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Challenges to NATO and Italy's Role: Trump, Brexit, Collective Defence and Neighborhood Stability

by Francesca Bitondo, Alessandro Marrone and Paola Sartori

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses a range of variables and challenges particularly relevant to Euro-Atlantic security and NATO, with a specific focus on Italy's role in such a context. The first chapter summarises the main decisions taken at NATO's Warsaw Summit in July 2016, and in particular: NATO's posture towards Russia, characterised by defence and deterrence on the one hand, and dialogue on the other; the 360-degree-approach which applies to both the Eastern and Southern flanks – even if with less emphasis on the latter; and the re-launching of NATO-EU cooperation. The second chapter focuses on the impact of two main variables on the international, transatlantic and European context. First, Donald Trump presidency, with a specific focus on the possible elements of its future foreign and defence policy. Second, Brexit, that with its wide range of consequences on the EU as a whole will impact, even if indirectly, European security and, hence, NATO. The final chapter explores Italy's actual and potential role in the current international scenario with specific reference to projecting stability on the Southern flank, balancing relations between NATO and Russia and supporting EU-NATO cooperation. Furthermore, a specific focus is dedicated to the unsatisfying implementation of the Italian White Paper for International Security and Defence, one year and a half after its adoption by the Italian government.

keywords

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1. The outcomes of the Warsaw Summit: a 360 degree approach

1.1 NATO-Russia relations: deterrence, defence and dialogue

Over the past twenty years, NATO has focused mainly on crisis management and maintaining peace through out of area operations and by strengthening cooperation and partnerships. The Russian illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent crisis have re-oriented NATO's focus towards Member States' territory and their closest neighbourhood. In particular, the current critical relations with Russia plays a crucial role in the transatlantic agenda, as it emerges from the Warsaw Summit declaration.[1]

NATO's approach towards vis-à-vis Russia rests on three main pillars: defence, deterrence and dialogue. NATO firmly condemned Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea which violated the principles of international law, as well as its presence in eastern Ukraine. Moreover, such approach aims at addressing other Russian actions perceived as provocative, such as: military exercises close to NATO's borders,

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[1] NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, 9 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

including in the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean; the repeated violation of the member states' airspace; and military deployments near NATO's frontiers.[2] In addition, Russia moved the Iskander/SS-26[3] to Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea.

Against this backdrop, NATO took an important decision in Warsaw, namely to deploy on a rotational basis an Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) of four international battalions in the three Baltic States and Poland. This decision concludes a process started back in 2014 at the Wales Summit. In fact, NATO has shifted from mere "reassurance"[4] of Eastern European members against the perceived Russian threat to a more actual deterrence, by refocusing NATO's attention on its own territory. Through the EFP, almost 17 years after the first accession to NATO of a former member of the Warsaw Pact, the Alliance's enlargement acquires also concrete military implications beyond its political significance.[5]

Since 2014, NATO has adopted several measures aimed at reassuring Central and Eastern European allies with respect to an increasingly aggressive Russian posture. These measures include more frequent and larger exercises and training activities, military presence on rotational basis, and preliminary activities to develop allied infrastructures in Central and Eastern Europe.[6] The activation of the EFP is intended to give a clear political signal of NATO's credibility and commitment to defence and deterrence on the Eastern flank. Noticeably, some member states here did not adequately invested in the modernization of their military, and only in 2015-2016 have increased defence budgets in the wake of the crisis with Russia.[7] Having the Baltic States still sizable deteriorated soviet structures, in 2014 the US administration decided to support them militarily and economically to reduce the gap in terms of national and collective defence which augmented in previous years.[8] To bridge this gap, besides the increase of military spending in 2015, Lithuania has reintroduced compulsory military service and Poland has recently decided to create a paramilitary "Territorial Defence Force" of tens of thousands of units.[9]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM).

[4] For more details see: Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|25e (December 2015), http://www.iai.it/en/node/5709.

[5] Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja, "Beyond Deterrence: NATO's Agenda after Warsaw", in *KAS Facts & Findings*, No. 224 (October 2016), http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.46589.

[6] Interview, 13 October 2016.

[7] Alessandro Marrone, Olivier De France, Daniele Fattibene (eds.), *Defence Budgets and Cooperation in Europe: Developments, Trends and Drivers*, Roma, IAI, January 2016, http://www.iai.it/en/node/5850.

[8] Interview, 13 October 2016.

[9] "Poland Plans Paramilitary Force of 35000 to Counter Russia", in *BBC News*, 3 June 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36442848.

At operational level, in theory Russia could easily enter the Baltic States, but it would be difficult for Moscow to control them. In this context, EFP deters such an eventuality, due to the immediate involvement of troops from the US and other main NATO members in a military conflict in the Baltics: the resulting casualties among allied militaries would inevitably lead to a full and direct involvement of the whole Alliance. In particular, the four battalions are "persistent, rotational, multinational." Persistent refers to both forces' ability to resist in the event of an armed attack, and to their regular presence on the territory of the Baltic countries beyond the aforementioned military exercises. At the same time, these forces are not permanent but rotational. According the Alliance's perspective, this should guarantee the respect of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 that, among other things, compels to not deploy "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces" in selected European regions – including Central and Eastern Europe.[10] In practice, rotational forces are trained in their respective nations up to the "prompt readiness" level, then they are certified by NATO and operate in the receiving country for a six months-period. After that, they are replaced by another battalion, according to the same procedure. Finally, being "multinational" is a crucial characteristic of these battalions. Indeed, the involvement of all the main NATO member states – for instance Italy will participate with 140 soldiers – is fundamental to commit the Allies both at political and military level according to the aforementioned deterrence rationale.

The four battalions have clearly less defence capabilities compared to the Russian forces deployed close to NATO's borders. However, they represent a "tripwire"[11] – in military jargon – connected to a much more substantial Allied force ready to react, should the tripwire be activated. In order to make the deterrence credible versus a possible Russian attempt to test NATO's defence, the political and military link between the four battalions and the rest of allied forces should be well-functioning. In light of these considerations, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) acquires even more relevance. The VJTF is the "spearhead" of NATO's rapid reaction forces created within the framework of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) approved in the 2014 Wales Summit, and it is operational since 2016 (it will be led by Italy in 2018):[12] the VJTF would be the first NATO force to intervene in the Eastern flank should the EFP be attacked. The Allied deterrence and defence posture then includes the NATO Response Force, enlarged up to 45,000 units by the RAP in 2014,[13] and the whole ensemble of Allies' conventional and nuclear forces. Essentially, the credibility of NATO's deterrent posture depends on two main factors which go well beyond the EFP: the actual military capabilities to counter

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[10] NATO, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, Paris, 27 May 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

[11] Interview, 13 October 2016.

[12] For more information on the VJTF programme see, among others: Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper", cit.

[13] Giulia Formichetti and Paola Tessari, "After the NATO Wales Summit: Prospects for International Security", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 14|09 (November 2014), http://www.iai.it/en/node/2379.

threats, and the political will to use them in case of conflict. For these reasons, the credibility of Allied deterrence and defence rests even more in the ability to efficiently and swiftly deploy the whole set of NATO armed forces in the short and long term.[14]

A NATO effective deterrence and defence posture would need to adopt measures enabling the Alliance to counter the Russian Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. The A2/AD aims at preventing reinforcements from entering the area of operation, and/or inflicting such a high number of casualties that would discourage it. This system comprises air, naval and land forces, and in particular, missiles capabilities. With specific mention to the NATO's Eastern flank, the Russian A2/AD capacity features an integrated air defence system with an additional layer of anti-ship cruise missiles based in Kaliningrad, and submarines in the Baltic Sea and in Northern Atlantic.[15] The Warsaw Summit recognizes the need to guarantee access of Allied military forces to the territories of all member states in case of conflict, also in order to maintain the tripwire deterrence effect created by the EFP. In this sense, NATO needs to pursue modernization of its technological and military capabilities, effectively coordinating the existing ones, under the framework of a clear and substantial conventional military strategy.[16] In light of all these considerations, the deployment of forces to start in 2017 can be considered as a sign of NATO's commitment to strengthen its war-like capacity in Europe in order to fully implement the deterrence and defence strategy announced in Warsaw.[17]

At the political and strategic level, the difficult relation with Moscow has not only refocused the Alliance towards Europe, but it has also brought back a dangerous NATO-Russia confrontation. This logic negatively affects also other international scenarios where the Russian Federation is deeply involved, like the Syrian one. As a result, relations are made even more tense due to such domino effect, so that different scenarios with distinct causes and dynamics become intertwined with negative cascade effects for both parties.[18] As a consequence, a re-launch of the dialogue with Russia is necessary, and such necessity – strongly supported by Italy – emerged at the Warsaw Summit. Thawing relations with Russia is needed not only to reduce tensions and pave the way for a diplomatic solution to the crisis

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[14] Francesca Bitondo and Paola Sartori, "NATO Defence Planning After the Warsaw Summit", in *Documenti IAI*, n. 16|14e (November 2016), http://www.iai.it/en/node/6953.

[15] Guillaume Lasconjarias and Alessandro Marrone, "How to Respond to Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)? Towards a NATO Counter-A2/AD Strategy", in *NDC Conference Reports*, No. 01/16 (February 2016), http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=906.

