

THE CRISIS AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION:

Actors, topics and patterns of Europeanization
in the Italian debate on the ECT

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Abstract

The failure of the *referenda* held in France and Holland in 2005 opened up a wide and often ambiguous debate in Italy, as the European Constitution is commonly considered a positive thing for the country's internal political, social and economic life. In this paper I will describe the main features of this debate and the dominant discourses on which the media in Italy have focused, basing my work on a discourse analysis made on a sample of 40 articles selected from three daily newspapers.

Key words

Public Sphere; Media; European Integration; European Constitution.

Introduction

The Italian *media* landscape is quite complex and, as it is well known, questions of pluralism and political interests in the *media* system have been debated from different angles, this being a crucial issue. Here it is important to remember – briefly – the controversial relationship between Italy and the European integration process. Italy has traditionally been a Europhile country, and Italians have strongly supported the development of such a supranational order from the beginning. This is due, according to Della Porta and Caiani, to a particular political and social condition well described in the following passage: “In general, Italy has been considered to be a particularly Europhile country, with citizens (as in other Southern European countries) having low opinions of their national elites and being more confident instead in the functioning of European institutions. Faced with corruption and inefficient public administration, public opinion as well as political elites support European Integration, which is perceived as an opportunity to ‘normalize’ the many Italian pathologies” (Della Porta & Caiani, 2006: 84).

The political context has thus strongly influenced support for European integration. At the beginning of the nineties, when scandals such as Tangentopoli led to the end of the First Republic and opened up a new crisis scenario, Europe was considered the solution to those pathologies described above by Della Porta and Caiani. A process of development and definition of a new imaginary associated with Europe improved the public's attitude to the process of integration. After the first Berlusconi government (1994-1996), Romano Prodi's government played a fundamental role in this, since his political approach was strongly based on Europeism: expressions and metaphors like "Bringing Italy into Europe" for example, were used in Public Communication campaigns in order to bolster the belief that joining the Euro would be a crucial and positive step towards solving the country's economic problems.

However, the approach to Europe has changed radically in the last few years, since Berlusconi won the elections in 2001. Lega Nord, a populist party in his political coalition, was fiercely opposed to Europe and Berlusconi's strategy was based on strengthening his alliance with the USA, giving the EU a secondary role. The debate on Europe has thus been politicized and it is important to bear in mind that part of the debate on the European Constitutional Treaty took place during the second Berlusconi government, which lasted until April 2006. Some recent research (Machil *et al.*, 2006) has demonstrated that two of the prominent features of European reporting in the Italian *media* are those of the nationalization and politicization of news-making: Europe becomes an issue whenever it has an impact on domestic debates and processes and it comes up as a topic on the agenda whenever it can be linked to the Italian political context (Grossi, 1996; Marini, 2003; Marletti & Mouchon, 2005).

In this paper³⁶, we will try to understand how the *media* represented the European Constitutional Treaty (ECT) debate in Italy in the period between June 1st, 2005 and June 30th, 2007; what were the main topics discussed and what actors were mentioned in the articles selected for analysis. The crisis ending and the future of European integration have been widely discussed in the *media*, with different political figures, both Italian and international, discussing these issues in the newspapers. The debate has been driven by five dominant discourses – which will be introduced in the forthcoming section – on which European political leaders gave different and often diverging opinions.

36. The research was carried out during the Recon Summer School "Advanced Methods and Techniques in Media Analysis" organized by the Jean Monnet Centre for European Studies (CEuS), Bremen, 22 July-17 August 2007. More information on the Recon project can be found on www.reconproject.eu

1. Cycle coverage, key events and dominant discourses in the Italian arena

The analysis carried out in the research period focused on articles on the ECT debate in three daily newspapers over almost two years and in particular between 1st of June 2005 and 30th of June 2007. I have focused on the most widely distributed newspapers (La Repubblica³⁷ and Il Corriere della Sera³⁸), because they have a recognizable impact in addressing the Italian arena on certain topics and issues, as these newspapers also have regional appendixes and editions. Besides this, I chose to add another kind of newspaper, Il Sole 24 Ore³⁹, which focuses mainly on economics but has prominent sections dedicated to political issues and is one of the most widely distributed newspapers. Using a set of keywords⁴⁰, 1328 articles, published in this period and pertaining to the Constitutional Treaty debate, was selected using online databases and CD-ROM archives. A sample of 40 articles primarily focused on the ECT was chosen for qualitative analysis from this group.

