when it was in opposition to progressive governments. The greater consideration for the role of the Armed Forces and the greater distance from pacifist thinking are among the reasons for this stance, which has been maintained without the need for any vigorous debate within the party.⁸³ As far as military expenditures are concerned, the PdL has not argued to cut the defence budget, and several of its high-ranking members have openly defended the Italian commitment in the F-35 program.⁸⁴ When in June 2013 the Parliament voted on the F-35 issue, the PdL was the first to line up in favor of the procurement program. This move was intended to meet the military needs of the Armed Forces, but also to strengthen such a strategic industrial sector as aerospace, security and defence as a part of a national industrial policy.⁸⁵ This did not prevent the PdL-led government to curtail expenditures from the state budget under the defence heading too, during the negative economic conjuncture between 2008 and 2011.

As previously mentioned, on 26 June 2013 the parliamentary debate on the F-35 program led the Chamber of Deputies to reject the motion tabled by SEL and M5S and to approve the majority motion resulted from an agreement among PD, PdL and SC,

⁸⁰ As testified, among other things, by the presence of Northern League regional governors Roberto Cota (Piedmont) and Roberto Maroni (Lombardy), at the Paris Air Show at Le Bourget on June 2013.

⁸¹ "F35, sì alla mozione della maggioranza. 'No a ulteriori acquisti senza l'ok delle Camere'", in *Corriere della Sera.it*, 26 June 2013, http://www.corriere.it/politica/13_giugno_26/pd-presenta-mozione-peracquisto-f35_615038ca-de33-11e2-9903-199918134868.shtml.

⁸² "Afghanistan: Maroni, utile lasciare teatro di guerra", in *AGI News*, 9 June 2013, http://www.regioni.it/it/show-_afghanistan_maroni_utile_lasciare_teatro_di_guerra_/news.php?id=301069. Intervista di Maria Latella a Roberto Maroni, in *SkyTG24*, 9 June 2013, http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/politica/2013/06/09/roberto_maroni_lega_nord_lombardia_intervista_maria_latella.html.

⁸³ Interview 12 June 2013 b), Rome.

⁸⁴ Silvio Lora-Lamia, "Joint Strike Fighter: il sottosegretario alla Difesa Crosetto fa il punto", in *Dedalo News*, 15 July 2010, <http://www.dedalonews.it/it/index.php/07/2010/joint-strike-fighter-il-sottosegretario-alla-difesa-crosetto-fa-il-punto>.

⁸⁵ In this respect, it is worthy to note the speech made by Fabrizio Cicchitto, President of the Chamber of Deputies' Foreign Affairs Committee and a PdL member, at the Conference on "I costi della non-Europa della difesa", organized by IAI and the Centro studi sul federalismo (CSF), Rome, 27 June 2013.

with 381 votes in favor and 149 against. The motion commits the government not to proceed to any phase of “further” procurements under the F-35 program without Parliament’s express opinion on the merit.⁸⁶ The term “further” was the crux of the compromise, so that the program is not suspended but in fact continues on its current course. In addition, representatives from the above-mentioned parties, SEL, M5S and SC presented a parliamentary question⁸⁷ on 15 October 2013 to denounce the decision of the Government to proceed with the acquisition of three more F-35 aircrafts (see below) despite the motion of 26 June that committed the Government to have parliamentary approval before engaging in further procurement.

Regarding the debate on the Italian participation in missions abroad, it resumed briefly in June 2013, after the death of the 53rd Italian soldier in Afghanistan. As in many other NATO countries, the support among the Italian public for this mission in its 10th year of activity has steady declined. This has induced some lawmakers of parties previously supportive of the intervention, such as LN for example, to redefine their position on the Italian role, the efficacy of the operation, as well as its moral, physical and economic costs. As previously discussed, the opposition of one segment of the Italian political spectrum, mainly SEL and M5S, but also some PD lawmakers, remains intact. It is rather strengthened by the situation in Afghanistan and the prospect that the Italian engagement will continue after 2014, though in a different manner, with the involvement in the NATO training mission known as Resolute Support.⁸⁸

Furthermore, it is fitting to recall that on 4 June 2013 a Parliamentary fact-finding investigation was launched, with the participation of Foreign Affairs Committee, Defence Committee and EU Policies Committee, regarding the Italian guidelines with respect to the European Defence Council scheduled for December 2013. The fact-finding investigation included a number of hearings: Italian institutional representatives such as the Minister of Defence and Italian ambassadors to NATO and to EU Political Security Committee; the General Secretary of the OECD and the Director General of the European Defence Agency; experts from different Italian and European research institutes; managers of the Italian defence industry. The presentations made so far have been characterized by a common attention to the importance of proceeding towards an integrated European defence (particularly because of the shrinking of national budgets) that would also represent an important export driver for European industry. It has been noted that the need for a “Europe of Defence” comes also from the fact that European armies have been used mainly together in multinational missions abroad in the last several years. The effects of such European defence integration on the value of Italian technological excellence cannot be overstated.

Another significant aspect addressed during the presentations is the EU-NATO relationship: since the two organizations share 22 member states, convergence of efforts and investments should be strongly pursued also within the Atlantic Alliance. In addition, representatives from the pacifist movements intervened in the fact-finding

⁸⁶ Chamber of Deputies, *Mozione 1/00125*, presented by Roberto Speranza (PD) on 26 June 2013, cit.

⁸⁷ Chamber of Deputies, *Interpellanza urgente 2-00255*, presented by Massimo Artini (M5S) on 15 October 2013, http://banchedati.camera.it/sindacatoispettivo_17/showXhtml.Asp?idAtto=7945&stile=8.

⁸⁸ “In Afghanistan resteranno 5/700 militari italiani dopo il 2014”, in *Analisi Difesa*, 21 June 2013, <http://www.analisedifesa.it/2013/06/in-afghanistan-resteranno-5700-militari-italiani-dopo-il-2014>.

investigation, urging the need for an innovative and complete defence model that allows the identification and prioritization of investments especially in comparison to the overall public expenditure.⁸⁹ Furthermore, representatives from the campaign “Sbilanciamoci” made reference to a document by the US Department of Defence⁹⁰ where Italy appears to have committed to the acquisition of three more F-35 aircrafts - in their view, a decision contrary to what was decided with the majority motion of 26 June 2013). This element resulted in the presentation of an interrogation by different lawmakers asking for clarification by the Government.⁹¹

The fact-finding inquiry constitutes a significant contribution to the parliamentary debate, for the number of hearings that have been planned as well as for the fact that it is taking place in conjunction by the Foreign Affairs, Defence, and EU Policies Committees.

