



AGENCY FOR
PEACEBUILDING



ITALY AND PEACEBUILDING

Agency for Peacebuilding

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ABOUT THE AGENCY FOR PEACEBUILDING

The Agency for Peacebuilding (AP) is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to promote conditions to enable the resolution of conflict, reduce violence and contribute to a durable peace across Europe, its neighbouring countries, and the world. AP is the first Italian organisation specialising in peacebuilding. This allows us to occupy a unique role in the European landscape: on the one hand, we interpret and synthesise relevant topics for the benefit of Italian agencies and institutions working on peace and security; on the other, we highlight experiences, capacities, and resources specific to the Italian system, which can contribute to the resolution of violent conflict.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Photo: Community peacebuilding group convening on the island of Madura, Indonesia (Credit: UN Women/Ryan Brown).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY _____ | 4 |
| THE NEED FOR A REPORT ON ITALIAN PEACEBUILDING _____ | 7 |
| THE GLOBAL SCENARIO _____ | 11 |
| ITALY'S INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE _____ | 15 |
| Foreign policy and the role of cooperation | 15 |
| MAECI e AICS: Peacebuilding not (yet) institutionalised | 18 |
| PEACEBUILDING FUNDING _____ | 22 |
| INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS _____ | 26 |
| ITALIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVE IN PEACEBUILDING _____ | 31 |
| THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL TOOLS AND INNOVATION _____ | 34 |
| The new Guidelines on the humanitarian-development-peace link | 34 |
| Civil Peace Corps: An unfinished pilot project | 35 |
| CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD: HOW TO INVEST IN PEACEBUILDING _____ | 38 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS _____ | 40 |
| APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY _____ | 42 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research aims to analyse the support provided by Italy to the peacebuilding sector, understood as including both institutions and civil society. Since the early 2000s, the field of peacebuilding and conflict prevention has been expanding, with interventions carried out by international organisations, political institutions and non-governmental organisations. It should be noted that civilian peacebuilding interventions are also officially considered part of development cooperation by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), although, overall, peacebuilding is still far from being a priority in foreign policy and international development decisions.

In Italy, peacebuilding has received limited consideration, often remaining relegated to a marginal role, without being recognized as a theme requiring a specific political intervention strategy. However, there is no lack of legislative references, such as that of the "General Law on International Development Cooperation" (Law 125/2014), which clarifies from the first article that the expression "development cooperation" is a synthesis of "international cooperation for sustainable development, human rights and peace".

While the Italian normative framework on peacebuilding and conflict prevention demonstrates a certain strength, the same cannot be said of institutional infrastructures. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (*Ministero degli affari esteri e della cooperazione internazionale*, or MAECI) has no directorates, offices or task forces dedicated to this issue. A specific structure for peacebuilding is not even present within the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (*Agenzia italiana per la cooperazione allo sviluppo*, or AICS); rather, the theme falls under the purview of the Emergency and Fragile States Unit. The work of the Unit emerges as capable of effectively linking the humanitarian and emergency dimension to that of development, while the link "peace" appears more in the background. For both MAECI and AICS, the prevention of violent conflicts and early warning are not functions to be performed directly; rather relevant information must be obtained from the European Union (EU) or from regional organizations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

From a financial perspective, Italy allocates more than two-thirds of its official development aid (ODA) to multilateral institutions with an approach that can best be defined as often "gregarious". As for funding for peacebuilding, the total of the OECD-DAC category "Conflict, peace and security" varies

considerably from year to year, showing strong discontinuity and remaining under one-per-cent of the total Italian ODA, similar figures if separated on the bilateral. Considering the ODA sub-category of "civil peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution", the figures become marginal and show strong variations also.

Concerning Italy's international missions, since 2014 there has been a gradual growth in authorised expenditure and in units of military personnel deployed, mainly on multilateral missions. A crucial critical point remains that the approval of the measures related to the missions, through the so-called "Missions Decree" (*Decreto missioni* in Italian), takes place every year with a significant and anomalous delay that does not allow an in-depth parliamentary debate. Furthermore, there is no informed exchange on data and analysis, but only a quick debate linked above all to aspects that are important to the media.

It should also be emphasised how the 2021 report of the "Missions Decree" itself made a specific note of the importance of enhancing "the instrument of civil peacebuilding, considering an ad hoc allocation in the future, and also taking into account the provisions of Law no. 125". The idea of an ad hoc allocation is therefore presented as a concrete step to be developed within the framework of the Missions Decree.

From a non-governmental point of view, Italy has historically had a very active civil society in international cooperation, from widespread small and medium-sized associations to international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in dozens of countries. Despite the reputation and the extensive work on cooperation, the specific skills of the main Italian NGOs on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflicts are very limited, whereas the issue has been taken up almost only by associations and movements rather than medium or large NGOs. This is due to several factors. First of all, as previously said, the MAECI has never implemented a policy and a budget line on peacebuilding. Furthermore, NGOs have no peacebuilding training and hardly ever have staff figures to deal with it. The almost total absence of an academic research structure in the field of peace studies, in particular on the role of civil society, also contributes to these limitations.

In this context, three relevant opportunities emerge to develop concrete steps in the short term. The first opportunity is to conclude the experimentation of the Civil Peace Corps (*Corpi civili per la pace*) with the publication of the third call and a final evaluation of the pilot initiative itself. Although it may be a programme with various legal and operational limitations, its conclusion and evaluation can provide significant information for the development of the sector in Italy. The second opportunity is represented by the approval and implementation of the Italian Guidelines on the Triple Nexus. In fact, clarifying the relationship between humanitarian aid, development and peace can improve operations in crisis areas. The document must not remain only formal, however, but should rather be immediately put to the test

through grants and projects in specific countries such as, for example, Lebanon—where Italy has been supporting peace and security with a particularly strong role since 2006. Finally, the 2022 Missions Decree could reserve a budget line on peacebuilding, in order to give space to Italian NGOs to work on civilian crisis management tools. These choices can then pave the way for more structural reforms, as described in this study and as reflected in the recommendations.

In light of the findings of this study, we provide recommendations for different sets of actors.

To the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation:

- Strengthen the support to the dense network of NGOs working in the field, particularly in fragile contexts.
- Establish a fund within MAECI for the realisation of peacebuilding interventions by civil society organisations in conflict or conflict-prone areas.
- Establish a desk or a task force dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- Start a working group with CSOs on the implementation of the Triple nexus and on peacebuilding.

To Italian Civil Society Organisations:

- Improve internal training on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.
- Devote renewed attention to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

To the Presidency of the Council of Ministers

- Implement the third call for tenders for the pilot programme of the Civil Peace Corps.
- Conduct an independent evaluation of the pilot programmes of the Civil Peace Corps.

THE NEED FOR A REPORT ON ITALIAN PEACEBUILDING

Since the early 2000s, the field of peacebuilding and conflict prevention has been expanding internationally, with interventions carried out by international organisations, political institutions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Alongside its institutionalisation at the international level, a significant academic debate around peacebuilding and peace consolidation has also developed since the mid-1990s. Despite this process of expansion, peacebuilding is still far from being at the centre of states' foreign policy, although it has gained significant space in the international cooperation of countries such as Germany, Sweden, or New Zealand.

Interventions that aim at peace construction carried out by civilian means have also been officially considered part of development cooperation since 2007, when the OECD-DAC¹ recognised that activities such as security sector reform, civilian and post-conflict peacebuilding, reintegration of ex-combatants, and small arms and light weapons control contribute to development goals². This passage is crucial, and it is one first step in the long process of linking the two sectors. As early as 1997, for example, the OECD-DAC defined conflict prevention as "a central development objective"³.

The European Union (EU), for its part, has progressively equipped itself with tools and expertise, both technical and political, for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. More than 20 years ago, on June 15 and 16, 2001, the European Council declared its support for the "EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts" which aimed at improving the EU's capacity to undertake coherent early warning, analysis, and action. Conflict prevention was already defined as one of the main objectives of the Union's foreign relations. Twenty years later, in early 2021, the EU has equipped itself with updated and usable tools, such as the new Conflict Analysis Guidelines of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission, and the Concept on Mediation approved by the European Council. These tools form part of a framework in which member states are called up onto coordinate, also in terms of available internal resources.

¹ [OCSE-DAC](#) the acronym for the Commission for Development Assistance of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

² OCSE-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#), 2021.

³ OCSE-DAC, [Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation](#), 1997, p. 9.

The field of peacebuilding has thus evolved since its ground-breaking conceptualisation by Johan Galtung in the mid-1970s⁴. The concept of peacebuilding was institutionalised by the United Nations (UN) in *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992 with a focus on post-conflict action, and expanded in the *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* in 1995 and by the *Brahimi Report* in 2000. In 2005, the United Nations established the Peacebuilding Commission along with the associated Peacebuilding Fund. Other international organisations, such as the World Bank, have also progressively dedicated more space and resources to peacebuilding. Peacebuilding grew steadily in the 1990s and early 2000s, while in the last decade its development has been challenged geographically and conceptually.

It should also be highlighted that peacebuilding itself has changed its priorities due to broader global transformations linked to various factors such as climate change, the expansion of international terrorism, cyber security, and the crumbling of trust in the multilateral system. The recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and the cruel war crimes that have emerged, as well as the civil war in Libya and the growing jihadist violence in the Sahel, or the disaster in Afghanistan, do not seem to leave room for civil and diplomatic instruments. Yet it is precisely a broad and sophisticated toolbox as well as a focus on prevention that can prevent, limit, or mitigate crises. This is exemplified by the fact that in recent years the fight against violent extremism in the Sahel through an almost exclusively military approach has produced effects opposite to those hoped for.

It must also be said that the internal political culture of each country and its history stand out as important factors in defining the greater or lesser support for international peacebuilding. Civilian instruments for responding to violent conflict require the participation of different levels of society to consolidate. At the same time, the abrupt changes of recent years, including shifts in the multipolar system and the spread of populism, can create significant changes in foreign policy trajectories one way or the other, including at the level of domestic political culture and policy. This context can offer opportunities for renewal also to Italy, which to date spends a much lower percentage than what other countries, such as Germany, invest on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

In Italy, peacebuilding has in fact received limited consideration by institutions and the academic world. The topic often remains limited to a marginal role, without recognising its specificity both as a strategy for political intervention and from the point of view of academic research. Italy is active and involved in many conflict areas, with important missions and investments in regions considered strategic, and through multilateral organisations. However, it does not show advanced internal capabilities on

⁴ Johan Galtung, "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding", in *Essays in Peace Research*, vol. 2, Christian Ejlertsen, pp. 282-304, 1975.

aspects of prevention and early warning, which could be functional elements of peacebuilding for a more effective and incisive foreign policy in conflict areas.

