



Italian Missions Abroad: National Interests and Procedural Practice

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Abstract

Italy has been increasingly active in international military missions since the end of World War II. This paper aims at showing that the procedures related to the deployment and extension of military missions abroad have several shortcomings. These procedures, which are focused mostly on technical aspects, are bound to certain time limits and do not ensure significant parliamentary debate or any kind of parliamentary debate at all. This negatively affects the identification and pursuit of Italian national interests in the deployment of missions abroad. Yet national interests are crucial: international missions are essential for foreign policy, but they represent a means and not an objective in and of itself. As a way forward, we identify a number of recommendations in the areas of law, policy practice and political debate that could improve the *status quo*.

Keywords: *Italy / Italian Parliament / Military missions / Defence policy / Foreign policy / National interest*

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Introduction

Several problematic aspects regarding the deployment of Italian missions abroad might be little known. For instance, there was no parliamentary intervention in as many as 30 missions out of the 124 launched between the end of World War II and 2010.¹ In addition, where the parliament did have a say, it was mostly in relation to the allocation of funds and not to the necessity of the mission. Moreover, political parties have often been unable to identify clearly the national interests pursued by a mission, or how these interests can be distinguished from the internationally shared values of peace and security. Unlike what happens in other countries, Italian missions abroad have rarely (perhaps never) entailed economic advantages, for example in terms of industrial cooperation or trade. The expression “national interest” itself is indeed one of the least used in the Italian political vocabulary.²

The procedures employed for sending missions abroad and extending their mandate have several limits, which become critical when it comes to defining national interests. In fact, these procedures negatively affect the need to discuss Italy’s role in international missions in relation to the country’s interests. In this paper we first provide some data on Italian missions abroad. We then consider the actors, the deployment of missions and their extension procedures, underlining the critical aspects related to what has become a consolidated practice. Finally, we address how recent government initiatives and the wider policy debate may improve the identification of national interests and their pursuit.

1. Italian missions abroad: facts and figures

Since the end of World War II to 2012, Italy has participated in 132 military missions, 25 of which are still ongoing. The majority (96) were deployed within international organizations as follows: 38 under the aegis of the United Nations, 27 under NATO’s leadership, and 23 within the EU.³ The remaining missions were deployed under the control of the Western European Union (WEU) (3), the Organization for Security and

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¹ Camera dei Deputati-Servizio studi, “Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari internazionali”, in *Dossier di documentazione XVI legislatura. Quaderni*, No. 4 (24 June 2010), <http://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/Testi/di0238.htm>.

² Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), “L’Italia e le missioni internazionali”, in *Documenti IAI*, No. 1205 (September 2012), p. 24, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1205.pdf>.

³ Camera dei Deputati-Servizio studi, “Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari internazionali”, cit.

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (2), NATO and WEU together (2) and finally the EU together with the WEU (1). In turn, 36 missions were deployed outside the framework of international organizations: among those, 9 were conducted in accordance with UN resolutions or were in some way linked to the UN.⁴

With respect to contributions to international organizations, Italy ranks first among EU countries in terms of personnel made available to the UN (as of January 2013 Italy contributed 1,121 military and police personnel), and sixth in terms of financing peacekeeping operations, providing 5 percent of the total contribution of UN Member States.⁵ As recently recalled by Minister for Foreign Affairs Giulio Terzi, Italy has provided 120,000 soldiers in 68 peacekeeping operations since the inception of the United Nations.⁶ Italy ranks sixth with respect to participation in EU missions within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and fourth in NATO with respect to both financial contributions and personnel, providing about 4,000 soldiers⁷ (for instance, in 2001 Italy deployed the largest contingent, second to the US's, in the NATO mission in Kosovo, KFOR). On average, Italy has deployed 8,000 soldiers in 30 missions per year. Italy also took over the UNIFIL command in Lebanon from February 2007 to January 2010 (and again since January 2012), twice the NATO KFOR command in Kosovo, the ISAF command in Afghanistan from August 2005 to May 2006, and has maintained the ISAF Regional Command West since 2006.