5.2. Minister of Defence and Minister of Foreign Affairs

In general, the politicians who are called upon to fill a leading position - Minister, Vice-Minister or Undersecretary - in the Foreign Affairs or Defence Ministries tend to have more moderate and pragmatic positions, in line with traditional Italian foreign and defence policy, than those previously held when they were merely members of Parliament.⁹² In this sense, the inertia of initiatives previously launched - such as the participation in international procurement programs like F-35 - and the naturally conservative tendency of every bureaucratic structure, including the diplomatic and military apparatus, have a certain amount of sway over the positions of the Minister who is currently in charge.⁹³ This influence depends, to a certain extent, on the character of the person in charge of the Ministry itself.

The leverage of the Minister of Defence on the Italian debate, despite his institutional responsibility on defence matters, is weakened by the plurality of the politico-institutional actors that assert their views on these issues. In this context, the capacity to influence the debate depends on the ability and personality of the person who holds the position of Minister of Defence.⁹⁴ A similar assessment can be made for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who among other things has a say on relations with the allies and partners within multilateral organizations such as NATO, EU and the UN, in relations with defence matters.⁹⁵

Concerning the recent debate on military expenditures, the Minister of Defence Mario Mauro has reaffirmed the importance of the F-35 procurement program and has called

⁸⁹ Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, *Indagine conoscitiva sui sistemi d'arma destinati alla difesa in vista del Consiglio europeo di dicembre 2013. Audizione di rappresentanti della campagna 'Sbilanciamoci!' e della Rete Italiana Disarmo*, 1 October 2013, available at <http://www.disarmo.org/nof35/docs/4553.pdf>.

⁹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), *Contracts for September 27, 2013*, No. 691-13, <http://www.defense.gov/Contracts/Contract.aspx?ContractID=5143>.

⁹¹ Chamber of Deputies, *Interpellanza urgente 2-00255*, cit.

⁹² Interviews 20 June and 1 July 2013, Rome.

⁹³ Interview 20 June 2013, Rome.

⁹⁴ Interview 7 June 2013, Rome.

⁹⁵ Ibidem.

the aircraft a necessary tool to increase security as well as a major return on investment in terms of industrial output. He underlined how such systems are necessary to maintain peace to the extent that they enable the removal of threats to international security.⁹⁶ According to the Minister, this requirement by the same token is part and parcel of political and military alliances aimed at providing a common support to the international community, which Italy cannot disregard.⁹⁷ As far as Italian engagement in international missions is concerned, the Minister of Defence does not deem possible a withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier than the end of 2014, as already set by NATO.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emma Bonino, is of the same opinion on Italian participation in missions abroad. She emphasized how the international presence in Afghanistan put an end to a repressive and bloody regime, thus implying that the military intervention was instrumental to allow the country's democratic transition in the country and that it would be irresponsible for Italy to leave now.⁹⁸ On the subject of the recent modernization choices made by the Italian Armed Forces, the Minister has confirmed her support for the establishment of a European army equipped with adequate resources, which would allow a significant saving compared to the present fragmentation of the European Armed Forces on a national basis.⁹⁹

5.3. *President of the Council of Ministers*

As previously recalled, the President of the Council of Ministers is the apex of executive power in Italy. Nonetheless, he is endowed with lesser powers than other Prime Ministers in EU countries, as he cannot dismiss a Minister nor can he call general elections. This relative weakness is visible in the limited power to influence the defence debate. On one hand, the President of the Council's stance on defence matters affects public opinion more than the one of Ministers of Defence or Foreign Affairs.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, the position of the President of the Council can be publicly criticized by other members of the government, by the political parties that support it, as well as, not to mention, by the opposition.

His role in the debate depends therefore on the personality and particularly on the political strength of the President in charge. It also depends on the ties that the President of the Council of Ministers is able to establish on one hand with the President of the Republic and on the other hand with the Ministers of Defence and of Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁶ Carlo Mercuri, Interview "Mauro: niente Frecce alla parata militare sì all'acquisto di F35", in // *Messaggero*, 23 May 2013, p. 11,

http://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Interviste/Pagine/IntervistaMinistroMauroMessaggero.aspx.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁸ "Attacco in Afghanistan. Bonino: non è stato un bambino, è propaganda", in *Rai News24*, 9 June 2013, <http://www.rainews24.rai.it/it/news.php?newsid=178683>. See the video of the interview by Lucia Annunziata to the Foreign Minister Emma Bonino:

http://media.esteri.it/videoEsteri/20130609_rai3_mezzora_arch.wmv.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews, 12 June 2013 b), Rome; 19 June 2013 a), Rome.

With regard to the current debate on defence, the President of the Council of Ministers Enrico Letta has made economic and social policy his main priority, and has left little space to defence matters. Nonetheless, during his visit to the Italian troops in Afghanistan, the President of the Council addressed the military as representing “the best image of our country in the world”.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, during the meeting with the Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Mr. Letta recalled that the end of the ISAF mission in 2014 will not terminate the Italian engagement in Afghanistan, which will continue with a substantial training program linked to Italy’s commitment to bring stability and peace in the country.¹⁰²

5.4. President of the Republic

The President of the Republic participates in the defence debate in a different way compared to the representatives of the political parties in Parliament and in government. First, as mentioned before, the President is the Head of the Armed Forces and chairs the Supreme Defence Council. Therefore, he has the highest institutional role on defence matters, although it is not executive.¹⁰³ The President has an undoubted influence in the decision-making process, that has *de facto* been accepted by the governments in power in the last fifteen years.¹⁰⁴

Secondly, from the early 2000s the Presidents of the Republic¹⁰⁵ have made a constant effort to highlight the role of the Armed Forces in Italian history and society, as well as regarding foreign and defence policy. This effort included undertakings and standpoints that have improved the public’s perception of the military’s usefulness.¹⁰⁶ Such a commitment has been manifest also in symbolic acts, for example with respect to 2 June, the Republic Day.¹⁰⁷ In this case as well, the manner in which Presidents Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Giorgio Napolitano have conceived their institutional role, different with respect to some of their predecessors, has been influential.¹⁰⁸

As far as the commitment to missions abroad is concerned, in the first half of 2013 President Napolitano frequently reiterated the importance of Italian military’s role, for example by emphasizing how the Italian Army contributes to the promotion of peace in

¹⁰¹ Translated from the Italian. See “Letta: ‘La missione si conclude nel 2014 ma non lasceremo solo l’Afghanistan’”, in *Corriere della Sera.it*, 25 August 2013, http://www.corriere.it/esteri/13_agosto_25/letta-afghanistan-visitaherat_f2c51184-0d65-11e3-a0ce-befba0269146.shtml.