Therefore, this piece of research aims to carry out an analysis of the support provided by the Italian system, understood both as a set of institutions and civil society, to the peacebuilding sector.

Looking ahead, the study aims to be the first of a series of annual publications to analyse the support of all the actors of the Italian system with respect to their foreign policy choices on peacebuilding and crisis prevention.

Thus, the main purpose of this study is to contribute to the debate on Italian, European and international foreign policy with data and scientific content, examining the strengths and the areas for development of the Italian approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Furthermore, the long-term aim is to improve Italy's action in this field both by integrating new civilian instruments within the existing interventions under the country's foreign policy, and by paying more attention to crisis prevention measures than reactive measures and ex-post interventions.

After a first part devoted to the international framework, the study analyses the state of institutional and civil society capacities in Italy, the financial resources employed, and the innovative instruments currently in place. This part fills an almost total gap in the Italian literature in the field. Finally, the study concludes by providing recommendations broken down by actor. The analysis just briefly mentions peacebuilding research and philanthropy, topics that will be addressed in depth in next year's study⁵.

Concerning terminology, the reference concepts of the piece of research are *conflict prevention* and *peacebuilding*. *Conflict prevention* is intended in its current usage by major international organisations as the prevention of armed or violent conflict. The use of adjectives is sometimes omitted for comprehensibility in usage and to facilitate reading. Regarding *peacebuilding*, the term was originally conceived by the United Nations in the context of its efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction in post-conflict societies. In recent decades, peacebuilding has gradually taken on a more comprehensive meaning. This has led to a range of uses from state-building to bottom-up peacebuilding through a plurality of actors and civilian instruments.

Within this study, the defining elements of peacebuilding are as follows: the use of civilian tools, the long term and multi-level approach, the central role of civil societies, and working through all phases of conflict, from prevention to reconciliation. A guiding definition is the one developed by the OECD-DAC: "Peacebuilding and reconciliation focuses on long-term support to, and establishment of, viable political and socio-economic and cultural institutions capable of addressing the root causes of conflicts, as well as

⁵ An overview of the methodology used for the study is included as an appendix.

other initiatives aimed at creating the necessary conditions for sustained peace and stability. These activities also seek to promote the integration of competing or marginalised groups within mainstream society, through providing equitable access to political decision-making, social networks, economic resources and information, and can be implemented in all phases of conflict [...]. Peacebuilding involves both long-term preventive measures and more immediate responses before, during and after conflict”⁶.

⁶ OECD-DAC, cit., 1997, p. 86.

THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

Violent conflicts have constantly increased at the global level in the last eight years, while they were following a trend of decline between the mid-nineties and 2014⁷. At the same time, the gap between the least and most peaceful countries continues to grow⁸. According to the World Bank, conflicts drive 80 per cent of all humanitarian needs⁹. The rise of violent conflict can also be seen in forced displacements, with the number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) having more than doubled from just over 40 million in 2007 to over 84 million by mid-2021. Interestingly, these numbers had also decreased in the years before 2007¹⁰. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic added even greater stress, leading to increases in poverty and inequalities, and fuelling violent conflicts¹¹.

While the pandemic shrank global gross domestic product (GDP) by 4.4 per cent in 2020, the crisis has not stopped world military spending, which increased for the eighth consecutive year. Total global military expenditure rose, in fact, to USD 1.981 billion in 2020, an increase of 2.6 per cent in real terms from 2019¹². The Russian invasion of Ukraine will strengthen this trend and will lead to more NATO members passing the two-per-cent spending target.

Table 1. Main international documents related to peacebuilding (2010 – 2021)

| | |
|--|--|
| UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women Peace and Security | The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. |
| New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (2011) | Agreement between fragile and conflict-affected states, development partners, and civil society to improve the current development policy and practice in fragile and conflict-affected states. |
| Agenda for Sustainable | Pillar 16 of the Agenda aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build |

⁷ Strand, Håvard & Håvard Hegre. “[Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2020](#)”, *Conflict Trends*, 3, PRIO, 2021; University of Uppsala, [Uppsala Conflict Data Programme](#), 2021.

⁸ Institute for Economics & Peace. [Global Peace Index 2021: Measuring Peace in a Complex World](#), June 2021.

⁹ World Bank, [Fragility, Conflict & Violence](#), Updated 11 March 2022.

¹⁰ UNHCR, [Refugee Statistics](#).

¹¹ Fiedler, Charlotte, Karina Mross, Yonas Adaye Adeto. “[Implications of COVID-19 for conflict in Africa](#)”, *DIE Briefing Paper*, 12, 2021.

¹² SIPRI. [Military Expenditure Database](#), 2021.

| | |
|--|--|
| Development (2015) | effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels |
| UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth Peace and Security | UNSCR 2250 identifies five key pillars for action for youth: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships and disengagement and reintegration. |
| Stockholm Declaration (2016) | The Stockholm Declaration outlines what members of the International Dialogue must do to revive commitment to the New Deal, and take it to the next level, to achieve the UN's ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leaving no one behind, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected environments. |
| UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016) | UNSCR Resolution 2282 reaffirms the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, whereby the responsibility for sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders and underlines the importance, in this regard, of inclusivity in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account. |
| Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (2018) | The Council Conclusions are about the strategically coherent use of EU tools and instruments in conflicts and crises. |

In this challenging global environment due to the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, support for prevention and peacebuilding remains as vital as ever. Furthermore, other long-term shifts – such as climate crises, the evolution of digital technology, the marginalisation of multilateral institutions and demographic changes – have transformed peace work¹³.

Overall, peacebuilding is still far from being at the heart of foreign and development policy decisions¹⁴. Peacebuilding also remains underfunded¹⁵, especially in terms of the “quality” of funds¹⁶. For instance, the main agencies financed by the UN Peacebuilding Fund pursue what might be called a “multipurpose approach to peace”; which means that they carry out their primary missions of development or support to refugees, with peacebuilding only as an added objective¹⁷. Lack of quality also means a lack of diversity in terms of donors: Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom (UK) and EU

¹³ Branka Panic, [Data for Peacebuilding and Prevention Ecosystem Mapping: The State of Play and the Path to Creating a Community of Practice](#), 2020.

¹⁴ Sherriff, Andrew (et al.). [Supporting peacebuilding in times of change](#), ECDPM, 2018.

¹⁵ OCSE-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#), 2021.

¹⁶ Sherriff, Andrew (et al.), 2018, cit.

¹⁷ Jannie Lilja and Gary Milante, [Financing Peacebuilding Ecosystems](#), 22 June 2021.

institutions provided almost half of total peacebuilding-related ODA¹⁸ and the 22 donors outside of the top ten represented only about 8% of total spending on peacebuilding¹⁹. As argued by some analysts, counting on a small number of governmental funders points to a vulnerability of the peacebuilding system due to possible changes at the domestic and international level. This is indeed the scenario that confronts the EU and member countries because of the war in Ukraine: many politicians and leaders are now moving towards increasing military budgets, but in a context of limited resources, these may be taken from diplomacy, prevention and peacebuilding budgets. As it is, "Conflict, peace and security" already represent a small component of ODA expenditure. Any changes to this, even limited ones, would as such have outsized consequences for how the sector operates. As military spending rises, "Conflict, peace and security" is still a relatively small area of ODA expenditure: It represents roughly two-per-cent of all aid from OECD-DAC members²⁰.

A quantitative analysis may help to give clarity to the size of what this report refers to as the peacebuilding sector. In the OECD-DAC categories for ODA, the term "peacebuilding" covers a broader range of activities than the other codes related to peace and security. 'Civilian peacebuilding' (code 15220) represents, as such, some 50% of spending on 'Conflict, peace and security' (code 152) by all OECD-DAC donors, and 52% of such spending by DAC countries.

Table 2. OCSE-DAC Code O152, "Conflict, peace and security"

| | |
|-------|--|
| 15210 | Security system management and reform |
| 15220 | Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution ²¹ |
| 15230 | Participation in international peacekeeping operations |
| 15240 | Reintegration and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control |
| 15250 | Removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war |
| 15261 | Child soldiers (prevention and demobilisation) |

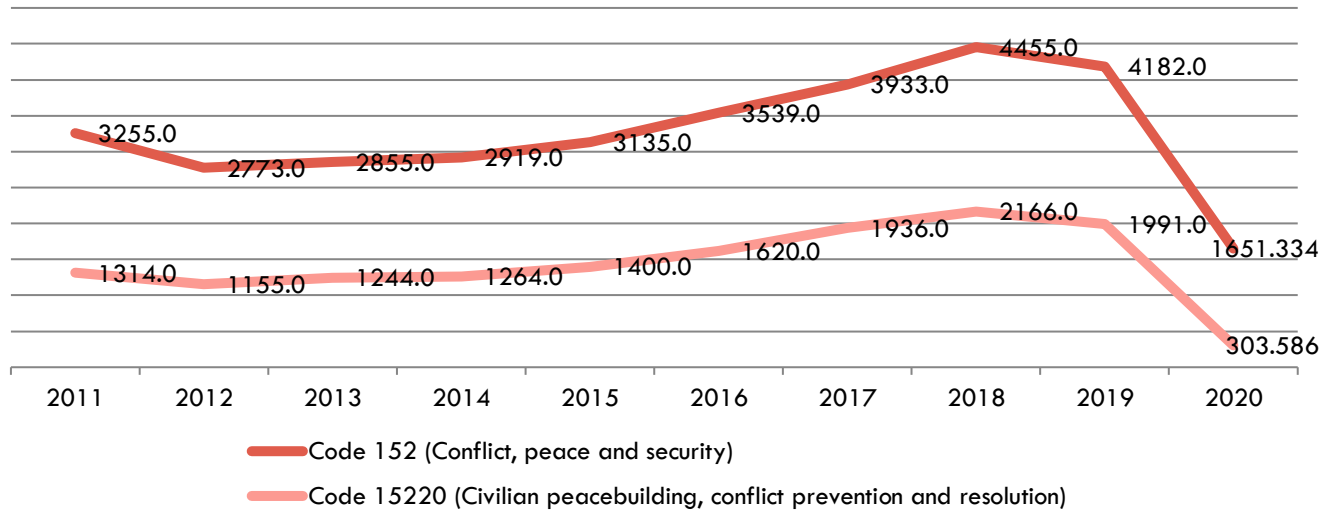
¹⁸ OCSE-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#), 2021.

¹⁹ Sherriff, Andrew (et al.), 2018, cit.