TABLE 1: NEWSPAPERS SELECTED FOR THE ANALYSIS

COUNTRY	NEWSPAPERS	NO. OF ARTICLES	
		TOTAL	SELECTED
Italy	La Repubblica Il Corriere della Sera Il Sole 24 Ore	1328	40

NAME OF NEWSPAPER	TYPE OF MEDIA	POLITICAL ORIENTATION	CIRCULATION RATE	SOURCE/DATABASE	TOTAL NO. OF ART.	SELECTED NO. OF ART.
La Repubblica	Broadsheet	Centre Left	588.275	Online Database	471	13
Il Corriere Della Sera	Broadsheet	Conservative	624.938	Online Database	450	12
Il Sole 24 Ore	Broadsheet	Liberal	334.322	Cd Rom (2005-2006) + Online (2007)	407	15

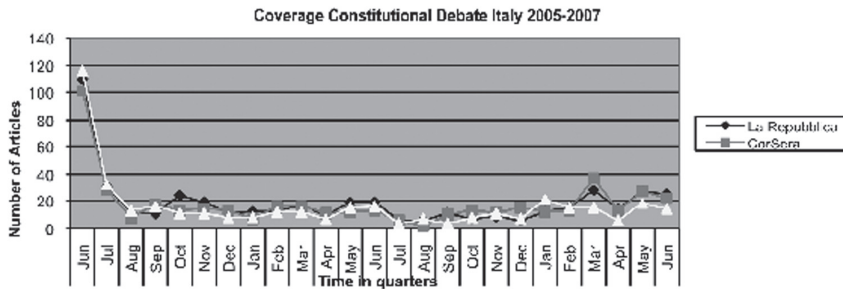
37. La Repubblica belongs to the l'Espresso editorial group and had a total distribution – in term of copies sold – of 588.275 in 2006 according to the agency ADS (Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa – <http://www.adsnotizie.it/>)

38. Il Corriere belongs to the RCS Mediagroup and had a total distribution – in term of copies sold – of 624.938 in 2006 according to the agency ADS

39. Il Sole 24 Ore belongs to Confindustria and had a total distribution – in term of copies sold – of 334.322 in 2006 according to the agency ADS

40. Such as : Constitutional Treaty, European Constitution, EU Constitution, Constitution for Europe, etc.

The sample was selected using four main criteria: 1) length of the article: only articles with a minimum of 250 words were selected; 2) focus on the Constitutional Treaty topic: only articles having the ECT as the main topic were included; 3) variety of actors participating in the debate: mainly articles in which institutional and non institutional actors gave opinions on the ECT were included; 4) relation of the articles to the peaks in the cycle coverage: focusing on all the stages at which the ECT debate increased in prominence. Besides this, as will be shown later, I followed the cycle coverage (point 4) extrapolated from all 1328 articles in order to define the relevance of the ECT debate.



At least ten key moments had an impact on coverage of the ECT in Italy and generated specific discourses on the Constitutional process.

TABLE 2. DOMESTIC CONTEXT: KEY EVENTS 2005/6 –2007/6

DATE	KEY EVENT	IMPACT ON CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE
June 2005	Failure of referenda	Start of the ‘crisis of Europe’
October 2005	Negotiations with Turkey	Discussion about European boundaries
November 2005	Elections in Germany	Emergence of Merkel as a central political figure for bringing Europe out of crisis
December 2005	European Council under British presidency	Discussion on the divisions between different visions of Europe
February 2006	Approval of the Bokenstein Directive	Discussion on the ‘costs of the enlargement’ and their part in the European Crisis
April 2006	Elections in Italy	Confrontation between two views of Europe

DATE	KEY EVENT	IMPACT ON CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE
August 2006	Meeting between Merkel and the Pope	Discussion on the 'Christian roots' reference in the ECT
September 2006	Sarkozy advocates for a Mini Treaty	Start of the discussion on the Future of Europe
March 2007	Celebrations of the Rome Treaty	Discussion on the value of the Berlin declaration
June 2007	Brussels Meeting	Discussion on the results of the European Council

Five dominant discourses structure the debate on the ECT in Italy, as they emerge from the overview of the ten key events. These are:

1. The discourse on the Crisis of Europe
2. The discourse on the democratic bases of the EU
3. The discourse on the EU's identity
4. The discourse on the EU's enlargement
5. The discourse on the future of Europe

As will be argued in the forthcoming paragraphs, these discourses were addressed by a particular set of actors and with reference to a specific set of topics discussed during the period under consideration.

