



Defense, Constitution and Country: that Sacred Duty that cannot be dismissed with slogans

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There is an ancient and ever-new vice in Italian public debate: the casual, almost ornamental use of supreme constitutional principles reduced to talk show slogans. It is **Antonio Polito** who reminds us of this with the clarity and moral strength that have always distinguished his signature in the *Corriere della Sera*, a giant not only of Italian journalism, but also of the civil conscience of a nation often lost in the mists of ideological ignorance.

In his article titled *Quoting the Constitution at random*, Polito wields his scalpel on one of the most delicate and slippery themes of our time: war, the defense of the Homeland, and the profound sense of the rules that keep us together as a democratic community.

The myth of desertion and the reality of conscription

The starting point of the reflection stems from a recent political and media short circuit, suspended between proclamations of youth "desertion" in the broad left-wing coalition and the silent presence of our military personnel engaged in international peacekeeping missions (from Lithuania to Yemen). As Polito notes with precision, before organizing hypothetical deserters, one would need to come to terms with legal reality: mandatory military conscription was suspended (and hopefully never reinstated) by law in 2001, but the constitutional text remained intact.

Article 52 of the Constitution reads unambiguously: *«The defense of the Homeland is a sacred duty of the citizen. Military service is mandatory within the limits and modes established by law»*. An article in which the word «sacred» (the only one appearing with this significance throughout the entire Charter) and the capital letter for the word «Homeland» were not imposed from above by a militarist faction, but rather strongly defended at the Constituent Assembly by giants of politics such as Aldo Moro and Palmiro Togliatti. The reason? The defense of the Homeland not as an expression of warmongering, but as the supreme act of solidarity and fraternity among fellow citizens.

Italy, peace and the repudiation of war

The ideological ignorance that often pervades the debate forgets the extraordinary architecture of our Constitution, which protects us on two complementary fronts:

1. **The repudiation of aggression (Article 11):** Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means of resolving international disputes. We could never, by Constitutional design, wage unilateral wars of aggression.
2. **The commitment to global justice (Also Article 11):** At the same time, our country permits limitations of sovereignty to promote and foster international organizations aimed at peace (UN, NATO, European Union). Defending the weakest and ensuring justice among Nations also entails the presence of our soldiers in theaters of international crisis.

It is a formidable historical legacy, which Togliatti himself supported with conviction: participation exclusively in just wars, defensive wars and those mandated by international

bodies that guarantee global legality.

Democracy and responsibility in times of crisis

When speaking of war, Polito reminds us, recalling the analysis of Professor Salvatore Curreri, we are not facing a playground for extemporaneous opinions, but a damnably serious matter. The Constitution provides with surgical precision for every step: the declaration of a state of war entrusted to Parliament (article 78) and the formal declaration by the Head of State (article 87), who also holds command of the Armed Forces.

Faced with those who invoke desertion or venture into risky comparisons—such as those who claim that the aggressed Ukraine should hold elections while forgetting the extension of parliamentary powers in time of war (article 60)—the voice of Polito and the teaching of the *Corriere della Sera* sound like a stern call to rigor.

The Italian Constitution is not an ideological manifesto to be waved intermittently or manipulated according to the geopolitical convenience of the moment. It is the irreplaceable perimeter of our freedom. To review it, understand it, and stop citing it carelessly is the first, true civic duty of a nation that wishes to continue to define itself as free.

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