²⁰ OCSE-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#), 2021.

²¹ Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution is defined as "Support for civilian activities related to peace building, conflict prevention and resolution, including capacity building, monitoring, dialogue and information exchange. Bilateral participation in international civilian peace missions such as those conducted by the UN Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) or the European Union (European Security and Defence Policy), and contributions to civilian peace funds or commissions (e.g. Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding thematic window of the MDG achievement fund etc.)."

Figure 1. ODA, codes 152 e 15220 (all donors, in millions of US dollars)



Source: Data OECD-DAC

A last financial issue concerns the channel of delivery for “Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution” for all donors. It should be considered that peacebuilding is like an ecosystem²² where the implementers are diverse, ranging from civil society organisations, to multilateral and regional organisations. This diversity of ecosystem is a point of strength on and of its own, as they have complementary roles, perspectives and skills, and it should be supported²³.

²² Branka Panic, cit. 2020.

²³ Jannie Lilja and Gary Milante, cit., 2021.

ITALY'S INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

Foreign policy and the role of cooperation

Italian foreign policy has traditionally moved within three main circles: Europe, the Mediterranean and transatlantic relations. Despite some variations in the approach to relations with the EU, the United States of America (USA), Russia and China (depending on political contingencies of Italian governments and also of international partners), Europeanism and Atlanticism remain the two main pillars of Italian foreign policy. At the same time, over the last eight years, the concept of the Mediterranean has progressively expanded to include the Sahelian-Saharan strip (now considered the "third circle and a half"). This is due both to the greater attention of the main international players towards the Sahel, and to the centrality of migratory flows in Italian foreign policy.

In operating within these three circles, Rome has tended to maintain a gregarious approach to other European powers, such as France and Germany, or to generally hold true to Atlanticism. Alongside the fact that Italy has almost always followed Washington's lead on major international security issues, at the European level it has tended to keep an eye on Paris and Berlin, while in the Mediterranean it has rarely sought individual initiatives or leadership on specific matters. The same idea is expressed by the concept used by some authors of "followership" as a strategy Italy uses to be part of the international community and preserve or improve its status²⁴.

Over the past decades, some exceptions have been represented by "hybrid diplomacy", a synergic action between public institutions and civil society organisations. One example has been the Italian government's support to the Community of Sant' Egidio for the peace process in Mozambique or Italy's championing freedom of religion or the International Criminal Court²⁵. Overall, Italy has always had to make diplomacy its most refined tool and has preferred multilateral approaches in the international sphere. In post-war history, this has made it an actor more inclined to pursue the path of peace and harmony among nations than to open international conflicts (although it has contributed to the military interventions carried out within NATO). In addition, a progressive ramification between political interests

²⁴ Andrea Carati & Andrea Locatelli, "Cui prodest? Italy's questionable involvement in multilateral military operations amid ethical concerns and national interest", *International Peacekeeping*, 24:1, 2017.

²⁵ Raffaele Marchetti, *La diplomazia ibrida italiana. Come il governo e la società civile cambiano il mondo insieme*, Mondadori, 2017.

and international economic-commercial interests should also be noted, with an almost exclusive focus on the latter²⁶. For this reason, "peace is in the Italian interest that trades with all regions of the world"²⁷.

In addition to acting primarily as a gregarious player for strategic reasons, Italy also tends to delegate in terms of policy, as is clearly visible in the context of international cooperation. **Indeed, Italy has historically left a large portion of its resources allocated to multilateral cooperation** – i.e. actually allocating resources to international organisations and agencies – and keeping a smaller portion for bilateral cooperation, i.e. direct relations with individual low or middle-income countries. On average, between 2010 and 2019, Italy directed 62% of its official development aid to multilateral institutions (68% in 2019)²⁸. This trend used to be on a more pronounced scale and has progressively declined, but it remains pronounced compared to other OECD countries.

Overall, considering that Italy is a G7 country and one of the six founders of the European Union, it emerges as a foreign policy actor that works below its potential in areas such as international cooperation and mediation. The Italian foreign policy on conflict prevention and peacebuilding should therefore be evaluated in this framework – also starting from some key elements of international cooperation policy.

The "General Law on International Cooperation for Development" (Law 125/2014) makes it clear from the first article that the expression "development cooperation" is a synthesis of "international cooperation for sustainable development, human rights and peace"²⁹. Moreover, it immediately refers to article 11 of the Italian Constitution and includes among its fundamental aims "to prevent conflicts, support processes of pacification, reconciliation, post-conflict stabilization, consolidation and strengthening of democratic institutions"³⁰. In the Italian legal system, therefore, peace work is enshrined as a fundamental and necessary component of the normative framework for development cooperation.

MAECI's three-year planning document supports this approach within its vision of bilateral cooperation action. This document indeed "has as its main reference the 2030 Agenda and its five pillars 'People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnerships'". The same is valid for Italy's bilateral cooperation, also to strengthen the political and solidarity partnerships that enhance international relations for mutual benefit and in support of peace processes. In addition, the document states that "Sustainable Development Goal 16 will continue to be a priority for Italian Cooperation" and that "in the three-year

²⁶ Emanuele Russo, "[Una Penna Spuntata](#)", *Human Security*, n. 12, 2020

²⁷ AP, research interview no. 10, 15 Feb. 2022.

²⁸ OECD-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#).

²⁹ On the first page, the text states: "International cooperation for sustainable development, human rights, and peace, hereinafter referred to as development cooperation" (General Framework on International Cooperation for Development, August 11, 2014).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, art. 2 c. 3

period, Italy will ensure its contribution to programmes aimed at supporting the processes of reconstruction, civilian stabilisation and peacebuilding"³¹.

Italy's National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

An issue on which Italy has been engaging already for quite some time is the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. This was created in 2000 with the adoption on the part of the UN Security Council of Resolution 1325, which aimed to reinforce Member States' actions to protect women and to promote their participation in decision-making processes, in particular on peace and security. In the years since the adoption of the Resolution, the main tool that States have been using to implement the Agenda has been the national action plans (NAP). To date, 98 countries around the world have adopted NAPs on Women, Peace and Security³².

Italy adopted its first NAP in 2010, then in 2014, 2016 and, lastly, in 2020. This last one, the fourth, will remain in force until 2024. All Plans have maintained over the years the same structure, with objectives largely aligned with the commitments made in the context of Resolution 1325, and with particular attention to increasing the participation of women in armed forces, including in peacekeeping missions to which Italy is a personnel contributor.

The development and monitoring of the Plan falls under the responsibility of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights (*Comitato Interministeriale per i Diritti Umani*, or CIDU), within MAECI, which coordinates the activities under the purview of the Plan through a permanent working group. This mechanism includes representatives from all relevant ministries, the most important of which are MAECI and the Ministry of Defence, and also representatives from civil society. This format has allowed for somewhat regular exchanges and the emergence of new elements, for example a reference to the need to increase the leadership of women in mediation processes, a theme that has been integrated more and more from one plan to the next.

³¹ MAECI, [Cooperazione internazionale per lo sviluppo. Documento triennale di programmazione e di indirizzo 2021-2023](#), 2021, p. 9, 22 e 23.

³² [National Actions Plans: At a Glance](#), Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

MAECI e AICS: Peacebuilding not (yet) institutionalised

While the Italian regulatory framework on peacebuilding and conflict prevention shows a certain level of coherence, the same cannot be said of the respective institutional infrastructure. **In fact, MAECI has no departments, offices or task forces dedicated to this area.** An office with this focus could have various locations, such as within the Directorate General (DG) for Political and Security Affairs or within the DG for Development Cooperation. However, none of them have dedicated desks or even specialised staff.

While in countries such as Sweden and Germany there are focal points, at MAECI any work on peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflicts is decentralised and the individual activities are the responsibility of the regional offices. In this regard, there is a comparative disadvantage when placing peacebuilding in an informal framework. Thus, for example, in European focal point meetings on various thematic aspects (e.g., security sector reform, deradicalisation, or mediation) often only officials from the geographic offices contribute, with obvious limitations in terms of specialised expertise. This also limits Italy's participation in the European Institute for Peace (EIP)³³, of which it is a founder and donor³⁴.

According to various analysts and researchers, the "Peace and security" context appears to be dominated by the Ministry of Defence. Development cooperation is present, albeit with limited parameters and approaches. What is lacking in Italy is a more "foreign affairs" vision of this sector, one that could entail multiple competences and operational tools, including those of peacebuilding³⁵. Indeed, when faced with complex and non-intuitive scenarios such as Afghanistan and the Sahel, MAECI's officials run the risk of not finding the appropriate tools, and thus end up leaving the issue exclusively in the field of Defence and following multilateral cooperation in traditional areas of development and humanitarian aid. Overall, it can only follow that "Italy has always been reluctant to be a *penholder* and take the lead on any international and conflict resolution dossier"³⁶.

A specific structure for peacebuilding is not present within AICS either, but this issue is related to the work of the Emergency and Fragile States Unit. According to sources in AICS, the Agency has been far-sighted in considering crises and conflicts to be addressed not only from an emergency perspective, but also from a development perspective. The Unit works in close coordination with those who follow programming in fragile states and in close contact with foreign offices³⁷. The work of the Office is thus capable of effectively linking the humanitarian and emergency dimension to that of development, while

³³ The [European Institute of Peace](#) (EIP) is an independent institute founded in 2014 by eight European governments including Italy.

³⁴ AP, research interview no. 5, 1 Feb. 2022.

³⁵ AP, research interview no. 3, 22 Dec. 2021

³⁶ AP, research interview no. 9, 11 Feb. 2022.

³⁷ AP, research interview no. 4, 31 Jan. 2022.

the "peace" nexus appears to be more in the background. Work in contexts of fragility is also understood to be linked to marginalisation and support to the most vulnerable groups (women, children, disabled, etc.) in line with the World Bank's approach³⁸. According to the OECD-DAC guidelines, AICS recognises the importance of the *Do No Harm* approach, while peacebuilding is understood primarily as more indirect peace work, "in the sense of cooperation, reconciliation, community work, and work with institutions"³⁹.

For both MAECI and AICS, conflict prevention and early warning are not functions to be carried out directly. According to some sources in MAECI, information on early warning comes from the OSCE and the EU, and possibly from Italy's intelligence services⁴⁰. In fact, "at the moment early warning is entrusted to the European plan, which is advanced; there is no Italian exercise on this juncture"⁴¹. Concerning AICS, it does not concern them much, rather just as a reflection. Indeed, while "AICS deals with cooperation, the Ministry deals with the diplomatic side". This is a very different approach from that of Germany, for example, which in 2017 published the "Guidelines for Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace", a 160-page text that was followed two years later by an "Inter-Ministerial Operations Manual" on the same issue⁴².

