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Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper

by Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone

ABSTRACT

The paper analyses the developments regarding the NATO agenda in view of the July 2016 Warsaw Summit. It also looks at Italy's defence policy with respect to the Atlantic Alliance and the impact of the *White Paper on International Security and Defence* adopted by the Italian government in April 2015. The first chapter focuses on the operational readiness and defence investment commitments made by the Allies in response to the conflict in Ukraine and the crisis in relations with Russia. It also delves into the debate on possible measures to address the threats from NATO's "Southern Flank", including fundamentalist terrorism and instability in North Africa and the Middle East. The second chapter discusses Italy's position within NATO, also with respect to the various Allies' threat perceptions, and analyses the content and implementation of the White Paper and its contribution to the management of the current instability within NATO and beyond. The final chapter provides the framework for an Italian and transatlantic rethinking of how to address threats from NATO's Southern Flank by means of a regional and thematic approach.

Italy's military policy | NATO | Mediterranean



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1. NATO toward the Warsaw Summit

1.1 The implementation of the Wales Summit's decisions

The year 2014 has been characterised by rising challenges to European security and instability both along NATO and EU Eastern and Southern boundaries. To date, the situation has not improved. Instability, conflicts and crisis persist, and internal divisions are still present within the main international security actors, EU and NATO above all. Numerous initiatives have been undertaken by NATO¹ in order to elaborate a proper and prompt response to these challenges, especially those coming from the Eastern flank, since the 2014 Wales Summit. The Summit Agenda has been deeply influenced by the Ukrainian crisis and the following deterioration of the relations with Russia. In fact, the main measure adopted at the Summit, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), includes two types of actions addressed towards the Eastern flank. On the one hand, the so-called Assurance measures – in place since May 2014 and further strengthened and developed at the Summit – which envisage to immediately enhance the presence of Allied military forces as well as to increase the number of exercises and monitoring activities in Eastern Europe.

¹ The analysis on the EU role lies outside the scope of this project.

* Paola Tessari and Paola Sartori are Research Assistant in the Security and Defence Programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). Alessandro Marrone is Senior Fellow in the Security and Defence Programme at IAI. Translated by Manrico De Vincentis and Valentina Beatrice Ortalizio, both interns in the Security and Defence Programme at IAI. The authors thank the following institutional interlocutors for the fruitful exchange of views during the preparation of the report: the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, particularly the Director General for Political and Security Affairs; Defence General Staff; Italian Permanent Mission to the Atlantic Council. For the same reason, the authors thank: Gregory Alegi, LUISS Guido Carli University; Pietro Batacchi, Rivista Italiana Difesa; Vincenzo Camporini, IAI Vice President; Michela Ceccorulli, University of Bologna; Stefano Cont, Chief of Military Policy Office, Italian Ministry of Defence; Fabrizio Coticchia, University of Genova; Jean-Pierre Darnis, Deputy Head of the Security and Defence Programme at IAI; Andrea Falconi, University of Perugia; Olivier de France, Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques; Michele Nones, Head of the Security and Defence Programme at IAI; Stefano Silvestri, Scientific Advisor at IAI.

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These measures aim at reassuring the Allies along Russian border.² On the other hand, the so-called Adaptation measures include changes to the Alliance long-term military posture and capabilities, for a faster reaction to sudden crises and extremely rapid threats, especially those linked to the concept of "hybrid warfare."³

1.1.1 Assurance measures and Adaptation measures

The Assurance measures encompass NATO exercises that have been intensified since May 2014. Among them, Noble Jump (10-21 June 2015) deserves a specific mention as it foresaw the first deployment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in Poland, and involved more than two thousands units. Worth mentioning is also the large-scale exercise Trident Juncture that took place from 21 October to 15 November 2015. Italy, Portugal and Spain were involved as co-hosting nations. Trident Juncture was the biggest NATO exercise since 2002, with the participation of more than 30 countries both NATO members and partners, for a total of 36,000 soldiers, 140 airplanes and 60 ships. It was the first real test of the new enhanced NATO Response Force (eNRF) and VJTF on a large scale. To note, the VJTF should be fully operational by 2016.⁴

Furthermore, NATO members contributed to the Baltic Air Policing mission on rotational basis: in particular, Italy has accomplished this task by deploying 4 Eurofighter Typhoon since the beginning of 2015, and since last May also Belgium, Norway and the United Kingdom have joined the Air Policing mission. Portugal and the United States have stationed some of their F-16 aircrafts in Romania as part of a training mission. Moreover, regular Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) surveillance commenced over Eastern Europe, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and Baltic Sea.⁵ A more precise analysis of the Italian contribution to these activities is reported in the second chapter of this paper.

On the contrary, Adaptation measures have been conceived to enhance the responsiveness of the Allied armed forces. To this purpose the NRF is being increased to reach 35,000 units and the above-mentioned VJTF – the Alliance's "spearhead force" in terms of operational readiness – has been created. Such a force of around 5,000 ground troops is deployable within 5-7 days, with a Battlegroup-size force ready to operate in 48-72 hours. The leadership of the VJTF will rotate on an annual basis. The leading nation on duty (the Framework Nation, FN) will provide the general framework as well as great part of military forces, while other Allied members contribute with sets of capabilities to be integrated into the

² NATO, *Readiness Action Plan*, Factsheet, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_02/20150205_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf.

³ For an interesting perspective on hybrid war, see, among others, Andreas Jacobs and Guillaume Lasconjarias, "NATO's Hybrid Flanks. Handling Unconventional Warfare in the South and the East", in *NDC Research Papers*, No. 112 (April 2015), <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=798>.

⁴ "La Nato dà il via all'esercitazione Trident Juncture", in *Analisi Difesa*, 21 October 2015, <http://www.analisedifesa.it/?p=29510>.

⁵ NATO, *Readiness Action Plan*, Factsheet, cit.

broader structure provided by the framework nation. Spain led the VJTF in 2015, while Germany is in charge for 2016 and United Kingdom and Italy will follow respectively in 2017 and 2018. Both the country coming first and the one coming after the framework nation on duty, are committed as framework nation for the respective VJTF in stand down and stand up mode.

Furthermore, as part of the Adaptation measures, other options are under evaluation regarding the opportunity and the sustainability of a possible pre-positioning of equipment and supplies along the Alliance's Eastern flank. This option would include also exercises and training activities involving, on rotational basis, the different VJTFs. The objective is to strengthen the credibility of NATO deterrence and to provide a proper response to Russian actions and threats. Moreover, since September 2015 six NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) have been activated in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. These are command and control posts, serving as a sort of small-scale headquarters, with the aim of improving cooperation and coordination between national and NATO forces.⁶ The NFIUs will be fully implemented by the Warsaw Summit to be held on 8-9 July 2016.⁷

1.1.2 NATO's 2% Defence Investment Pledge

Besides the necessity of improving its readiness, NATO has to face a second and more structural problem, which relates to the scarce European defence investments. In fact, the overall expenditure of European NATO members decreased in the post Cold War period despite the remarkable Alliance's enlargement that since the nineties has brought its membership up to 28 members. In 1990, the then fourteen European allies collectively spent around 314 billion dollars on defence. In 2015, the now 26 European NATO members have devoted around 227 billion dollars on defence, with a resulting decrease of 28%.⁸

As underlined in the Summit's final declaration, member states agreed to increase their defence expenditures in order to cope with previous investments cuts and the transformed (and worsened) strategic context. The Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) provides the roadmap: "Allies whose current proportion of GDP spent on defence is below this level [2%] will:

- halt any decline in defence expenditure;
- aim to increase defence expenditure in real terms as GDP grows;
- aim to move towards the 2% guideline within a decade with a view to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO's capability shortfalls."⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ NATO SHAPE, *Six NATO Force Integration Units activated*, 2 September 2015, <http://www.aco.nato.int/six-nato-force-integration-units-activated.aspx>.

⁸ Jan Techau, "The Politics of 2 Percent: NATO and the Security Vacuum in Europe", in *Carnegie Europe*, 2 September 2015, p.4, <http://ceip.org/1UpXOga>.

⁹ NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*, 5 September 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_

It must be highlighted that the 2% objective is not new to NATO members: for instance, right before the Riga Summit in 2006, the then American ambassador to the Alliance, Victoria Nuland, mentioned the 2% indicator as a minimum defence investment threshold for the allies. Despite its non-binding nature, the renewed commitment at the Wales Summit assumes a political value, especially at a time when NATO is facing new challenges coming from different fronts. A careful analysis of the Allied defence budgets points out a decreasing trend in defence expenditures during the period from 2008 to 2014, particularly among the main NATO contributors (Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Italy).

In contrast to the recent past and consistently to the commitments made at the Wales Summit, in 2015 many European Allies announced their intention to increase military expenditures. Germany, for instance, has announced a defence budget increase of 6.2% over the next five years, thus reaching 35 billion euro in 2017. Similarly, in April 2015, unlike previous plans, Paris announced a 3.9 billion increase for the 2016-2019 period. This decision has probably been mainly driven by the increasing need for security following the terrorist attacks of January 2015, further sharpened by the attacks of last November. Lastly, United Kingdom has recently decided to raise its defence budget by 0.5% a year in real terms until 2020-2021.¹⁰

Interestingly, Poland in accordance to its constitution has been constantly spending 1.95% of its GDP in defence, and plans to raise the investment to 2% in 2016. It is also worth noting that the Baltic States are experiencing remarkable defence spending increases. Firstly, Estonia which already invests 2% of its GDP in defence is going to reach 2.05%. Secondly, Latvia foresees an investment increase over the next years in order to reach 2% by 2020. Lastly, the Latvian defence budget has tripled from 2014 to 2015, to 1.11% of its GDP. However, besides these cases, the main picture remains discouraging: according to NATO estimates, only five Allies (Estonia, Poland, United Kingdom and United States) will reach the 2% goal by the end of 2015. Furthermore, United Kingdom will reach the objective by relocating the nuclear deterrent expenditure from the Ministry of Treasury to the Ministry of Defence budget.