[16] Reinhard Krumm, "Europe Security Governance and Transatlantic Relations. The West, Russia and Europe's Security Order", in *FES International Policy Analysis*, November 2016, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/12905.pdf.

[17] Regarding NATO's position in the Baltic region, see: Vladimir Socor, "NATO's New Force Posture in the Baltic Region: Pluses and Minuses", in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 13, No. 141 (3 August 2016), https://shar.es/18oeNT.

[18] Interview, 11 October 2016.

in Europe, but also to engage Moscow in other scenarios where the international community as a whole faces the same threats.

In this context, the first NATO-Russia Council meeting after two years of frozen relations has taken place on 20 April 2016 and has reopened the dialogue by focusing on: the crisis in Ukraine and the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements, the need for transparency and risk reduction in military activities, and the situation in Afghanistan.[19] Collaboration within the NATO-Russia Council has been very profitable in the past, as demonstrated by the use of Russian infrastructures to provide logistic support to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and by the creation of a Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund to support the Afghan Armed Forces in the use and maintenance the Mi-17 helicopters – then, Mi-35. Ahead of the Warsaw Summit, the NATO-Russia Council gathered again on 13 July 2016, confirming a reopened diplomatic channel between the two parties. Although no convergence of views has been registered so far, the Council still represents a powerful forum to support mutual understanding.[20] Moreover, meetings are useful for reducing the escalation risks on the NATO-Russia border, increasing transparency concerning ongoing military activities, and paving the way for a future strategic dialogue on the pan-European security architecture.[21]

As it will be outlined in the second chapter, the reflection among Allies on the posture towards Russia needs to consider the changes to be brought by Trump administration on US-Russia relations in the next future. This is even more valid considering the elected President's declared intention to strike a deal with the Russian leadership.

1.2 The difficulty to "projecting stability" on the Southern flank

In Warsaw, the Allies decided to adopt a 360 degree approach to counter the "arch of insecurity and instability" that surrounds the Alliance. In theory, this approach places the Eastern and the Southern flanks on the same level. However, this does not mean they have been given the same priority, neither in terms of invested resources, nor of strategy. Despite that, the 360 degree approach is a political sign of Alliance's determination to include the Mediterranean into its range of action, through decisions to be further detailed and realized.

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[19] Alessandro Marrone and Ester Sabatino, "2016 NATO Summit: What Agenda for Italy", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 16|08e (June 2016), http://www.iai.it/en/node/6452.

[20] NATO, *NATO Secretary General Welcomes Frank and Open Discussions in NATO-Russia Council*, 13 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_134100.htm.

[21] For an interesting view on the NATO-Russia Council, see: Kadri Liik and Merle Maigre, "NATO-Russia Dialogue and the Future of the NATO-Russia Council", in *ECFR Commentaries*, 5 July 2016, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_nato_russia_dialogue_and_the_future_of_the_nato_russia_council.

The political value, rather than the operational, accorded to the Southern flank lies in the specific nature of threats deriving from this region. On the Eastern flank NATO is confronted with a conventional threat, which is typically part of the Alliance's Cold War DNA. Indeed, the counterpart is a clearly defined a state actor – despite new elements in the tactics of hybrid warfare that could represent a challenge[22] – and the allied response can rely on its consolidated political-military structures and doctrine, both conventional and nuclear. On the contrary, the threats coming from NATO's Southern flank such as terrorism, the migratory crisis and the political-institutional instability, present uncertain characteristics, and come mainly from non-state actors like terrorist groups or result from non-military dynamics such as massive irregular immigration. This does not mean they do not represent a threat to Euro-Atlantic security: terrorists are killing citizens in cities of NATO countries, the migration crisis is creating relevant problems in European societies both at national and EU level, and conflicts and instability in North Africa and Middle East contribute to both massive and uncontrolled migration flows and terrorist attacks in Europe. Concerning the migration phenomenon, it is important to highlight that it does not represent a direct threat to Allies' security per se. However, it is relevant for the large majority of NATO countries; it is linked to terrorism; and it constitutes a destabilizing factor for the European democracies and the whole EU by fuelling public order issues, by instigating racism and intolerance, and by exacerbating nationalist sentiments. In turn, the migratory crisis is strictly related to the conflicts in North Africa and Middle East, which trigger the flows and/or prevent a more effective management of them by transit states. For both geographical and economic reasons, Europe represents the most common destination for migrants coming from the African continent and the Middle East, and it is likely to remain so.[23] The nature of these threats lead to difficulties in defining a clear strategy and specific action plans. Nevertheless, it would be short-sighted not to consider the negative consequences of such arch insecurity and instability surrounding Europe for Euro-Atlantic security, both in the short and long run.

With reference to the Southern flank, the NATO countries supporting an enhanced presence of the Alliance in the Mediterranean do consider the region as a whole – Northern Africa, the Sahel, and the Middle East – while acknowledging the transversal nature of some issues, such as terrorism, migration crisis and political-institutional instability. However, NATO is less prepared – in terms of capabilities and scope – to deal with more volatile and low intensity threats, or even without a specific military dimension, like terrorism and migration crisis. For this reason, the Alliance aims now at "projecting stability" in the region, which is an objective that should be functional both at national and regional level for those threats requiring a firm and permanent cooperation among the countries in the area.

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[22] Regarding the recent debate on the so-called "hybrid war", see: Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey A. Larsen (eds.), "NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats", in *NDC Forum Papers*, No. 24 (December 2015), http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=886.

[23] Interview, 11 October 2016.

In this context, the Warsaw Summit has taken three main decisions. First of all, the Alliance has decided to initiate a maritime operation in the Mediterranean called Sea Guardian. Officially launched on the 9 November 2016,[24] it replaces and expands the mandate of the precedent NATO operation, Active Endeavour – limited to patrolling and monitoring ships in the Mediterranean to help countering terrorist activities. Sea Guardian envisages an enhanced military and intelligence cooperation; the possible collaboration with other navies and coast guards in the region; the cooperation with the EU mission Sophia by providing Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and logistics support; and finally the possible contribution to capacity building of the Libyan coast guard and navy.[25] Moreover, in Warsaw the Allies decided to deploy NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to support the international coalition against ISIS. Such aircrafts provide real-time Command and Control (C2), air and maritime surveillance, as well as airspace management capability. In terms of operational tools, and as opposed to those capabilities provided by Member States on a case-by-case basis, the AWACS represent the most technologically advanced asset among those directly owned and operated by NATO. Finally, falling again under the scope of the fighting Islamic State and terrorism, the Summit has underlined the importance of projecting stability by reinforcing the collaboration with Iraq, Jordan and Afghanistan. As such, NATO is increasing the investments in the formation of the Iraqi security forces by moving the training centre from Jordan to Iraq. The country, after the gradual retake of territories from ISIS, is confronted with the challenging phase of regaining full control of them, perform stabilization and reconstruction activities for the longer term.

As the Warsaw Summit has moved towards strengthening of maritime security in the Mediterranean, the development of security partnerships in the region and the fight against the Islamic State, the crisis in Libya clearly represents an important element to take into account.[26] As previously mentioned, the Warsaw Summit confirmed NATO's availability to support Libyan navy and coast guard mainly through defence capacity building, and if requested by the legitimate Libyan authorities. The crisis in Libya negatively affect both Islamic terrorism and the migration crisis. As a matter of fact, the economic collapse and the proliferation of terroristic groups (Islamic State being one of the most important, but not the only one) exposes Libya to a humanitarian crisis with millions of potential refugees to flee to Europe. Having seen the consequences of Western military intervention in 2011, which was not followed by any peacekeeping or stabilization force after NATO air campaign de facto helped rebels to oust Gaddafi from power, any further political and operational action of the Alliance in the country should be

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[24] NATO, *NATO Launches New Operation Sea Guardian*, 9 November 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_137427.htm.

[25] Alessandro Marrone, "La Nato tra Mosca, Mediterraneo e Bruxelles", in *AffarInternazionali*, 10 July 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3536. Regarding the cooperation between the EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA mission and the Sea Guardian, see the third chapter of this document.

[26] Interview, 13 October 2016.

carefully assessed. Any option should be carefully planned and inscribed within a cooperation framework, especially with the EU.[27] More precisely, once a number of political conditions in Libya are reached so to give external support a chance of success, the EU could provide its expertise in the training of law enforcement agencies and in the civil institution building, whereas NATO could provide its own traditional competences in training military forces.

Even in this case, the Alliance will have to consider the possible new stances of the new Republican administration. Trump made clear that the Islamic State represents the main threat to American security, without really expanding on its view of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa or about a US strategy in the region. For sure, Trump's scepticism towards international organizations and institutions and his preference for bilateral deals (addressed in the second chapter of this paper) could pose a challenge to the Alliance's role, EU-NATO cooperation and the fluid intertwining of alliances and rivalries among the regional actors relevant on the NATO Southern flank.

1.3 A re-launch of the EU-NATO strategic partnership

The multiple challenges the EU is confronted with, and the British referendum that initiated the process of exiting of the United Kingdom from the Union, have recently pushed some EU countries to accelerate in the field of the defence cooperation and integration. The EU Global Strategy (EUGS), presented on 28 June 2016 by the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini has further boosted this acceleration, with a view of cooperation and synergy with the Alliance. Today, NATO seems to recognize the importance of a stronger and more capable EU for Euro-Atlantic security.[28] The growth of a European defence could lead to an increased burden sharing by member states of both NATO and EU, as well as to a more coordinated and efficient action within the Alliance.