The lack of space for conflict prevention is also confirmed by political sources: "few believe in the possibility of conflict prevention. There is a lot of room for improvement"⁴³. Most international missions are seen as "monitoring" or "Takuba, the United Nations missions in Libya and the Horn of Africa are more of a targeted presence to know what is happening rather than preventing", leaving prevention only to the diplomatic and political sphere, as in Iraq⁴⁴.

Overall, Italian cooperation lacks an overall, long-term vision of the strategies and tools to be developed. It is emblematic that Italy's "Three-year Programming and Steering Document" (*Documento triennale di programmazione e di Indirizzo*, or DTPI) on international cooperation ratifies the status quo rather than planning evolutions. As presented by the OECD-DAC, "the legal requirement to submit a new DTPI every year undermines the strategic value of the document as a medium-term framework. Stakeholders find it unclear to what extent the guidance provided for each three-year period is certain. [...] The limited strategic value does not do justice to the consultative process and the massive amount of

³⁸ United Nations; World Bank. 2018. [Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict](#). World Bank, 2018.

³⁹ AP, research interview no. 4, 31 Jan. 2022.

⁴⁰ AP, research interview no. 11, 15 Feb. 2022.

⁴¹ AP, research interview no. 5, 1 Feb. 2022.

⁴² The Federal Government, [Federal Government of Germany Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace](#), June 2017; e [Operations Manual Interministerial Approach to Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts and Building Peace](#), July 2019.

⁴³ AP, research interview no. 3, 25 Jan. 2022.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

work involved in developing three-year planning documents"⁴⁵. Planning in the medium term is thus a "conservative snapshot of what has been done". There is a tendency not to change much in the way of procedures and international standards, but to follow the indications of the political referent who become, effectively, the "point of synthesis"⁴⁶.

Given the lack of programming, it is difficult to have new approaches and tools emerge. While AICS tries to incorporate and integrate some innovative technical aspects for the benefit of transparency and efficiency – although still with fears and limitations on the "peace nexus" – MAECI's DG for Development Cooperation (DGCS) does not take action on aspects such as peacebuilding unless it is considered a priority by the Vice-Minister in charge of cooperation. Some internal changes, such as internal auditors, have arisen because they have been requested by international organisations or by Brussels. They are, however limited to management aspects⁴⁷. In addition, some practical management matters have not been encouraging innovation. For example, the DGCS has not had its own dedicated budget for a long time, whereas it now has one for expenses such as evaluation and communication. Another limitation in terms of innovation is that there is no external debate that might foster new ideas and approaches⁴⁸. DGCS does not seem to adopt a *Do No Harm* and conflict sensitivity approach. Overall, however, it is felt that the expertise of the diplomatic corps is sufficient to apply a conflict-sensitive approach to development cooperation⁴⁹.

The absence of an office or task force dedicated to peacebuilding is perceived by some MAECI officials as a structural limitation on which the Ministry should reflect⁵⁰. In the DG for Political Affairs, for example, there is also a sense of regret that peacebuilding is not one of the unit's core businesses, and it would be desirable to develop it further, especially in a European projection and by inserting it into a logic of integrated approach: "We need to find a forum to discuss peacebuilding. At the moment, there is an informal grouping on peacebuilding with periodic meetings where experiences and ideas on projects can be exchanged. [...] It is important to address these structural deficiencies"⁵¹. These limitations also affect the European projection. Internal exchanges between DGCS and DGAP on the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), for example, are very limited.

⁴⁵ OECD-DAC, [OECD 2019 Peer Review of Italy's Development Cooperation](#), May 2020, p. 43.

⁴⁶ AP, research interview no. 10, 15 Feb. 2022.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ AP, research interview no. 5, 1 Feb. 2022.

⁵¹ Ibid.

For other diplomats, however, there is not necessarily a need. For example, they believe that the diplomatic apparatus is sufficient to support mediation⁵². Italy may also occasionally support dialogue mechanisms on human rights, democracy, or support track-two mediation processes (second level mediation between non-state actors), such as that done by the Community of Sant' Egidio, but it is not a programmatic objective. Therefore, there is no perception of the fact, or at least not enough reflection, that staff dedicated to these issues and expert support can represent an added value.

In conclusion, the relationship between MAECI (and DGCS in particular) and AICS remains complex and it does not appear always based on mechanisms of complementarity and mutual trust. On the one hand, DGCS considers AICS to be limited in terms of political competencies and overall vision. While at the Agency, the Directorate General often appears distant from cooperation practices and international standards. This separation inside the Ministry represents a constraint for the Italian cooperation system in its various declinations, including peacebuilding.

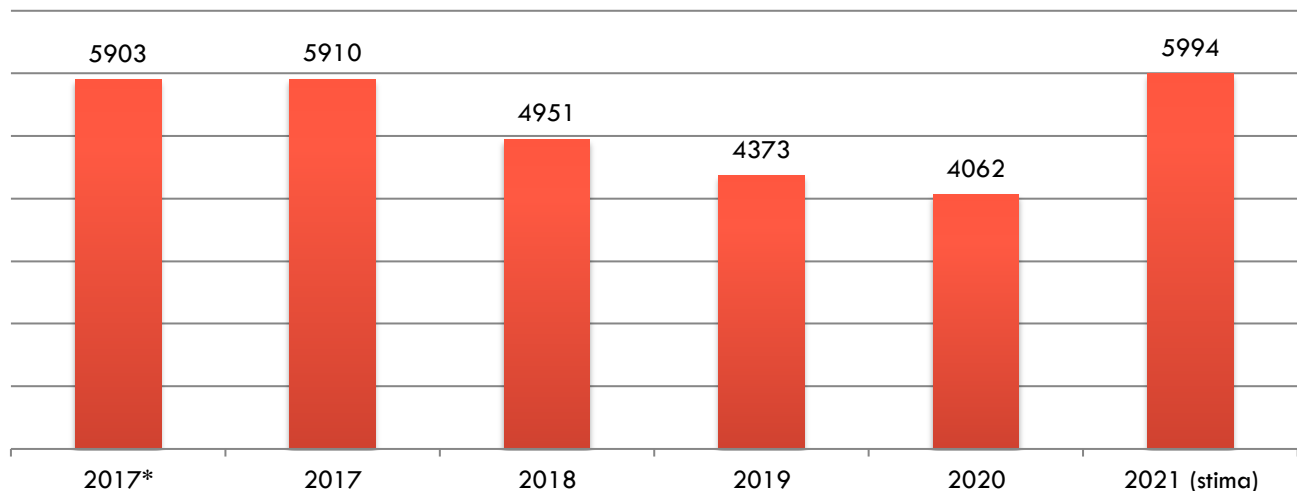
⁵² AP, research interview no. 11, 15 Feb. 2022.

PEACEBUILDING FUNDING

Italy allocates over two-thirds of its official development aid to multilateral institutions. As presented in the previous section, this approach is due to both a lack of long-term planning and internal management limitations within MAECI, such as administrative and accounting problems⁵³.

Overall, in terms of funding for official development assistance, Italy is the tenth largest contributor in the world with around 4.1 billion euros. From 2017 to 2020, the contribution decreased by 31 per cent, reaching around 0.22 per cent of GDP. The strategic priority is migration management in the Mediterranean, although since 2020 Italy has invested in multilateral measures to combat the pandemic, such as *Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance*⁵⁴.

Figure 2. ODA, Total flux (in million of US dollars)⁵⁵



Source: Data OECD-DAC re-elaborated by DonorTracker.org.

At the end of 2021, Italy's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marina Sereni, re-started a growth trend in the country's official development aid that will project it at 0.24% of GDP in 2023 and 0.27% in 2026, and that should also see an increase in resources for the bilateral channel⁵⁶. Compared to the last few

⁵³ AP, research interview no. 10, 15 Feb. 2022.

⁵⁴ Data and image are taken from <https://donortracker.org/country/italy>

⁵⁵ Nel 2017, gli aiuti allo sviluppo erano ancora calcolati usando un metodo basato sul flusso di cassa, da allora sostituito.

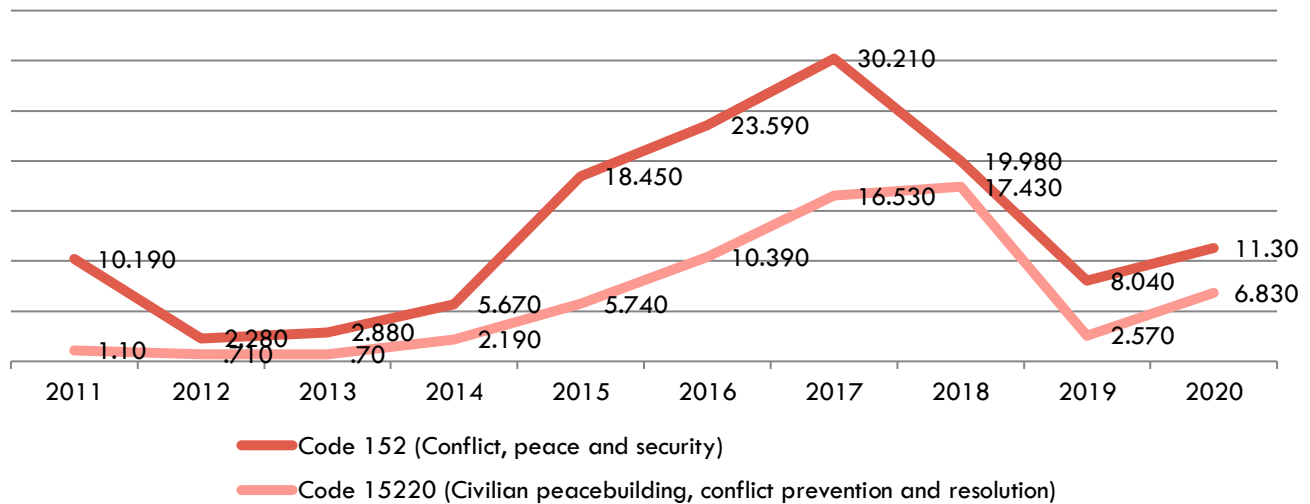
⁵⁶ Openpolis, [Le prospettive della cooperazione e la legge di bilancio 2022](#), 7 Jan. 2022

years, this represents a reversal of a trend, albeit minimal, which will have to be confirmed in the annual budget laws.