In light of this situation, experts casted several doubts over the value of 2% as an indicative metric of defence spending. According to some analysts, this pledge seems to be a hard-to-reach target for most member states, especially considering that it is a percentage of the GDP, which vary considerably from country to country. The German case is illustrative of this consideration. Germany currently invests 37 billion euro in defence, while it should spend 74 billion in order to reach the 2% of

texts_112964.htm.

¹⁰ Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "In Europa l'Italia canta fuori dal coro", in *AffarInternazionali*, 22 July 2015, <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3128>.

its GDP. According to experts, such an expenditure could not be sustainable.¹¹ On the other hand, for a country as Spain, reaching the 2% threshold would entail a doubling of the current defence investment, which has been reduced by 30% since the economic crisis of 2008.¹² This would imply restoring pre-recession and pre-austerity levels of defence expenditure. Furthermore, it is worth reminding that the Spanish situation is similar to those of many other European countries hit by austerity measures. For all of them reaching the 2% threshold is hardly feasible in the short-period, especially due to the EU budget constraints and the persistent low – or even absent – economic growth.

Secondly, some analysts do not consider “the policy of 2%” as a reliable indicator, since it measures the input rather than the output. In other words, it considers only the defence spending and it fails to assess the actual level of military capabilities and whether resources are wisely invested. For instance, it does not discern between investments to acquire assets that due to the lack of maintenance and training are just lying idle, and resources spent to have well-trained operational units.¹³ In other words, the 2% parameter is not sufficient to measure the operational readiness, deployability and sustainability of Armed Forces.

In particular, the 2% parameter is not reflective of the actual share of risk and burden that a country is willing to bear by deploying its armed forces in multinational military operations. Greece and Denmark provide interesting examples in this regard. Greek and Danish defence investments as a proportion of the GDP differ significantly and do not mirror the actual national operational contribution to NATO missions. With respect to Greece, since 2013 its defence expenditure amounts to 2% of GDP, thus fully complying with NATO commitments. Nonetheless, Greek troop contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2012 was limited to 160. On the other hand, Denmark which allocates 1.5% of its GDP to defence, had roughly 750 troops in Afghanistan during the same time frame (2010-2012).¹⁴

Yet, having said that, the 2% parameter is politically valuable. First, it tends to restrain European states from further decreasing their defence expenditures as it has been since the end of the Cold War with a peak in the aftermath of the economic crisis. NATO’s pledge of 2% does contribute to contain domestic pressures to favour other expense items to the detriment of the defence spending, by appealing to international commitments and by involving Allies pressure. To give up on this parameter, which serves as an “external obligation,” despite its purely political value, would probably lead to further cuts.¹⁵ Such an eventuality would produce

¹¹ Jan Techau, “The Politics of 2 Percent: NATO and the Security Vacuum in Europe”, cit., p.11.

¹² Mark Nolan, “Spanish Navy Cuts 18 Ships in 6 Years”, in *The Leader*, 9 January 2014, <http://www.theleader.info/501/article/42159>.

¹³ Claudia Major, “Time to Scrap NATO’s 2 Percent Pledge?”, in *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, 28 April 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=59918>.

¹⁴ John Deni, “Burden Sharing and NATO’s 2 Percent Goal”, in *Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe*, 14 April 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=59767>.

¹⁵ During the Cold War, the NATO threshold for defence spending was 3%, and it was then lowered

free riding effects as well as decreasing expenditure trends among NATO members. In fact, even complying countries would then be discouraged from maintaining a 2% investment, given the lack of specific NATO political requirements in this sense.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned weaknesses of the 2% pledge relate to the “one-size-fits-all” feature of this metric. Discussing the functional value of this parameter is thus legitimate. Indeed a political debate is currently going on within the Alliance and also Italy has provided its contribution. In particular, it contributed to update NATO “metrics” (percentages parameters) regarding resources, capabilities and operational contributions of the Allies.¹⁶ The 2% measure has mainly a political value, but it still is a valid indicator of the priority given by governments to defence. Especially, considering that it is often an unpopular sector. Regarding the effective implementation of such an investment pledge, the 2% goal stands as a general commitment not to decrease the defence budget. Having said that, an effective approach should not provide only quantitative thresholds, but indicate specific guidelines on “how to spend.” However, it should maintain the necessary flexibility in order to meet national specificities. The pledge to spend 20% of the defence budgets on major equipment represent a step forward on this path, although these target are not new in NATO’s history.¹⁷ In other words, member states should be free to decide how to invest their national resources by seeking to align national choices with NATO agreed guidelines, as far as possible.

1.2 The Eastern vs. Southern flank dilemma back to NATO agenda

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the 2% commitment is part of the set of measures adopted in response to the crisis in Ukraine, “the gravest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War” according to the former NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.¹⁸ The RAP adoption, following the crisis in Ukraine and the Russian aggressive posture, highlights a renewed NATO’s emphasis on collective defence, to the expense of crisis management. To note, both are indicated by the 2010 Strategic Concept as two out of the three Alliance’s core tasks. Moreover, the crisis in Ukraine and, in general, the threat perception about Russia, have forced NATO to focus on the region between the Baltic and the Black sea – the so called *intermarium* – by overshadowing other crisis scenarios on the Alliance’s neighbouring South. Nonetheless, the current situation, characterised by the coexistence of multiple threats coming from different flanks, has gradually led NATO member states to a consistent redefinition of their threat perceptions. In such a context, identifying a “common threat” among the 28 member states has become increasingly difficult, despite all declarations on the principle of NATO cohesion.

in the Nineties.

¹⁶ Interview, 7 December 2015.

¹⁷ Interview, 3 November 2015.

¹⁸ NATO, *Joint press point with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the Prime Minister of Ukraine, Arsenii Yatseniuk*, 6 March 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_107842.htm.

On the one hand, Southern Allies are much more concerned about the advance of the Islamic State and Islamist terrorism as well as instability and conflicts within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, with the subsequent migratory pressures on the EU Southern borders. On the other hand, Eastern Allies tend to prioritise NATO deterrence and defence against a possible Russian hostile action against the Baltic countries and Poland, as well as the stabilisation process in Ukraine.

With respect to this internal division, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and France – the latter even more after the terroristic attacks of 13 November 2015 – clearly belong to the former group of countries. According to their perceptions, more threatening to their national security is the situation in the Middle East and in Northern Africa rather than the crisis in Ukraine. As highlighted by the Eurobarometer report of May 2015, illegal immigration stands as the first source of concern among European citizens.¹⁹ Vice versa, members sharing borders with Russia, as the Baltic Republics and Poland, see Moscow as the main threat, as confirmed by an analysis conducted by the Pew Research Centre. According to this survey, while 70% of the interviewees in Poland consider Russia as a military threat, in France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom and Spain, only 40-50% share this perception (in the United States is nearly 59%).²⁰

Different threat perceptions linked to specific regional contexts affect also NATO resource allocation and consequently influence the choice between collective defence on the Eastern flank or crisis management in the South. For instance, pre-positioning the VJTF in the Eastern Europe, only for deterrence purposes and without a direct Russian attack on these territories, would not be easily agreed by the 28 allies. The reason is twofold. Firstly, such a move would negatively affect the relationship with Russia. Secondly, such a deployment of forces would limit NATO capabilities to respond promptly and adequately to other emergency situations: prepositioning the VJTF would indeed reduce its intrinsic strength in terms of rapid mobilisation and redeployment. With respect to the decision-making process, the RAP does not envisage any reform, while providing measures to speed up the VJTF deployment by prepositioning some units along borders with crisis areas. To date, every NATO operational deployment needs to be approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) by consensus. In other words representatives of all 28 member states have to agree on the decision. With reference to the flexibility issue, some analysts affirm that an efficient deployment of VJTF to address both collective defence and crisis management – beyond the provision of VJTF in *stand up and stand down* mode – could be realised as long as no assets will be pre-positioned. In fact, given the limited number of available assets, pre-positioning would mean freezing them and would limit NATO rapid reaction capabilities and its chances to face a potential

¹⁹ European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 83*, May 2015, p. 14-16, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb83/_en.htm.

²⁰ Pew Research Centre, *Poland Most Worried about Russian Military Threat*, 8 June 2015, <http://pewrsr.ch/1QKnctD>.

escalation.²¹ At the same time, it would significantly reduce NATO's capability to engage in "out-of-area" operations. Such a scenario should be avoided especially considering that nowadays Allies internal security is increasingly linked to stability of the EU neighbourhood.

Finally, some experts expressed doubts regarding the actual deterrent value of the VJTF. In fact, while significantly reducing NATO response time to less than three days, its force consists of only 5,000 troops. In case of a major conventional armed attack, VJTF would not suffice to defend the Allied territories, and the eNRF (35,000 units) would be able to provide support only within a month.

Such divergences emerged also during the NATO Defence Ministerial meeting, in May 2015, as well as during the adoption process of the Political Guidance. Such a document could have assumed a fundamental role in the definition of a shared strategy to address the new arch of crisis surrounding NATO, especially considering that the 2010 Strategic Concept (as previous ones) does not specify the Alliance's intervention priorities.²² But this process was marked by the confrontation of "Easterners" and "Southerners," thus ending up in a zero sum game between collective defence and crisis management.²³ Such an outcome is linked to the difference of perceptions regarding the actual likelihood of an armed attack according to definition provided by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. In fact, the different nature of the security challenges threatening the Eastern and Southern flanks let re-emerge the old intra-alliance division concerning NATO's core tasks. The question is: should the Alliance primarily focus on collective defence capabilities or rather on "expeditionary" capabilities for crisis management operations?²⁴

The confrontation between Southern and Eastern flanks, the different threat perceptions and the subsequent internal divisions, are all hurdles that NATO need to overcome. This is necessary in order to ensure a common adaptation process and thus adequate responses to rising crises and challenges towards Euro-Atlantic security. During the Ministerial meeting held in May 2015, "SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander Europe] and CMC [Chairman of the Military Committee] have underlined the need to adaptation [...] to cope with emerging diverse and complex threats over Alliance periphery."²⁵ Excessive prioritisation of resources on collective

²¹ Wojciech Lorenz, "2016 NATO Summit on Strategic Adaptation", in *PISM Bulletin*, No. 58=790 (9 June 2015), p. 1, http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_pilk=19967.