In the joint declaration adopted in Warsaw, the EU and NATO representatives have clearly expressed their will to re-launch cooperation and develop a strategic partnership.[29] Since the Russian illegal annexation of Crimea, the two actors have recognized the necessity to come together in face of common threats and promote joint actions to be more effective.[30] This cooperation should be extended to several areas, since both NATO and EU are confronted with several challenges and security issues, which require an ad-hoc combination of complementary civil and military

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[27] Karim Mezran, "Saving Libya to Defend NATO's Southern Flank", in *MENASource*, 6 October 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/saving-libya-to-defend-nato-s-southernflank.

[28] Francesca Bitondo and Paola Sartori, "NATO Defence Planning After the Warsaw Summit", cit.

[29] NATO, *Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Warsaw, 8 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm.

[30] Judy Dempsey, "NATO and the EU Agree to End Their Rivalry", in *Strategic Europe*, 8 July 2016, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=64045.

elements. Indeed, as highlighted by the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Junker, "a stronger European Union means a stronger NATO, and a stronger NATO means a stronger European Union."[31] Noticeably in this regard has been the pragmatic and collaborative attitude of Turkey, which proved to be essential not to hamper the re-launch of EU-NATO collaboration.

The EU-NATO joint declaration, signed in the margin of the Warsaw Summit, outlines seven priority areas to re-launch the strategic partnership between the two actors. First of all, it aims at boosting the ability to counter hybrid threats, through a bolstered resilience, working together on analysis and prevention, information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing. The renewed EU-NATO cooperation devotes a specific focus on Mediterranean as it calls for adapting operational cooperation at sea, with a mutual reinforcement of the respective activities, especially towards the migration crisis. Furthermore, the two actors propose to expand the coordination on cyber security and defence, including in the context of operations, education and training. Other priorities for the cooperation are the development of complementary and interoperable capabilities between NATO and EU, as well as the collaboration at industrial and technological levels. The partnership also foresees the definition of an agenda of parallel and coordinated exercises including on hybrid threats, to be held over the next two years. Finally, the declaration sets a complementary approach to defence and security capacity building – also in the maritime domain – and fostering resilience in partners across eastern and southern neighbourhood of NATO and EU.

For a speedy implementation of such priorities, the European External Action Service and the European Commission have been tasked to develop options and mechanisms of cooperation by December 2016. To note, the High Representative/Vice President of the Commission has steered and coordinated the process, on the basis of the strategic view outlined by the EUGS. At the same time, on the NATO side, the International Staff has received the same task assignment and an information exchange has continued to present agreed and complementary proposals.[32] On 6 December 2016, a common set of concrete proposals for the implementation of the Warsaw joint declaration has been endorsed by both the NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting and the European Council.[33] They regard mainly exchange of information and analysis, staff-level contacts, consultation on capability development, coordinated exercises, establishment of joint working groups involving respective centres of excellence – i.e. on hybrid warfare – and further

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[31] European Commission, *Remarks by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the joint press conference with Donald Tusk, President of the European Council and Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO*, Warsaw, 8 July 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-2460_en.htm.

[32] Interview, 23 September 2016.

[33] NATO, *Statement on the implementation of the Joint Declaration signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 6 December 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_138829.htm.

tasks and deadlines to keep military-diplomatic machineries at work together. As a whole, this set of concrete proposals represents a positive development, resulting from the bottom-up commitment of NATO and EU staffs and institutional representatives. However, it is not a breakthrough of cooperation which would rather need a strong political mandate by US and European governments.

Although the re-launch of EU-NATO partnership have found in Warsaw wide political support, is still unclear how to move forward and enhance cooperation also because of the unsolved Cyprus issue. The normalization of the relations between Turkey and Cyprus constitutes a key element to increment the EU-NATO cooperation in general as well as in some more specific domain, such as addressing the migration crisis.[34] The negotiations on the reunification of the island have made progresses in 2016, but their fade is still uncertain. The issue is linked to the EU-Turkey agreement on migration, as well as to the negotiations to enter the Union which have been stalled in recent months. In a way, the major obstacle to an enhanced EU-NATO cooperation is the lack of EU cohesion on security and defence issues. Numerous initiatives have been set up by both EU institutions and its member states over the last months to re-launch European defence, yet their implementation is not easy at least in the short term. Without a greater and more structured cohesion within the Union, it is plausible that the stance of its member states also in NATO will not record any notable progress. In the words of the President of the Council of EU Donald Tusk, "Even though our internal and external security are closely linked, sometimes it seems as if the EU and NATO were on two different planets, and not headquartered in the same city."[35]

In 2016, until Trump takes office, the political will of NATO and/or EU member states and the pressure of the international security environment have created the possibility for a greater European integration, also to the benefit of NATO. It remains to be seen whether NATO and EU governments will be able to seize it in 2017. In particular, as it will be discussed in the second chapter, Trump's position substantially differs from the support towards EU, including the opposition to Brexit, expressed by Barack Obama's administration over the last eight years. It is rather probable that the new President will shift towards a more realistic and nationalist approach, by considering multilateralism and alliances not as positive elements per se but only as mere instruments to pursue immediate US national interest.

1.4 Investments in defence, cyber security and intelligence

A credible commitment on the three topics analysed in this chapter – deterrence, defence and dialogue; projection of stability; partnership with the EU – should be based on appropriate military expenditures by NATO members in order to counter

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[34] Interview, 17 October 2016.

[35] European Council, *Remarks by President Donald Tusk after the Signature of the EU-NATO Declaration*, 8 July 2016, http://europa.eu/!FC96yM.

threats and, more generally, to enable the Alliance to pursue its security priorities. In doing so, the level of ambition should be balanced with the realities of each member state, in primis regarding defence budgets.

The problem of economic and military burden sharing across the Atlantic has always been an issue within NATO. In the last two years, budgetary trends have registered an improvement, since several Member States have been approaching the parameters decided at the Wales Summit: to spend 2 percent of national GDP on defence by 2024, including 20 percent of this two percent on investments in equipment, encompassing research and technology development. These criteria have been sometimes criticized because of their debatable methodology and accuracy. However, they have a strong political value, and are functional as external obligation for governments to invest in defence, against domestic pressures aiming at cutting military expenditure in favour of other sectors – especially with reference to countries affected by enduring austerity, recession or economic stagnation. In this context, according to the Warsaw Summit declaration, in 2016 the overall expenditure of the Allies has increased for the first time since 2009.[36] In particular, five member states[37] meet NATO's criterion of spending at least 2 percent of the GDP in defence, and ten of them[38] invest more than 20 percent in equipment.

There seems to be a trend towards the stated criteria, although the landscape in Europe varies considerably, depending on regional and national elements.[39] Remarkable imbalance remains at transatlantic level. Indeed, the United States spend 3.6 percent of the GDP in defence, provides between half and two thirds of the Allied military assets and capabilities,[40] and cover almost 30 percent of NATO budget. This results in Washington request to Allies in Europe to invest more resources in defence and to assume a greater role in contributing to transatlantic and, above all, European security. It is likely that the next Trump administration will reiterate this request more firmly, as will be analysed in the second chapter of this paper.

In terms of capabilities to use for military purposes, the Warsaw Summit has recognized the cyber space as an operational domain, on the same level as land, maritime, air and space. This decision represents an important step forward towards a proactive NATO posture in this transversal domain, which influences

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[36] NATO, *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2009-2016)*, 4 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_132934.htm.

[37] In decreasing order of the defence budget: United States, United Kingdom, Poland, Greece, and Estonia.

[38] France, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

[39] Alessandro Marrone, Olivier De France, Daniele Fattibene (eds.), *Defence Budgets and Cooperation in Europe: Developments, Trends and Drivers*, cit.

[40] Projections vary according to the methodology adopted to count the single national military capacities.

the development of large part of current and future military capabilities, as well as its operational use. Cyber technological innovation is advancing, particularly led by the civil sector. The institution of the Cyber Defence Committee within NATO and the reinforcement of some Allies' centres of excellence, decided in Warsaw, are positive steps in the right direction. However, cyber threats require that NATO provides a solid strategy in terms of operations as well as capability planning and development. The attention to the cyber domain seems even more compelling and necessary as the Alliance moves towards a C2 structure based on cloud computing.[41] Therefore it is needed to overcome national reticence in order to create an effective and coordinated information exchange system and cyber defence.[42] Finally, in relation to the improvement of information sharing, the Warsaw Summit decided to set up a new Joint Intelligence and Security Division led by a new Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security, supposed to enable a deeper intra-allies cooperation in this crucial field.

2. New variables: Trump presidency and upcoming Brexit

2.1 The Trump presidency, Euro-Atlantic security and NATO

Trump's election as US president took the majority of analysts and media by surprise,[43] and only after his victory Europe has begun to seriously consider its implications for Euro-Atlantic security and NATO, and more generally for transatlantic relations and the international system.

The following four issues are likely to be central in the first year of Trump administration: the influence of the establishment on the new president – and of Trump on the establishment; nationalism and realism first; less military intervention abroad; bilateral deals with great and middle powers.