Regarding peacebuilding, the total for the OECD-DAC category "Conflict, peace and security" (code 152) varies considerably from year to year. Thus, between 2012 and 2019, spending has ranged from \$2,210 million in 2012 to \$29,268 million in 2017. In percentage terms, the figure remains below one-per-cent of the Italian contribution. Similar data are observable when unbundled on a bilateral basis⁵⁷.

If the OECD-DAC 15220 sub-code ("Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution")⁵⁸ is considered, the figures from 2012 to 2019 range from almost \$700,000 in 2014 to over \$16 million in 2018 (including over \$11 Million for the OSCE Mission in Ukraine)⁵⁹.

Figure 3. Italy's ODA, codes 152 e 15220 (in millions of US dollars)



Source: Data OECD-DAC

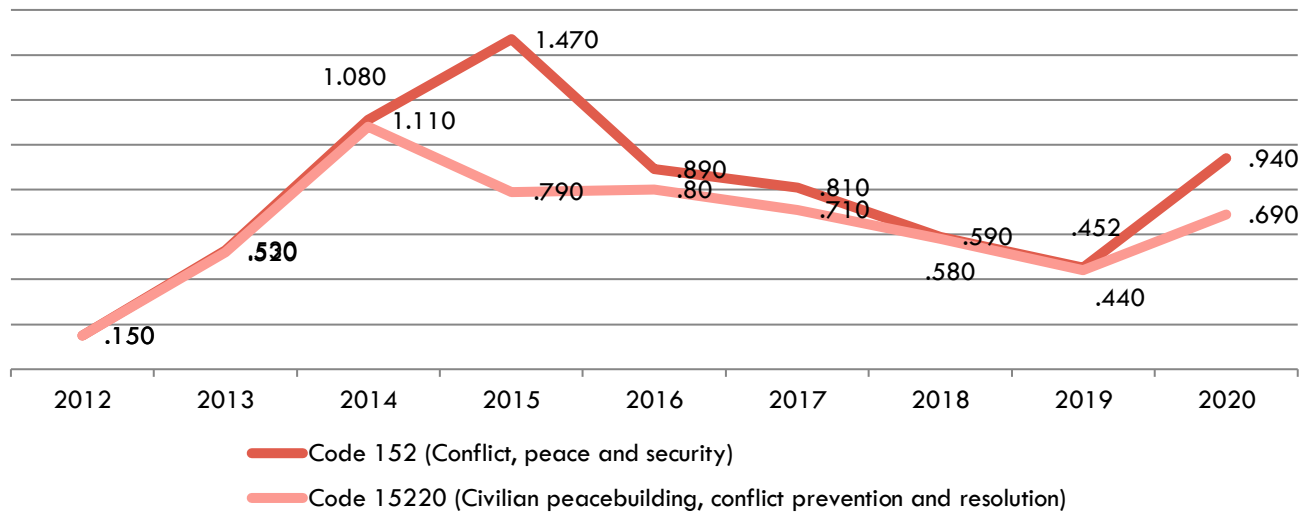
When considering the channels through which funding is implemented, the majority of ODA is channelled through multilateral organisations. Under the heading "NGOs and civil society" the figures drop significantly over the 2012-2019 period, ranging from \$142,000 in 2012 to \$778,000 in 2016.

⁵⁷ OECD-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#)

⁵⁸ Includes support to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution, including capacity building, monitoring, dialogue and information exchange, and bilateral participation in international civilian peacekeeping missions and contributions to civilian peace funds or commissions.

⁵⁹ OECD-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System \(CRS\)](#)

Figure 4. Italy's ODA only to NGOs, codes 152 e 15220 (in millions of US dollars)



Source: Data OECD-DAC

The contribution of Italian official development aid to peacebuilding and conflict prevention is therefore extremely limited, inconstant, and channeled mainly through international organisations, while very small funds are allocated to non-governmental subjects.

Italy and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund

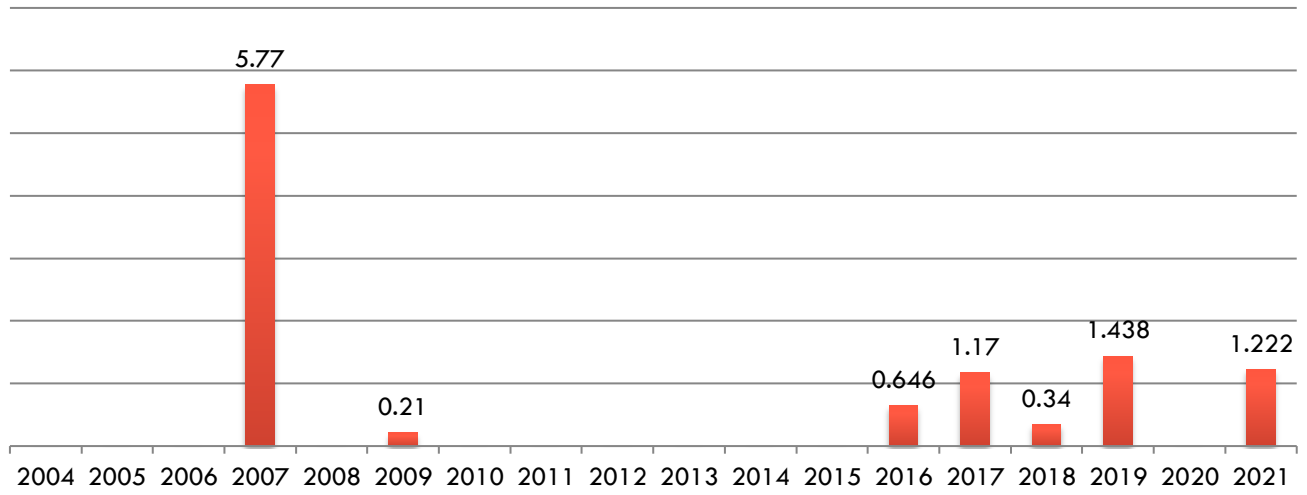
The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) was created in 2006 as the organisation's instrument to support peace in countries marked by violent conflicts or in situations at risk. In 2021, Italy contributed to the Fund with over 1.111 million euros. For the year 2022, the fund amounts to about 100 million euros, a sharp decrease from approximately 160 million euros in 2020 and 2021. Italy is the 19th contributor to the Fund, out of 45 donor countries⁶⁰. After a peak in 2007 and a subsequent disengagement from donations, Italy resumed contributing to the Fund starting in 2016. As one institutional source claimed in relation to changes in the funding, "it is a characteristic of our country to change direction"⁶¹. Other sources believe that the change in funding is due to Italy's increased spending on targeted goals, as well as on a shift in Rome's positions about its role in the United Nations system⁶².

⁶⁰ Data on donors to the UN Peacebuilding Fund are taken from <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding>.

⁶¹ AP, research interview no. 11, 15 Feb. 2022.

⁶² AP, research interview no. 6, 3 Feb. 2022.

Figure 5. Italy's contributions to the UN Peacebuilding Fund (in millions of US dollars)



Fonte: Dati del Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

The analysis of Italy's ongoing international missions reveals interesting elements on the strategic choices of Italian foreign policy, in particular in reference to recent evolutions in the country's military and financial commitments. From a comparative perspective, it is interesting to assess the Italian engagement in relation to the main European and international partners in the UN and OSCE framework. Overall, the research on Italian missions outlines an "Italian model" of intervention based on some recurring features, such as a clear predominance of the multilateral commitment, a scarcity of information on the areas of intervention, a low military profile (often focused on training) and a bipartisan parliamentary system for missions⁶³.

Data on international missions refer to the missions approved for the year 2021 by the so-called Missions Decree,⁶⁴ and are based on the technical and analytical reports related to 2020 (Analytical Report)⁶⁵. **In examining the main elements of the Missions Decree, it is important to mention that its approval takes place every year with a significant and anomalous delay.** This does not allow for a regular parliamentary debate. Furthermore, there is no informed exchange on data and analysis, but only a quick discussion mostly linked to aspects that are important mostly in the media (such as Libya in 2021). These critical issues are reported by different categories of informants, parliamentarians⁶⁶ and academics⁶⁷, and also reported in the Analytical Report⁶⁸. Indeed, the tight deadlines prevent a proper debate between political forces that would contribute to enriching the topic, both in terms of content and of democratic legitimacy.

After having observed the need to optimise resources in the various deployments, due to the pandemic emergency, the Analytical Report sets the objectives of the 2021 missions as "stabilizing the ongoing crises, managing transition processes and supporting reformist agendas". As an ultimate goal it

⁶³ Fabrizio Coticchia, Francesco N. Moro, *Adapt, Improvise, Overcome? The Transformation of Italian Armed Forces*, Routledge, 2015.

⁶⁴ Presidency of the Council of Ministers, [Doc. XXV n. 4 - Resolution of the Council of Ministers on Italy's participation in further international missions](#) (Article 2, paragraph 2, of Law No. 145 of 21 July 2016), 17 June 2021.

⁶⁵ Doc. XXVI n. 4, "Analytical report on the international missions of the Armed Forces and Police Forces, as well as on development cooperation interventions in support of peace and stabilization processes", (Article 3, paragraph 1, of the law of 21 July 2016, n. 145), 30 June 2021. (Analytical Report).

⁶⁶ AP, research interview n. 9, 11 Feb. 2022.

⁶⁷ AP, research interview n. 7. 10 Feb. 2022.

⁶⁸ Chamber of Deputies, [Report of the Commissions III \(Foreign and Community Affairs\) and IV \(Defense\)](#), July 14, 2021. "The delay with which the Resolution is again submitted to parliamentary examination and authorization, with the risk of nullifying the effectiveness of the Parliament-Government relationship in defining priority foreign policy guidelines, of which participation in international missions constitutes a fundamental guideline that - thanks to the virtuous interaction between diplomatic leverage, military instrument and development cooperation interventions - allows our country to safeguard the national interest and promote the stabilization and strengthening of dialogue through a multilateral approach".

identifies and establishes a geographical priority: the fight against terrorism and the stabilisation of the enlarged Mediterranean area. The latter region is defined as the set of countries of the EU, the Balkans, the Black Sea, North Africa and the Middle East.

The Mediterranean is one of the areas of the so-called triple circle of foreign policy, which includes the European Union (Italy is engaged in 12 EU missions⁶⁹) and NATO, with Italy participating in nine missions⁷⁰. Regarding the latter, research shows the impact of the progressive disengagement by the United States from direct leadership of international missions, a circumstance that has left the possibility and responsibility for Italy to play a role of greater political and strategic importance⁷¹. Overall, the triple Atlantic-European-Mediterranean circle is part of the multilateral approach that marks Italian foreign policy, with the recognition of the United Nations as "the main legitimation reference for international security issues"⁷² and with the participation in five UN missions⁷³. With 900 units deployed, Italy is (as of December 2021) the 23rd contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations⁷⁴. There also are five new missions authorized in 2021:

- UNSOM United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia;
- Operation EMASOH in the Strait of Hormuz;
- Operation "Cedar Emergency " in Lebanon;
- EUBAM LIBYA European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya; and
- EUAM Ukraine European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine⁷⁵.