²² Interview, 25 November 2015.

²³ Aylin Matlé and Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, "From Wales to Warsaw: A New Normal for NATO?", in *KAS Facts and Findings*, No. 187 (October 2015), p. 2, <http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.42717>.

²⁴ For further analysis on different views emerged after the end of the Cold War and on the equilibrium reached in the 2010 Strategic Concept, see Alessandro Marrone, "The Equilibrium of the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept", in *The International Spectator*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (September 2011), p. 93-111.

²⁵ NATO Allied Command Transformation, *Adaptation Measures are Leveraging our Already Long-term Transformation Efforts*, 1 June 2015, <http://www.act.nato.int/adaptation-measures-are->

defence could harm Alliance's flexibility, bearing in mind that the current Strategic Concept identifies three core tasks – and not just one – in order to enable NATO to respond to the multiple challenges of the 21st century. According to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, flexibility and adaptability are among Alliance's main strengths.²⁶

The capacity to satisfy the diverse security interests of its member states ensured NATO's post-Cold War survival.²⁷ In fact, even after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO was able to adapt to the new scenario by renewing itself and identifying new objectives and best suited tools to an ever-changing world. The Alliance progressively defined its three core tasks through the Strategic Concepts of 1991, 1999 and – above all – 2010, tasks which today are strictly interconnected. For instance, strengthening the resilience of those countries along NATO borders through partnership programmes, as part of the cooperative security core task, contributes to enhance also collective defence. Therefore, balancing the three core tasks represents an important guiding principle for NATO's internal reflection, especially considering the extreme uncertainty and unpredictability of the international scenario. Keeping the right balance also means preserving the *full spectrum* of military capabilities to be able to operate both in case of a conventional war and against hybrid threats – also to avoiding strategic surprises.

In this sense, the Warsaw Summit in 2016 stands as an opportunity to take stock of Wales conclusions, adopted in an extremely awkward moment for international security. NATO members' attention had been captured by Ukraine and Russia, and other crises scenarios receded into the background. In particular, in order to address NATO's internal divisions regarding threat perceptions the Alliance should:

- ensure that equal attention is devoted to threats coming both from the South and East;²⁸
- enhance cooperation initiatives both on a bilateral and multilateral basis in order to meet single national interests and address the emergency situations in Allies' neighbourhoods.

Specific cooperation initiatives, tailored according to specific national needs, favour the elaboration of a shared response by enabling the Alliance to address the current challenges more effectively as well as to overcome the East/South confrontation.

leveraging-our-already-long-term-transformation-efforts.

²⁶ Trine Flockhart, "Back to Basics or Just Backwards? An Agenda for NATO's 2016 Warsaw Summit", in *DIIS Policy Briefs*, August 2015, <http://diis.dk/en/node/5584>.

²⁷ For further analysis on NATO's survival after the fall of the Soviet threat, see Alessandro Colombo, *La lunga alleanza. La Nato tra consolidamento, supremazia e crisi*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2001; Marco Clementi, *La Nato*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2002; Vittorio Emanuele Parsi, *L'Alleanza inevitabile Europa e Stati Uniti dopo l'Iraq*, Milan, Egea, 2003.

²⁸ Interview, 7 December 2015.

1.3 Which role for NATO in the Mediterranean region?

Instability on the Southern flank keeps worsening due to the persistent Syrian and Libyan conflicts, the advance of the Islamic State and more generally extremism, Islamist terrorism and foreign fighters.²⁹ All these elements gained increasing media coverage after the Paris attacks of 13 November. The situation is further affected by instability in some areas of the Middle East. To note, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia are the main countries of origin for foreign fighters. As it was underlined by Andrea Manciuilli, the President of the Italian Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, speed and features of foreign fighters cause major concerns: it suffices to mention that around 12,000 foreign fighters have joined the Caliphate during the last three years.³⁰ Moreover, further to this situation, the above-mentioned lack of common threat perception within NATO has so far impeded the adoption of a coherent regional strategy.³¹

The Mediterranean region still represents an area of interest for the Alliance, as its safety is relevant for the whole Europe and events in the old *Mare Nostrum* have not only regional but also global implications. It is worth reminding that in this region NATO contribution in the fight against terrorism dates back to 2001 with the launch of the Active Endeavour operation – a patrolling mission of the Mediterranean sea, focused on tracking and controlling suspect merchant ships.³² In addition to the request of a more active EU role, increasing tensions in these areas re-opened the debate regarding the necessity of a NATO “Southern Strategy.” This should draw on lessons learned, both positive and negative, including from the Libyan intervention in 2011 and the French-guided mission in Mali supported by some NATO members in 2012.³³

By bearing in mind the importance of the Mediterranean region, the Alliance in the post-Cold War period had started several cooperation initiatives in this area, like the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). NATO should build on these frameworks in order to strengthen cooperation with countries in the region. More specifically, the Mediterranean Dialogue is a bilateral and multilateral forum of cooperation and dialogue between NATO and seven countries of the Mediterranean area: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. MD cooperation initiatives are adopted and realised through the Annual Work Programme and include seminars or more practical activities on

²⁹ Ian O. Lesser, “The United States and the Future of Mediterranean Security: Reflections from GMF’s Mediterranean Strategy Group”, in *GMF Mediterranean Policy Program Policy Briefs*, 14 April 2015, <http://www.gmfus.org/node/8471>.

³⁰ Michele Pierri, “Ecco perché la Nato guarderà al Mediterraneo. Parla Manciuilli (Pd)” in *Formiche.net*, 8 October 2015, <http://formiche.net/?p=294184>.

³¹ Interview, 24 November 2015.

³² NATO, *Operation Active Endeavour*, updated 26 March 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_7932.htm.

³³ Stephen Larrabee and Peter A. Wilson, “NATO needs a Southern strategy”, in *The Epoch Times*, 25 October 2015, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/529861-nato-needs-a-southern-strategy>.

crisis management, border's security, consultations on terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Regarding MD counter terrorism initiatives, the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T) plays a fundamental role, being the main available tool for a joint action by both allies and partners against this threat. The goal of the PAP-T is to support information sharing as well as cooperation through joint counter-terrorism trainings or by managing the consequences in the event of an attack.³⁴

The second NATO regional cooperation initiative involving the Middle East countries is the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. It was established in 2004 and includes Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar. As the MD, the ICI is a bilateral and multilateral cooperation initiative that contributed to the collaboration with the Gulf states. Such a relationship was definitely enshrined by the Qatar participation to NATO's operation in Libya in 2011. In the light of the deteriorating situation in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the former NATO Secretary General decided to improve cooperation with the MD and ICI countries in order to meet the standards of Partnership for Peace (PfP) initiatives.³⁵

Besides these cooperation instruments, the necessity of NATO support to the US-led coalition in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq, has been recently recalled.³⁶ To date, despite the Alliance's political support to the operation, NATO will not give direct contribution – neither with aircrafts nor ground forces – unless the Iraqi government request it.³⁷ Furthermore, such an intervention would not respond to a collective defence logic, as stated by Article 5. NATO's role would be limited to indirect forms of support as provision of equipment or training programmes.³⁸ All military operations undertaken so far in Iraq and Syria depend on national initiatives and do not involve the Alliance as a whole.³⁹

Illegal immigration to Europe through the Mediterranean and the Balkan routes also appear among the security challenges threatening the "Southern flank." Regarding this emergency situation, NATO has offered full support to any European initiative against migrant traffickers in the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ Worth noting is that

³⁴ NATO, *The Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism*, updated 16 February 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50084.htm.

³⁵ Emiliano Stornelli, "A New Policy for the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative", in *Atlantic Committee*, 30 October 2012.

³⁶ The countries taking part in the coalition are Australia, Bahrein, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Jordan, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States.

³⁷ Sam Jones, "Nato offers resources in fight against Isis", in *Financial Times*, 1 December 2014, <http://on.ft.com/11JUyF>.

³⁸ NATO contributed to the training of Iraqi armed forces with the NATO Training Mission- Iraq (NTM-I) from 2004 to 2011, in response to the request of the Iraqi interim government and in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1546.

³⁹ David Francis, "No NATO action against Russia or the Islamic State", in *The Complex*, 29 August 2014, <http://atfp.co/1FdRZgk>.

⁴⁰ This study is based on research completed in December 2015, and does not reflect more

Alliance's posture and stances in the South differ from those in the East, in light of the different threats it has to face. As a matter of fact, the Eastern flank is threatened by a unitary actor, the Russian Federation, considered by many NATO Allies as an enemy using both conventional and hybrid warfare. Whilst in the South, NATO is confronted with multiple and diversified threats, that, given their nature, are not included in Article 5.⁴¹

According to some analysts, NATO, as a military Alliance, is not the best-suited actor to deal with the migrant crisis. According to this view, this task should be addressed by the European Union.⁴² A possible solution could envisage the access to NATO capabilities, e.g. border surveillance systems, within a cooperation framework, for an EU-led operation. Such an initiative under the European flag would be better welcomed than a purely NATO mission.⁴³ Indeed, NATO is no longer the only guarantor of the Western security and stability, as it was during the Cold War period, and the Union has acquired increasing importance as regional security actor.⁴⁴ In such a context, NATO-EU bilateral cooperation should be firmly strengthened.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, to define a strategy for the Southern flank, it is necessary to clearly indicate what NATO and its members are capable and willing to do, based on their priorities and capabilities.⁴⁶ In this sense, according to some experts, regional cooperation could possibly overcome the East/South confrontation. Countries sharing the same risks and identifying a common threat could act together in operations aimed to reinforce their regional security. It is important to work together in order to improve the Alliance readiness. But first a common understanding and a clear political will should be promoted in order to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the both Adaptation and Assurance measures. In this sense, to distinguish between the two different areas of intervention, the Southern and Eastern flank, could help to mitigate their instability conditions.⁴⁷

On the other hand, a sort of "regionalisation" of the Euro-Atlantic security represents a risk for the cohesion of the Alliance. The efficiency and the credibility of deterrence and defence measures in the Eastern Europe would be reduced, if not neutralised, without the ground support of American and Western European

recent developments, such as the NATO decision to launch an operation in the Eagean Sea in order to support Member States. For a timely analysis see Paola Sartori and Paola Tessari, "Anche la Nato contro i trafficanti nell'Egeo", in *AffarInternazionali*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3330>.