2. Actors and agency

As can be seen from Table 3, actors that directly participate in the debate are prominently Member State Actors. These include Heads of State and Government, party leaders and political figures in general. The high presence of member state actors is mainly due to the fact that one of the structural features of the Italian way of framing news about the EU Constitution is by referring to actors belonging to other Member States, as will be underlined later. Unsurprisingly European Institutional actors are the second main category to emerge from the sample; the majority are political actors, representatives of Member States' governments working in European Institutions or those directly employed by these Institutions. Thus, both members of European institutions and also heads of national governments acting at the supranational level are frequently subjects of the articles in the Italian newspapers analyzed.

The third category defined within the Italian debate is that of voters/citizens: in the quotations cited there was a prevalence of citizens' statements about the ECT's debate, usually reported on directly by the author of the articles or addressed by a particular political leader. In fact articles quite often began with an explicit reference to public opinion, both Italian and foreign. In particular French or Dutch citizens were often quoted, in the light of their role in framing the so-called crisis of Europe, especially in the first waves of the debate following the failure of the referenda. In some cases, reference was made to European Public opinion as a whole questioning the democratic bases of the European Union, the issue of participation being a central and widely discussed topic.

TABLE 3. ACTORS' TYPES

ACTOR TYPE	OCCURRENCE*		NO OF ARTICLES**	
	NO	% OF TOTAL	NO	% OF ARTICLES
European actors	38	8	15	38
Member state actors (national/sub-national)	174	35	32	80
International organisations and non-EU states	-	-	-	-
Political parties	8	2	3	8
Economic organisations	-	-	-	-
Civil society organisations	8	2	4	10
Mass <i>media</i> /external journalists	3	1	3	8
Personalities, experts, think tanks	11	2	5	13
Public/voters/people/citizens	37	7	19	48
All actors	500	100	40	100

* no of quotations including the respective actor type

** no of articles that include the respective actor type

In a significant number of the Italian articles analyzed, the opinions of member States political leaders structure the debate on the ECT. It is worth stressing this point, in so far as a real confrontation (between different points of view about, and visions of, the future of Europe) took place and was developed by various actors. It is not the case that most of the foreign actors quoted and reported on are heads of state of the so called European core group (France, Germany and England), or that most of the quotations are related to future options for the ECT (as will be discussed in depth in forthcoming paragraphs).

Looking at the top ten actors (see Table 4), two heads of state – Angela Merkel and Tony Blair – are most often quoted in the Italian newspapers selected for the analysis. Merkel has received much attention since she was elected as German Chancellor in November 2005. In Italy, Merkel was considered a leading European figure, because of her central role in bringing the EU out of crisis. The coverage of the confrontation between Tony Blair and Merkel on their positions on the Constitutional Treaty in the Italian *media* has been very interesting.

In December 2006 a very telling article commented on the European Council held in Brussels by the Finnish Presidency under the headline “Blair freezes Merkel: the EU Charter? No, thanks”. In this article the British Prime Minister is reported as having expressed his opposition to the reformulation of the ECT. The opposition between Blair and Merkel was then confirmed in February 2007, when the British Prime Minister clearly stated that he did not intend to do anything to “*save the European Constitution*”.

The British position was understood thus: “*Prime Minister Tony Blair must have said to Merkel, according to yesterday’s edition of the Times, that London would not approve any institutional reform before obtaining assurances that the European Constitution would not be rescued*” (Il Sole 24 Ore, 02.02.2007). In a later interview with Tony Blair, which appeared on April 2007 (soon after the Berlin declaration) the British leader strengthened this position, arguing for a simplified Treaty without having another referendum (Corriere della Sera, April 20th, 2007).

TABLE 4. ACTORS’ TOP 10

RANK	ACTOR NAME	OCCURRENCE*		NO OF ARTICLES**	
		NO	% OF TOTAL	NO	% OF ARTICLES
1	H.10. Angela Merkel	24	5	15	38
2	H.10. Tony Blair	24	5	8	20
3	H.10. Romano Prodi	23	5	8	20
4	H.10. Massimo D’Alema	19	4	3	8
5	H.10. Giorgio Napolitano	18	4	3	8
6	H.10. Mario Monti	15	3	1	3
7	H.10. Giuliano Amato	12	2	3	8
8	H.10. Giuseppe Gargani	11	2	1	3
9	H.10. José Manuel Barroso	11	2	3	8
10	H.10. Nicolas Sarkozy	11	2	7	18
	All quotations	500	100	40	100