As an overall figure, the highest number of armed forces deployed on missions is 9,255 (it has increased since the previous year: in 2020 they were 7,488) and the average number is 6,461 units (6000 units in 2020). The financial requirement is over 1,245 million euros, also up compared to 2020 (when it was over 1,113 million euros). As a trend in recent years, starting from 2004, the minimum peak of commitment both in financial and contingent terms was in 2014. From then on, a gradual growth in authorized expenditure and in personnel units is observed.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Indian Ocean – EUNAVFOR Somalia – Op. "Atalanta", Mali - EUTM, Somalia - EUTM, Somalia - EUCAP, Mediterraneo Centrale - Joint Operation Themis, Mali - EUCAP Sahel, Bosnia Herzegovina - EUFOR - ALTHEA, Central African Republic - EUTM RCA, European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) IRAQ, Kosovo - EULEX, EUNAVFOR MED – Operation Irini, European Maritime Awareness - Hormuz Straits (EMASOH).

⁷⁰ Bosnia Herzegovina - NATO HQ Sarajevo, Romania - Operation eAP South Area, Mediterranean Sea - Sea Guardian, Iraq - NATO Mission Iraq, Fyrom - NATO Liaison Office Skopje, Kosovo - KFOR - Joint Enterprise, Serbia – NATO Military Liaison Office Belgrade, Lithuania – eFP Operazione "Baltic Guardian", Mediterranean Sea - NATO Standing Naval Forces.

⁷¹ AP, research interview n. 3, 25 Jan. 2022.

⁷² Analytical Report, p. 165.

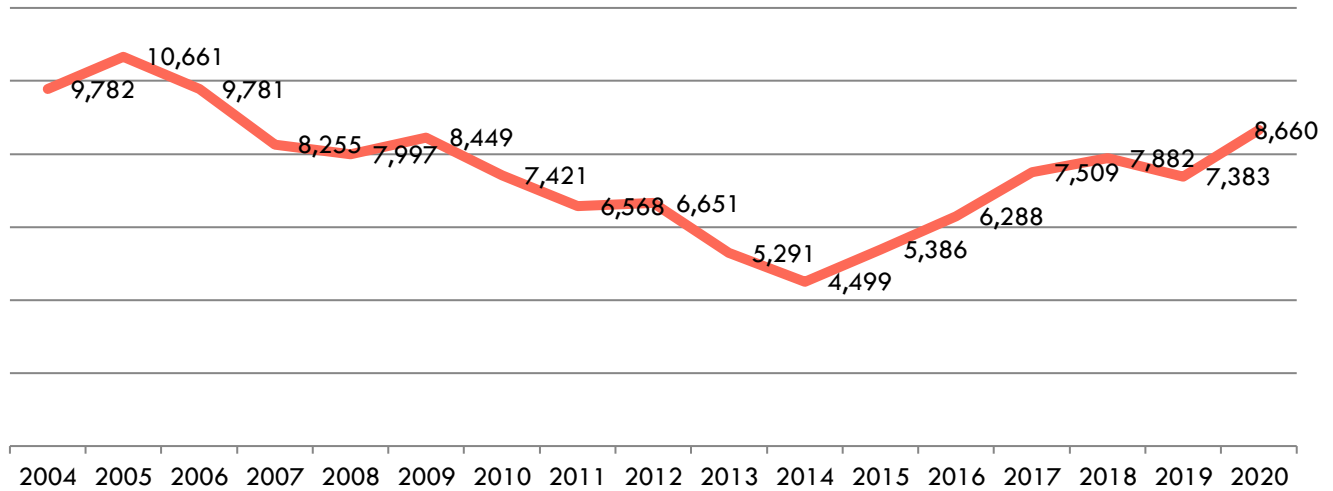
⁷³ Mali - MINUSMA, Lebanon - UNIFIL, Republic of Cyprus - UNFICYP, India / Pakistan - UNMOGIP, Western Sahara - MINURSO

⁷⁴ UN, [Uniformed Personnel Contributing Countries by Ranking](#), December 2021.

⁷⁵ Chamber of Deputies, parliamentary documentation, "[International missions authorized and extended in 2021](#)", 1 October 2021.

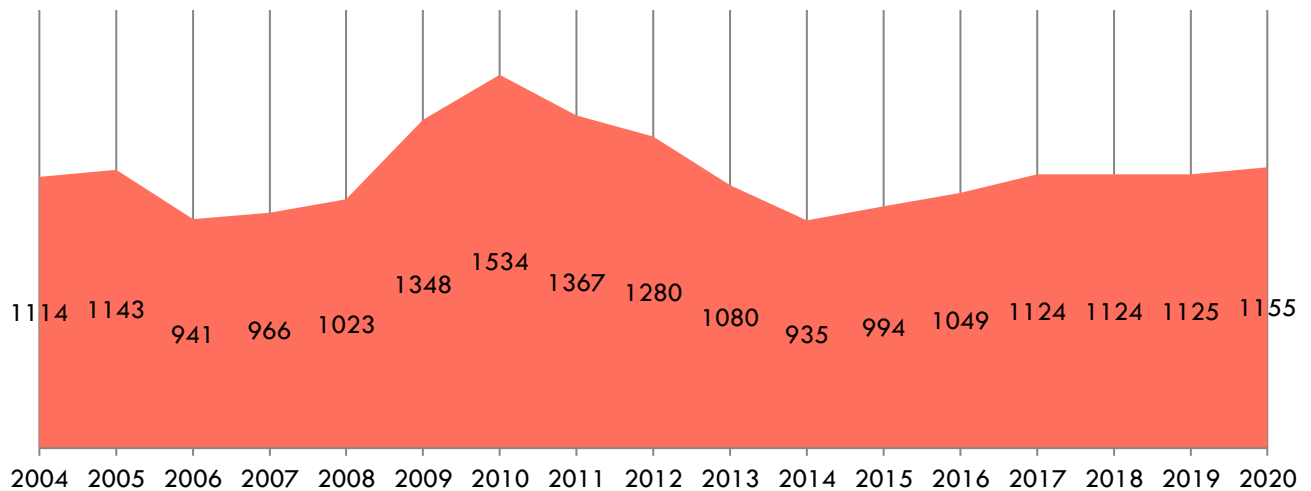
⁷⁶ The graphs are taken from the Chamber of Deputies, XVIII Legislature, Documentation and Research, "International missions: Tables and graphs 2004-2020", n. 116, July 31, 2020.

Figure. Number of Italian military personnel deployed to international missions



Source: Italian Chamber of Deputies, XVIII Legislature, Documentation and Research, "International missions: Tables and graphs 2004-2020", n. 116, July 31, 2020.

Figure 7. Authorised budget for Italy's participation to international missions (millions of Euros)



Source: Italian Chamber of Deputies, XVIII Legislature, Documentation and Research, "International missions: Tables and graphs 2004-2020", n. 116, July 31, 2020.

Finally, the Decree brings out two other aspects to be clarified with respect to the peacebuilding system in Italy. The first one concerns the expenditure of the Ministry of Defense for missions listed as official development aid according to the OECD-DAC criteria. These are small projects implemented within the missions. The economic commitment in this area is completely marginal - just over 2 million Euros in

2019⁷⁷, largely dedicated to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the UN's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. This primarily performs a confidence-building function between the local population and the main activities of the missions. Even though these activities are sometimes considered as peacebuilding initiatives, they play a different role and are more closely linked to the objectives of the missions.

The second aspect concerns the important role for peacebuilding in Italy, shown by references and legislative guidelines present in the 2021 Missions Decree. First of all, that law recognizes the centralist concern the local and international civil societies in peace processes:

*"As part of the effort made in development cooperation interventions in support of peace and stabilisation processes, within development cooperation and humanitarian demining initiatives, it is strategic for our country to allocate part of the funds to multilateral institutions, but also to Italian non-governmental organisations, involving their networks and representatives, in order to support the system of relationships built with local communities and their knowledge of the local reality"*⁷⁸.

Additionally, the Decree refers directly to the role of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security⁷⁹.

Finally, the law highlights how "important it is to enhance the instrument of civilian *peacebuilding*, which could warrant in the future the consideration of a special financial allocation"⁸⁰. The idea of a specific fund for peacebuilding is therefore presented as a concrete step to be developed within the framework of the Missions Decree.

Italy's Mission in Lebanon

The Italian presence in Lebanon as a part of the UNIFIL represents a successful contribution of Italian leadership in the multilateral framework of the United Nations with various elements of civil-military cooperation and mediation.

UNIFIL's mission is based on UN Security Council Resolution 425, which was adopted on March 19, 1978, and its second phase was launched in the summer of 2006 following the clashes between the Israeli army and Hezbollah. Since 2006, Italy has headed the Mission four times.

⁷⁷ MAECI, [Annual Report on the implementation of the development cooperation policy 2019](#), 2021. p. 3.

⁷⁸ Italian Chamber of Deputies, [Report of the Committees III \(Foreign and Community Affairs\) and IV \(Defense\)](#), 14 July 2021

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 7-8

In fact, within the mission, Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) activities are conducted. These include the participation of non-military components and actors from the Mission's target areas, and generally support efforts aimed to increase the country's socio-economic stabilisation and development, which are also part of UNIFIL's mandate. Every year, projects are carried out to protect minorities, vulnerable groups and the environment, and to strengthen health and education systems with a loan of over 1.3 million euros (2019). CIMIC funds applied in Lebanon constitute 45% of Italy's entire allocation to all international missions⁸¹. These interventions "have a significant impact and contribute to strengthening the image of the Italian contingent"⁸².

UNIFIL also plays a role of mediation and confidence-building between the Lebanese and Israelis forces through the Tripartite Forum. The Forum is led by Mission officials to promote dialogue between the representatives of the parties⁸³. As stated by researchers from the Center for International Studies, "the Tripartite is the longest standing confidence-building mechanism between Israelis and Lebanese". The same research report also defines the Italian presence in Lebanon as a remarkable form of conflict prevention: "the prevention of conflict operated by the Mission does not aim at directly influencing the parties, but rather at acting indirectly to change the context [...] The value of the mission is to affect the 'rules of engagement' that regulate the conflict between the parties, make them explicit and ensure that they are shared"⁸⁴.