¹⁰² “Afghanistan, Letta incontra i soldati e Karzai: ‘Italia resterà anche dopo fine missione’”, in *Repubblica.it*, 25 August 2013, http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2013/08/25/news/letta_in_afghanistan_visita_ai_soldati_italiani-65252703. See the video of the press conference in Kabul: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y4GRprCK9c>.

¹⁰³ This role is also supported by the Diplomatic and Military Advisors to the President of the Republic, roles usually assumed by high-rank civil and military functionaries with relevant experience at the international level.

¹⁰⁴ Interview 20 June 2013, Rome.

¹⁰⁵ Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (1999-2006) and Giorgio Napolitano (2006-2013; 2013-ongoing).

¹⁰⁶ Interview 1 July 2013, Rome.

¹⁰⁷ Interview 5 July 2013, Rome.

¹⁰⁸ Interviews, 1 July 2013, Rome; 23 July 2013, Rome.

full observance of Art. 11 of the Constitution.¹⁰⁹ With respect to military expenditures, although the President has recognized the need for a reduction in public expenses, he has acknowledged how the Armed Forces have already put in place a noteworthy reform and process of rationalization of their configuration.¹¹⁰ President Napolitano has also explicitly upheld the law that reformed the military instrument in the acceptance speech for his second presidential mandate.¹¹¹ On 2 July 2013, the meeting of the Supreme Defence Council chaired by Mr. Napolitano, reiterated that “regarding the fact-finding and possible scrutiny of the Defence Committee on the modernizations programs of the Armed Forces [...] the Parliament’s capacity in this respect cannot be seen as a right of veto over the operative decisions and technical arrangements that, due to their very nature, belong to the constitutional responsibilities of the executive branch.”¹¹² During the following Supreme Defence Council on 6 November 2013,¹¹³ the Council wished for a quick approval of the decrees for the implementation of the 2012 law on the reform of the military instrument, currently under discussion.¹¹⁴ The entry into force of the reform has to result in shared strategic guidelines based on the proper response to crisis scenarios and to the threats that Italy and the EU have to face. During the meeting, the commitment to the drafting of a White Book on Defence emerged, in order to identify a shared vision of the concept of security, and in support of European defence integration.

On the occasion of the Italian Armed Forces Day on 4 November 2013 President Napolitano, after recalling Italy and EU’s commitment to political and diplomatic solutions rather than to military actions, reminded that threats like terrorism, civil wars, and the emergency deriving from flows of immigrants, require anyway the presence of the Armed Forces supported by adequate equipment, alongside with European and Atlantic Allies. To this end- the President urged - certain decisions concerning defence budgets reductions should not be addressed superficially since they affect military

¹⁰⁹ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Messaggio del Presidente Napolitano per il 152° Anniversario della costituzione dell'Esercito*, 4 May 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=14922>.

¹¹⁰ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Messaggio del Presidente Napolitano in occasione della festa della Marina Militare*, 10 May 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=15154>.

¹¹¹ “Nor can we ignore the need to react to any misinformation and controversy that strike our military powers, which have rightly embarked on a serious reform. Their focus, however, in the spirit of the Constitution, remains that of safeguarding Italy’s participation - with the selfless sacrifice of no small number of our young people - in the international community’s stabilisation and peace missions.” See Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Speech before the Chambers by the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano*, 22 April 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=2700>.

¹¹² Translated from the Italian. See Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Napolitano ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo di Difesa*, cit.

¹¹³ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Napolitano ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo di Difesa*, 6 November 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Notizia&key=39213>.

¹¹⁴ Chamber of Deputies Studies Department, *Revisione dello strumento militare - Schema D.Lgs. n. 32 (Revisione delle strutture e dell'organizzazione) Legge n. 244/2012*, 7 October 2013, <http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/dossier/Testi/DI0079.htm>; and *Revisione dello strumento militare - Schema D.Lgs. n. 33 - (Revisione delle dotazioni organiche) Legge n. 244/2012 07/10/2013*, 7 October 2013, <http://documenti.camera.it/leg17/dossier/Testi/DI0064.htm>.

assets that are fundamental for our forces, especially in the view of the European Council in December that represents a precious occasion for both Italy and EU.¹¹⁵

5.5. Armed Forces

Traditionally, in the Italian Republic's history, the highest levels of the Armed Forces have kept a low profile within the debate on defence matters. There are at least four reasons. First, the above-mentioned scant inclination of public opinion to debate issues of national interest and, if necessary, the related use of force to protect it. Second, the heritage of Italy's specific historical experience, in particular - but not only - with reference to Fascism and the defeat in the Second World War.¹¹⁶ Third, during the Cold War, the confrontational posture between the NATO Armed Forces and the Soviet block that maintained relations with the communist parties in Western Europe.¹¹⁷ Fourth, the respect for the different prerogatives of the political authority and the military over defence matters, paired with a certain reluctance to exercise a regular public communications strategy.¹¹⁸

This low profile approach has been displayed in the involvement in missions abroad, by not highlighting the combat tasks carried out by Italian troops. It also regarded defence spending, whose needs and technical-operative aspects have been explained by the military in a way hardly perceived by public opinion.¹¹⁹ The Armed Forces' approach to the public debate started to gradually change only in recent years with a greater opening to civilians and to public opinion in general. Public pronouncements by the top level representatives of the Armed Forces have taken place mainly in the course of Parliamentary hearings, particularly with respect to military expenses. Hearings such as the one by General Secretary of Defence and National Armaments Director Gen. Claudio Debertolis, that took place in December 2012, where the General referred both to the military and the industrial rationale to sustain the acquisition of the F-35 aircraft. In fact, Gen. Debertolis insisted on the advanced features of the aircraft as an "unavoidable requirement for the replacement of 253 aircraft belonging to three different lineups: 18 vertical take-off aircraft AV-8B of the Navy, 136 AMX and 99 Tornado of the Air Force".¹²⁰ In Italy the National Armaments Director has, by law, the mandate to safeguard and support the Italian defence industry.¹²¹ Therefore, Gen.