* no of statements by the respective actor

** no of articles that include statements of the respective actor

As can be seen from Table 4, a prominent actor at the European Level who appears in the top ten list is the president of the European Commission, Manuel Barroso, although he is only mentioned in three articles. It is worth quoting Barroso at least twice, in order to get an insight into the European Institutions' position in the debate on the Constitutional Treaty. The leaders of Member States' are sometimes quoted by journalists to show the diverging visions held on the ECT, whereas Barroso, as president of the EC, tends to express very positive and sometimes rhetorical points of view on the state of crisis, in some cases denying its very existence, as here in an interview given to La Repubblica:

How can you call this a crisis? We should understand the situation in relation to the events of the last fifty years. Fifty years ago, the European Community was constituted of six countries. Now we are twenty-seven. At the time its sources of power were scarce, both from an internal and external point of view. Today, the EU is a strong power and its role in the world is much more relevant than when it had six or twelve Member States (La Repubblica, March 18th, 2007).

Barroso goes on to say:

We should preserve the essence of the Constitution and must find a solution as close as possible to the Charter signed by the Member States (...). It's the Member States' governments who must find a compromise, not the European Commission. If it was up to me, I would write an even more ambitious European Constitution (La Repubblica, March 18th, 2007).

Half of the political leaders who appear in the newspapers are Italian and 3 out of 5 belong to the centre-left coalition elected in April 2006. In the sample the centre-right is often referred to as a whole or as *Euroscptics* in general, without direct reference to its leaders. Other national actors who come up in the sample are Giorgio Napolitano (president of the Italian Republic since 2006), Mario Monti (former member of the European Commission) and Giuseppe Gargani (Member of the European Parliament). As can be seen in Table 6, the person who appears most frequently in the sample is Romano Prodi who – especially since becoming Prime Minister – has structured his discourse on the Constitutional Treaty in a very specific way. Romani Prodi is a central figure; one of the main proponents of a slightly modified Charter and, towards the

end of 2007, one of the people who called for a two tier Europe in order to preserve the substance of the ECT, proceeding with a core group of Member States (Corriere della Sera, 23.05.2007).

Generally speaking, one could say that the overall position of the Italian leaders who appear in the top ten list was to support the substance of the European Constitution. However, it is interesting to underline the fact that contradictions between the different political leaders' positions often emerged, when they tried to set up alliances or liaisons with other countries' political leaders. In fact, there seem to have been serious splits about the future of Europe/ the European Constitution between these leaders and, at the same time, there have been controversial attempts to set up liaisons or alliances with other countries' political leaders in order to get their consensus or support. The following excerpt, taken from an article which appeared in *Il Sole 24 Ore* is interesting, in that it demonstrates what has been described above:

While Napolitano, in order to challenge the position of opposing countries such as Great Britain, strongly affirms that the European Constitution is not rubbish, and while Prodi tries to negotiate with Poland and the Czech Republic, the Interior Minister Amato seems to be worried about the weight of the word Constitution and has been trying to substitute it with the words "Fundamental Treaty", in order to help Sarkozy to avoid a new referendum. The Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema, in order to win over the audience at a recent lecture given in Oxford, tried to focus on the limits of Altiero Spinelli's federalist idea, questioned because it does not conceive the European reality as essentially constituted by Member States (Il Sole 24 Ore, May 17th, 2007).

In this passage different positions are revealed, such as Giorgio Napolitano's one, who is evaluating positively the Constitutional Treaty and criticizing the British Position; Giuliano Amato advocating for reforming the Treaty referring (and supporting) to Sarkozy's intention of avoiding a new referenda; D'Alema evaluating negatively a federal Europe in order to gain the British's consensus. The journalist defines these splits as a sort of 'tactical manoeuvring' in preparation for the forthcoming Council presidency and in order to preserve the substance of the ECT.

As we will see in the next section, the people in the top ten list have polarized themselves around very specific and conflicting positions, structuring the discourse on the Future of Europe in a very particular way.

3. Topics on the Constitutional debate

One of the aims of the research conducted was to understand the particular reference made in the different articles to specific topics characterizing the EU Constitutional debate. In the previous sections I underlined the emergence of five dominant discourses which frame the discussion of the ECT in Italy. In the next two sections we will examine these discourses in detail, in order to discover their peculiarities and focus.

It is worth beginning by commenting on Table 5 (below), since it gives us very interesting insights into the main Constitutional topics on which news-making has focused.

TABLE 5. CONSTITUTIONAL TOPICS: EU POLICIES, POLITY OR PROCESS?