The Italian presence in Lebanon also provides for the participation of 140 units in the bilateral training mission of the Lebanese Armed Forces (MIBIL)⁸⁵, with the aim of forming and training the Lebanese security forces, in conjunction with the Lebanese authorities⁸⁶.

⁸¹ Elaboration by the Defense Department of the Chamber Studies Service on the data taken from the Analytical Report for 2020 (Doc. N. XXVI, n. 4, file 43/2020).

⁸² Chamber of Deputies, Documentation and Research, "The Italian participation in CIMIC activities (" Civil Military Co-operation ") Dossier n ° 188 - Reading cards, February 3, 2022.

⁸³ Updates on Tripartite Forum activities available at <https://unifil.unmissions.org/search/node/tripartite>

⁸⁴ Paolo Crippa and Lorenzo Marinone, "UNIFIL, 40 years of strategic mission for Lebanon and Italy", Center for International Studies, 2019, p. 32.

⁸⁵ Analytical Report, p. 63.

⁸⁶ Chamber of Deputies, Documentation and Research, "The UNIFIL and MIBIL missions in Lebanon" Dossier n ° 40 - Reading cards, 5 February 2019

ITALIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVE IN PEACEBUILDING

Italy has historically had a very active civil society in international cooperation, from widespread and capillary small and medium-sized associations to international NGOs engaged in dozens of countries. NGOs have traditionally also enjoyed public trust and a good reputation in the eyes of Italian public opinion. However, in 2018, NGOs experienced a more controversial phases, with several of their activities becoming criminalised by the Ministry of the Interior under the then first Conte government, as they were seen as responsible for irregular immigration. Following the dismantling of EU operations to protect human life in the Mediterranean, such as *Mare Nostrum* in 2014, the only sea rescue initiatives were undertaken by NGOs. After a series of measures aimed at limiting the action of civil society ships, such as the approval of a "code of conduct" in 2017, starting from 2018 an explicit policy of impeding the saving of lives at sea has been undertaken, mainly through official government decrees (the so-called "security decrees") which provided for the blocking of Italian ships carrying foreigners at the border and in certain circumstances ordered their seizure and penalties of up to one million euros⁸⁷.

These dynamics, relating almost exclusively to work in the Mediterranean and in Italy, have therefore seen for the first time some NGOs attacked head-on by political institutions, with repercussions at the level of complaints and negative media campaigns, and consequently on public opinion. In that case, there was a strong reaction, of mobilisation of the so-called intermediate bodies, in defense of the action of NGOs, a sign of sensitivity and strength in a country that seemed otherwise atrophied. Already with the following government, the second chaired by Giuseppe Conte, the reputation of Italian NGOs appeared to be restored, as witnessed for example in the Edelman Trust Barometer data⁸⁸, both thanks to the action of civil society that moved public opinion, and to amendments to the legislation and to the cancellation of the security decrees.⁸⁹

Despite the reputation and the extensive work on cooperation, the specific skills of the main Italian NGOs on peacebuilding and conflict prevention are very limited, and engagement on this issues has largely remained the remit of associations and movements rather than of medium or large NGO. This process is due to several factors. First of all, as presented in the previous section, MAECI has not

⁸⁷ Luca Maserà, "Il contrasto amministrativo alle ONG che operano soccorsi in mare, dal codice di condotta di Minniti, al decreto Salvini bis e alla riforma Lamorgese: le forme mutevoli di una politica costante", *Questione Giustizia*, 2021.

⁸⁸ Available on: <https://www.info-cooperazione.it/2020/02/barometro-della-fiducia-gli-italiani-bocchiano-il-capitalismo-in-risalita-la-fiducia-verso-le-ong/>

⁸⁹ AP, research interview n. 8, 11 Feb. 2022.

implemented a policy and a budget line (also in terms of calls for proposals) on peacebuilding. Italian NGOs have a lot of experience on calls issued by AICS, but these do not lead them to develop specific skills. Furthermore, NGOs have no peacebuilding training and hardly ever have internal staff to deal with it. The almost total absence of academic research structure in the field of peace studies, in particular on the role of civil society in peacebuilding, also contributes to these limitations.

Thanks to the relationship with international organisations and donors, however, awareness of the importance of conflict sensitivity has been developed. The issue of having opportunities for NGOs in peace-related calls therefore remains central. For example, an Italian NGO reported that, because as an organisation it pursued peacebuilding calls for proposals by the German government, this brought them more knowledge and led to a shift in their internal attention to the issue, going beyond a merely symbolic level of engagement⁹⁰.

Given the limited know-how of Italian NGOs in the sector, it is associations and peace movements in Italy that are historically very active and plural. However, the scarce opportunities, the strong link with activism and the value connotation of the commitment to peace have not allowed the professionalisation that took place in other sectors⁹¹. This has led to severe limitations both in working in third countries and in dialogue with political institutions. Fieldwork clearly needs resources, skills and continuity and not the absence of an "Italian system" that has kept the range of action to limited "bottom-up" interventions.

Overall, the Italy's peace efforts should not be underestimated. Several realities work with great dedication and professionalism despite the financial and programmatic difficulties. Consider, for example, the peacebuilding work developed in Iraq by Un Ponte Per, the research and dissemination of the *Centro Sereno Regis*, the support and action from below of *Operazione Colomba* or the studies and advocacy work of the *Centro Studi Difesa Civile* on gender issues and youth in the field of peace and security. Of course, the ability to systematise one's work to make it improvable, replicable and to make it known will also play an important role.

A crucial issue remains dialogue with political institutions. While disarmament-focused civil society has developed strong skills and the ability to dialogue based on solid data on military spending, organisations working on peacebuilding have struggled over the past two decades to build advocacy plans and ongoing relationships. This difficulty also arises from the limited technical elaboration of the proposals, which can hardly be adopted by institutions and translated into policies. For example, calling for a ministry of peace may be an impactful campaign, but it is unlikely that it will bring politicians and officials around a table to implement it. It can represent an ideal tension, a point of arrival, but then it

⁹⁰ AP, research interview, n. 13, 4 March 2022.

⁹¹ Luisa Del Turco, cit., 2020.

must be further declined into concrete advocacy objectives. The same theme of the Civil Peace Corps was often presented with little concreteness and the approval of experimental projects in 2013 was more linked to the amendment of a single parliamentarian than to broader advocacy work. This action certainly had the merit of introducing this experimentation into the Italian legal framework, but it had the limit of not having politicians, parties and officials who followed the initiative, and this situation left it on its own. Each phase was therefore delayed and implemented with great difficulty, from the implementing decrees to the release of the tenders.

Overall, for the non-governmental sector there also remains ample room for improvement and professionalisation on peace processes. In the Italian pacifist movements and associations, there is an effort underway in recent years to go "beyond the rainbow" by creating concrete actions, campaigns and targeted advocacy⁹². Given the complexity of scenarios such as Afghanistan or the Sahel, the strengthening of this trend of the "Italian system" in its non-governmental component can also take place thanks to new and dedicated resources by Italian institutions to create more synergies and opportunities.

⁹² Andrea Catanzaro, Fabrizio Cotichia, *Al di là dell' Arcobaleno*, Vita e Pensiero, 2018.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL TOOLS AND INNOVATION

The new Guidelines on the humanitarian-development-peace link

In April 2022 the Italian strategic guidelines on the so-called "triple nexus" (i.e. the "humanitarian-development-peace link") were drafted and discussed. They incorporated the areas of action and the principles defined by the *Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* of the OECD-DAC of February 2019. The guidelines were drafted by a working group composed of representatives of MAECI, AICS, several Italian NGO platforms, and universities (which joined the working group at a later stage) and were issued after over two years of work and various setbacks. The strategic guidelines will be followed by operational guidelines for implementation. According to the OECD-DAC, the guidelines "will allow Italy and its partners to conduct more in-depth analyses and to better select suitable programmes in fragile or crisis contexts"⁹³.

The importance of the triple link has already been acknowledged by Italian institutions, in particular by AICS: "The protracted nature of humanitarian crises has highlighted the need to overcome the traditional distinction between humanitarian aid and development. The response to crises cannot come from the humanitarian system alone; rather it is essential that development cooperation also intervenes to help reduce the root causes of crises - especially in contexts of fragility - and to strengthen the resilience of populations and local systems"⁹⁴. The centrality of the peace pillar is also underlined: "Furthermore, the need for an enlargement of the humanitarian and development nexus to the 'peace' dimension has been progressively affirmed. Now, peace is considered fundamental, especially where humanitarian crises originate from conflicts. This is also consistent with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 of the 2030 Agenda, according to which an essential condition for achieving the SDGs is the progressive elimination of the cause of violence and fragility"⁹⁵. However, according to many non-governmental organisations, it seems that institutions still lack awareness on the peace pillar⁹⁶.

⁹³ OECD-DAC, cit., May 2020.

⁹⁴ AICS, *Plan of the AICS and of the General Management for Development Cooperation of the MAECI for the effectiveness of the interventions 2020-2022*, 2019, p. 21.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ AP, research interview n. 13, March 4, 2022.

Therefore, implementing the triple nexus is a unique opportunity for the Italian cooperation system to commit to peacebuilding and conflict prevention and to start a new phase of strategic and operational integration with the humanitarian and development fields. Interestingly, the implementation will take place in consultation with civil society organisations. In this context, the role of peacebuilding NGOs could be important in overcoming fears that have also emerged at the international level regarding the compatibility of principles and methods of action in the three different areas. The prospect of building peace, as expressed by the OECD-DAC, would reduce the fear of introducing security logic and coercive modalities, which conflicts with the principles of humanitarian action and the participatory modality of development processes⁹⁷.

Civil Peace Corps: An unfinished pilot project

An initiative that stands out for its original approach and vision in the panorama of Italian peacebuilding is the institution of the Civil Peace Corps (*Corpi Civili di Pace*, or CCP), an experimental project aimed at training civil operators capable of carrying out non-military interventions in conflict areas. This concept has various interpretations, but in Italy the original idea of the necessity and effectiveness of civil interventions for peace in war zones is mainly attributed to the Alexander Langer, a Member of the European Parliament. In the 1990s, Langer promoted the creation of a permanent presence of nonviolent operators at the European level, who could be deployed in areas of armed conflict to carry out mediation and peacebuilding actions⁹⁸. During the wars in the Western Balkans, Langer believed that "the potential role of civilians in preventing or managing conflicts is still greatly underestimated"⁹⁹. While Langer's European proposals did not take off in Europe, the German Civil Peace Service (*Ziviler Friedensdienst*)¹⁰⁰ constitutes the most successful example of institutionalising civilian interventions in conflict areas. The current conception of CCPs in Italy was implemented within the framework of the Universal Civil Service. This represents a limited legislative measure, compared to the German version. Still, it was a valid initiative for starting to develop an Italian model of civilian intervention. The experimentation of CCPs was foreseen by the 2014 stability law (Law 147/2013), which allocated three million Euros (on an annual basis, for a three-year project) "for the experimental establishment of a contingent of civil peace corps intended for the training and experimentation of the

⁹⁷ Luisa Del Turco, "[Il peacebuilding italiano: opportunità, ostacoli e prospettive](#)", *Human Security*, n. 12, 2020.

⁹⁸ Alexander Langer e Ernst Gulcher, "Per la creazione di un corpo civile di pace dell'ONU e dell'Unione Europea. Alcune idee, forse anche poco realistiche", *Azione Nonviolenta*, 2005.

⁹⁹ Langer, no. 1.

¹⁰⁰ The Civil Service for Peace (CPS) is a programme aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace in crisis areas and conflict regions. Since the CPS was founded in 1999, around 1,700 international professionals have worked in more than 60 countries. The CPS is run by nine German peace and development organisations in collaboration with local partner organisations. The CPS is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (the 2019-2021 budget was 55 million Euros per year).

presence of 500 young volunteers to be involved in non-governmental peace actions in areas of conflict or at risk of conflict or in areas of environmental emergency"¹⁰¹. The actual beginning took place after the publication of the inter-ministerial decree (between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) on May 7, 2015.

Although CCPs have often been mentioned in Italian laws, for example, in the general discipline on international development cooperation (Law 125/2014), the first year of implementation started only in 2017, when the CCPs were activated in the framework of the civil service. The civil service had been just reformed from "national" to "universal", as a civil, unarmed and non-violent application of the constitutional obligation of the "defense of the homeland", which Article 52 of the Italian Constitution defines as the "sacred duty of the citizen". Law 106/2016 had in fact included, among universal civil service projects, "initiatives related to the promotion of peace and nonviolence and development cooperation, even in countries outside the European Union".

The pilot project was conceived on a three-year basis, but from 2013 to 2022 it was only carried out for two years (2017/18 and 2019/20). Furthermore, the second year was interrupted due to pandemic restrictions. The high number of aspiring volunteers for this type of project, in contrast to the general trend of the Civil Service, is an important indicator of the vitality of the sector.

The two years of implemented projects highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the CCP pilot project. Among the strengths, it is worthwhile to emphasise the attention paid to the training of the young people selected for the programme. Some informants¹⁰², reporting their experience in the two different years, describe an articulated, wide-ranging and high-level training, adequate to the quality expectations of the CCP's set path. In fact, this training required more specific objectives and topics in the field of unarmed interventions in conflict areas than other types of projects (cooperation or humanitarian) in universal civil service. This distinction between specific peace activities and those of development cooperation or humanitarian projects has not been reflected in the planning of civil interventions in conflict areas. As a result, the practice of some projects was not a proper "experimentation of civilian instruments on conflicts", but was initially comparable to other types of civil service experience. On this point, it also emerged that only some Italian civil society organisations are ready to work fully in this area. Furthermore, the bureaucratic framework of the Civil Service has precluded the direct participation of many NGOs supporting peacebuilding projects. MAECI was involved in the deployment of CCP on the field. Interviews show that the program is known within the Ministry. However, the role of

¹⁰¹ Law 147/2013, p. 58-59.

¹⁰² AP, research interviews 15, 16, 17 February, 15, 24 and 25 March 2022.

the Ministry has remained marginal concerning the institutionalisation of these interventions following the German model.

Overall, this research shows the importance and urgency of completing the third year of the CCP pilot project. The final year should leverage the strengths that emerged from previous experience, in particular on training, and focus on identifying partners and projects that enhance the specificity of the CCPs. Finally, the Coordination Group of the Civil Corps of Peace¹⁰³ could act as a connection network at the end of the training course, to enhance the professional experience of the volunteers.

¹⁰³ The Coordination Group of the Civil Corps of Peace was set up in 2021 to relaunch the initiative. The group is made up of volunteers and trainers who participated in the experimentation of the CCPs. The Coordination Group carries out advocacy activities to obtain the implementation of the action already approved and funded for over eight years. The Group also makes it possible to consolidate a network of contacts between those who have participated in the CCPs, to be able to continue in professional activities within the same sector, and ideally to establish a permanent network of civil operators qualified to carry out effective actions in areas of armed conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD: HOW TO INVEST IN PEACEBUILDING

This study, the first piece of research on Italy and peacebuilding, shows that, while the United Nations widely recognise the role of civilians in peacebuilding, and the OECD-DAC considers peacebuilding actions through civilian means as part of the development cooperation efforts, in Italy there is still no real sector policy. On both the institutional side and the non-governmental one, there have been some initiatives and interesting pilot projects. However, the lack of coordination, competent focal point offices, and dedicated resources do not allow to systematise previous experience, to incorporate good practices and approaches from other countries, and to create an “Italian peacebuilding system”.

The overall legislative framework indeed offers a favourable potential for the development of civilian crisis prevention and management tools, such as Law 125/2014 on international cooperation. Nevertheless, the necessary revival is hindered by the lack of resources, both in terms of economic resources and institutional infrastructures – since there are no dedicated offices or task forces within MAECI and AICS. Today, Italy spends three-per-cent of what Germany invests on peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Moreover, the country's strong general tendency to favour the multilateral channel does not help Italy's prominence in foreign policy.

The resulting picture is a country that mostly plays a supporting role in much of its foreign policy, despite resources invested in international missions and multilateral efforts. And yet, Italy did demonstrate leadership in fields such as public health and food security, and partially for the climate crisis. For example, Italy co-organised the Conference of the Parties (COP26) and the UN Food System Pre-Summit in 2021.

Given the already articulated and encouraging legislative framework, as well as the plethora of grassroots and experimental experiences, Italy has the opportunity to invest in overcoming the obstacles that have limited it so far. Against this background, three decisive opportunities emerge to develop concrete steps in the short term.

This is, firstly, the conclusion of the piloting phase of the CCP, with the publication of the third call for tenders and a final evaluation of the programme. Despite legal and operational constraints, the conclusion and evaluation of the CCP will provide relevant and significant information for the development of this field in Italy. The second opportunity is the approval and systematisation of the

Italian Guidelines on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. Clarifying the relationship between the three sectors can improve actions and operations in crisis areas. To avoid remaining purely a formality, the document must be put to the test immediately through calls for tenders and projects in specific countries, such as Lebanon. Lastly, the 2022 Missions Decree can provide space for Italian and foreign NGOs to work on civil instruments of crisis management. These can be starting points to pave the way for more structural reforms, as illustrated in the elaboration of the study above and in the recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of this study, we provide recommendations for different sets of actors.

To the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

Strengthen the support to the dense network of NGOs working in the field, particularly in fragile contexts.

As highlighted in the 2019 OECD-DAC Peer Review, the Italian system of development must devote more attention to NGOs operating in crisis areas, with particular focus on efforts around peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity and prevention of crises.

Establish a fund within MAECI for the realisation of peacebuilding interventions by civil society organisations in conflict or conflict-prone areas.

The lack of dedicated resources significantly limited the development of Italian peacebuilding. A dedicated fund can start a three-year trial of civil peacebuilding, laying the foundation for the strategic implementation of the triple nexus. The fund can be incorporated into the Directorate General for Political Affairs, to foster synergies with other Italian institutions and constant exchange between institutions, academia, international organisations, and civil society organisations. Within this framework, links can be developed within the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Establish a desk or a task force dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Considering the limitations of working on peacebuilding without a dedicated structure, MAECI can consider the creation of a specific desk or task force, perhaps within the Directorate General for Political Affairs. At the same time, specific experts can be identified within AICS that are not only specialised in operations in crisis-affected areas, but also more specifically in conflict dynamics and peace processes.

Start a working group with civil society organisations on the implementation of the Triple nexus and on peacebuilding.

In the crucial phase of the implementation of the Guidelines on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, MAECI, in synergy with AICS, must start a permanent working group for dialogue with CSOs, in order to monitor and guide the progressive implementation of the Guidelines.

To civil society organisations

Improve internal training on peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

Italian NGOs and CSOs can already start developing and strengthening their expertise and internal capabilities on conflict sensitivity, peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflicts.

Devote renewed attention to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

The new Italian guidelines on the triple nexus represent the opportunity to develop new working methods and synergies. Italian CSOs can move forward in this direction by starting to contribute to the exchange with political institutions, aiming to obtain dedicated spaces and resources.

To the Italian President of the Council of Ministers

Implement the third call for tenders for the pilot programme of the Civil Peace Corps.

Within the Universal Civil Service system, the pilot programme was approved in 2013. Yet, the third tender – already planned and with dedicated resources – has not been published. The Presidency of the Council of Ministers must therefore conclude the trial period, given also the limitations of the second deployment of volunteers due to the pandemic.

Conduct an independent evaluation of the Civil Peace Corps.

Indeed, the programme has foreseen a monitoring and evaluation plan. In particular, the final evaluation by an independent entity is a fundamental requirement for drawing conclusions and learning lessons for future action.

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research used a methodology that was mainly qualitative, while also informed by some quantitative data and analyses. The research also relied on comparative analyses, in particular with other European countries. Overall, the redaction of the findings in the present report went through two distinct phases, the first focused on a comprehensive literature review (using both primary and secondary sources), and the second dedicated to interviews with key informants.

The initial literature review was focused on official government documents, as well as documents from international organisations, reports from think tanks and NGOs, and studies and analyses relating to specific contexts and sectors. AP also relied on primary sources made available from MAECI and other institutions.

Quantitative analyses are based mostly on the re-elaboration of data mined from think tanks in Italy and abroad (among others, OECD-DAC, SIPRI's Annual Yearbook, the European Center for Development Policy Management, the Global Peace Index). For OECD-DACs budget categories (the so-called "codes"), AP made reference to Code 152 ("Conflict, peace and security"), and Code 15220 ("Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution"), mirroring the methodology used by the European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) in: Sherriff, Andrew (et al.), "Supporting peacebuilding in times of change" (ECDPM; 2018).

In regards to interviews, a total of 18 were conducted between December 2021 and March 2022, with different experts and stakeholders (MAECI representatives and AICS administrators, Italian members of Parliament, personnel from Italian NGOs and CSOs, academics, experts and participants to the Civil Peace Corps programme).



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