¹¹⁵ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Intervento del Presidente Napolitano alla cerimonia di consegna delle decorazioni dell'Ordine Militare d'Italia palazzo del Quirinale*, 4 November 2013, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=2774>.

¹¹⁶ Interviews, 1 July 2013, Rome; 5 July 2013 c), Florence.

¹¹⁷ Interview 23 July 2013, Rome.

¹¹⁸ Interviews, 1 July 2013, Rome; 8 July 2013 b), Rome.

¹¹⁹ This is not to invalidate the work of military institutions such as, for example, the Armed Forces Historical Department (*Uffici storici delle forze armate*) or the Military Center for Strategic Studies (*Centro militare di studi strategici*), in particular with regard to civilian experts on defence matters, but rather to underline the low profile that the armed forces have in the public debate. Interview 2 September 2013, Turin.

¹²⁰ Translated from the Italian. See Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, *Audizione del Segretario generale della Difesa e Direttore nazionale degli armamenti, generale di squadra aerea Claudio Debortolis ...*, cit., p. 4.

¹²¹ Article 41 of Legislative decree No. 66 of 15 March 2010 on the military organisation code, published in OG No. 106 of 8 May 2010, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2010-03-15;66>.

Debertolis has emphasized the industrial return of the procurement program, by remembering the over 90 Italian companies involved in it, including Finmeccanica and Avio. According to Gen. Debertolis, thanks to the F-35 program, in particular to the Cameri facility, these companies have been able to retain their existing industrial capacity and seize the opportunity for technological growth.¹²²

In this context, an interesting development is the Directive on Strategic Communication of the Ministry of Defence, issued on 15 July 2013 by the Defence Minister's cabinet. The three purposes of the directive are to establish a new approach to communication, to structure and co-ordinate communication activities conducted by the Defence Ministry, and to optimize these activities to achieve pre-determined strategic objectives.¹²³ These objectives include: "explaining the motives for the engagement in military operations", "promoting the common European defence" and "creating the conditions for an effective and shared modernization of the military instrument".¹²⁴ The Directive acknowledges that "a different approach to the past [is necessary], characterized by a new awareness that, at all levels, the Defence [Ministry], as any other public administrations, is already immersed in a communicative space that is and always will be filled, no matter what."¹²⁵ Therefore, the Directive stipulates a more active and pro-active approach not only when it comes to inform public opinion, but also in the interaction with different stakeholders, opinion-makers and the target audience.

As concerns, instead, defence expenditure, during the ceremony for the celebration of the Italian Armed Forces Day on 4 November 2013, the Chief of the Defence General Staff Admiral Binelli Mantelli,¹²⁶ called attention to the severe economic conjuncture that has been affecting Italy and Europe and that requires a rationalization of expenditure and especially integration at the multinational level. In order to encourage and support defence integration, he underlined, Italy will have to take advantage of the semester of Presidency of the EU next year with the awareness that significant evolutions at the EU level will also impact on NATO.

5.6. *Pacifist movements*

A traditionally active category in the debate on defence matters is constituted by the pacifist movements such as, for example, Rete italiana disarmo (Italian Disarmament Network), Campagna Sbilanciamoci! (Campaign Let's Take a Chance!) and Tavola della Pace (Peace Table). Regarding both military expenditures and the participation in missions abroad, the pacifist movements single out the concept of defence sanctioned

¹²² Defence Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, *Audizione del Segretario generale della Difesa e Direttore nazionale degli armamenti, generale di squadra aerea Claudio Debertolis ...*, cit.

¹²³ Ministry of Defence, *Direttiva sulla comunicazione strategica del Ministero della Difesa*, 15 July 2013, p. 2, http://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Uffici_diretta_collaborazione/Pagine/DirettivasullaComunicazioneStrategicaDellaDifesa.aspx.

¹²⁴ Translated from the Italian. Ibidem, p. 3-4.

¹²⁵ Translated from the Italian. Ibidem, p. 4.

¹²⁶ Ministry of Defence, Message of Admiral Luigi Binelli Mantelli, Chief of Defence Staff, on the occasion of the National Unification and Armed Forces' Day, Rome, 4 November 2013 [in Italian], <http://www.difesa.it/Content/Manifestazioni/4novembre/2013/Pagine/OrdineGiornoCaSMD.aspx>.

by the first part of Art. 11 of the Constitution which is founded upon the “rejection of war”.¹²⁷ They consider preventive diplomacy and the investment in socio-economic conditions of unstable countries or of crisis areas as the most efficient way to “build peace”.¹²⁸ In contrast to the Cold War era, in recent years the action of some pacifist movements has been more aimed to connect the ideal call for peace with the context of Italian defence policy - itself different from what it was before 1989.¹²⁹ This effort has been done, among other ways, by establishing a dialogue with entities outside of the movement who were nonetheless interested in debating defence matters, from think tanks to banks.¹³⁰ Beyond the regular activities of the pacifist movements, their participation in the debate is enhanced when external circumstances, such as the decision to militarily intervene in Iraq in 2003, or internal events, like the Parliamentary debate on the procurement of F-35 in 2013, arouse public opinion’s interest around certain key words. This makes the public opinion more keen to take the pacifist message into account, as it is in line with the current tone of the debate.¹³¹

According to the pacifist view, disarmament should be devised at the international level - or, according to some pacifists, Italy should proceed with unilateral disarmament - as the necessary condition for the reduction or prevention of crises and conflicts. The pacifist movements have indeed asked to cut Italian defence expenditures through a diminution of the military personnel and the integration of the Armed Forces into the United Nations system, in which they would be truly able to prevent conflicts and maintain peace. This approach implies the withdrawal of Italian troops from NATO mission in Afghanistan, which is described as an example of US interventionism linked to the war on terrorism. In other words a “real war”, entirely at odds with the Art. 11 of the Constitution, and that it is, in fact, only a pretext for a geo-strategic, military, and resources’ control hidden strategy.¹³² The pacifist movements denounce that Italian troops are more and more under attack in Afghanistan, and have opposed Italy’s decision to commit to the NATO training mission Resolute Support. In this mission, that will be launched in 2015, Italy will retain Regional Command West, the same has been in charge since 2006 within ISAF.