⁴¹ Francesca Monaco and Alessandra Scalia, "NATO Towards Warsaw 2016 Summit: Challenges and Opportunities", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|24e (December 2015), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5695>.

⁴² Interview, 5 October 2015.

⁴³ Interview, 10 October 2015.

⁴⁴ Francesca Monaco and Alessandra Scalia, "NATO Towards Warsaw 2016 Summit...", cit.

⁴⁵ Interview, 24 November 2015.

⁴⁶ Francesca Monaco and Alessandra Scalia, "NATO Towards Warsaw 2016 Summit...", cit., p. 5.

⁴⁷ Ian O.Lesser, "The United States and the Future of Mediterranean Security...", cit.

allies. Similarly, on the Southern flank NATO cannot simply be a coordination hub for national operations by Mediterranean Member States. On the contrary, NATO's support in the South implies military and economic efforts by all the Allies, including North Europeans and Americans, in order to face the challenges from the Southern flank. To note, these are challenges that NATO has involuntarily contributed to create with the 2011 intervention in Libya, following the French-British-US politico-military initiative.

2. The White Paper and the Italian defence policy

In view of the next Warsaw Summit, NATO bodies and national ministries are involved in difficult discussions. They have to assess how to develop and adapt the Alliance in order to deal with the current international security challenges. This necessity has become even more urgent after the Paris attacks. The tragic event made evident the direct and dramatic impact that local and regional crisis may have on European security. The publication of the White Paper for International Security and Defence (WP), in April 2015, represented a crucial contribution to the definition of the Italian stance within this debate. After a gap of strategic reflections that has characterised the highest political and institutional levels since 1985, the document defines the national defence priorities as well as ways and means to achieve them.⁴⁸ The realistic analysis of ambitions and available resources provides a solid basis for defining the role that the Italian armed forces should play both in a regional and NATO framework.

2.1 *The White Paper and the Italian role in NATO*

The White Paper outlines the guidelines for the Italy's defence policy in the short and medium term. Accordingly, it provides elements for the definition of the Italian role within the Atlantic Alliance. To this purpose, it takes in due consideration the present security environment and the divergences among member states about NATO priorities between the Southern and Eastern flanks.

2.1.1 *The White Paper and the Italian view on the Southern flank in the NATO debate*

Geographic position and national interests place Italy among those countries convinced of the need to refocus the Alliance toward threats coming from the Southern flank. Yet, at the same time the whole Euro-Atlantic security is considered equally essential to the Italian defence policy. Indeed, NATO constitutes a crucial benchmark for the Italian armed forces, both in terms of strategic doctrine and operational requirements.⁴⁹ According to the national perspective, active role

⁴⁸ Alessandro Marrone (ed.), "The White Paper: A Strategy for Italy's Defence Policy", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|09e (June 2015), p. 3, <http://www.iai.it/en/node/4239>.

⁴⁹ Interview, 19 October 2015.

within the Alliance is essential to the Italian foreign and defence policy for two main reasons. Firstly, it is instrumental to maintain and strengthen Italy's position at the international level and towards the allies. Secondly, it serves as an "insurance policy" against any possible threat Italy would not be able to face alone.⁵⁰

This concept is clearly stated also in the White Paper, where it describes NATO as essential to defend national interests and as a cornerstone of the Italian defence and security architecture. It is stated that: "only the Alliance between North America and Europe is able to dissuade, deter and provide military defence against any kind of threat" (point 64).⁵¹ According to the White Paper, active participation within NATO represents "the only strategy that can maximize the security framework and mitigate the risks" (point 69). Moreover, it specifies that this effort entails a high-quality and professional contribution, through the use of appropriate means and adequate equipment. In this way, Italy's participation in the Alliance's forces would be more efficient, within the framework of the current review of NATO forces (point 70). Nonetheless, whilst reaffirming the importance of the Alliance cohesion, the White Paper prioritises the European "integration" of the national military within the EU framework. In line with the Italian traditional foreign and defence policy, the document seeks to balance "Europeanism" and "Atlanticism" while defining the national role within both the EU and NATO.

As for the defence of national interests in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the White Paper recommends a greater activism. It also envisages the possibility for Italy to take the lead of some crisis management operations, especially in "those areas where Italy's direct knowledge of the situations is greater due to historical, social or cultural proximity" (point 71). According to the White Paper and with respects to the wider European and Atlantic context, this activism has to be adequately integrated within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy and in relation to the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue.⁵² In this context, the document calls on Italy to act for policies that are more focused on Euro-Mediterranean security.

According to the White Paper propositions and in view of the next Warsaw Summit, Italy should elaborate a coherent and structured proposal to gain NATO's support in tackling the Mediterranean threats. Such an effort requires precise objectives, a clear strategy and adequate military capabilities.⁵³ This task is undoubtedly difficult due to several reasons. Above all, the definition of the threat and consequently of an adequate response strategy is complicated by the complexity of the situation and variety of actors involved.

⁵⁰ In order to further examine the relation between NATO and the Italian national interests, see Alessandro Marrone, Carolina De Simone and Paola Tessari, "Italian Interests and NATO: From Missions to Trenches?", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 14|12e (December 2014), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/2382>.

⁵¹ Italian Ministry of Defence, *White Paper for International Security and Defence*, 30 April 2015, http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Documents/2015/07_Luglio/White%20book.pdf.

⁵² See Chapter 1.

⁵³ Interviews 19 and 22 October 2015.

Hence, several factors contribute to foster the intricacy of the regional conflicts. Firstly, the failed states like Libya and Syria, that – currently marked by civil wars with the involvement of regional powers – are spreading insecurity and instability well beyond their own borders. Secondly, extremist groups, among which the Islamic State is the dominating force, but not the only one. The IS is spreading its influence in the region through affiliated networks, by acting as a quasi-state actor. Lastly, this situation of violence and growing instability contributed to increase migration flows, to such an extent that the phenomenon has become a real humanitarian emergency.⁵⁴ Such instability is substantially different from a threat challenging territorial integrity, also in terms of impact on the internal security of many EU countries. According to this consideration, the arch of instability on the Southern flank induces to consider a wide range of intervention options, including crisis management, counterterrorism and humanitarian relief.

Nonetheless, a possible NATO "out of area" intervention seems to lack consensus among the majority of national public opinions, even in a region close to eight of its members, as it is the case for the Mediterranean area.⁵⁵ In fact, according to the *Transatlantic Trends 2014 Report*, when asked what kind of mission NATO should conduct in the next years, the majority of respondents – 59% of Americans and 73% of Europeans – answered that territorial defence should be the core task of the Alliance. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees opposes operating "out of area" and said that NATO should not engage in military operation outside of Europe and the United States.⁵⁶ Divergences of opinion over the 2011 Libya intervention further confirm these results. In that occasion, NATO military intervention lacked consensus among some member states – Germany, Poland and Turkey among others – who declined to join the operation.⁵⁷

Lastly, the recent transatlantic debate, especially concerning the NATO Political Guidance, highlighted the emergence of new political dynamics within the Alliance. Traditionally, larger member states, particularly the US, would have reached consensus on their proposal by gathering the support needed from the smaller allies. However, in this case, the major Allies have struggled to avoid a displacement of the Alliance toward the positions of the Eastern states, especially Poland and the Baltic Republics, afraid of the Russian threat. While, in other circumstance, the American leadership served to discipline these kind of disputes, in this case Eastern Allies proved greater political activism and autonomy in promoting their stances within the Alliance.

⁵⁴ Margriet Drent, Rob Hendriks, Dick Zandee, "New Threats, New EU and NATO responses", in *Clingendael Reports*, July 2015, p. 22, <http://www.clingendael.nl/publication/new-threats-new-eu-and-nato-responses>.

⁵⁵ Albania, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.

⁵⁶ German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends, Key Findings 2014*, p. 46, <http://trends.gmfus.org/transatlantic-trends/key-findings>.

⁵⁷ Lorena De Vita, "In Libia è in gioco la credibilità della NATO", in *Limes online*, 8 June 2011, <http://www.limesonline.com/in-libia-e-in-gioco-la-credibilita-della-nato/24219>.

On the contrary, these new dynamics highlighted the difficulties that the Southern Allies, including Italy, encountered in promoting their standpoints in the transatlantic debate. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the 2015 Global Security Forum initiative promoted by the Central Eastern European countries. With the purpose of discussing foreign and defence policy issues, the 10th edition of this conference represented an important platform to start an informal preparation of the next Warsaw Summit.⁵⁸ Countries from the region were well politically represented at the event by Prime Ministers and Presidents, while Southern governments' representative were not present.⁵⁹ Few political and institutional events can be mentioned as ways to promote a debate also on challenges from the Southern flanks and bring in an Italian perspective: the seminar of the NATO Parliamentary assembly which took place in Florence in November 2015⁶⁰ and the official presentation of the English version of Italy's White Paper both to NATO and EDA. Nevertheless, in order to reinforce both the national and the Mediterranean perspectives within the transatlantic debate, Rome should devote greater effort to carry on more structured initiatives.

While the reduced American leadership in NATO until 2015 can be ascribed to the Obama administration's strategy of reducing military commitments in Europe and MENA, it remains to be seen if the political activism of the Eastern allies will be a long lasting phenomenon. Should divergences of opinions persist among European members and the US remain not that interested in engaging Allies, this would lead to an important change in the political equilibrium of the Alliance. In such a situation to find common ground on NATO future will be more difficult.⁶¹ In this regard, the Italian contribution to the definition of the Alliance's strategic priorities is central, even more considering the increasing instability in the Mediterranean region.

Should Italy learn to reap the benefits of its efforts and military contribution to the Atlantic Alliance, including the substantial and constant participation to NATO operations, it would gain the political support it needs to promote security

⁵⁸ GLOBSEC, *Preparation for NATO Summit in Warsaw? GLOBSEC is the best opportunity in midterm*, 18 June 2015, <http://globsec.org/globsec2015/news/preparation-for-nato-summit-in-warsaw-globsec-is-the-best-opportunity-in-midterm>.