TOPICS	OCCURRENCE*		NO OF ARTICLES**	
	NO	% OF TOTAL	NO	% OF ARTICLES
EU policy	66	13	22	55
internal market	20	4	11	28
Regulatory	11	2	8	20
Distributive	2	0	2	5
Cultural	1	0	1	3
internal/judicial	13	3	7	18
Foreign	9	2	7	18
Finances	17	3	8	20
Charter	17	3	5	13
EU polity	159	32	36	90
Symbols	50	10	18	45
democratic life	40	8	17	43
Institutional set-up	25	5	14	35
decision-rules	28	6	15	38
Membership	50	10	21	53
Constitutional process	401	80	40	100
past (pre June 2005)	161	32	39	98
present (June 05-June 07)	71	14	30	75
future options	276	55	37	93
Total	500	100	40	100

* no of quotations including the respective topic

** no of articles that include the respective topic

EU policies

The first set of topics (described in the table as EU policies) is the smaller one and consists of a set of discussions about the internal market conditions after the failure of the ECT going on in Italy. It is worth remembering that, as a consequence of the EU crisis, and parallel to the failure of the referenda in France and Holland, a series of discussions about the Euro was going on in Italy during 2005 and 2006, with some representatives of the centre-right coalition calling for Italy to withdraw from the euro-zone. It is also worth underlining the high level of politicization of the debate, Italian membership of the EU hardly being questioned for domestic reasons. Part of the debate about the ECT – and about Italy's role in the EU generally – was carried out during a period of electioneering. The European Integration process as a whole thus became a highly politicized symbol and the negative effects of the Internal Market on the Italian economy were used by the centre-right to attack Prodi.

This is also related to another dominant discourse, that on enlargement. A number of articles conceived the negative effects of the accession of new Member States in terms of the undermining of the EU's public space but, more specifically, in terms of the destabilization produced in the former internal economic and social area. The Bolkenstein directive, for example, was considered problematic because of the domestic impact of low cost workers who would be able to move freely within Member States. An entire set of stereotypes, often reported by journalists, was used to develop a negative perception of the widening of the EU to the east.

It is not surprising that “freedom of people and services” is the most frequently discussed subject within the set of topics related to the ‘internal market’. A very relevant article appeared in *Il Sole 24 Ore*, in which the author wrote about the increasingly negative attitudes found throughout former Member States towards (potential) new immigrants from Eastern Europe. The journalist explicitly claimed that the “Nos” were unjustifiably produced by such a state of fear (*Il Sole 24 Ore, September 8th, 2005*).

EU Polity

The general discourse on the enlargement process, however, has been about the second set of topics, those related to the EU polity. Looking at the ‘membership’ and ‘symbols’ categories, we can see that these are in fact dominant and widely addressed both by Italian and other nationalities’ political actors. This was particularly the case at the beginning of the period under examination, when the Turkish question and the forthcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania were widely addressed in

terms of their geographical, economic and identity impact on the future of European Integration.

A recurrent topic has been the common heritage of the European Union, which opens up a discussion on the third dominant discourse in the Italian sample, the one regarding identity. In particular – and this will be discussed further – in many articles one of the main issues has been that of the Christian roots of the European Union to be included in a new Treaty, this being Romano Prodi's position, for example, but not Massimo D'Alema's. In fact the latter emphasized the risks of defining a European Identity against something (Islam) on the basis of religious values (La Repubblica, 27.10.2006).

Both Italians and others have consistently contextualized the 'Turkish question' within a discourse about identity. For example, in August 2005 Karl Heinz Gasser gave an interview to Il Sole 24 Ore. In talking about the situation following the rejections of the Constitution, he proposed a new common referendum to take place simultaneously in all the European Countries. In this article he set the failure of the ECT in a broader context and also addressed the Turkish accession:

I hope full Turkish membership of the EU will not become a reality. We hope Ankara will become a privileged member of the EU, but we are against this nation being part of the European Union for a number of reasons: in terms of social policy, in relation to the protection of human rights, and also because of its geographical position, since 99% of its territory is located in Asia and not in Europe (Il Sole 24 Ore, August 2nd ,).

In a later article appeared soon after the decision to start the negotiations for Turkey's joining the EU, Andrea Bonanni, a journalist writing for La Repubblica, commented on the above opinion and explained the difficulties that this possible new Member State could create for the future development of the European Integration process and, in particular, for the definition of a European identity:

Everybody knows that Turkey's accession would radically question the nature, tasks and finalities of the European Enterprise (...). The accession of a country which is still far from sharing the EU's political culture and its economic development makes it inconceivable that a strong European identity could be established, capable of allowing the EU to develop as an independent actor in the international arena (La Repubblica, 04.10.2005).