As this data show, Italy is traditionally committed to multilateral missions: "At least three different factors affect this choice. First, the opportunity to confirm and, possibly, reinforce Italy's role within international organizations. Second, the very nature of emerging threats, ranging from terrorism to piracy, which require multilateral responses. Third, the political sustainability of missions: legitimacy and bipartisan consensus among internal political forces are possible thanks to the collective nature of the missions. In fact, Italian participation in missions always takes place within international organizations - NATO, the UN, the EU".⁸

2. Actors, mission deployment and extension procedures

There is no *ad hoc* legislation in the Italian legal order on the deployment of armed forces in international missions.⁹ The procedure is based on both constitutional and sub-constitutional norms and on consolidated practice.

⁴ Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", cit., p. 6.

⁵ See the UN Peacekeeping website: *Troops and Police contributors: Contributions by country*, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>; *Financing Peacekeeping*, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>.

⁶ "Onu: Terzi, Italia rispettata per contributo a missioni pace", in *La Repubblica*, 26 November 2012, <http://www.repubblica.it/ultimora/24ore/nazionale/news-dettaglio/4262633>.

⁷ See the Italian Ministry of Defence website: *Operazioni militari*, <http://www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/Pagine/OperazioniMilitari.aspx>.

⁸ IAI and ISPI, "L'Italia e la trasformazione dello scenario internazionale fra rischi di marginalizzazione e nuove responsabilità", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 1004 (March 2010), <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai1004.pdf> (authors' translation).

⁹ Parts of this section are largely based on Alessandro Marrone and Federica Di Camillo, "Italy" in Heiko Biehl (ed.), *Strategic Culture in Europe*, Heidelberg, Springer, 2013 forthcoming, p. 193-206.

With reference to the actors involved, the 2011 *Italian Military Doctrine*¹⁰ identifies three levels of responsibility:

- The political-strategic level, including the constitutional bodies responsible for political guidance, thus the government and the parliament. A Political Strategic Committee (PSC) has been set up within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers chaired by the Prime Minister and tasked with the political and strategic guidance of crises. This level also comprises the President of the Republic and the Supreme Defence Council (SDC), chaired by the President of the Republic, who, however, has no executive powers. The SDC, composed of the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Treasury, Economic Development (and others upon the President's request) as well as the Chief of Defence Staff, is responsible for examining general political and technical problems, and fundamental decisions in the field of national security and defence. Therefore, it is within the SDC that prompt information on the government's decisions are gathered, also during crises, to allow the President of the Republic to carry out his/her function of Guarantor of the Constitution. Opinions expressed within the SDC can heavily influence the government's decision even before the matter is brought before parliament. The unpredictability and rapid evolution of crises may bring the President of the Republic to be the first and only counterpart of the government. Moreover, "since the parliamentary counterposition is focused only on the constitutional or unconstitutional character of the mission in object, rather than on its appropriateness, the opinion of the President of the Republic (prior to the interplay between government and parliament) on the compliance with the Constitution is inevitably politically significant".¹¹ The general guidelines of Italy's security and defence policy are defined at this political-strategic level, through the relationship of trust between government and parliament. Because of this, the government has to conform to the political guidance expressed in parliament.
- The political-military level, which includes the Defence Minister, responsible for implementing the guidelines worked out at the political-strategic level.
- The strategic-military level, represented by the Chief of Defence Staff who, according to the directives provided by the Minister of Defence, is responsible for the planning, deployment and use of the armed forces.

As regards procedure, the Constitution sets out (under art. 78 and 87.9) that "Parliament decides on the state of war and gives the necessary powers to the Government" and that the President of the Republic declares the state of war as decided by the parliament. This provision clearly highlights the centrality of parliament as a matter of principle. However, these legal provisions have never been applied in deciding upon the deployment and management of Italian missions (deployed mainly

¹⁰ Stato Maggiore della Difesa, *La dottrina militare italiana. Edizione 2011* (PID/S-1), http://www.difesa.it/SMD_/Staff/Reparti/III/CID/Dottrina/Pagine/Dottrina_Militare_Italiana.aspx.

¹¹ Giulio Maria Raffa, *L'Italia s'è desta? Profili giuridici della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari all'estero*, Tesi di laurea triennale, Scienze politiche e internazionali, Università di Pisa, 2011, p. 68 (authors' translation).

as a part of multilateral initiatives, as seen above) since they do not constitute acts of war in legal terms.¹²