⁵⁹ GLOBSEC, *List of Participants 2015*, <http://globsec.org/upload/documents/globsec-2015-documents/globsec2015-list-of-participants.pdf>.

⁶⁰ To the event took part, among others: the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini; the President of the Italian Senate Pietro Grasso; the President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Boldrini; the Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni; the Minister of Defence Roberta Pinotti; the Minister of Interior Angelino Alfano; Undersecretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers Marco Minniti; the Chief of Defence Staff Claudio Graziano. The Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly unanimously approved the report presented by the President of the Italian Delegation Andrea Manciuilli. See Italian Chamber of Deputies, *Press Release*, 23 November 2015, http://www.camera.it/leg17/1131?shadow_comunicatostampa=9625.

⁶¹ Aylin Matlé and Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, "From Wales to Warsaw: A New Normal for NATO?", cit., p. 3.

interests in the Mediterranean.⁶² To this purpose, Italy should adopt a clear strategy including precise objectives and concrete requests to the Allies, to put forward with coherence within NATO in order to formulate specific and concrete requests to the Allies. The White Paper may constitute an excellent starting point, but the national political establishment should devote greater effort in this regard.

2.1.2 The Italian role between political ambitions and actual resources

Within the debate over the Eastern and Southern flanks, the Framework Nation Concept (FNC), adopted at the Wales Summit, could play a catalyst role in order to secure the Eastern allies against the Russian threat, on the one hand, and tackle the complexity of the Mediterranean scenario, on the other. The FNC could therefore be a useful element for the Italian role within NATO. Basically, this concept aims at boosting cooperation among NATO countries on capability development and force generation, as under the leadership of a Framework Nation (FN) groups of states should coordinate more closely on a long term basis.⁶³ Being firstly conceived prior to the Ukrainian crisis, this concept has then been developed in close synergy with the RAP as well as the VJTF led by a Framework Nation on a rotational basis.⁶⁴

As FN, Germany leads a group of seventeen nations to focus on capability development in areas such as logistics; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) protection; command and control; delivering fire-power from land, sea, and air. United Kingdom serves as FN for a group of seven nations to develop a Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), able to cover the entire spectrum of possible operations, including high intensity ones. Italy also serves as FN within a group of six allies to focus on the development of greater command and control capabilities and a more efficient deployment of the land component in stabilisation and reconstruction operations.⁶⁵ Interestingly, the Italian role as Framework Nation reflects the esteemed national capabilities in the crisis management domain. Indeed, Italy has been providing valuable contribution in operations requiring significant deployment of troops on the ground and building good relationships with the civilian population. For instance, this has been the case for operations in the Balkans, Lebanon and Afghanistan, and a similar scenario could emerge from a possible future intervention in the Mediterranean as well.

⁶² Interview, 12 November 2015.

⁶³ Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, "The Framework Nations Concept. Germany's Contribution to a Capable European Defence", in *SWP Comments*, No. 52 (December 2014), p. 2, http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publications/swp-comments-en/swp-aktuelle-details/article/das_rehmenationen_konzept.html.

⁶⁴ As discussed in Chapter 1.

⁶⁵ Franklin D. Kramer, Hans Binnendijk and Daniel S. Hamilton, "NATO's New Strategy: Stability Generation", in *Atlantic Council Reports*, September 2015, p. 6, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/nato-s-new-strategy-stability-generation>.

One of the premises of the FNC is the US decision to gradually reduce its contribution to the overall Alliance's capabilities from the current estimated 66% to 50%. According to this scenario, the European allies will have to increase their investments to preserve NATO's operational capabilities in the current international security environment. In this context, it is worth mentioning the member states' pledge to increase and/or maintain their defence's expenditures at a level of 2% of the GDP by 2024. However, despite its significance, such a commitment should be considered in light of its aforementioned specific limitations.

The Italian commitment to follow the decisions of the Wales Summit with regard to the defence budget seems to be characterised by the lack of a coherent political guideline.⁶⁶ On one side, the White Paper does not give particular prominence to NATO commitments. For instance, it does not envisage increases in the defence expenditure, but provides guidelines to adapt the Italian armed forces to the changing international context by improving their efficiency and effectiveness, within the limited available resource. Wales recommendations seems to have had only limited impact within the Italian political establishment.⁶⁷ In particular, regarding the 2% pledge, Italy risks to lose credibility, especially in comparison to the current U-turn on defence spending by the main European allies.

Between 2006 and 2014, the Italian percentage of GDP invested in the defence function registered the most consistent reduction among the main European countries.⁶⁸ Considering the current level of expenditure, worth 0.9% of GDP,⁶⁹ the 2% commitment can be considered a real "mirage".⁷⁰ More specifically, expenses for the defence functions decreased from 14 billion to 13.2 billion between 2014 and 2015. This expenditure item could be further reduced in the next years, to reach 12.7 billion in 2017.⁷¹ In addition, an inefficient allocation of resources contribute to worsen the situation even further. In 2014, 67.6% of resources were allocated to the Personnel category, 22.9% to the Investment and merely 9.5% was devoted to training, maintenance and operational costs.⁷² Such an imbalance in the resource allocation negatively affect the readiness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Italian Armed Forces.

⁶⁶ Interview, 19 October 2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ French Ministry of Defence, *Annuaire Statistique de la Défense 2014/2015*, October 2015, p. 77, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/portail-defense-mediathèque/publications/annuaire-statistique-de-la-defense-2014-2015>.

⁶⁹ However, to this sum it should be added both the funding to defence procurement from the Ministry of Economic Development and the funds to military operations from the yearly *ad hoc* law approved by the Parliament. For an overview of defence expenditures in Italy see Roberta Maldacea, Alessandro Marrone and Paola Sartori, *Defence Budgets and Industry: Tables and Graphs*, Roma, IAI, July 2015, <http://www.iai.it/en/node/702>.

⁷⁰ Interview, 22 October 2015.

⁷¹ Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "In Europa l'Italia canta fuori dal coro", cit.

⁷² Roberta Maldacea, Alessandro Marrone, Paola Sartori, *Defence Budgets and Industry*, cit.

At the same time, with respect to the national contribution to NATO operational readiness, Italy's participation in reassurance measures on the Eastern flank is remarkable. In particular, the Italian Air Force participation to the NATO air patrol missions in the Baltic countries is worth noticing. Four Italian Eurofighters and almost 100 military personnel were deployed over a period of eight months, from 1 January to 27 August 2015.⁷³ Moreover, it should be noted that after concluding the initial four months as lead Nation, Italy was asked to extend its contribution for an additional period as augmenting Nation. It became the first NATO Ally to have supported Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission for eight months in a row and the only Allied country to have performed all Interim Air Policing (IAP) NATO missions: Albania, Iceland, Slovenia and Baltic States. Moreover, besides participation in military exercises on the Eastern flank,⁷⁴ Italy will also guide the VJTF in 2018. To note, within the Atlantic Alliance, the added value of some specific units of the Italian Armed Force is widely recognised. According to the Secretary-General, "Italy is a key player, is a key actor in working together with the Allies to meet and face the challenges stemming from the south."⁷⁵ Indeed, thanks to the over twenty years of experience in international missions – sometimes as leading nation – such as Balkans, Lebanon and Afghanistan, Italy is considered a valid and appreciated partner within the Alliance.

However, as already mentioned, the picture looks contradictory as high operational performances are not supported by adequate resources, which are instead limited and not properly allocated. Such a situation is not sustainable in the long term. The persistent expense unbalances and the general scarcity of resources will probably undermine Italian capacity to contribute to international missions (NATO or non NATO) if timely adjustment measures are not taken. According to other experts, spending cuts have already reached such a level as to question the capacity to conduct a potential operation in a peace-enforcing scenario like the Libya one, because the impossibility to sustain a long-term deployment of forces would make it impossible to carry out robust and prolonged stabilisation operations.⁷⁶ Despite the White Paper provisions and the recent political declarations, Italian capacity to play an active and central role with regard to crises in the Mediterranean region, even through the military means, seem to arouse experts concerns because of resources issues.⁷⁷

⁷³ Antonio Caliandro, "Italy ended its NATO Baltic Air Policing mission", in *NATO Allied Air Command*, 28 August 2015, <http://bit.ly/1NQ3TRX>.

⁷⁴ Trident Joust, among others, which took place in Bulgaria, Romania and Italy between 17 and 28 June. The training involved 1,500 troops. NATO, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, Factsheet, October 2015, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_10/20151007_1510-factsheet_rap_en.pdf.

⁷⁵ Italian Ministry of Defence, *Minister Pinotti meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg*, Rome, 26 February 2015, http://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/jens.aspx.

⁷⁶ Interview, 19 October 2015.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

A change of pace is crucial in order to overcome such a critical situation. This implies:

- first of all, as foreseen by the White Paper, an immediate budget reorganisation toward a more balanced, effective and efficient allocation of resources to the defence function;
- secondly, to increase defence expenditure in order to get closer to the 2% pledge, following the examples of the main European allies.

Significantly, the point No. 42 of the White Paper clarifies that a full national commitment to both the Atlantic Alliance and the EU defence integration involve not only benefits but also specific obligations and expenses.

2.2 The impact of the White Paper on the Italian defence policy

In order to further understand the impact of the White Paper on the Italian role within NATO as well as on its relationship with the allies, the following chapter outlines the main contents of the military reform envisaged by the document. The analysis will evaluate its impact on the organisation and structure of the Armed Forces, and therefore the implications for their expeditionary capacity.