The European identity discourse, however, is carried out within the parameters of the classical divide between religious and civic patterns and follows lines established by the essentialist versus constructivist debate (Cederman, 2000). The former position is based on the assumption that the source of a collective identity relies on the common features shared by a particular community, in terms of the ethnic, religious or cultural background which constitute the inhabitants' common heritage (see for ex. Smith, 1992), whereas the latter position is based on the idea that a collective identity is the result of the reinvention of a common past, through the selection of certain traits (Anderson, 1996; Shore, 2000) but also through the development of a demos which enables the citizenry to participate in the democratic life of a country. Both these discussions are relevant and more or less equally represented within the Italian *media*.

As regards the religious form of identity, it should be stressed that the importance of Christian roots became a topic soon after the failure of the referenda, when Prodi wrote a long article in *La Repubblica* entitled "The missing frame of our Christian Roots" (*La Repubblica*, 30.06.2005), in which he argued that Christianity should have been considered central to the development of a new sense of Europeanism:

A Europe which decries its past, which forgets its religious heritage and which does not consider its spiritual dimension, would not be able to complete the project into which we are putting so much effort: developing a Europe for everybody. (La Repubblica, June 30th, 2005).

This kind of argument emerged again over the next two years, particularly whenever the general discussion about the topic named the 'Future of the European Constitution' was addressed. An article that appeared in August 2006 directly quoted Angela Merkel as saying to Ratzinger that "*it is necessary to include a reference to Christianity in the ECT because it is a consistent part of the European Heritage*", during a meeting held in the Vatican City. (*La Repubblica*, August 29th, 2006).

On the other hand, some of the authors addressing the identity question justified their arguments calling for a kind of civic identification, through the enhancement of citizenship rights and advocating a Constitution that included participatory elements. From this point of view, the ECT could have been able to stimulate a European Demos, and its failure is considered as having undermined the possibility of developing a civic sense of collective identity. The French and Dutch Nos have been judged negatively since, as a consequence of the ECT's rejection, the possibilities for citizens to parti-

cipate in the EU's democratic life have been drastically reduced (Corriere della Sera, 5.06.05). Commenting on the scenario which led to the failure of the ECT, Giuliano Amato found the reasons for the European Crisis in the lack of a "*transnational public sphere, a European political system and a set of political parties able to mediate between the different national interests*" (Il Sole 24 Ore, 05/03/2006).

Finally, it is worth underlining that within the set of topics grouped in the EU polity section, another category directly linked to the discourse on Participatory Democracy emerged in 43% of the articles. This refers particularly to a set of statements in which people said there was a need to enhance the democratic bases of the European Integration Project in order to develop future options for the ECT. Some commentators and articles' authors, especially in the period following the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, described the crisis of Europe as mirroring the lack of democracy in Europe or, in some cases, finding in the French and Dutch opposition an expression of the active participation of those Member States' citizens.

The first thought was expressed by Stefano Rodotà in an article in La Repubblica, where he pointed to the failure of the Constitutional Project as the main expression of the democratic instability that has affected the EU for a long time (La Repubblica, 1.7.2005). Piero Ignazi, a leading Italian political scientist, takes a contrasting position. In a very interesting article in Il Sole 24 Ore, he said he considered the failure of the ECT in France and Holland to be the main indicator of an emergence of a European demos in the Habermasian sense and, moreover, as an expression of the crisis of the leading role of national political leaders. Thus, in this scholar's opinion, rather than being an expression of a lack of European democracy, the Nos represented a clear expression of the crisis of democracy within the National States (Il Sole 24 Ore, 4.6.2005).

Constitutional process

The third set of topics discussed in the 40 articles is related to the so called Constitutional process, including all the issues, strategies, and processes which directly concern the past, present and future of the European Constitution. The articles can be divided into two groups: most of them discuss future options for the European Integration process and the discourse on the future of Europe; a smaller group discusses past events and the discourse on the current European crisis.

As regards the latter subject, it is worth underlining that, as some of the articles concentrated are in the period between 2005 and 2006, most of them contain referen-

ces to features and aspects pertaining to the failure of the referenda. One could say – as already stated before in a less explicit way- that this is the period in which people appearing in Italian newspapers tried to point out the reasons for the failure, addressing the dominant discourse of the ‘crisis of Europe’ and linking their explanation to other dominant discourses such as those of enlargement, of European identity and of the lack of bases for participatory democracy. Initially, Italian journalists described this period with a diverse and quite creative series of labels such as catalepsy, failure, collapse, breakdown, impasse, ending, ditching, sinking, etc.