1) The influence of the establishment on the new president – and of Trump on the establishment

The US political and institutional system has solid checks and balances, as well as strong continuity of its foreign and defence policies. Indeed, so far it has proved itself capable of limiting fluctuations even during the tenures of extremely diverse presidents such as Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Congress as well as the establishment composed by the bureaucracy, the military, the private sector, media and think tanks reflect the stable inclinations and interests that are

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[41] Francesca Bitondo e Paola Sartori, "NATO Defence Planning After the Warsaw Summit", cit.

[42] Dominik Jankowski, "The Alliance on its Road from Warsaw to Brussels", in *European Geostrategy*, Vol. 8, No. 20 (1 September 2016), http://go.shr.lc/2cxp9Sz.

[43] There were some exceptions: for one of the most detailed analyses of the consensus for candidate Trump, see Jean-Pierre Darnis, "Le ragioni di Trump: perché il tycoon va avanti", in *AffarInternazionali*, 28 August 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3588.

an integral part of the US role in the world, especially in a post-Cold War context. Furthermore, as in other democracies, the more radical and populist positions taken during the electoral campaign in order to gain votes are subsequently restricted by the reality of government, including budgetary constraints and the limits imposed by legally binding international agreements.

However, the Trump administration carries a potential for change that is new for the Republicans and for the country as a whole, for at least four reasons. First, Trump's personal history as an outsider, separate from the Republican ruling class (which did not fully support him during the electoral campaign), and his unpredictable temperament. Second, there is the Republican control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, not to mention the majority of States, which means that until the next parliamentary elections in two years' time any democratic opposition to the White House will be quite ineffective. At the same time, the Republicans' tight margin in the Senate – of just one vote – and the presence of internal adversaries of Trump such as the head of the Senate Armed Services Committee John McCain may lead to modifications in the president's approach, for example in relation to an agreement with Russia. Third, Trump's unfavourable and/or innovative stance regarding globalization and free trade, alliances and international institutions traditionally supported by the US establishment, are popular among the majority of the electorate in many states, even those that are not traditionally Republican. In other words, Trump's anti-establishment position is strong because it is supported more than in the past by the majority of American voters.

A fourth element supporting Trumps' ability to change established US position is the drastic overhaul of the top positions in US institutions allowed by the spoil system. Here is important to look which posts are filled by mainstream Republicans, and which ones by outsider close to Trump's inner circle – particularly in the White House, Pentagon and State Department. Trump has appointed as his Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, Chairman of the Republican Party National Committee, an experienced and leading politician within the party. However, Trump's Chief Strategist will be Steve Bannon, a conservative outsider who headed his electoral campaign in its final months.

Then he has chosen the retired general Michael Flynn as National Security Advisor. Flynn, a top figure in the American army, served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Obama appointed him as Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency in 2012. He is, therefore, certainly part of the American national security establishment. Nevertheless, Flynn resigned in 2014 after a row with the Obama administration and then played an active part in the Trump election campaign, making unusually tough statements for a retired high official – for example about the fight against Islamic extremism.[44] To a certain extent, then, Flynn is both part of the establishment

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[44] Jennifer Rubin, "Trump Raises Red Flags with his Flynn Pick", in *The Washington Post*, 18 November 2016, http://wpo.st/4DdG2.

and a critic of it, echoing the position of Trump himself.

The Secretary of Defence is another former General, James Mattis of the Marine corps, who commanded NATO Allied Command Transformation, and then from 2010-2013 – under Obama administration – the US Central Command (CentCom) responsible for military operations in in Middle East and North Africa. While the new Defence Secretary is certainly part of the Pentagon military establishment, Trump has chosen as Secretary of State a person with no experience with US diplomacy as Rex Tillerson, the Chief Executive Officer of the US energy company ExxonMobil. However, Tillerson's long-standing experience with international trade implies contacts with political, economic and diplomatic decision makers in a number of countries, including Russia. Finally, Trump has chosen as CIA chief the Republican representative Mike Pompeo, close to the positions of Tea Party, and former General John Kelly for the Homeland Security Department. The rest of Trump administration sees Republican politicians responsible of energy, education and health portfolios, and outsiders from the private sector leading the trade and treasury departments. From these nominations it seems, then, that Trump aims to balance somehow the Republican establishment and the outsiders chosen on the basis of a personal relation. In any case, it should not be taken for granted members of his administration will follow his most radical position: already in the Congress hearings of January 2017, Tillerson affirmed he is not against the Trans-Pacific Partnership which Trumps promised to rip-up, while Kelly opposed the return to waterboarding previously mentioned by Trump during the electoral campaign.[45]

In view of all this, it seems possible that the establishment will exert its traditional influence over the new president, but also that Trump will significantly influence the establishment itself, starting with the Republican camp, bringing about important changes in American foreign and defence policy.

2) Nationalism and realism first

The new president has less faith than his predecessors in the international institutions and alliances that the US has built up over decades.[46] He is not opposed to them per se, but he sees them merely as tools at the service of the immediate American national interest, to be abandoned or modified if they no longer serve this purpose. More generally, Trump is above all a nationalist, so for him globalization and the liberal world order are not intrinsically positive, but only valuable if they benefit America's immediate national, economic and security interests.

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[45] Eric Bradner, "Trump vs. His Cabinet: New Splits Emerge", in *CNN Politics*, 11 January 2017, http://cnn.it/2iHrskt.

[46] A theory put forward by, among others, Thomas Wright, in a recent interview. See Uri Friedman, "How Donald Trump Could Change the World", in *The Atlantic*, 7 November 2016, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/trump-election-foreign-policy/505934.

This is one of the major differences with the Obama administration, which made multilateralism, alliances and international institutions a key element of US foreign policy, in line with the vision of an international liberal order. This vision is the legacy of President Woodrow Wilson, and was strongly advocated by the Clinton administration in the 1990s. Then it has been openly challenged by Trump during his campaign when he argued that in the current context such an order no longer serves American economic and security interests.

Nationalist and realist elements were certainly not absent from previous US administrations, nor indeed from any presidency faced with the reality of the international system before, during and after the Cold War. With Trump, though, they will probably become more important when it comes to considering investing political, economic, diplomatic and military resources in alliances and institutions seeking to regulate and stabilize the international system and functioning beyond mere power politics. Trump's admiration of Brexit can be seen in this light, as can the scepticism with which he has hitherto viewed the usefulness and relevance of NATO, which he has recently called as "obsolete" although "important."[47] His predecessors remained convinced that the US benefit structurally from an international system based on free trade, rule of law and democratic values, while Trump intends to evaluate these benefits on a case-by-case basis. The new president will not have read Lord Palmerston, but he might well recognize himself in the nineteenth-century British Prime Minister's assertion that "we have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."

The problem, as emphasized by several experts, is that the international system created after the Second World War is crumbling, allowing the growth of disorder and the risk of conflict, meanwhile the US plays an essential role in ensuring its survival.[48] Trump's scepticism regarding this very system accentuates its fragility and ineffectiveness, driving not only the great powers but also middle ones to act more independently and aggressively in their various areas of influence, resorting more often to the use of force, either openly or covertly, waging conventional or hybrid warfare. This inevitably leads to increased instability and conflict in the areas where the interests of great and middle powers collide, and makes international institutions and organizations less able to mitigate the risks, limit escalation and manage crises.

It remains to be seen how the international system will react to this approach on the part of the superpower which remains its linchpin, and therefore whether Trump will rectify the course that is currently being taken.

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[47] Michael Gove and Kai Diekmann, "Full Transcript of the Interview with Donald Trump", in *The Times*, 16 January 2017.

[48] Stefano Silvestri, "L'urgenza di compiere scelte difficili", in *AffarInternazionali*, 31 October 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3674.

3) Less military intervention abroad

Another important change in the US position on the world stage during the Trump presidency will be the increased reluctance to be active abroad, whether politically, diplomatically or militarily, except in cases when there is a direct national interest to protect. This reluctance is rooted in the overstretch of military capabilities after more than a decade of a war on terror fought with large-scale operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It also stems from accumulated public fatigue towards such effort and disillusionment with the results achieved.

The incumbent democratic administration had already, to some extent, recognized the electorate's wish for less military engagement abroad, so much so that Obama brought US troops completely out of Iraq in 2011 and reduced their presence in Afghanistan by 90 percent by 2014. When the effects of this disengagement led to the dramatic explosion of conflict and instability in Iraq in 2014, with the advance of Islamic State, Obama was somehow obliged to intervene again, but he set strict limits on the number of US boots on the ground. In Libya, too, in the face of insistence a certain section of public opinion and the Democratic establishment – including Hillary Clinton – as well as from allies such as France and UK, Obama limited military involvement to an air campaign with not further stabilization operations. Finally, until 2016 the US have been extremely reluctant to intervene in Syria, as demonstrated by the "red lines" set by Obama and passed by Assad with no consequences.

In this context, the Trump administration is likely to continue to use military force in a tailored way to combat Islamic State, which has been repeatedly defined by Trump as the principle enemy to be defeated[49] – although with no details on the strategy to do so. In setting out this aim, Trump outlined his intention to avoid large-scale campaigns like those of the Bush era, and may return to interrogation methods such as waterboarding that were abandoned by the Obama administration[50] which instead placed "targeted killings" at the centre of its counter-terrorism strategy. This will mark the end of a series of military intervention previously endorsed by the Clinton administration with its humanitarian wars, then by Bush with its war on terror, and finally by part of the Obama administration in the name of the Responsibility to Protect – one example being Hillary Clinton's approach in Libya.