At the same time, art. 10.1a of the *Code of Military Rules*¹³ describes a procedure based on previous norms and practices: the government takes defence- and security-related decisions, which are first discussed by the Supreme Defence Council and then examined and *approved* by parliament. The Defence Minister is then responsible for the implementation of the decisions. In most cases therefore, the decision concerning the use of armed forces abroad is taken by the government, which assesses whether or not to participate in international operations and is responsible for this decision vis-à-vis the parliament. As stated by Natalino Ronzitti, “the lack of *ad hoc* legislation has been filled by a parliamentary intervention either before or after the deployment of armed forces, or when the government submits the law decree issued to finance the mission to parliament for the passing into law. [...] Parliamentary control is only a political control and not a formal authorization of the use of force decided by the government like the authorization envisaged in case of ‘war’ according to art. 78 of the Italian Constitution.”¹⁴

As a result, parliamentary interventions¹⁵ have taken place at different times with respect to the beginning of the missions (before, during, after) and with different instruments, as reported below.

Type of act	Prior approval	Contemporary approval	Subsequent approval
Law	6	1	/
Law decree	25	3	21
Motions approval	2	/	1
Resolutions approval	6	2	3
Questions	1	1	2
Hearings	9	4	7
Total	49	11	34

Source: Authors' elaboration on Camera dei Deputati-Servizio studi, “Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari internazionali”, cit.

¹² Natalino Ronzitti, “Il diritto applicabile alle Forze Armate italiane all'estero: problemi e prospettive”, in *Contributi di Istituti di ricerca specializzati*, No. 90 (April 2008), p. 3-4, http://www.iai.it/pdf/Oss_Transatlantico/90.pdf.

¹³ Government bill No. 66 of 15 March 2010. See Decreto legislativo n. 66 del 15 marzo 2010, *Codice dell'ordinamento militare*, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legge:2010-03-15;66>.

¹⁴ Natalino Ronzitti, “Impegno crescente dell'Italia: Il conflitto in Libia e il ruolo del parlamento”, in *Affari Internazionali*, 2 May 2011, <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1745> (authors' translation).

¹⁵ Only the first parliamentary intervention has been considered, but in the majority of cases the Parliament has repeatedly intervened on the same mission. See Camera dei Deputati-Servizio studi, “Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari internazionali”, cit.

Considering that the figures above are based on a set of 124 missions (period: end of World War II to 2010), it is worth noting that the parliament did not intervene at all in 30 out of 124 cases. With respect to the remaining 94 cases, parliamentary approval was received prior to deployment of the operation only for 49 missions, at the same time as deployment for 11, and after deployment for 34. With reference only to the operations conducted in the framework of international organizations (90), the data shows 31 cases of parliamentary approval prior to the deployment of the missions, 7 cases of contemporary approval and 30 cases of subsequent approval. On 22 occasions the parliament did not intervene at all.¹⁶

The authorization to deploy armed forces abroad can be based either on a law decree converted into law by parliament within 60 days or a bill presented by the government and approved in parliament. The latter is rarely the case, considering that out of 85 missions:

- only 3 were based on a bill presented by the government (mainly ratification of international agreements concerning the mission in question);
- 26 were exclusively based on a law decree subsequently passed into law;
- 56 were based both on a law decree adopted after the mission had already begun, and then converted into law, as well as on ordinary law (in some cases filling the gap of law decrees not converted into law in time).¹⁷

Law decrees are thus the key legal instrument for the deployment and the renewal of Italian participation in missions. This is confirmed by a review of financing procedures that have changed over time, along with the increase of participation in international missions.

Initially, because of their exceptional and unpredictable nature, missions were financed by a Reserve Fund established in 1978, in the budget line of the then-Ministry of Treasury, and acting like a fund for unexpected expenditure aimed at covering the gaps

¹⁶ For some examples on the most significant cases, see Camera dei Deputati-Servizio studi, "Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni militari internazionali", cit. (authors' translation): *Parliamentary intervention prior to the mission*: regarding IFOR in former Yugoslavia, December 1995, the government previously verified the parliament's support, opening a debate which ended with a political guidance act. *Intervention contemporary to the mission*: NATO operation in Kosovo on 24 March 1999. On the same day, the Deputy Prime Minister informed the parliament and the government on the evolution of the crisis. On 26 March, a debate took place in parliament with the approval of two motions by the Senate and three resolutions by the Chamber of Deputies. *Intervention subsequent to the mission*: regarding the humanitarian mission NATO AFOR (or Allied Harbour) in Albania from 8th April 1999, in the context of the war actions in Kosovo the parliamentary intervention took place after the deployment of the mission through the approval of resolutions. In other cases, the government only informed the parliamentary Commissions (as for the military operation Deliberate Force by NATO in Bosnia in 1995). For the recent EU missions in Congo and Darfur (2005), and for the first NATO mission in Iraq (2004), the parliament expressed its opinion during the discussion on the law decree on financing, after the deployment of the mission. *No intervention*: UNMOGIP (January 1959) in India and Pakistan, UNIIMOG (August 1988) in Iran and Iraq, UNIFIL (July 1979) in Lebanon, UNTAC (July 1992) in Cambodia, MINUGUA (July 1995) in Guatemala, and the most recent MONUC (December 1999) in Congo, UNMIL (October 2003) in Liberia and Distinguished Games (July 2004) in Greece. They are mainly missions deployed following the obligation deriving from the participation in International Organizations.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