The so called future options for proceeding with the Constitutional process were not a real issue in this first period of time. Generally speaking the discussion was concentrated on the “future of European integration” (in a very abstract way) and, as shown in Table 6, this topic is the most common one.

TABLE 6. TOP 10 TOPICS

RANK	TOPICS	OCCURRENCE*		NO OF ARTICLES**	
		NO	% OF TOTAL	NO	% OF ARTICLES
1	M.03.13. Future of Europe/Future European integration	67	13	30	75
2	M.01.01.07. Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004)	65	13	24	60
3	M.01.09. National ratification failures	44	9	28	70
4	M.03.09. Reform Treaty	38	8	14	35
5	M.03.08. Mini-Treaty	31	6	11	28
6	L.01.02. Union's values (e.g. Christianity/Christian inheritance)	29	6	6	15
7	M.03.18 Future of the constitution (general)	25	5	12	30
8	M.03.15. Two speed-Europe	22	4	16	40
9	M.03.02. Plan D: Dialogue, Discussion, Communication	21	4	14	35
10	M.03.07. Discard ECT	19	4	11	28
	All quotations	500	100	40	100

* no of quotations including the respective topic

** no of articles that include the respective topic

Looking again at the time period considered, one could say that the real discussion on the different future options for the EU’s Constitutional Treaty started in September 2006, when Sarkozy gave a speech proposing the idea of a mini Treaty based on a long term presidency, a Foreign Minister, and a system of qualified majority voting. As explained in the first paragraph of this report, this could be considered the start of the ‘reflexive time within the reflection period’, in which political leaders around Europe confronted each other on the issues of the future of European integration, often

with aggressive undertones. Table 8 shows that seven out of ten topics concern the ECT's future options.

As already stated, a lot of discussion has been polarised around the positions of two political leaders, Tony Blair and Angela Merkel and, later, also around that of Nicolas Sarkozy. Furthermore, the structure of the news-making seems to have developed around the sets of alliances these three built up with other European political leaders in Europe, in order to pursue different future options for the Europe Constitution. A 'three block Europe', in which people coalesce around these three positions, has thus been represented in the *media*.

This polarisation is mirrored in the Italian newspapers which, especially since the end of 2006, have presented the following conflicting visions of the ECT's future: 1) the anti ECT block led by England and followed by Poland and the Czech Republic advocating a reform Treaty almost identical to the Nice Treaty; 2) The 'friends of the European Constitution' (using a formula expressed by Adriana Ceretelli on *Il Sole 24 Ore* 2/02/07) constituted by all the countries who ratified the document and led by Merkel; 3) the "Mini-Treaty" block, led by Sarkozy, advocating a document less solemn and substantive than the rejected Constitution.

Italian political actors, particularly Romano Prodi, Massimo d'Alema and Giorgio Napolitano, referred to and supported the second block, advocating that the Constitutional Treaty be approved, even though this would entail a 'two speed Europe', with a core group of members adopting the Constitution as it stood.

4. Relations and patterns of Europeanization

Another research task was to understand the patterns of Europeanization of the Public Sphere in the different European States under consideration. The question of the emergence of an EPS has not essentially been a question for academic debate. Since at least 2001 (but as a result of an historical process that began in the early seventies or even before), the European Commission has been proposing the development of an EPS in order to solve the problems of legitimacy and consensus that have characterised the Integration Process (European Commission, 2005; 2006). The White Paper on Communication Policy and the Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate have been strategically developed in order to stimulate the emergence of a top down public sphere (Bee, 2008). In scientific studies, views on the concept of a European

Public Sphere have been diverging and a growing literature has been trying to understand how the EPS can be structured. In a very schematic way, we can say that much of the literature has focused on the understanding of the Europeanization of national public spheres (Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Trenz, 2004).

In this paper I use the idea of Communicative Europeanization proposed by Liebert (Liebert, 2007). This consists of 5 levels, gauging the relation that actors at different levels have to each other, as can be seen in table 7.

TABLE 7 MODES OF COMMUNICATIVE EUROPEANIZATION

TYPES	INDICATORS
Segmented Europeanization	References to EU events, actors etc., but exchanges limited to MS communication community.
Vertical Europeanization	Synchronisation and convergence of MS communication communities, as a consequence of top-down EU mechanisms
Horizontal Europeanization	References to events and actors from other member states: cross-boundary mutual observations among different communication communities (symmetrical or asymmetrical).
European trans-nationalism	Cross-border overlapping of communications, interacting with foreign debates (symmetrical/ asymmetrical): – awareness of issues in foreign debates – direct inclusion of foreign actors – discursive exchanges, incorporating foreign arguments (positively or negatively)
Supranational Europeanization	References to collective European identity.