Considering the previous gap in terms of government's strategic document of this kind, a proper assessment of the White Paper should take into due consideration its reforming value. On the one hand, it is certainly "revolutionary" in that it proposes a deep and substantial transformation of the Armed Forces. On the other hand, at the strategic level, it introduces only minor and flexible changes with respect to traditional Italian defence policy in order to reach a balanced evaluation and a clearer definition of ambitions in relation to national interests.⁷⁸

2.2.1 Guidelines for the transformation of the Armed Forces according to the White Paper

With respect to the reform of the organisation and structure of the Armed Forces, the White Paper aims at increasing efficiency by revising the current dysfunctional use of resources. In this regard, key transformation elements regards the governance, the education and the training process, the defence investments, the budget allocation, as well as the introduction of the Operational Reserve Force. All these provisions, if implemented, should add value to the contribution of the Italian Armed Forces to NATO. More generally they should improve Italy's participation in both multinational coalitions and multilateral organisations in the security domain, concerning first international operations but also in terms of deterrence, exercises, military cooperation and defence industrial policy.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

According to the public announcement by the Supreme Defence Council on 21st October 2015, by building on the guidelines provided by the White Paper the Defence General Staff and Secretary-General of Defence are currently working – later than previously expected – for the elaboration of concrete and technical proposals. The work is done in *ad hoc* committee and working groups and the results will have to be submitted to the Defence Minister for consideration.⁷⁹

Governance reform

The redefinition of the internal organisation of the Armed Forces and consequently of how they act have significant implications both from a political and operational perspective. As for the first, such a reform will better define roles and functions with respect to the use of force by the state authority. From an operational point of view, a streamlined internal organisation will preserve adequate readiness, sustainability and interoperability of the military.⁸⁰ The idea is to build on the reform launched in 1997 by the then Minister of Defence, Beniamino Andreatta. By adopting a top-down approach the internal organisation should be re-defined starting from the vertices⁸¹ according to three guiding principles: organisation of strategic functions, unified command and efficiency and economic viability of operations.

By enforcing the first principle, the White Paper proposes the reorganisation of commands, units as well as central and local offices according to five strategic functions: political management; strategic and military management; generation and preparation of forces; use of force; and support to forces (point No. 147).

The aim is to avoid unnecessary duplications and fragmentation of resources. According to this approach, the document foresees a strict separation between the political management and the strategic and military one. The first is the competence of the Defence Minister, and the latter is under the responsibility of the Chief of Defence Staff (*Capo di Stato Maggiore della Difesa* - CASMD).

The Minister of Defence, hierarchical and disciplinary apex of the military, implements government decision in this field, issues directives on military policy and approves planning activities. In addition, according to the WP, the Minister has a precisely defined range of responsibilities that constitute the function of political management” (point No. 152). The goal of the document is to strengthen this function by empowering the offices that directly collaborate with the Minister, especially in those areas connected to the exercise of the high political functions. Moreover, the Minister and the Under Secretaries of Defence will be granted the right to choose the staff of these offices. In this way, the traditional “information

⁷⁹ Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Mattarella ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo della Difesa*, Rome, 21 October 2015, <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=1017>.

⁸⁰ Alessandro Marrone (ed.), “The White Paper: A Strategy for Italy’s Defence Policy”, cit., p. 11.

⁸¹ Interview, 9 November 2015.

asymmetry” between the political and the technical/bureaucratic spheres should be overcome, thus enabling policy-makers to take informed decisions and verify their implementation and results.

Concerning the strategic and military management, the CASMD will remain the head of the technical-military body of the Armed Forces. In addition, he will be the only responsible to the political authority for all aspects related to forces’ deployment, generation, preparation and general and support. According to the White Paper, the responsibility of the planning and the employment of forces in operation will be delegated to a new figure, the Second in Command for the Operations (*Vice Comandante per le Operazioni - VCOM-OPS*). He will exercise his functions through the Joint Operational Command (*Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze - COI*) and the single service commands. Similarly, also the Joint Special Operations Command and the new Cyber Operations Command will work under the VCOM-OPS. So basically any kind of military operation will be under the responsibility of the COI, that will evolve into a sort of Joint Force Command.⁸² The intention is to overcome the current functional overlapping that characterises COI and the single service commands.⁸³ This reform should lead to a more streamlined, efficient and deployable chain of command, able to adequately respond not only to national needs but also to operational requirements for international missions, including NATO-led operations.

Furthermore the CASMD will be responsible also for the forces support. More specifically, “the National Armaments and Logistics Director (*[Direttore Nazionale Armamenti e Logistica] DNAL*) will centralize the acquisition of weapon systems, infrastructures and logistics, with the exception of direct support to operational units” (point No. 174). The purpose is again to optimise the use of resources by eliminating duplications, introducing new working practices and inducing any level of command to take on more responsibility.⁸⁴ Lastly, Chiefs of Staff of the single Armed Forces will, according to the directives received, take responsibility for the generation and preparation of the land, naval and air forces. In this regard, the White Paper increase the hierarchical dependency of single services Chiefs of Staff from the CASMD.

According to the WP, personnel is an essential element for the success of this transformation process (point No. 180). Consequently, the White Paper foresees the review of the defence training structure, towards a more homogeneous and integrated military, to fulfil common goals and avoid redundancies. Three main drivers will guide this review: continuous training; maximum organisational synergy; standardisation and internationalisation of training courses (point No. 182). The first point acknowledges the well known necessity to have regular training opportunities alongside professional activities throughout military

⁸² Pietro Batacchi, “Il libro Bianco 2015”, in *Rivista Italiana Difesa (RID)*, No. 6 (June 2015), p. 30.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Interview, 17 November 2015.

career. Secondly, the White Paper aims to integrate the organisation of all those activities that are common to the Armed Forces and the civilian personnel. Lastly, the training process should be harmonised according to international standards, in order to reach high level of integration and interoperability within multinational contexts.

Despite the lack of any specific NATO guideline regarding training process, the transformation foreseen by the White Paper positively meets requests for international standardisation issued within the transatlantic context.⁸⁵ In an increasingly complex security environment, improving the training process and personnel's education becomes essential in order to carry out tailored military interventions according to an effects-based approach.⁸⁶

New dispositions for investments, budget and Operational Reserve

According to the criteria of efficiency and effectiveness of the military instrument, the White Paper moves beyond the reform of the internal organisation to introduce significant provisions in the military procurement process and MoD budget allocation.

Regarding the first point, the White Paper foresees the introduction of a multi-years investment law. Such a provision aims to ensure adequate planning and stable availability of resources, and due parliamentary and governmental supervision over the most important choices. The six-years law, to be updated each three years, should plan the main investments in military equipment to ensure the operational capability of the acquired assets, through appropriate staff training and proper logistical support (point No. 160). This consideration acquires even more relevance in light of what is indicated in the following section: "Capabilities to be generated for an integrated national force." According to this paragraph the armed forces have to develop adequate joint operational capabilities. Considering "that in the future the military component will be increasingly integrated with those of other European countries and NATO" these capabilities have to be fully interoperable and integrated within NATO forces (point No. 144). In other words, a more stable mid-term procurement planning, duly coordinated with the maintenance and training procedures, ensures an adequate acquisition process of military capabilities.

With regard to the defence expenditures, the White Paper proposes to overcome the existing distribution of costs within the MoD budget, namely for personnel, training and investment, by introducing three new points of reference: "personnel," "operability of the military component" and "operations" (point No. 164). Basically, the current personnel element remains unchanged, while the other two have been overcome by the new allocation system. In fact, the new operability line of budget will include costs of administration, training, rapid response and technology

⁸⁵ Interview, 9 November 2015.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

development. This entry will thus cover the previous “training” and “investment” categories, which included the costs for procurement, modernisation, evolution of capabilities, research and development. Yet the major equipment procurement programs (hopefully including logistic support and maintenance during the first few years), will be defined by the aforementioned six-years law.

The “Operations” category will include all costs for military cooperation and national and international missions. To note, funding of international missions will be permanently included in the defence budget,⁸⁷ thus ending the *ad hoc* resources allocation system through decree-laws each 12 months or less. This will lead to a more transparent and clear distribution of costs.⁸⁸ The goal of the budgetary reform is to achieve a more adequate allocation of resources, in accordance with criteria adopted by other European countries, but above all, with the real role that these costs play in the defence budget (point No. 164).

Another important provision relates to the introduction of the Operational Reserve Force to overcome the existing organisation based on the so called Specialised Reserve which is complementary to professional forces. This reform should align the Italian military to the model adopted by some Allies. It also responds to NATO request of maintaining efficient but smaller armed forces at lower costs.⁸⁹ Given the progressive reduction of military personnel and the increasing instability and conflicts within the international security environment, the current personnel dimension may be insufficient to act in some operational contexts, also considering the expected national commitment of troops both at NATO and EU level (e.g. the VJTF and the Battlegroups) and the ongoing military missions on the Italian soil. Therefore new forms of integration between the Armed Forces and an efficient and deployable Operational Reserve are necessary.

2.2.2 The strategic implications of the White Paper

The White Paper contributes to the definition of the Italian defence policy, in that it seeks to match the level of ambition with the resources likely available in the next years, by adopting a more cautious and realistic approach. It clearly outlines how defence policy is concretely conditioned by budgetary constraints, when it states that “our ability and willingness to invest in international security, however, must take into account the real overall possibilities of the nation, the economic and financial circumstances” (point No. 62). According to this premise, the documents precisely identifies the areas of national strategic importance: the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Mediterranean regions.

⁸⁷ Pietro Batacchi, “Il libro Bianco 2015”, cit., p. 31.

⁸⁸ For further informations on the funding mechanism of the Italian missions abroad, see Federica di Camillo and Paola Tessari, “Italian Missions Abroad”, in *IAI Working Papers*, No. 13|07 (February 2013), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/389>.

⁸⁹ Pietro Batacchi, “Il Libro Bianco 2015”, cit., p. 33.

The former refers to the community formed by the European and North American states, whose importance for Italy is essential in terms of both values and economics. It highlights how the transatlantic relationship had represented one of the most strong and lasting pillar of the global equilibrium, since the end of the II World War. This enduring bond builds on fundamental Western values such as freedom, peace, prosperity and development (point No. 41). On the other side, it specifies that this relationship represents not only "one of the driving factors behind European integration," but also "the result of the mingling the respective economies that has no equal in any other sphere of relations between nations" (point No. 41). For this reason the Euro-Atlantic region is vital to the Italian national interests, also from an economic point of view.

In fact, 68% of national trade imports and 75% of exports are in this area, plus is worth mentioning the "high level of industrial interdependence that already exists and the strategic network of joint technological research activities and professional training." For this reason the security in the Euro-Atlantic region has been indicated as a top priority for Italy (point No. 42). In this sense, the White Paper underlines as the Atlantic Alliance is the cornerstone for the protection – today and in the future – of national security and defence, together with the development of a progressive integration of the EU countries' militaries.

On the other hand, the Euro-Mediterranean area appears to be much more complicated than the Euro-Atlantic region. Despite being bound by the Mediterranean Sea, the region is divided by specific political, social, economic,⁹⁰ cultural and religious features. According to the White Paper, this region includes countries from the EU, the Balkans, Black Sea, Maghreb, and the Mediterranean area of the Middle East. The stability of the Euro-Mediterranean region is a vital interest for Italy for two different reasons. On one side, the economic, social and political turmoil that affected many of these countries in the latest years and the evolution of the terrorist phenomenon are seriously threatening Italian as well as the regional security. On the other side, this situation affects also the national energy dependence on these countries,⁹¹ thus regional stability is crucial also for the national economy.

According to the White Paper, the Euro-Mediterranean and the Euro-Atlantic areas are equally important to national security. They are defined as "both essential and complementary elements in the framework of national security and defence"

⁹⁰ For a deeper analysis of the economic relations among the countries of the region, see: Alessandro Ungaro, "L'Italia nel Mediterraneo tra sfide commerciali, infrastrutturali e nuovi traffici navali", in Alessandro Marrone and Michele Nones (eds.), *La sicurezza del Mediterraneo e l'Italia*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, November 2015, p. 31-52 (Quaderni IAI No.15), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5607>.

⁹¹ For a further analysis on the energy aspects of the situation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, see Nicolò Sartori, "Il Mediterraneo e la sicurezza energetica" in Alessandro Marrone and Michele Nones (eds.), *La sicurezza del Mediterraneo e l'Italia*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, November 2015, p. 53-72 (Quaderni IAI No.15), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5607>.

(point No. 50). In this regard, the White Paper highlights the strategic need to better calibrate Italian military so as to offer a broad range of capabilities for interventions and to ensure Italy can lead in the region eventual multinational operations including crisis management, restoring peace and international security (point No. 138).

Interestingly, the White Paper does not limit the national action range solely to the countries on the Mediterranean basin, as the Euro-Mediterranean region is perceived as an open system whose stability “is influenced by the dynamics occurring particularly in adjacent areas” (point No. 51). Being more specific, “in order to protect national interests and to strengthen the framework of security and defence, areas of particular interest are the Mashr[e]q, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the countries of the Persian Gulf” (point No. 51).

The reforms foreseen by White Paper are crucial to ensure effectiveness, quality and efficiency of the Italian Armed Forces. The full implementation of these measures will require utmost attention and responsibility on the behalf of the political institutions. Considering their high level of ambition, the WP’s reforms will probably encounter some resistance in their implementation. Notably, it seems this is currently happening for setting up the implementing measures.⁹² This phase is actually falling behind the schedules defined by the White Paper.⁹³

With reference to the implementation process, the following reasons can explain the current delays. First of all, the complexity of the military and multiple interrelations in and between various levels within the Armed Forces structure.⁹⁴ In order to ensure internal coherence and the correct functioning of the diverse components, the evaluation process of the proposed reforms has to consider the entire defence framework and cannot focus on a specific element. Probably this specific aspect has not been duly considered in the drafting of the chapter on “Strategic Planning and Implementation of the White Paper.” As a result, schedules proved to be too optimistic when compared to the scope and ambitions of the reform process. Lastly, the fact that the reforms implementation needs a prior political evaluation and often involves the legislative process further contribute to explain the current delays in implementing the reforms envisaged by the White Paper.

To conclude, the White Paper provides important guidelines for a long and articulated reform process. Such an effort was, and still is, fundamental and necessary, but its realisation closely depends on the political leadership. The full implementation of this process is today more essential than ever to ensure Italy will continue to be a “net contributor of security” both within NATO and the EU, and to safeguard national interest and preserve country’s security.

⁹² Interview, 19 October 2015.

⁹³ Interview, 3 November 2015.

⁹⁴ Interview, 17 November 2015.

3. Conclusions: Elements for an Italian initiative on NATO Southern flank

The landscape outlined in the previous chapters poses significant challenges to the Italian defence policy, particularly regarding the Euro-Mediterranean region and within NATO. Therefore, Italy will need to take a clear stance and propose concrete initiatives with respect to both the current NATO internal debate and the instability on the Southern flank. In this regard, two issues deserve due consideration. Firstly, the diminished US leadership within the Alliance. Secondly, the renewed tendency by NATO members to pursue increasing autonomous foreign and defence policies. Both these trends call on Italy to contribute to a common European and Euro-Atlantic strategy, through the definition of a national initiative. To this purpose, this conclusive chapter intends to provide some food for thoughts.

Given the fragmented nature of the Euro-Mediterranean region and the diversity of threats challenging NATO countries on the Southern flank, a twofold approach should be considered: both thematic and regional. On the one hand, a thematic approach could be useful to reach consensus among the Allies, to promote an effective cooperation with the EU, and to tackle those threats whilst considering the limitations of a politico-military organisation such as NATO. Being more specific, a thematic approach should focus on single identifiable issues such as international Islamic terrorism and maritime security in the first place.

First of all, with respect to extremist terrorism increased cooperation between NATO and the EU should be promoted in various ways and at various levels. The activation of the mutual defence clause, under article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty, following the Paris attacks, could be instrumental in this sense. In fact, this step could lead to an increasing EU activism against threats coming from the Mediterranean and the Middle East, thus facilitating cooperation with NATO. Being more specific, such a cooperation could foresee intelligence sharing and a coordinated use of land, naval, air and space assets of NATO and EU member states, as well as of the Alliance as whole (e.g. the Airborne Warning & Control System, AWACS). These provisions would enhance the Mediterranean situational awareness thus improving the effectiveness of the international counter terrorism campaign. In this context, the application of the Berlin Plus agreements could ensure the availability of NATO assets for EU-led operations. Furthermore, increased NATO-EU cooperation could improve also the assistance provided to partner countries of the Southern flank, deeply affected by the terroristic phenomenon. To this purpose, closer coordination between NATO Capacity Building Programmes and the more comprehensive EU missions for institution building could be instrumental.

Similarly, greater synergy between the Allied mission Active Endeavour, in place since 2001, and the current counter terrorism efforts by EU member states should be pursued. Moreover, increased cooperation between NATO and EU to counter terrorism, under a European leadership, would represent an important step in the fight against this threat. Indeed, the coalition of the willing now formed by

Western countries represents a starting point, but more needs to be done and a sort of “double multilateralisation” of the European action – under EU leadership and with NATO support – would overcome the limitations and weaknesses of the current bunch of bilateral cooperation between France and single partners.

Secondly, to effectively address the issue of maritime security NATO should act both at a strategic and operational level. From a strategic point of view, the Atlantic Alliance needs to adopt a new Maritime Strategy because the current document dates back to 2011 and radical changes occurred in the Euro-Mediterranean region in the last few years.⁹⁵ The new strategy should identify threats to maritime security and indicate adequate responses to be implemented according to the 2010 Strategic Concept and in coordination with the RAP and VJTF deployment plans. As part of this strategic revision, the Atlantic Alliance should:

- restructure the Standing Maritime Groups by improving their readiness and deployability;
- reinforce maritime command and control on the southern flank, and ensure more coordination between them and national structures.

Moreover, by taking advantage from the ongoing European strategic debate, the adoption of a new Alliance Maritime Strategy could represent an opportunity to enhance cooperation between NATO and the EU. In fact, the Union adopted the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS)⁹⁶ in 2015 and is currently working for the definition of a new EU Global Strategy. Finally, the new Alliance Maritime Strategy should include also regional chapters, and each of them should focus on a basin bordering the Alliance, starting from the Mediterranean one.

Moving to the operational level, the increased Russian and Chinese presence in the Mediterranean region, including submarines, requires an intensification of NATO surveillance and exercises activities. Such measures will ensure the effectiveness and readiness of the Alliance’s deterrent in the Mediterranean, and will improve the Allied maritime situational awareness with regards to technologically advanced assets, nuclear or conventional, of non-NATO countries present in the basin. At the same time, in order to tackle the migration crisis, human smuggling and international terrorism, more coordination is needed among actors involved. At the moment, EU, NATO and Italy are conducting parallel operations in the Mediterranean, and precisely Active Endeavour, Triton, EUNAVFORMED and the national operation Mare Sicuro. Their mandates should be redefined to ensure a more efficient use of the military forces and avoid dysfunctional overlaps. EU-

⁹⁵ Alessandro Marrone, Michele Nones and Alessandro R. Ungaro, “Politica di difesa, strumento militare e operazioni nel Mediterraneo”, in Alessandro Marrone and Michele Nones (eds.), *La sicurezza del Mediterraneo e l’Italia*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, November 2015, p. 138 (Quaderni IAI No. 15), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5607>.

⁹⁶ For an analysis of the EUMSS, see Lorenzo Vai, “La strategia per la sicurezza marittima dell’Unione Europea: cogito ergo sum?”, in Alessandro Marrone and Michele Nones (eds.), *La sicurezza del Mediterraneo e l’Italia*, Rome, Nuova Cultura, November 2015, p. 99-114 (Quaderni IAI No. 15), <http://www.iai.it/en/node/5607>.

NATO cooperation in the region should foresee the integration of both capabilities and functions of these maritime operations, in order to avoid duplications of roles and waste of resources and improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Finally, regarding the adaptation of NATO military posture, the RAP, the VJTF and the eNRF should be developed and implemented by striking a balance between Eastern and Southern flank, both in military and political terms. Such an approach would fulfil the "360 degrees" principle of forces deployable for the full range of NATO's missions and operations, from collective defence on the Alliance soil to out-of-area crisis management operations, on the whole perimeter of the Alliance. This effort implies:

- a conceptual evolution with respect to deterrence and defence, in order to make them effective against to hybrid and non-conventional threats;⁹⁷
- developing military planning and deployment scenarios for the VJTF and eNRF on both the Eastern and Southern flank;
- positioning assets and/or commands permanently/on a rotational base both in Central-Eastern Europe and in the Southern European members of NATO;
- exercises and drills planning that consider both Eastern and Southern scenarios.