As far as military expenditures are concerned, in 2009 the three movements jointly launched a campaign against the F-35 program, known as “Taglia le ali alle armi” (Clip

¹²⁷ Article 11 of the Italian Constitution states: “Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes. Italy agrees, on conditions of equality with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty that may be necessary to a world order ensuring peace and justice among the Nations. Italy promotes and encourages international organisations furthering such ends”. Text:

http://www.quirinale.it/qnrw/statico/costituzione/pdf/costituzione_inglese.pdf. For an in-depth study of the interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution see Natalino Ronzitti (ed.), *L’articolo 11 della Costituzione*, cit.

¹²⁸ Interview 24 June 2013 a), Rome.

¹²⁹ The debate on the deployment of Euromissiles in Italy that took place at the beginning of the 80s is an example of political debate which left a strong mark on public opinion, and was, of course, very different compared to the post-Cold War period. Interviews 20 June, 8 July b) and 23 July 2013, Rome.

¹³⁰ Interview 30 July 2013, Milan.

¹³¹ Interview 5 July 2013 c), Florence.

¹³² Peacelink, *Lettera a Famiglia Cristiana sulle “missioni di pace”*, 27 November 2012, <http://www.peacelink.it/editoriale/a/37299.html>.

Weapons' Wings). As of 2013, it has collected more than 95,000 petitioners,¹³³ focusing on the cost and on the technical aspects of the aircraft. The campaign proposes to cancel outright the F-35 procurement program in favor of other social programs, presenting alternative utilization of the funds estimated for the purchase of the aircraft.¹³⁴ Indeed, the pacifist network emphasizes that the cost of the aircraft will weigh on the younger generation given the duration of the procurement program, which should continue for another 15-20 years. In view of the approval of the state budget law, the pacifist network reinforced its action asking for further support with the objective of impeding the allocation of funds for F-35 aircrafts in the same law.¹³⁵ According to the campaign supporters, Italy should follow the example of other countries participating in the program, which have decided to re-assess their involvement in the multinational procurement.¹³⁶ Moreover, certain pacifist movements interpret and present to the public a meaning of "defence" which is different and wider than defence as the use of Armed Forces. Defence is conceived rather through non-military means as well as protection of citizens' health and employment.¹³⁷

5.7. Catholic Church

It is difficult to consider the Catholic Church as a unitary actor with respect to defence matters, because of two reasons. First, the different schools of thought historically present in the Catholic culture, from the doctrine of "just war" to positions that are in principle opposed to any use of force. Second, the diverse institutional agents of the Church present in Italy, from the Vatican Secretary of State to the Italian Episcopal Conference,¹³⁸ plus the variety of Catholic associations that are active on defence issues and are linked in different ways to the Church.

Generally speaking, the Catholic Church is engaged in promoting alternative solutions to the use of force to achieve a peaceful international order. As a consequence, it is generally critical with respect to the international military interventions in which Italy has participated. The position of the Church refers mainly to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine*,¹³⁹ that calls for the just governance of relations between peoples and political communities based upon reason, fairness, legality, negotiation, and precludes the recourse to violence and war. Furthermore, in the Papal encyclical *Pacem In Terris* issued on 11 April 1963, war is defined as "*alienum a ratione*", alien to reason. In other

¹³³ See the website of the campaign "Clip Weapons' Wings": <http://www.disarmo.org/nof35>.

¹³⁴ Percorsi di Pace, campaign "Clip Weapons' Wings" <http://www.percorsidipace.eu/Engine/RAServePG.php/P/315510130400/M/250010130306/T/Taglia-le-ali-alle-armi>.

¹³⁵ Rete disarmo, *Tutta l'Italia dice: divieto di caccia! Un autunno di azione contro gli F-35*, 9 October 2013, <http://www.disarmo.org/nof35/autunno-di-azione-contro-f35>.

¹³⁶ See for example the Canadian decision at the end of 2012 to review its participation by carrying out various studies to better clarify the costs of the program. See Government of Canada, *National Fighter Procurement Secretariat releases updated F-35 costs through 2013 Annual Update*, 9 August 2013, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?nid=762619>.

¹³⁷ Interview 30 July 2013, Rome.

¹³⁸ Interview 12 June 2013 a), Rome.

¹³⁹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

words, pure madness.¹⁴⁰ The defence of the right to live implies the furtherance of peace and, at the same time, a condemn of arms race. The Second Vatican Council had defined the arms race as “an utterly treacherous trap for humanity”¹⁴¹ and war as “a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.”¹⁴²

In September 2013, following the critical evolution of the situation in Syria, Pope Francis reaffirmed the opposition to war of the Catholic Church, recalling that “the only war that we must all fight is the one against evil”¹⁴³ and urging the international community to promote “clear proposals for peace in that country without further delay, a peace based on dialogue and negotiation”.¹⁴⁴ The Pope also invited to take part in fasting and praying at a wake for peace, during which he underlined that war is linked to selfish interests and desire for power and control.¹⁴⁵ Finally, several Church leaders appealed to Italy’s commitment to peace and non-violence enshrined in Art. 11 of the Constitution on the rejection of war.

Yet the Second Vatican Council took into consideration the legitimate right of the states to defend their people: “Certainly, war has not been rooted out of human affairs. As long as the danger of war remains and there is no competent and sufficiently powerful authority at the international level, governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defence once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted. State authorities and others who share public responsibility have the duty to conduct such grave matters soberly and to protect the welfare of the people entrusted to their care”.¹⁴⁶

In this context, it is necessary to consider the position of those representing the Church who are in close contact with the Armed Forces. Recently, in his homily at the funeral of the 53rd Italian victim in Afghanistan, the military chaplain Vincenzo Pelvi recalled how the building of peace does not depend only on “the constant weaving of diplomatic relations, cultural encounters, agreements on common projects, commitments”¹⁴⁷ but also on values that are rooted in the love for life. Moreover, he emphasized how neither the changes of Italian public opinion nor the interests that are partisan and selfish have been helpful to the Italian soldiers in their missions abroad.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ Giovanni Giudici. “Le armi uccidono anche se non vengono usate”, in *Famiglia Cristiana*, No. 4/2013, p. 37, <http://www.mosaicodipace.it/mosaico/a/37745.html>.