Trump has declared himself ready to intervene militarily if and when there should be a direct threat to American interests and security. It is likely that he would use methods similar to those of Obama, and rely mainly on airpower and special forces without putting troops on the ground. Yet substantial military action would not be

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[49] Christopher P. Cavas and Joe Gould, "Top Trump Military Advisers Detail GOP Candidate's Defense Plan", in *Defence News*, 30 October 2016, http://www.defensenews.com/articles/trump-defense-plan-detailed.

[50] Sari Horwitz, "Trump and His Transition Team Push Ahead, Meeting with Political Allies", in *The Washington Post*, 20 November 2016, http://wapo.st/2gynk9K.

out of the question if the situation required it.[51] It is worth remembering that even George W. Bush won the 2000 presidential election with an explicit promise to reduce American military engagement abroad, after the humanitarian wars fought by the Clinton administration, but then the September 11 attacks radically changed his foreign and defence policies.

President Trump has, nevertheless, promised to invest more in the American armed forces, accusing Obama of having undermined American's military supremacy and pledging to re-establish it. For example, he has claimed to want to increase the size of the US army from its current 475,000 to 540,000, the number of naval units from 272 to 350,[52] and the Marine battalions to 36. In order to reach these goals, it would be necessary to increase the defence budget and repeal the automatic cuts imposed since 2011 by the Budget Control Act – the so called "sequestration" – which would, for example, let number of soldiers in the US army to decrease to 460,000 in 2017.[53] This kind of budget increase would be difficult to achieve even with a majority of Republicans in Congress, because of the need to find massive resources elsewhere in the federal budget.

The intention to increase the defence budget may seem to contradict the opposition to military engagement abroad. However, this contradiction can be explained on the one hand by the intention to consolidate American military power in order to be in a stronger position to negotiate deals with other states. On the other hand, it can be motivated by the desire – on a domestic level – to satisfy that section of the electorate favourable towards the military and investments in the defence industry which result in job creation. In this context, the latest statements about savings to be realized in large defence procurement programmes such as F-35 and Air Force One,[54] produced respectively by Lockheed Martin and Boeing, could be judged as a way to deal with the private sector in order to achieve a better price for the products to be procured.[55] At the same time, such statements are the result of the aforementioned unpredictable temperament of the new president and his troubled relation with Republican establishment, and changes regarding these major procurement programmes cannot be completely ruled out.

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[51] On this subject see, among others, Jean-Pierre Darnis, "Trump presidente, wait and see", in *AffarInternazionali*, 10 November 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3690.

[52] Pietro Batacchi, "Trump ha vinto", in *RID Portale Difesa*, 9 November 2016, http://www.portaledifesa.it/index~phppag,3_id,1565.html.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Michael D. Shear, Christopher Drew and Isabel Kershner, "Trump Joins Line of Critics of Costly Fighter Jet", in *The New York Times*, 12 December 2016, https://nyti.ms/2gz0L49.

[55] Indeed, then Lockheed Chief Executive Officer Marillyn Hewson met with Trump before Christmas and pledged to drive the cost down aggressively in exchange of the continuation of the programme.

4) Bilateral deals with great and middle powers

Several analysts have observed that Trump's vision is mainly based on power politics, bilateral relations and deals negotiated by Washington with interlocutors in order to promote US the national interest in a pragmatic way.[56] Trump believes that bilateral deals with great and middle powers are the best way to obtain the most advantageous results for the US, in terms of both the economy and security.

These deals would be reached with major states first, because they can establish in their neighbourhood a basic level of regional stability that serves America's interests. Reaching such deals may imply to damage the positions of smaller allies, the cohesion of alliances, and the functioning of multilateral organizations of which Washington is a member, if the overall deal is considered favourable to the US interests. Experts have recently portrayed the scenario of a Washington acting under Trump as a "mercenary superpower," protecting only those countries that somehow pay an explicit and favourable transactional bargain, so that the administration could focus on making America great at home.[57]

Such element of bilateral deal is certainly not new in the history of the Cold War and the years since, but is will probably be more prominent with Trump than it was with Obama who still did reach an agreement with Iran despite protests from Saudi Arabian and Israeli allies. In particular, Trump has specifically stated his desire to reach a global deal with Russia, and his Secretary of State has explicitly endorsed this vision – which is fully in line with Tillerson professional background. According to the view emerging from Washington, if bilateral agreements and power politics become central to the international system, and international liberalism and multilateralism do not serve American interests, and if Islamist terrorism is to be fought without engaging too many US troops on the ground, then Moscow will be a key partner with which to seek an agreement. This agreement may well boil down to an exchange between acceptance of Russia's sphere of influence over former Soviet states out of NATO on the one hand, with subsequent easing of sanctions linked to the crisis in Ukraine,[58] and on the other hand a less aggressive posture of Russia from the Baltic[59] to the Black Sea, and an increased Russian contribution to the fight against Islamic terrorism.

This faith in bilateral agreements is partly based in Trump's experience in the private sector, which similar to those of Tillerson: the approach of a businessman used to negotiate a deal with very diverse parties. However, such an approach

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[56] See, among others, Riccardo Alcaro, "Europa, la più sensibile al voto Usa", in *AffarInternazionali*, 5 November 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3682.

[57] Robin Niblett, "Liberalism in Retreat", in *Chatham House Expert Comments*, 13 December 2016, https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/26868.

[58] Martà Dassù, "Trump, the Russian Deal and Europe", in *Aspenia online*, 15 December 2016, http://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspenia-online/node/7138.

[59] Patricia Lewis, "Trump Leads US Security Policy into Uncharted Territory", in *Chatham House Expert Comments*, 16 November 2016, https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/26226.

may not work in complex arenas in which regional players, including US allies, are in conflict among themselves in various groupings, and in which a bilateral agreement with the strongest counterpart does not necessarily reduce conflict. Evidence of this was seen when the Sunni states, and others, gave regional support to Islamic State after America opened up to Iranian Shias at odds with the Sunnis. In this context, the news reported in Russia of a first phone call between Trump and Putin in which the two leaders welcomed the opportunity to "normalise relations and pursue constructive cooperation"[60] should be neither overestimated nor underestimated.

The interaction between the establishment and the president, a leaning towards nationalism and realism, the preference for bilateral deals, and the reduction of military engagement abroad, may all be aspects of upcoming Trump's approach to foreign and defence policy. It is an approach that would, to some extent, echo both the "Jacksonian" model, according to which president Andrew Jackson took a unilateral and nationalist approach to pursuing the national interest, and the "Jeffersonian" model, whereby Thomas Jefferson championed American's isolation from foreign crises and entanglements.[61]

Nevertheless, it is not certain that a "Trump doctrine" is emerging or will emerge. In fact, the president is likely to concentrate first on domestic issues, such as immigration and the economy, pursuing his intention to cancel or modify key elements of Obama legacy such as regarding healthcare. Beside rude and worrying tweets on nuclear weapons or North Korea, foreign and defence policy do not appear to be Trump's first priority. Moreover, regarding foreign and defence policy Trump has made contracting statements during the electoral campaign, and outlined several opposing priorities difficult to accomplish within a single coherent strategy.[62] The result may be an approach to international affairs that alternates between isolationism and hyperactivity, based on pragmatism and opportunism. This would, in its turn, threaten to increase global uncertainty, the fragility of the international system, and instability and conflict. The breaks of traditional diplomatic *modus operandi* such as the aforementioned tweet on nuclear weapons,[63] or Taiwan president's phone call taken by Trump – the first time a president-elect does so since 1979 recognition by US of Popular Republic of China as successor of pre-Maoist China – point towards a less predictable and

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[60] Russia Presidency, *Telephone Conversation with US President-elect Donald Trump*, 14 November 2016, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53255; Neil MacFarquhar, "Putin and Trump Talk on Phone and Agree to Improve Ties, Kremlin Says", in *The New York Times*, 14 November 2016, http://nyti.ms/2ezqacV.

[61] For an analysis of these two schools of thought, and of the "Wilsonian" and "Hamiltonian" approaches, see the historian Walter Russel Mead, *Special Providence. American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, New York, Knopf, 2001.

[62] David Blázquez, "Global Shock: What to Expect from a Trump Presidency", in *Aspenia online*, 15 December 2017, http://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspenia-online/node/7142.

[63] See in this regards Heather Williams, "Overcharged or Overblown? Nuclear Risks and Trump's Tweets", in *Aspenia online*, 2 January 2017, http://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspenia-online/node/7173.

more instinctive foreign and defence policy than Obama's one.

Despite such caveat over the uncertainty of a possible "Trump doctrine," the four elements described above point towards possible relevant implications for Euro-Atlantic security, and thus for NATO and Italian defence policy.

First, relations between US and Russia are likely to change, with obvious repercussions within the Atlantic Alliance, given Washington's role as NATO's leader and the current tense state of NATO-Russia relations. Trump has stated that he wants to engage in dialogue with president Vladimir Putin and reach a deal, a position that fits with his preference, discussed earlier, for bilateral agreements with great or middle powers. It is by no means certain that such an agreement will ever be reached, also because of the objective difficulties of striking and maintaining a deal with Putin's leadership. In the end, also the first Obama administration wanted to "reset" deteriorated relations with Russia and build more cooperative ones, but it ended with the crisis in Ukraine. Beside, the starting point of current US-Russia relations is quite difficult, also considering the Russian interference in the presidential electoral campaign through hacking of Democratic Party emails – which has been reported by US intelligence and lately recognized by Trump himself.[64]

Nevertheless, regardless to its final result, the very same fact that a deal between US and Russia is being pursued will force NATO members to reflect on what it might involve, and more generally on what their own position should be in relation to Moscow. This could affect NATO military posture as well as economic sanctions adopted by the EU. The process of reaching an agreement with Russia, even if it will end in a bilateral deal between Trump and Putin, is an extremely delicate process, because it has an impact on transatlantic and intra-European cohesion which are key factors in Euro-Atlantic stability and security. In the end, Article 5 is not a transactional issue, and its credibility should be preserved in any deal with Russia if Euro-Atlantic security has to be ensured by NATO also in the next future. The credibility of commitments to support partner countries out of NATO perimeter is also important, especially if these are transitioning towards a Western model, and it may be negatively impacted too by the pursuing of such deal. On the other hand, if properly managed an overarching agreement with Russia would ease tensions in Europe and contribute to a more solid regional security architecture. This in turn would benefit European economies, and allow NATO, EU and their member states to focus on pressing issues such as terrorism, migration and instability in Middle East and North Africa.

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[64] Stephen Collinson, "Trump: 'I think it was Russia'", in *CNN Politics*, 12 January 2017, http://cnn.it/2iF5AWT.

Second, in line with the overall approach outlined above, Trump has suggested that US commitment towards allies should be somehow related to their defence spending.[65] He promised to insist more strongly than his predecessors that NATO members should increase their military expenditure and contributions to transatlantic burden sharing. An obvious starting point for this would be the double objective formally agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit by all NATO members, previously mentioned: by 2024, 2 percent of GDP should be spent on defence, of which 20 percent should go to investments in for research, development and equipment procurement. This will be a sore point for the vast majority of European countries, despite the recent, slight rise in many of their defence budgets. The question of burden sharing has always been an important one for NATO, but it is likely to be posed more forcefully by Trump, especially given his scepticism about the relevance of international organizations such as the Atlantic Alliance to the US national interest. It was not by chance that, according to NATO sources, the first telephone call between the newly elected president and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg focused on Allies defence spending, the importance of the Alliance, and the fight against Islamic terrorism.[66] Nevertheless, despite longstanding disagreement about the extent of burden sharing when it comes to defence, Europeans remain ones of Washington's few reliable allies able to promote international security.[67] Moreover, Trump's less interventionist approach could imply less pressure from the US for European military contributions in terms of crisis management operations than there was previously.[68]

Third, Trump could indeed change the American stance towards missions abroad and the fight against Islamic terrorism in countries where NATO is directly or indirectly involved in political or military terms, such as Iraq where it contribute to train Iraqi security forces. More generally, the Republic administration could change US position towards Syria and Libya, and regional players in North Africa and the Middle East,[69] but the features and timing of this change remains uncertain at the moment. On the one hand, the aim of fighting Islamic terrorism could lead to temporary alliances with those that currently share that objective, including Russia or even the Assad faction in Syria. On the other hand, statements by Trump and Flynn about the Muslim world and immigrants from certain countries could hinder bilateral or multilateral cooperation with potential partners in the region. The uncertainty surrounding Trump's approach to the Middle East is due to

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[65] James Stavridis, "It's Time to Audit NATO", in *Foreign Policy*, 10 November 2016, http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/10/its-time-to-audit-nato.

[66] NATO, *Readout of the Secretary General's Phone Call with US President-elect Donald Trump*, 18 November 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_137806.htm; Robin Emmott, "Trump, NATO Chief Pledge Alliance's 'Enduring Importance' in Phone Call", in *Reuters*, 18 November 2016, http://reut.rs/2gmI7vT.

[67] Francesca Bitondo, "Le sfide della Nato nell'era Trump", in *AffarInternazionali*, 12 November 2016, http://www.affarinternazionali.it/articolo.asp?ID=3692.

[68] John C. Hulsman, "The Method Behind Trump's Challenge and the Questions for Europe", in *Aspenia online*, 9 November 2016, http://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspenia-online/node/7064.

[69] Pietro Batacchi, "Trump ha vinto", cit.

complex relationships with allies such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel – the former with a significant support from America's large Jewish community – as well as with Iran after the nuclear deal achieved by Obama. Noticeably, Trump and other members of his administration, including Flynn and Pompeo, have criticised the deal with Teheran, but it is not certain the Republican administration will work to dismantle it. Undoubtedly, a loosening of America's ties to alliances and international institutions would encourage similar tendencies in that region. Tendencies that are already strong in sovranist and militarily active states such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and Iran, and are contributing to the arch of instability and insecurity surrounding Europe.

In conclusion, these four elements of the new president's approach and their three implications for Euro-Atlantic security indicate a scenario different from any other since NATO was founded. It is a scenario in which Europe will be more alone in the face of an authoritarian Russia and an unstable North Africa and Middle East. Whether a deal between Washington and Moscow will be reached for the benefit also of Euro-Atlantic security is not certain, neither are clear the consequences of further US disengagement from the Arab world. For sure, Europeans will also have to count less than ever on Washington leadership to ensure its security within a relatively stable international order based on multilateral institutions.

This scenario seems to have pushed European decision-makers to reflect more on Europe's independent capacity to defence itself,[70] something that will need to be acted on in the context of NATO and the EU. On 14 November 2016, the approval by the European Council of the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence[71] of the EU Global Strategy – the former being the Union's strategic document already endorsed in June 2016[72] – point towards this direction. Further, on 6 December 2016, the aforementioned set of joint proposals[73] to implement the EU-NATO Warsaw declaration seems to confirm, on the eve of Trump taking over the White House, the willingness of Europe and North America to work together for the Euro-Atlantic security. Yet it has to be seen how Trump administration will consider this part of the Obama legacy.

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[70] Daniel Kehoane, "Make Europe Defend Again?", in *Strategic Europe*, 18 November 2016, http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/66199.

[71] Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on Implementing the EU Global Strategy in the Area of Security and Defence* (14149/16), 14 November 2016, http://europa.eu/!NQ34FH.

[72] European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, 28 June 2016, https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/2.

[73] Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Implementation of the Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 6 December 2016, http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15283-2016-INIT/en/pdf.

2.2 The impact of Brexit on Euro-Atlantic security and NATO

In this context, Brexit is another source of uncertainty. The December 2016 ruling by the British High Court stated there must be a parliamentary vote to ratify and implement the result of the June referendum. The case is currently being discussed by the Supreme Court, to decide if British government can activate article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on its own to initiate the negotiations to leave the EU, or has to pass a bill in the Parliament to do so. In the meanwhile, Prime Minister Teresa May announced the activation of article 50 by March 2017. While it is uncertain how and when London will implement Brexit, the most likely scenario is still that the United Kingdom will leave the EU in a few years.

There has been much debate about the effect of Brexit on the EU, but less thought has been given to its impact on Euro-Atlantic security, and therefore on NATO. The United Kingdom remains, obviously, a member of the Alliance. NATO is not directly affected by Brexit, and maintains its usefulness and centrality in the current international security environment marked by the tense relations with Russia and the rise of conflict and instability in its neighbourhood. However, the prospect of London leaving the EU in two or three years' time has several implications for Euro-Atlantic security that need to be considered also in relation with NATO.

The first implication concerns the British contribution to Euro-Atlantic security. Her Majesty's government has insisted, also at the Warsaw summit, that Brexit will not have a negative impact on London's role in NATO. The commitment to act as a "framework nation" for one of the four multinational battalions of the EFP (the one based in Estonia) supports this claim, as does the British green-light to the EU-NATO joint declaration aimed at reinforcing cooperation between the two organizations. Furthermore, the United Kingdom may focus more on its contribution to NATO to make up for its default in terms of EU security and defence. This may be especially true for crisis management operations and defence capacity building, given that the United Kingdom would no longer be concerned with these in an EU context. Little would change in terms of collective defence, which is already a NATO prerogative that has once more become important due to Russia's aggressive posture. What is more, it is likely that when it leaves the EU, London will seek greater cooperation with America on a series of issues, from nuclear capacity to intelligence and the fight against terrorism. This cooperation could be either purely bilateral or could be framed within a NATO context, as it will become increasingly important for the United Kingdom.[74] As Trump takes office in the White House, London will find an interlocutor more disposed to seek bilateral agreements on a variety of issues, given that, unlike his predecessor, he not only did not oppose but actually supported Brexit. Eventually, UK may try to find in the Washington an ally to resist EU pressure during Brexit negotiations, by linking the

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[74] Vaughne Miller (ed.), "Brexit: Impact across Policy Areas", in *House of Commons Briefing Papers*, No. 07213 (26 August 2016), p. 158-159, http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7213.

formers to the British and American role in NATO.[75] However, Trump is far from sharing many of the policies traditionally pursued by the United Kingdom, from the importance of international institutions in crisis management to the need for a firm stance towards Moscow, up to international free trade and climate change, so it will not be easy for the British government to cultivate the so-called "special relationship" with the new president.[76]

In any case, London's good intentions will come up against a series of unwanted effects of the referendum, which will have a negative impact on British defence policy including in a NATO context. The first is that a lot of the government's political capital and human resources – especially from the Foreign Commonwealth Office, but elsewhere, too – will be, and to some extent are already, absorbed in negotiations with the EU likely to be complex, difficult and lengthy (lasting up to 2019). The second effect, signs of which have already been seen, is that leaving the EU reopens the question of Scottish independence. Scotland had voted against seceding from the UK in the 2014 referendum, a result partly due to the fact that leaving London meant leaving the EU, and thus sacrificing all the benefits of the single market, regional funding etc. Now that, by contrast, remaining in the United Kingdom will entail exactly those sacrifices, or at least many of them, the appeal of independence that could allow a subsequent Scottish entry into the EU is increasing for those north of the Hadrian's Wall.

The third unwanted effect of the referendum is that the United Kingdom's return to the confines of purely national borders threatens to reignite tensions that had been extinguished less than twenty years ago by the Good Friday agreement negotiated by Tony Blair's government with Dublin in 1998. Ending free movement and reintroducing border controls between the Republic of Ireland (a member of the EU) and Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom) could prove to be politically complex and painful for Belfast.[77] The possible scenario of a British government embroiled in exhausting negotiations with Brussels, with Scotland demanding a second independence referendum, and a tense border between Ulster and Eire, would not make it easy for the United Kingdom to play an active role in NATO when it comes to collective defence or stabilization of its neighbourhood. Nor would it make London a privileged partner for Washington, despite Trump's appreciation for Brexit and scepticism for international institutions like the EU ones.

The referendum's second implication for Euro-Atlantic security regards the process of European defence integration. It is worth remembering that Obama's administration had largely abandoned any scepticism or caution relating to this.

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[75] Julian Lindley-French, "Maggie May? – Downing Street and the new White House", in *Aspenia online*, 15 November 2016, http://www.aspeninstitute.it/aspenia-online/node/7088.

[76] Thomas Raines, "Britain is Caught between Trump and a Hard Place", in *Chatham House Expert Comments*, 16 November 2016, https://www.chathamhouse.org/node/26241.

[77] See, among others, Malcolm Chalmers, "Would a New SDSR Be Needed After a Brexit Vote?", in *RUSI Briefing Papers*, June 2016, https://rusi.org/node/15725.

There had previously been more caution, summed up in the 1990s by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's "3 Ds" ("no duplication, no discrimination, no decoupling"), and then maintained by the Bush administration when some European countries were opposed to the Iraq war and a division was described between "old" and "new" Europe. In recent years, America has instead encouraged European countries to contribute as much as possible to the security of their continent and its neighbourhood by means of NATO, the EU or bilateral-regional cooperation – in practice, "whatever works" to rebalance the burden sharing, which is seen to fall increasingly on Washington. It is no coincidence that cooperation between NATO and the EU has improved. An improvement regarding not only operational theatres – from Afghanistan to the Gulf of Aden and the Balkans – but also consultation between like-minded bodies such as NATO's Allied Command Transformation and the EU's European Defence Agency, as well as the highest political and institutional level. Thanks to France's re-entry into NATO's integrated military command, Germany's increased role in defence, and the good, cooperative relationship established between NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini, the gradual convergence between NATO and the EU led to the joint declaration at the Warsaw summit and its implementation, discussed in the previous chapter.

This process of political and geopolitical convergence may now be affected by London's exit from the EU. There may be a stalling of European defence cooperation because of the complexity and sensitivity of Brexit negotiations. Or, a renewal of defence cooperation within the EU may take place thanks to the lack of the traditional British veto. This could lead to greater political and military integration on the part of key states such as France, Germany and Italy. This in turn would make Europe's contribution to Euro-Atlantic security more effective and efficient, through NATO and the EU as well as *ad hoc* coalitions, and would encourage a more balanced and fruitful transatlantic relations. The Trump presidency could paradoxically facilitate this process since, as discussed in this chapter, America will likely provide Europe with less security guarantees and become more isolationist and nationalist, and more reluctant to intervene in overseas crises.

At this crossroad between stalling on one side, and a renewal of European defence on the other, a key variable is the negotiation between UK and EU over Brexit, especially regarding the single market and the free movement of capital, goods, services and people. One option could be a preference for maintaining access to the single market as far as possible on the first three fronts, while changing the rules on the fourth to reduce the number of immigrants (the so-called "soft Brexit"). On January 2017, Prime Minister Theresa May has expressed her intention to renounce to the whole elements of EU memberships and move towards a "hard Brexit".

Whatever the solution may be, the agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom could lead to completely different scenarios. In the first, an agreement will be reached that satisfies both the United Kingdom and the EU – that is, both the EU institutions and the member states – and this will form the basis for a partnership

that will have positive repercussions for defence, facilitating bilateral and mini-lateral cooperation as well as NATO's multilateral framework. In the second scenario, the Brexit agreement will result in bad relations between the British and those states still in the EU, which will weaken and/or hinder defence cooperation at all levels, including that of NATO. A third scenario could see negotiations between the British government and the European Commission, as set out by Article 50 of the Lisbon treaty, focussing only on bureaucratic, regulatory and financial aspects of Brexit, on issues such as the status of British staff seconded to EU institutions and the management of the EU's seven-year budget up to 2020. Negotiation of these issues would push back negotiations about the partnership – and London's relationship to the single market – to a later phase. In this "postponing" scenario, the effect on NATO would be lessened because decisions on more critical issues would be delayed. This scenario would not, however, remove the weight of uncertainty from the situation because the issues would be shelved rather than resolved.

Each of these scenarios would have a different impact on the politico-institutional aspect, from crisis management operations to the evolution of EU Common Security and Defence Policy, and on the procurement and industrial aspect. This last issue is particularly complex because it is linked to the European single market whose rules, thanks to the 2009 EU Directive, also largely apply to the aerospace, security and defence industries. It is also linked to a series of European frameworks that are not part of the EU but linked to it in various way, from the OCCAR to the LOI/FA.[78] The question of procurement and industry is especially pertinent. First, because it directly affects the development and acquisition of systems and technologies needed by the armed forces to maintain effective and efficient military capabilities. Second, because of the importance of industrial defence policy within overall defence policy, for example in relation to multinational procurement programmes and cooperation or competition in exports to third countries.

For all these reasons, the process that will lead to the United Kingdom's exit from the EU and to the redefinition of its relationship with continental Europe will have a considerable, albeit indirect, impact on Euro-Atlantic security and therefore on NATO. This impact depends on many variables that threaten to be negative but may also turn out to be positive, and which will develop through 2017. As a result, they should be taken into account in any consideration of NATO and Italian defence policy.

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[78] For a comprehensive discussion of the impact of Brexit on European defence see Alessandro R. Ungaro and Daniele Fattibene, "L'impatto della Brexit per la difesa europea e transatlantica: tanti dubbi e poche certezze", in *Osservatorio di politica internazionale. Approfondimenti*, No. 123 (November 2016), http://www.iai.it/en/node/7082.

3. Italy's defence policy and NATO

3.1. The Italian equilibrium regarding NATO-Russia relations

At the Warsaw Summit, whose agenda was strongly influenced by NATO's priorities on the Eastern flank, Italy had to play a not easy role. On the one hand, the solidarity principle led the country to guarantee its contribution to reassure the Allies in Central Eastern Europe and to reinforce collective defence. On the other hand, because of its traditional good relations with Moscow, Rome worked to avoid taking a clear confrontational stance against the Russian Federation. In this sense, maintaining open the channel for political dialogue is surely among the priorities of the Italian agenda, and it has emerged especially from the Warsaw Summit.

In this regard and in spite of the time gone, a still valid reference point is represented by the principles of the "Three Wise Men" Report,[79] then reflected and embedded in the subsequent Harmel Report of 1967.[80] To Italy, it is of paramount importance that the Alliance maintains a proper political dimension coupled with a purely military one.[81] In fact, today as in the past, the military dimension and the principle of collective defence – albeit significant – must go hand in hand with politico-diplomatic measures intended to increase the level of mutual trust among parties, in order to detent relations with Russia.[82]

Consistent with these reflections, the Italian approach succeeded in influencing the formulation of the Warsaw Summit conclusions. Particularly, the diplomatic effort prevented that the excessive intransigent stances of some Allies could compromise the resumption of dialogue within the NATO-Russia Council.[83] Italy, together with France, Germany and Spain among others, insisted to reaffirm in the Summit conclusions the importance of both reinforcing the defence and deterrence posture of the Alliance on the one hand and to keep an open line for communication with Russia through a "periodic, focused and meaningful

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[79] The "Report of the Committee of Three on Non-Military Cooperation in NATO" was elaborated in 1956 by a committee composed by Halvard Lange, Gaetano Martino, as president, and Lester B. Pearson to "advise the Council on ways and means to extend cooperation in non-military fields and to strengthen unity in the Atlantic Community." Lawrence S. Kaplan, "Report of the 'Three Wise Men': 50 Years On", in *NATO Review*, Spring 2006, http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue1/english/history.html. For the full text of the report, see the NATO website at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/57772.htm#III.

[80] The report, elaborated in 1967, on the initiative of the then Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel had the merit to introduce the concept of deterrence and dialogue. For the full text of the report, see NATO website at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/57772.htm#III.

[81] Interview, 23 September 2016.

[82] The Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Mattarella ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo di Difesa*, 30 June 2016, http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=1911; Stefano Vespa, "Vertice Nato a Varsavia, ecco la linea dell'Italia (molto pro Russia)", in *formiche.net*, 7 July 2016, http://formiche.net/?p=524869.

[83] Interview, 23 September 2016.

dialogue,"[84] on the other. Thus, the aim was and is to avoid misunderstanding in terms of action and perceptions, which might lead to non-intentional escalations, by encouraging greater transparency and predictability on the sensitive Eastern flank.

In this try, Italy enjoys a certain level of credibility thanks to its constant and valid contribution inside NATO, via both international missions – the most evident element in the post-Cold War period – and exercises/deployment of military assets in the territory of member states. With particular reference to the Eastern flank, Italy made clear its commitment regarding both the reassurance measures decided at the Wales Summit,[85] as much as concerning the deterrence ones decided in Warsaw. In fact, Italy effectively contributed to the Air Policing mission in the Baltic countries in 2015; in the framework of the EFP Rome is to contribute with 140 units to the Canadian-led battalion; and in 2018 will be the leading nation of the VJTF.

Noticeably, according to recent declarations of the Defence Minister Roberta Pinotti,[86] Italy insisted to limit the size of the four multinational battalions and to assure that their deployment would not become permanent, without reducing, however, its commitment in the EFP. In other words, the limited number of EFP units is also the result of the Italian position, which stands firm to the necessity to avoid exacerbations of confrontational tones with Moscow.

According to the same logic, in recent months Italy did not endorse the introduction of new EU sanctions against Russia for its intervention in Syria – which were not adopted. Although this decision has been taken within the EU context and not in the NATO one, it is consistent with the position Italy is holding regarding this dossier within different institutional frameworks.

Moreover, Russia's increasing political and military activism in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East ended up with connecting the dynamics of the Eastern flank with those of the Southern one. Therefore, from the Italian point of view, it is even more crucial to set a dialogue with Moscow not only on the Ukraine scenario but also on other crisis involving Russia.[87] In such a delicate balance, on one side it is important for Italy to facilitate the dialogue among parties, by trying to make the most intransigent Allies understand some of the Russian views. On the other side, Italy has to avoid hyperactivism and highly symbolic gestures that might be

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[84] NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, cit., para. 12.

[85] For further details please see: Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper", cit.

[86] Michele Arnese e Emanuele Rossi, "Ecco come Roberta Pinotti minimizza le operazioni dell'Italia con la Nato in Lettonia", in *formiche.net*, 19 October 2016, http://formiche.net/?p=548659.

[87] Interview of Monica Maggioni to Minister Gentiloni, "Russia, Gentiloni a Rainews24: 'Accanto alle sanzioni ci vuole un percorso di dialogo' (video)", in *Rainews24*, 19 December 2014, http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/media/Russia-Gentiloni-a-Rainews24-Accanto-alle-sanzioni-ci-vuole-un-percorso-di-dialogo-4847b112-862d-4252-9000-239c0c8f8ca0.html.

understood as divisive of the Western front and thus benefit Moscow.[88] Therefore, Italy needs to continue promoting an approach based on resolve and dialogue,[89] by exploiting the full potential of its diplomacy. A functioning external projection, from the highest political level to the day-by-day activity, proved in the past to be able to achieve relevant results, not least the 2002 NATO Summit in Pratica di Mare (Rome) which saw the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council.

In this light, considering the relevant capacity of some of the allied countries to influence the politico-strategic dialogue of the Atlantic alliance, by efficiently conveying their own reasons and positions beyond their specific weight, Italy should better exploit the resources at its disposal. In this sense, creating a constructive and constant dialogue among the institutions, the private sector, think tanks, and various stakeholders from the civil society, could help promoting the Italian vision in the wider Euro-Atlantic debate. In this context, initiatives like the Special Group on the Mediterranean and the Middle East of the NATO parliamentary assembly held on October 2016 in Rome are of particular relevance. The Special Group met on the initiative of the Italian delegation and over 140 members of the parliament took part representing 40 countries, including NATO member states, partners from North Africa and Middle East, besides also academics and experts.[90] The activity of Italian members of Parliament contributed to the appointment of Hon. Paolo Alli as Chair of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, a post which was not assigned to Italy since 1961. It is important to include these activities in a more structured framework able to convey in an effective and continuous manner the Italian vision,[91] also by collaborating with the academia and think tanks. Furthermore, by exploiting the benefits of hosting the NATO Defence College in Rome, joint projects and initiatives could be initiated whose results could then be presented to broader audiences.

Obviously, Italy will have to take into account the new approach of Trump's presidency to the relations with Russia (Cf. second chapter). On the one hand, it is probable that the US support towards further NATO deterrence measures will drastically diminish, regardless the requests from the Eastern European allies in this regards. On the other hand, this will not necessarily bring to a re-launch of the NATO-Russia dialogue, considering Trump preference for bilateral deals with great and middle powers. Accordingly, it will be fundamental to keep a Western cohesion within both NATO and the EU in order to balance possible fluctuations of the US position and stabilize both NATO-Russia relations and Euro-Atlantic security. Consequently, striking a balance in the relations with Russian Federation will

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[88] Interview, 26 October 2016.

[89] Michele Arnese e Emanuele Rossi, "Ecco come Roberta Pinotti minimizza le operazioni dell'Italia con la Nato in Lettonia", cit.

[90] For further information and for the recording of the meeting see the Chamber of Deputies website: http://webtv.camera.it/evento/10190.

[91] Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper", cit.

continue to be an important Italian priority also in the new context of transatlantic relations marked by the Trump presidency.

3.2 Italy and the EU-NATO cooperation

As already stated, the EU-NATO joint declaration surely represents one of the most relevant results of the Warsaw Summit. A constant Italian diplomatic effort supported this achievement, by enabling to reach a wide consensus on a document containing important proposals for cooperation.

In this contest, based on the traditional and careful balance between Atlanticism and Europeanism in its foreign and defence policy, Italy is in a perfect position to significantly contribute to a rapid implementation of the proposals contained in the declaration. Specifically, among the seven areas of cooperation highlighted in the document, *rebus sic stantibus*, two of them might find a successful implementation with Italy taking a leading role. First, an increasing operational cooperation in the maritime sector and concerning migration flows. Second, greater coordination of efforts in terms of defence and security capacity building to sustain the resilience of partner countries on the Southern and Eastern flanks.[92]

Regarding the first point, it is an important signal that brings the Alliance back to its maritime dimension, which in the last period has been left behind in respect to land operational priorities. Specifically, the simultaneous presence of the EUNAVFOR MED Sofia and the Sea Guardian missions in the Mediterranean offers an immediate possibility to deepen collaboration. During the 26-27 October Defence Ministers meeting, NATO members discussed the reinforcement of cooperation between the Alliance and the Union to increase maritime security. In this context, Italy strongly sustained the necessity to activate a coordination between NATO and the EU to operationalize the 360 degree approach also on the Southern flank. In particular, precisely during the NATO Ministerial meeting to which also the HR/VP Federica Mogherini took part, Allies formally decided that the NATO assets employed in for Sea Guardian would have to be sent to the central Mediterranean to support the EUNAVFOR MED Sofia with information gathering and contrasting illicit traffic.[93]

At the same venue, Minister Pinotti proposed to transform the Joint Allied Command in Naples into a hub for all the operations in the Mediterranean.[94] This possibility has already been discussed at a technical level by Chiefs of Defence Staff and could, indeed, represents a concrete step forward towards an efficient and functional management of several initiatives intended to promote security

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[92] Interview, 23 September 2016.

[93] NATO, *Defence Ministers Take Forward EU-NATO Cooperation*, 27 October 2016, http://www. nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_136844.htm.

[94] Italian Ministry of Defence, *Difesa e Sicurezza, Ministri della Nato riuniti a Bruxelles*, 26 October 2016, http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Pagine/Difesa_e_Sicurezza_Ministri_della_Nato_ riuniti_a_Bruxelles.aspx.

and stability on the Southern flank.

Defence and security capacity building is another area in which the EU-NATO cooperation could be deepened and enhanced in the short term. Both actors could contribute to the stabilization of countries in their neighborhood, by providing the respective resources. The EU developed a remarkable expertise, thanks to the several training and CSDP missions. At the same time, in some cases NATO contribution to military training would be extremely helpful, also regarding border control which in MENA countries is often entrusted to armed forces. Italy could efficiently promote such an approach, especially considering its active participation in both NATO and EU missions. Indeed, since 27 July 2016, Italy is involved in the formation of the Libyan Coast guard and Navy in the framework of the EUNAVFOR MED Sofia mission. In Iraq, and principally in Baghdad and Erbil, Italy already trains Iraqi security forces and the curd Peshmerga[95] in the context of the anti-ISIS international coalition. Furthermore, Italy could also take part in NATO training activities of Iraqi military and security forces, once the operational details are defined.[96]

Undoubtedly, Italy will need to consider the variables which could potentially hamper EU-NATO cooperation – including those discussed in this paper. First of all, the uncertainty about Trumps foreign and defence policy, and particularly regarding NATO and EU. Second, