

path”, regardless of the choices made in other EU Member States. Not holding the referendum would in practice result in aligning with those that do not want the Constitution or simply those who are against deepening of the European integration process.

It was only in the eve of the European Council in Brussels on 16 June, after the Dutch referendum and the decision by other Member States, notably Britain, to postpone their own public consultations, that the government admitted that it could put the referendum on hold, depending on the reigning mood and the decisions to be taken in Brussels. A final decision on the ratification process should, in any case, be taken by all 25 Heads of State and Government and not in a unilateral manner. The “time for reflection” approach gradually gained ground in the government and even the President of the Republic, earlier the staunchest supporter of the continuation of the referendum process admitted, days before the European Council, that Europe had entered a serious crisis and the timing of the Portuguese referendum was not the best one.

The decision to postpone the Portuguese referendum was, therefore, announced in the multilateral context of the European Council together with similar decisions taken by the governments of Denmark, Ireland and the Czech Republic. Since then, the ‘Constitutional crisis debate’ has virtually eclipsed from the political agenda. The Secretary of State for European Affairs has recently declared that the government would not support a “cherry-picking” solution for solving the current crisis (i.e. applying provisionally only some sections of the Constitution), as it would probably break the Constitution into pieces and alienate the electorate even more.

The government will likely bring back the issue to the agenda only when the momentum is regained at the European level. Till then, a pro-active attitude is not to be expected.

Public discussion on the future of the European Constitution has also waned significantly after the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands. Opponents of the legal text have seized the opportunity to declare the death of the Constitution and the need for the

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Other European issues have dominated the political agenda, namely the negotiation of the 2007-2013 financial perspectives and the revision of the Lisbon Agenda.

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ensure the country's commitment to ESDP. However, for the time being, Portugal has not yet proposed any national BG. It contributes to the Spanish-Italian amphibious battle group and has been contemplating the creation of a Luso-Spanish land-forces battle group, an idea strongly favoured by top military officials.

4. The Constitutional Treaty and its future – National perceptions concerning a 'plan B'

After the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands (as well as the popular approval in Luxembourg), official reactions to the uncertainties in which the EU currently finds itself have been sparse and vague.

The number one priority for the Portuguese government in relation to the present stalemate is not CFSP/ESDP but rather the approval of the financial perspectives 2007-2013. As for the former, there is a conviction that most of the measures already underway – Battle Groups, the Armaments Agency – will continue their course, especially because EU leaders will want to show the public that the EU is still capable of functioning even if the Constitution is (at least temporarily) abandoned. Therefore, views on most CFSP/ESDP related subjects remain those presented during and after the negotiations of the European Constitution. As stated above, the government has signalled its opposition to a pick-and-choose approach to the Constitution and may therefore reject attempts to implement certain measures of the text in detriment of others. It will also certainly oppose any moves to develop enhanced cooperation schemes (especially in the defence field) **outside** the EU framework.

External Representation

Portugal supported the creation of a Foreign Minister for the EU, as long as the latter was also be a member of the European Commission (double-hatting). The support for double-hatting has mainly to do with the need to guarantee the involvement of the Commission in the conduct of the Union's foreign policy. Since the government always opposed any changes to the current system of rotating presidencies and the establishment of the President of the European Council, it is no surprise that its preference was to keep the Presidency's role in external relations. Given its positions during the negotiating phase, it is unlikely that the government will press for any interim solution to the external representation of the Union.

Finally, the transformation of the current EC delegations in third countries into "EU Embassies", as a factor strengthening the EU's presence in the world, was backed by the government and hence it should support practical measures to implement a revamped external service without the need for treaty reform.

Decision-making and structured co-operation

At the IGC, Portuguese negotiators did not support the proposed changes to the decision-making rules of CFSP and therefore are not particularly worried with the prospect of sticking to the Nice provisions.

As for structured cooperation, Portuguese political parties and diplomats were never strong enthusiasts of enhanced co-operation and in the past have seen it as an attempt by larger Member States to decide not only on the direction of policies but also on who is allowed to participate in more advanced stages of integration. Successive Treaty reforms

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