¹⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 81, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, 80.

¹⁴³ Twitter/Pontifex: <https://twitter.com/Pontifex/status/377453964012183552>.

¹⁴⁴ Francis, *Angelus*, 1 September 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/angelus/2013/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20130901_en.html.

¹⁴⁵ Francis, *Vigil of Prayer for Peace*, 7 September 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130907_veglia-pace_en.html.

¹⁴⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, cit., 79.

¹⁴⁷ Translated from the Italian. See the homily by Vincenzo Pelvi, *Tessitori di pace*, Rome, 10 June 2013, p. 2, http://www.ordinariato.it/file_media/doc/news/372/Tessitori_di_pace.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2-3.

5.8. Defence industry

The role of the aerospace, defence and security industry¹⁴⁹ in the debate is dependent on internal and external factors to the industrial sector itself. As far as the internal factors are concerned, it should be noted that the Italian defence industry, as in other major European countries, can be described as a pyramid. Such pyramid has few large companies (system integrators) at the top, which represent about 2/3 of the sector's industrial capacity, and a great number of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) at the basis that work as suppliers of the system integrators and/or as independent producers on the international market. The state controls the main Italian company in this sector, Finmeccanica, through the Treasury which holds 33% of the stocks, and the top Italian shipbuilding, Fincantieri. Consequently, the main defence industries cannot be considered, nor they act, as private entities entirely independent from the government. Conversely, the SMEs, as in other areas of the Italian economy, tend to be fragmented and are generally not capable of articulating a common position in the public debate.¹⁵⁰

Concerning the external factor, the defence industry is generally perceived in a less positive manner compared to other sectors of the Italian economy¹⁵¹ because it produces weapons systems. This is a structural element that curbs the defence industry's ability to communicate effectively. The sum of these two factors, internal and external, has restricted the industry's involvement in the public debate. At the same time, on the industrial front, the main focus has been on a direct dialogue with the politico-institutional decision-makers, as opposed to a communication strategy towards the wider public opinion.¹⁵² This is due in part to the Italian context that does not explicitly regulate the lobbies' role, contrary to what happens in the US where the legal framework pushes the action of pressure groups into the public debate.¹⁵³

Nonetheless, some managers of the defence industry have recently contributed to the debate on military expenditures. For example, during the 2013 Le Bourget International Air Show, the CEO of Alenia Aermacchi - a Finmeccanica company - Giuseppe Giordo, reiterated the importance of Italy's participation in the F-35 program, a role that must be considered in parallel to other international procurement programs¹⁵⁴ such as the Eurofighter.¹⁵⁵ On 16 October Finmeccanica CEO Alessandro Pansa, speaking at a Parliamentary hearing, has confirmed an estimate of 10 billions of dollars of turnover

¹⁴⁹ The term "aerospace, defence and security industry" is officially used by the industrial federation of this branch, a part of Italian Confindustria, because it conveys more effectively the reality of a technological and industrial base that offers products and services to the armed forces, the police and public security forces, and to civilian clients. This is particularly true in the aerospace, space and electronic industries where dual-use technologies are developed, in other words technologies that can be used for both civilian and military purposes. For the sake of brevity the term "defence industry" is used hereafter.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews 1 July 2013 a) and b), Rome; 8 July 2013 a), Rome.

¹⁵¹ Interview 8 July 2013 a), Rome.

¹⁵² Interviews 1 July 2013, a) and b), Rome; 30 July 2013, Milan.

¹⁵³ Interviews 18 June 2013, Rome; 8 July 2013 a), Rome.

¹⁵⁴ "Difesa: Giordo, F-35 troppo importante, stabilire meglio alcune condizioni", in *Corriere della Sera.it*, 18 June 2013, http://www.corriere.it/notizie-ultima-ora/Economia/Difesa-Giordo-troppo-importante-stabiliremeglio-alcune-condizioni/18-06-2013/1-A_007037981.shtml.

¹⁵⁵ The Eurofighter is a fighter jet acquired jointly by Germany, UK, Italy and Spain, and produced by a consortium of European companies joined by Finmeccanica through Alenia Aermacchi.

for Italian defence industry deriving from F-35 program.¹⁵⁶ Generally speaking, the focus of public speeches of defence industry managers tends to be limited to the industrial aspects of the defence policy, and especially on the economic returns for Italy.¹⁵⁷ In their public pronouncements at conferences or round tables, defence industry managers tend to emphasize the high technology and innovation character of defence products and their consequent positive effect on the entire Italian economy. They also underline that the main international military procurement programs are managed by NATO and/or EU countries, which are Italy's partners in most missions abroad. According to this view, since the political authority has the sole responsibility to decide if, when and how to resort to armed force, the defence industry's task is to provide the adequate "technological and systemic equipment" to allow the state to act.¹⁵⁸

5.9. Trade unions

The trade unions are naturally vigilant over issues of economic and social policy, all the more in the Italian context which has witnessed in the last few years fiscal austerity and recession. This affects their involvement in the public debate, particularly with regard to military expenditures. For example, in April 2013, the heads of the main unions (*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro - CGIL*, *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori - CISL*, and *Unione Italiana del Lavoro - UIL*) called for military expenditures to be reviewed and rather used to cover the redundancy fund (*cassa integrazione*) and to finance employment policies.¹⁵⁹

The unions representing workers of Italian companies involved in the F-35 program have criticized the program for not providing new jobs. In particular, they claim that the plant in Cameri does not create new jobs but will rather employ workers currently employed in other Alenia plants, while workers will be forced to relocate. At the same time, the CGIL branch representing workers of Alenia Aermacchi, the *Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici - FIOM Alenia*, has reiterated its opposition to the F-35 program. According to FIOM Alenia, it represents a setback for the company: from aircraft constructor to mere sub-contractor with low profitability margins and a limited industrial outlook, since Italy's role will be limited to assembly and this implies a loss of know-how and production capabilities.¹⁶⁰ What's even worse, according to FIOM Alenia, is the near total exclusion from aircraft's development and that pervasive secrecy which make it impossible to have complete command of the F-35 configuration, and thus prevents the development of national adaptations or autonomous integrations. Consequently, FIOM has asked to shift F-35 funds to programs that Italy and Alenia Aermacchi already own, such as the transport aircraft

¹⁵⁶ Silvio Lora-Lamia, "Finmeccanica: 'L'F-35 non è un nostro programma'", in *Analisi Difesa*, 19 October 2013, <http://www.analisedifesa.it/2013/10/f-35-in-calole-prospettive-di-commesse-e-occupazione-in-italia>.