The adoption of the Strategic Level Guidance by NATO Foreign Ministers in October 2015 represents a significant step in this direction, that needs to be further developed in view of the Warsaw Summit. To note, Italy played an important role in helping to achieve consensus on that Guidance first among the Southern member states.⁹⁸

According to some observers,⁹⁹ Trident Juncture highlighted the necessity of revising and strengthening NATO's command structures, in order to match Alliance's level of ambition with the actual Allies' operational performances. If allied commands are not able to carry out one major operation and several smaller ones at the same time, then NATO flexibility is at stake.

Alliance's eventual adoption of a thematic approach on the Southern flank does not exclude a reflection on a regional strategy, since these two lines of action (thematic and geographical) are rather synergic and complementary. The political character of a regional approach is higher than a thematic one, because it needs first and foremost to build on the interaction with local governments as well as with external powers with a considerable engagement in the MENA region. The creation of a politico-diplomatic framework for the region, where key players such as Algeria, Egypt, Gulf States, Iran, Israel, Russia and Saudi Arabia find a basic agreement among them and with the West on a new regional order, would pave the way for the containment, and possibly future solution, of both Syrian and Libyan crises. Such a framework should provide regional actors with adequate security guarantees, thus

⁹⁷ Interview, 3 December 2015.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Interview, 7 December 2015.

refraining them from supporting terrorist and/or rebel groups.

To this purpose and according to Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, NATO should restate its relevance as a consultation and coordination forum, in order to favour convergence of member states' national positions. The Alliance could provide a valid framework to move beyond ad-hoc coalitions, which have recently proved to lack effectiveness as in the case for the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, and probably will be same under an eventual French leadership. Such a framework could encourage the creation of groups of states willing and able to increase their commitment against a specific threat, being it for geographic proximity, interest affinity or similar threat perception. By building on the current trend towards bilateral, regional and mini-lateral defence cooperation, restating NATO as consultation and coordination forum will prevent the Alliance from becoming a mere toolbox for ad-hoc coalitions. Internal cohesion among the Allies in dealing with the current arch of crisis constitutes the Clausewitzian "centre of gravity" of the Alliance: the element from which NATO derives its will to fight and win, as well as the main target of an eventual enemy's blow.

According to this logic of consultation, although with more modest ambitions, NATO should strengthen its multilateral regional partnerships, building on the existing Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, to create fora for strategic dialogue with countries in the region. Bilateral and multilateral operational programmes already in place – with a focus on a wide range of issues, from security sector reform and defence capacity building to borders surveillance and CBRN threats – should continue. At the same time, these two partnerships should evolve into more political and more strategic multilateral frameworks to discuss security and stabilisation in the Euro-Mediterranean region. At the Ministerial meeting, held in Antalya in May 2015, NATO Foreign Ministers started a reflection on the partnerships that the Alliance has developed so far. Such a reflection should aims to:

- a politico-strategic leap forward of the existing partnerships;
- more flexible formats for partnerships' functioning;
- providing these partnerships with more resources;
- to revise the approach towards the Southern partners, acknowledging that the context differs from the one that led to the creation of Eastern partnerships.¹⁰⁰

To note, Italy is actively contributing to this debate.

The various efforts by the main NATO and non-NATO countries taking place at different levels and in diverse *fora* (*in primis* the Vienna negotiation process for Syria) are fundamental to reach a political solution to crises in the MENA region. Against this background, NATO partnerships and the Alliance itself as a political and not just military organisation could increase allied contributions in this regard. The aim is to project stability on the Southern flank, without – or before – using Allied military in out-of-area operations. This is necessary for NATO to launch

¹⁰⁰ Interview, 3 December 2015.

politico-military initiatives to reassure key MENA countries, who need a source of equilibrium to ensure de-escalation of tensions among neighbouring countries not just from single NATO member states. For instance, the Sunni-Shia split, that is at the heart of MENA regional conflicts, is led by the Saudi-Iran rivalry.

NATO political role to support the stabilisation process in the region would revitalise the dialogue between Western Allies and Turkey regarding issues of great importance to Ankara, that have been treated on a national basis so far by the Turkish government as well as by other allies. The continuation of a merely national approach could lead not only to the lack of inter-Allies coordination, but also to further incidents with other key players in the region such as the shooting down of the Russian aircraft, by the Turkish Air Force on 24 November 2015, due the Russia's plane violation of the Turkish airspace.¹⁰¹

Italy could and should elaborate a concrete initiative to contribute to a common strategy to tackle security threats challenging the Euro-Atlantic security and coming from the Southern flank. As a key player in the region from a geopolitical point of view, and with a tradition of good relations with Russia, Italy could provide valid contribution for the NATO elaboration of a shared line of action on the Southern flank which takes stock of difference agendas among Allies.

To this purpose, Italy should promote a strategic debate within the Alliance itself. The 2010 Strategic Concept points out the key NATO priorities, which are still valid at today. However, Allied military efforts with regards to the RAP, VJTF and missions such as Active Endeavour require a new strategic guidance to drive Alliance's actions not only towards the Russian threat, but also toward the Southern flank. With respect to Moscow, reassurance of the Central Eastern European members cannot be the only goal pursued. The Alliance rather needs to elaborate a twin-track strategy: a more robust deterrence and defence on the one hand, and at the same time reopening dialogue with Russia on the other hand, also in order to avoid possible escalations due to either to reassurance measures adopted or to incidents such as the downing of the Russian aircraft.

The effective promotion of a strategic dialogue within the Alliance requires Italy to adopt a clear national strategy. In fact, an explicit, constant and coherent political stance represents a fundamental prerequisite for the protection and support of national interests within multilateral frameworks. Otherwise, the Italian capacity to call for a greater NATO role in the Mediterranean via concrete and feasible proposals will be undermined.

From a national perspective, the adoption of a clear political, diplomatic and military initiative would be instrumental to promote Italian priorities within the transatlantic debate. In this regard, national strategic reflection should build on

¹⁰¹ Tulay Karadeniz and Maria Kiselyova, "Turkey downs Russian warplane near Syria border, Putin warns of 'serious consequences'", in *Reuters*, 24 November 2015, <http://reut.rs/1OqYYpk>.

lessons learned from previous NATO experiences on the Southern flank including the 2011 war in Libya. In that case, after the end of the NATO air campaign the inability to manage the stabilisation process in Libya resulted in a failed state, with all the related negative consequences for, but not limited to, the internal security of NATO Member States in the Mediterranean region.

Furthermore, the adoption of a coherent and effective political stance should go hand in hand with necessary dialogue and diplomatic negotiation with regional powers and local actors. This effort should avoid confrontation of diverging national strategies aimed at addressing security threats that are common and shared by all countries in the region. This element represents a crucial premise for the success of any military intervention in the area, being it stabilisation in Libya or fighting the Islamic State in Syria.

In order to achieve these foreign and defence policy's objectives, the Italian action should be coordinated and synergic at both bilateral and multilateral level. As for the latter, Italy has to leave aside the idealist conception that has hitherto influenced its foreign action, to adopt a more realistic approach to multilateralism. This would strengthen Italian position within the international scenario. A "realistic multilateralism" should apply to:

- the analysis of Allies strategies, whose leading interests sometimes diverge from the Italian ones;
- the pragmatic combination of bilateral, mini-lateral and multilateral initiatives;
- the provision of coherent military and non-military resources to implement the strategy adopted by the foreign and defence policy.¹⁰²

Such a conception of multilateralism could be instrumental in promoting Italian national interests within multilateral frameworks. In return for its national valuable contribution to international security Italy should work for gaining political support to promote its stances at the negotiating tables with the Allies. In order to capitalise its military contribution to the Alliance, it is important for Rome to consistently pursue a coherent strategy. On the one hand, this requires a better promotion of the Italian presence in key positions within organisations to which it belongs, including NATO. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that while Italy continuously held the position of Deputy Secretary General since 1958, with a brief interruption between 1964 and the 1971 because the Italian Manlio Brosio held the post of Secretary General, this praxis ended in 2012. In the last four years no Italian held the post, while in 2014 Jens Stoltenberg became the new NATO Secretary General ruling out any chances for the Italian Franco Frattini, who had been amongst the contenders for this position.¹⁰³ On the other hand, more internal political cohesion would enable the Italian leadership to maintain a consistent strategy, by reducing partisan fight and encouraging the consensus on the common denominator

¹⁰² Alessandro Marrone, Michele Nones and Alessandro R. Ungaro, "Politica di difesa, strumento militare e operazioni nel Mediterraneo", cit., p. 139.

¹⁰³ "Nato, tramonta il nome di Frattini", in *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 28 March 2014, <http://24o.it/exXOG>.

represented by national interests. The White Paper could provide a crucial input for the definition of the Italian defence policy in that it clearly defines the country's priorities and lines of actions. However, this document is far from representing the end of the road, and it should rather be considered as a valid starting point.

Needless to say, such a defence policy requires adequate military means. To this extent the implementation of the Italian White Paper represents a crucial prerequisite for younger, more deployable and sustainable Armed Forces. This is one of the Italy's internal reforms necessary to make the state more solid, effective, efficient and internationally competitive. In this sense White Paper's provisions such as the reform of Armed Forces internal organisation and governance, the review of the training and education process, the new dispositions on budget allocation, the six-years procurement law, as well as the introduction of the Reserve Force are all functional to improve the quality of action of the Italian armed forces.

Besides the current delays in the implementation of the White Paper provisions, due to the armed forces complexity, the success of this reform process rests on the will of the Italian political leadership. Similarly, political will is also fundamental for the allocation of an increased amount of resources necessary to maintain such an operational capacity that it can adequately support the Italian foreign and defence policy. In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, that dramatically showed European vulnerabilities to external and unpredictable threats, investing in security and defence has become extremely urgent. Not only to uphold the 2% pledge and preserve Italian credibility with allies, but more importantly to ensure Italy is ready and prepared to respond to current and future threats to national security.

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Via Angelo Brunetti, 9 - I-00186 Rome, Italy

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

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