Source: Liebert (2007: 247)

The following table shows the connections between different actors, as analysed by the Italian newspapers.

TABLE 8. RELATIONS

AUTHORS/ACTORS	NATIONAL ADDRESSEES	FOREIGN NATIONAL ADDRESSEES	EU ADDRESSEES	ALL ADRESSE
	NO	NO	NO	NO
Own National actor	10	68	31	106
Foreign national actor	-	3	2	5
EU Actors	5	28	23	53
All relations	15	99	56	166

As can be seen from the numbers represented, the frequency of “segmented Europeanization” is very low: Italian actors rarely addressed other Italian actors. The dynamics of horizontal Europeanization, however, seem to characterise the sample selected for analysis, with frequent references to other nationalities’ actors. We must clarify whether these foreign actors have had a real voice in the Italian arena or not, in other words, whether there is a process of transnational Europeanization going on in the country. The answer is no. In fact, as Liebert (2007: 246) clarifies, this process entails more than the simple observation of foreign actors but “a more intense cross-border interaction with foreign discourses, giving non-national actors direct voice in national debates and/or engaging with foreign issues and arguments”.

This point was discussed above, when the dominant actors in the Italian case were introduced. More than having a real voice or engaging with foreign issues and arguments, Italian actors rely on other nationalities to legitimize their own positions, or to polarise opinion on certain issues for domestic reasons. For example, all the attention paid to the confrontational game played by Merkel and Blair should be read in a broader context; in which two basic positions, either for (the majority), or against, the ECT, were expressed by Italian political leaders. In other words, focusing so much on Merkel’s role was meant to support and develop the idea upon which the Italian actors in the sample widely agreed: the necessity of proceeding with the Constitutional Treaty.

Representation of “vertical Europeanization” seems to be quite meaningful in the Italian case, in so far as there is a quite consistent presence of top down debate addressed by the supranational institutions. Supranational Europeanization, defined by Liebert as “references to collective European identity”, though not the dominant discourse, as quite often been framed in the Italian case by a number of actors, mainly

Italian political leaders. They have stressed the need to think about the significance of a common set of principles, values and traits defined as being European.

Conclusion

The failure of the Constitutional Treaty after the French and Dutch referenda was a shock for Italian social and political actors, as the country has traditionally been pro-European and basically in favour of further integration. This shock is well represented in the articles included in the sample, which often describe the crisis in alarmist tones, but also with a sense of disillusion with the EU's political system. In general, the project of EU integration is not questioned as such, but the overall approach – often described as bureaucratic, not totally democratic, and too subject to domestic dynamics- is severely criticised.

A process of horizontal Europeanization seems to be going on in Italy; the frequent reference in the press to actors from other Member States is shaping Italian news-making on the ECT debate. The discussion is dominated by political actors and leaders, mainly working at the national, but also the European, level. In particular, reference is mainly made to foreign Heads of States and Governments – Angela Merkel and Tony Blair appearing more than anyone else – and then to leaders of the centre left coalition such as Romano Prodi, Massimo D'Alema or Giorgio Napolitano (President of the Republic since 2006 but a long time left-winger). The public, sometimes a European public, in expressions like "European citizens", "Europeans", "the European electorate" – but more often referring to Italian, French or Dutch citizens - is the third main actor. This needs to be considered as a peculiarity of the Italian debate, since it is directly connected to a larger discussion on the democratic basis of the EU and the lack of consensus about the EU's institutional architecture.

Dominant discussions have been the inclusion of a reference to our so-called religious heritage in the Treaty, the need to define the status of Turkey in (or out of) the future EU, the process of European enlargement, the symbolic and democratic dimensions of the integration process. These topics have been discussed as part of the 'constitutional process' discourse and more specifically in connection with the different possible future options for proceeding with the European integration process. Mapping out possible ways to overcome the state of crisis has been a fairly recurrent and prominent theme, people being – particularly the Italians – basically in favour of

a reformulation of the ECT with a few small modifications. The articles' authors, and also domestic political leaders, usually refer to other nationalities' actors in order to support or criticise their positions on the reformulation of the European Constitution. Reference to the European Identity question is quite common, but positions are fairly equally divided. Both the democratic and the symbolic and cultural meanings of the EU are widely discussed and it is considered essential that they be understood if the crisis of the EU is to be overcome.

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