¹⁵⁷ Interview 9 September 2013, Rome.

¹⁵⁸ Alessandro Pansa, *Etica e affari: scelte, comportamenti e responsabilità*, address at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 5 July 2007.

¹⁵⁹ CGIL, *Ammortizzatori: Camusso, risorse da spese militari e grandi patrimoni*, 16 April 2013, <http://www.cgil.it/DettaglioDocumento.aspx?ID=20849>.

¹⁶⁰ FIOM Alenia Turin and Caselle communiqué of 27 October 2011, http://www.rassegna.it/userdata/articoli/allegati/2011/11/lt-fiom-2011-10-27lettera-aperta-alla-citta-ditorinoaleniasiasipal_234409.pdf.

C27J, and the Eurofighter air-to-air combat interceptor.¹⁶¹ In this case, the argument advanced by some of the trade unions does not concern the utility of military expenditures *per se*, as they are not truly questioned, but their destination. According to FIOM, the investment in different combat and transport aircraft would bring greater technological and market returns to the Italian defence industry than the F-35 one.

5.10. Media

The media have a particular role with respect to the defence debate as they are a *medium* of expression of previously analyzed actors, but are also a self-standing actor that participates in the public debate. They include both traditional media such as press, radio and television, as well as internet with its multiple voices and facets, from the specialized websites to the social networks, to those independent blogs that have a significant number of followers.

As mentioned before, the traditional media generally do not regularly devote adequate attention to foreign policy and defence matters. Neither they regularly cover operational theaters other than Afghanistan, such as the Balkans, Lebanon and the Gulf of Aden, despite the deployment of hundreds of Italian troops there. As far as the missions are concerned, when the media's attention is drawn by attacks against Italian troops, the focus is on reporting the event and the personal life of the victims, as well as on the reaction of the Italian political parties. The scarce propensity of the traditional media to address defence matters is also due to the relatively low number of specialized journalists who focus on these issues, who can thus be considered experts in this field,¹⁶² also through physical presence in the crisis areas.¹⁶³

On the contrary, in some cases the media themselves shine a light on defence matters, for example by providing critical reports regarding military expenditures for weapons modernization of the army and space programs.¹⁶⁴ Still, when they address military expenditures, a significant share of press articles or television programs focuses on the different positions of political parties, as well as on the possible alternative uses of resources devoted to defence. Less attention is dedicated to the needs of the Armed Forces, which required the launch of the procurement program to be satisfied, and to the way that equipment might be used. Conversely, all these issues are often present in the new media, particularly on the websites and blogs that collect opinions from a wide array of different subjects: from activists belonging to pacifist movements to members of the Armed Forces (not many, and generally low-level officers), to politicians and experts. On the web the tone tends to be less rhetorical and less "institutional" compared to traditional media, particularly compared to television, and critical voices with respect to Italian missions abroad and military expenditures can be heard more frequently. This is also due to the scarce use of the web by institutional actors such as the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ FIOM communiqué, 19 January 2012, http://www.fiom.cgil.it/stampa/2012/c_12_01_19.htm.

¹⁶² Interview 30 July 2013, Milan.

¹⁶³ Interview 1 July 2013, Rome.

¹⁶⁴ Gianluca Di Feo, "Le spese folli della difesa", in *l'Espresso*, 2 May 2013, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio/le-spese-folli-della-difesa/2206164>.

¹⁶⁵ Interview 8 July 2013 b), Rome.

Communication over the internet is subject to different interpretations by both experts and practitioners. The web is seen as a potentially vast reservoir of information, as well one of the main incubators of perceptions on defence matters. Not surprisingly the recent Directive on Strategic Communication of the Ministry of Defence urges a renewed commitment of the Ministry to timely communicate over the internet in a way tailored to the characteristics of this important channel of communication.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, on the web seems to prevail the most simplistic, immediate, instinctive message, the one aimed to provoke emotive reactions such as outrage or compassion.¹⁶⁷ Some believe that the advent of new media has led to such a galaxy of sources of information so that there is no longer a real “mainstream” point of view in Italian society. There are rather *different* social segments subdivided by age, education, income, etc, that chose to access to *different* sources of information that present *different* points of view and so concur to form *different* perceptions of reality.¹⁶⁸ Others note how, in fact, the defence debate on the web, including blogs and social networks, is strongly influenced by the terms of the debate in the traditional media, for example by a television report or a press campaign.¹⁶⁹ Finally, there is a feeling that communication through internet tends to strengthen opinions already formed, as it facilitates the gathering of confirming information and the entry into epistemic communities with similar ideological orientations.¹⁷⁰

5.11. Experts

In Italy, as in other European countries, there are university departments, research institutes, think tanks, specialized press and single experts which study systematically and in-depth defence matters, often within the wider context of Italian foreign policy, contemporary history or international relations, and fare fully part of high-level European and transatlantic research networks. However, the experts community in Italy has access to smaller economic resources compared to other European countries,¹⁷¹ because of some of the above-mentioned structural issues such as the scant public discussion of the national interest and its potential protection through the use of force, Italy’s limited experience as a colonial power, and the perception that there are no imminent and direct threats to national security in the post-Cold War era. Such a situation, paired with the little capacity of single experts and research centers to network on a national level,¹⁷² restricts their role within the public debate on defence matters.

The influence of the experts as a group is very limited insofar there is a certain disconnect with the wider public opinion.¹⁷³ The connection seems to depend, mainly, on the amount of space that traditional media, such as television, radio and press, give

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Direttiva sulla comunicazione strategica del Ministero della Difesa*, cit., p. 13-16.

¹⁶⁷ Interviews 19 June 2013 d) and 24 June 2013 b), Rome; 4 July 2013, Florence; 30 July 2013, Milan.

¹⁶⁸ Interview 24 June 2013 a) Rome.

¹⁶⁹ Interview 8 July 2013 b), Rome.