in the budget allocation.¹⁸ Even though increasing participation in missions abroad reduced the unpredictability of these operations, financing was based on the aforementioned fund until 2004, when a dedicated “Reserve fund for contingent expenses deriving from the extension of the mandate of international peace operations” was set out in the state budget law for 2004 (1,2 billion euros was thus established under art. 3.8. of the law No. 350 of December 2003). Nevertheless, this kind of fund has often turned out to be insufficient for overall expenses, with further financing needed and therefore taken from the “first” fund for unexpected expenditures (1978), or newly allocated through other instruments, such as law decrees. Moreover, this “second” Reserve Fund established in 2004 did not set up a permanent mechanism regarding the financing of missions because the sums allocated usually covered a period that varied from one to three years and, once the deadline was reached, there was no obligation for the budget to renew the financing.

As a matter of fact, from 2004 to 2011 (inclusive), missions were largely financed *outside* this “second” fund established in 2004. For instance, state budget law for 2007 allocated 1 billion euros to this Reserve Fund for each year from 2007 to 2009.¹⁹ But looking more closely, if we take 2009, the overall financing for missions - in addition to the 1 billion euros allocated to the aforementioned Reserve Fund through the state budget law for 2007 - amounted to 808 million euros for the period January-June (law decree 209/2008), 510 million euros for the period July-October (law 108/2009) and 187 million euros for the period November-December (law decree 152/2009). That means that 1 billion euros of the overall financing of missions in 2009 came from the “second” Reserve Fund established in the state budget law (since 2004) while 1.5 billion euros came from elsewhere, through the legislative acts mentioned previously. The resulting ratio is 1:1.5 and that means that most of the financing for missions is managed *outside* the dedicated Reserve fund and through law decrees that are instruments which should be used only in cases of “urgent legislation”, which can have a very short term timeline, and which present a series of negative aspects (see below).

In fact the use of law decrees brings both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, this mechanism gives the government the power to act directly and immediately in case of crisis. Law decrees allow for a rapid definition of the fundamental aspects of a mission (such as the coverage of financial expenditures, the duration and the penal provisions applicable to the military personnel involved). They also guarantee a certain degree of parliamentary control, comprising the lack of obligation to convert a law decree into law. Parliament may also resort to a confidence vote if it considers the government’s action inappropriate and can control it through instruments such as inquiries, hearings, interrogations, and questions (especially within the Foreign Affairs and Defence Commissions of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, which are places of ongoing political confrontation). As an additional guarantee, actions by the actors involved (government and parliament) must comply

¹⁸ Art. 9 of Law No. 468 of 5 August 1978. See Legge n. 468 del 5 agosto 1978, *Riforma di alcune norme di contabilità generale dello Stato in materia di bilancio*, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:1978;468>. See also Renato Somma, “La partecipazione italiana a missioni internazionali: disciplina vigente e prospettive di riforma”, in *Federalismi.it*, Vol. 9, No. 7 (6 April 2011), p. 23, <http://www.federalismi.it/AppI MostraDoc.cfm?Artid=17889>.

¹⁹ Renato Somma, “La partecipazione italiana a missioni internazionali...”, cit., p. 5.

with art. 10.1 and 11 of the Constitution, which forbid wars of aggression, and with the provisions of international law, including those allowing for the use of armed forces.

On the negative side, the recurrent use of law decrees in the past 20 years has reinforced the government's role, especially when law decrees are frequently reiterated because they have not been converted into law within the established time limits. Consequently, in the majority of cases, parliament's role has been reduced to a *posteriori* approval through the conversion of the law decrees into law. While parliament may adopt amendments to law decrees during the procedure of conversion into law, this has happened only very rarely so far. In addition, since conversion laws usually cover a period of six months, parliament mostly ends up deliberating on the financial aspects which are conditioned by legislative limits, rather than on a political assessment on the content of the mission.

Moreover a parliamentary debate which is limited almost exclusively to financing is not only the cause of "omissions", as it does not consider the appropriateness of a mission, but also generates a number of "distortions" related to the overlapping of competences and roles. With the current mechanism, members of parliament can end up being involved in decisions concerning technical-military issues which should, instead, fall under the competence of the strategic-military level. Consequently, political and operational responsibilities overlap creating inefficiencies, as in the case of decisions concerning the choice of the most appropriate arms systems for a specific phase of a mission.²⁰ Other distortions are those related to the allocation of funds to R&D defense investment programmes. As in the latest financing law decree devoted to the extension of Italian military missions (No. 215 of 29 December 2011), funds devoted to the missions were also allocated to industrial investments with the result of partly conditioning long-term R&D planning that characterizes defence technologies to the short-term planning of the financing law decrees. This period has been usually six months over the last years, but sometimes even shorter: for instance in 2009, the financing took place in three phases (the last covering only a 2-month period): January-June, July-October and November-December. In this respect, the initiative of Prime Minister Mario Monti to return to covering the financing for a one-year period²¹ and through the dedicated Reserve Fund (firstly established by the state budget law for 2004) is welcome and hopefully will be followed also by the next government. By covering a more extended period, this choice contributes to overcoming a certain perception of insecurity by the armed forces and by Italy's allies. Above all, it optimizes the efforts to achieve long-term planning.

²⁰ This was the case for the debate promoted by the Defence Minister himself in 2011 on the armament of four Italian air fighters in Afghanistan. "In that case the opposition to the deployment of other weapons with armaments comparable to those already on the field - in absence of changing the rules of engagement - could only be based on the will to please the electorate by opposing a decision of the government". See Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", cit., p. 25 (authors' translation).

²¹ According to the law decree for 2012, the extension of the mandate of international missions (art. 1) covered the entire period from 1 January to 31 December 2012. See Law decree No. 215 of 29 November 2011: Decreto-legge n. 215 del 29 novembre 2011, *Proroga delle missioni internazionali delle Forze armate e di polizia...*, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legge:2011;215>.

3. International missions, procedural shortcomings and the national interest

The conclusions we can draw from this analysis confirm that the procedures related to the deployment and extension of military missions abroad have several shortcomings. These shortcomings make it difficult to identify and assess the national interests involved. The procedures which are focused mostly on technical aspects are bound to certain time limits and do not ensure significant parliamentary debate or any kind of parliamentary debate at all. This negatively affects the identification of Italian national interests in the deployment of missions abroad.²²

Without pretending to be exhaustive, any new *ad hoc* legal framework for and/or any improvement in the practice and in the political awareness involved in the deployment and extension of a mission should consider several aspects with a premise: of the possible reform proposals, those focused on “procedure” (for both the deployment and extension of missions) are preferable to those focused on “content” which could, instead, be problematic and inappropriate. In fact, drafting for example a list of circumstances in which Italy can intervene could result in classifications that are not shared at either the national or international level.²³ In addition, defining categories of crisis could be inefficient due to the nature of crises and conflicts and their unpredictable evolution that require flexible and prompt reactions.

In focusing on *procedure*, we should first consider the compliance with the principle - established by the Constitution - of *joint participation* of the bodies responsible for political guidance (parliament and government) and guarantee (Head of State) in decisions concerning the international security of the state. This means that the above-mentioned bodies should be involved in an appropriate and balanced manner in the procedure: while assuring a strong role for government, so that it can act immediately in times of crisis, an equally a strong role for parliament, based on increased control and guarantee powers, is also needed.

Specifically, parliamentary intervention should always be *prior* to the deployment of a mission to assure effective guarantees.²⁴ In reality, as seen above, the large and

²² “The expression ‘national interest’ disappeared from the political vocabulary. It was enthusiastically replaced by multilateralism, meaning a concept which does not exist in the reality of international politics. [...] In any case, the participation in international missions allows the legitimization under the ‘ecumenical fetish’ of the UN, under humanitarianism, loyalty to NATO or to the EU or to the ‘major principles’ of the international order. This is more a rhetorical artifice, useful to gain consensus and hide drawbacks in other sectors. But in so doing we avoid a real debate on national interests, meaning whether it is worth intervening or not”. See Carlo Jean, “La via italiana alle operazioni di pace”, in *Affari Internazionali*, 2 July 2011, <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=1801> (authors’ translation).

²³ The Code of Military Rules (2010) reiterates the similarity between the state of war (as foreseen in the Constitution) and serious international crises (whose meaning, definition and declaration are not clear). See Giuseppe De Vergottini, “Il ripudio della guerra, il divieto dell’uso della forza e l’invio delle missioni militari all’estero”, intervention at the conference on *L’art. 11 della Costituzione, baluardo della vocazione internazionale dell’Italia*, Rome, 27 November 2012. Again, the relevant definitions of the President of the Council of Ministers’ decree on the national organization for crisis management appear generic and somehow tautological in order to allow different interpretations regarding national interests and crisis. See President of the Council of Ministers’ decree of 5 May 2010, <http://gazzette.comune.jesi.an.it/2010/139/1.htm>.

²⁴ Giulio Maria Raffa, *L’Italia s’è desta?*, cit., p. 87 (authors’ translation): “According to the Ruffino Resolution, the basis for the consolidated practice, parliamentary approval shall always be prior to the

ordinary use of the law decrees has reduced the role of parliament to a *posteriori* approval through the conversion of the financing law decrees into law. The content itself of these law decrees can imply distortions (to be avoided for the future), as those regarding the involvement of parliament in technical-military issues or in the allocation of funds to R&D defence investment programmes. A content that - it is the case for the latest financing law decree devoted to the extension of Italian military missions (No. 215 of 29 December 2011) - can be complex and sometime covers issues that are simply not related to international missions and that should not be part of an instrument of urgent legislation but rather be addressed separately in details through other instruments. The fact is that until now the parliament's procedure for the deployment and extension of instruments to guide Italian participation in international missions has been based mostly on law decrees for re-financing. However, the evaluation of a mission should be kept separate from the need to allocate funds. The latter could involve a law decree, while the former should be based on other procedures and instruments for an assessment of the overall strategic coherence.

In order to verify this overall strategic coherence dedicated parliamentary sessions debating the development of international missions are needed. To date, no formal mechanism is envisaged for the government to report to parliament on the situation of Italian contingents abroad. In this respect, the introduction under art. 10-bis of the Law No. 13 of 24 February 2012²⁵ of quarterly communications by the Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers concerning the situation of ongoing missions and development cooperation operations can represent "a first step towards the establishment of a dedicated annual parliamentary session. This session, concerning Italy's role, objectives and modalities in relation to international missions, would contribute to the development of an in-depth and constructive reflection thereupon".²⁶

It would be sensible that this novelty introduced by Prime Minister Mario Monti - together with the other two aforementioned initiatives to return to covering the financing for a one-year period and through the dedicated Reserve Fund - be followed also by the next government and that its application be monitored to record progress and enable improvements.

In this paper we argue that the procedures currently employed for sending missions abroad and extending their mandate impede a comprehensive articulation of national interests. International missions are essential for foreign policy, but they represent a

adoption of a decision. Nevertheless, that provision shall not be interpreted too strictly, since the government holds the power to address immediately and directly a situation of serious and imminent danger threatening the security of the Republic, recurring if necessary to the use of force". The Ruffino Resolution was approved on 16 January 2001 by the Defence Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and it rules a constitutional procedure for the deployment of Armed Forces abroad, attached to art. 1 of 18 February 1997 regarding the restructuring on the attributions of the Defence Minister. Based on law No. 25 of 1997, this resolution provided the basis for the practice established over the years. However its value was strictly political and terminated at the end of the relevant legislature (XIII) in 2001. See Camera dei Deputati-Commissione Difesa, *Risoluzione n. 7-01007 Ruffino ed altri*, 16 January 2001, http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg13/lavori/bollet/200101/0116/pdf/04.pdf.

²⁵ Legge n. 13 del 24 febbraio 2012, *Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 29 dicembre 2011, n. 215*, <http://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2012;13>.

²⁶ Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", cit., p. 44 (authors' translation).

means and not an objective. This point cannot be taken for granted: even at EU level, the European Parliament has warned against the possible replacement of foreign policy (CFSP) by missions (CSDP).²⁷ National interests should be identified in relation to a specific mission beyond general objectives.²⁸ According to a recent study, Italy's participation in international missions may be traced back to four main objectives: peace-keeping, enhancement of multilateralism, international prestige, loyalty to international commitments and allies (mainly NATO and the EU). The study argues that "The main reasons - peace, multilateralism, prestige and loyalty - are fundamentally universal, thus they can justify intervention all over the world. A force interposing between two fighting parties contributes to peace, and reinforces Italian prestige within the UN, be it between Israel and Lebanon, or the Tamil Tigers and the Ceylon government. This may result in a waste of energy, leading to the deployment of forces without any precise strategic criterion".²⁹

National interests have to be considered with a more strategic approach oriented to *short, medium and long-term periods* in relation to a specific mission. Debate should go beyond general interests, taking into consideration Italy's specific interests involved in each mission, clarifying if, how and how much Italian participation is needed to safeguard them, and providing relative guidelines for their pursuit.³⁰ National interests (and the means to pursue them) should be defined regularly and not only at the launching of a mission. The mandate of a mission should not be extended by default, insofar as national interests and Italian commitments evolve over time.

Among the possible national interests also *economic interests* should be assessed. The reality today is that economic interests are often considered a *taboo* for Italian missions. Some have pointed out that economic interests have never influenced the decision to participate in an international mission, and even that no direct interests have ever been taken into consideration. This is confirmed if we analyse relevant countries' imports from Italy (or their public investments): "This lack of direct interest is positive for the perception of Italy abroad, since it confirms that certain decisions are based only on political or strategic interests. *Perhaps we are too cautious or, as some argue, naïve, since we do not value our missions economically, at least to make up for expenses*" (our italics).³¹

²⁷ European Parliament, *Resolution on the development of the common security and defence policy following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty* (P7_TA(2011)0228), 11 May 2011, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:377E:0051:0065:EN:PDF>.

²⁸ Federica Di Camillo and Lucia Marta, "National Security Strategies: The Italian Case", in *Working Papers Elcano*, No. 39/2009 (October 2009), http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/content?wcm_global_context=elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/dt39-2009.

²⁹ See Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", cit., p. 24 (authors' translation): "Some missions of the last 20 years were linked to a clear national interest. Among those, operation Alba in 1997, an international stabilization mission in Albania led by Italy, and decided by the Government's initiative; several missions in the Western Balkans, whose stability is essential to Italy; or the naval mission in the Gulf 1 (1987-1988) to protect the maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz from the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq conflict and Atalanta/Ocean Shield, two missions against piracy in the Indian Ocean still ongoing".

³⁰ Stefania Forte and Alessandro Marrone (eds.), "L'Italia e le missioni internazionali", cit., p. 43.

³¹ Michele Nones, "Come si valuta una missione", in *Limes*, No. 3/2007, p. 101 (authors' translation).

National interests should be identified and *pursued*. This is why the opportunity of establishing “coordination structures” for each mission should be considered in order to manage, from the beginning, all aspects of the intervention, and to carry out these activities when the military component is no longer deployed. To this end, proposals like the following should be considered in order to introduce military missions abroad in the framework of a global plan for interventions: “The coordination of security and defence forces and of public and private investments would be considered, taking into account also the role of NGOs. For each mission an inter-ministerial working group would be created, with the aim of ensuring from the beginning management and monitoring of the mission with the most informal approach and access and circulation of information. The role of these working groups could be easily reinforced as follows: firstly, by nominating a representative of the government (not involved in administrative tasks) tasked full-time with following the evolution of the relevant factors related to the missions and able to overcome the divisions between the individual ministry’s competences; secondly, by nominating a minister of reference for each mission (taking also into consideration its evolution) acting on behalf of the whole government; and finally by keeping the government and parliament fully informed in order to ensure their involvement”.³² A comprehensive and continuous coordination beyond the military component and presence is therefore needed.

Bearing in mind the negative effects that current procedures have on the discussion of Italy’s role in international missions in parliament in terms of defining and pursuing national interests we would recommend improvements in the procedures first. Altering the procedures would create a more propitious environment for political debate, particularly in parliament. This, in turn, would be functional to the definition of Italy’s specific interests involved in each mission and to the guidelines for their pursuit. Such an identification of national interests, conducted regularly and within a broader strategic framework, is of the essence also in view of the ongoing cuts in the defence budget, which call for greater prioritization and fine-tuning of the objectives and instruments deployed in the context of military missions abroad.

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³² Ibidem, p. 104 (authors’ translation).

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