¹⁷⁰ Interview 17 June 2013 b), Rome.

¹⁷¹ As a mere example, the number of university degrees that are pertinent to defence matters in Italy is lower than in countries such as France and UK.

¹⁷² Interview 5 July 2013 c), Florence.

¹⁷³ Interviews 28 June 2013, 9 July 2013 a) and 9 September 2013, Rome.

to experts' opinion on defence matters during the short span of time in which these issues come to the attention of the mass media.¹⁷⁴ Such opinions are difficult to be exposed in a hurried and simplified manner, as for example in the course of a television talk show - thus increasing the disconnect between experts and public opinion. Even positive examples of interaction between experts and other actors such as the representatives of political parties, government, Armed Forces and defence industry, find only a faint echo among public opinion. It appears that the more regular, in-depth, not-ideological debate on defence matters occurring in Italy continues to involve mainly experts and practitioners already interested in these issues.

Conclusions

The Italian debate on defence matters is influenced by national structural factors which are unlikely to change in the short term - as happens in other European countries. At the same time, it has to live with its own weaknesses - again, as happens to other Europeans. However, this does not mean the actors are bound to continue to shape the Italian debate in this way in the next years. In fact, the national structural factors do *influence* the debate but do not *determine* it. Therefore, its weaknesses can be tackled or at least mitigated by an effort from all actors, in order to feed a more constructive, accurate and mature debate. A number of elements are worth noticing in this regard.

First, part of Italian public opinion will likely continue to attach great importance to two aspects of Armed Forces' deployment: the legitimacy in accordance with international law, and the tasks carried out within missions abroad concerning humanitarian assistance, socio-economic reconstruction, training of local security forces. However, other sectors of Italian public opinion are more keen to a cost-benefit analysis of Italy's participation in international missions - and of the related defence spending - particularly in times of austerity, and do not consider these aspects as crucial. Therefore, the purposes, results and effects of international missions with regard to Italy's national interests should be discussed more deeply in order to constructively involve in the debate a wider share of Italian public opinion. For example, whether, how and how much the anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden - where Italy deploys important assets - do contribute to secure Italian international trade and energy security could and should be discussed more publicly and in-depth. Moreover, the real benefit of participation in missions abroad for Italy's defence and foreign policy, including national standing within important international organizations such as NATO, EU and UN, should be addressed. That means not only making references to the fact that the international community, multilateral organizations or important allies "ask" Italy to do something, but rather explaining if and how the Italian investment in missions abroad or international defence cooperation obtain a positive return from partners and allies with regard to national interests. In other words, the debate on the purposes and benefits of Italy's participation in missions abroad should become more complete and realistic, in order to meet, on the one hand, the public opinion's high standards in terms of international legitimacy and humanitarian aspects and, on the other hand, the growing concern about the cost-benefit analysis of every single mission.

¹⁷⁴ Interviews 28 June 2013, Rome; 4 July 2013 and 5 July 2013, c) Florence.

Second, as mentioned before, in Italy many institutional actors express their view on defence matters and exert various degrees of influence in the related decision-making process. A more constant dialogue, flow of information and exchange of views among these actors, in particular between the Government and the Parliament ones, would increase the knowledge and awareness of defence matters among the politico-institutional voices which influence the public debate. This regards both the political level - which is obviously complicated by simultaneous dynamics of competition/cooperation - and the level of military and civil servants, cabinet members and political advisors working with Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, EU Policies and Economic Development, with the related Committees in the Senate and Chambers of Deputies, as well as with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the cabinet of the President of the Republic.

Third, the aforementioned Armed Forces' low profile in the debate is understandable in light of Italian history, but it has *de facto* implied a scarcity of public information about what military does in international missions and what is needed in terms of equipment and procurement. Such low profile approach has begun to change in recent years as the result of more out-spoken role of Armed Forces, and should continue to evolve. This is not to say Armed Forces should take any political stance, rather they should continue to respect the role of civilian authorities in this regard. Yet better dissemination of information on military expenditure and international missions from the Armed Forces would provide valuable technical elements for a more aware and constructive debate.

Fourth, considering the disconnect between, on the one hand, the community of experts and practitioners and, on the other hand, the mass media, opportunities should be created for a greater connection between the two sides. That would help the public opinion to have a more systematic and comprehensive coverage of defence matters, by improving the quality of the public debate. In line with this goal, preparing new civil experts, better training military press officers, and promoting the involvement of new practitioners and experts by mass media would help the engagement of a larger sector of Italian society in the debate. For example, embedding journalists from traditional and new media in international missions is an opportunity to look, on a more regular basis, at what Italian Armed Forces do. At the same time, through the web the debate on defence matters may reach new and younger sectors of Italian public opinion. In particular, regarding the relationship between experts and journalists, as in every relation it takes two to tango. That means experts should make an effort to explain their analysis in a more accessible, understandable and appealing way to a public of non-experts, and journalists should try to go beyond the first, easy way to address defence matters on the basis of stereotypes or ideological stances.

Apparently the Italian audience interested in foreign and defence policy is growing, therefore there is a potential demand for greater information and better debate on these matters which all actors could, and should, satisfy.

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Gregory Alegi, Director Dedalo News
Mario Arpino, former Chief of Defence Staff
Antonello Biagini, University La Sapienza
Luciano Bozzo, University of Florence
Vincenzo Camporini, former Chief of Defence Staff and Vice President of IAI
Stefano Cont, Head of the Defence Policy, Cabinet Office of the Ministry of Defence
Andrea Gerli, Il Messaggero
Giampiero Giacomello, University of Bologna
Giampiero Gramaglia, former Director of ANSA and Communication Advisor at IAI
Giancarlo Grasso, Senior Advisor, Finmeccanica
Alessandra Lai, Senior Parliamentary Advisor for International Affairs, Senate
Sonia Lucarelli, University of Bologna
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Roberto Menotti, Editor, Aspenia Online
Carlo Musso, Head of the Research Department, Finmeccanica
Sergio Parazzini, Catholic University Sacro Cuore
Natalino Ronzitti, LUISS Guido Carli University and Scientific Advisor at IAI
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Silvio Rossignoli, President Aerosekur
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Roberto Santoro, Magna Charta Foundation
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Arturo Varvelli, Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale
Francesco Vignarca, Rete italiana per il disarmo

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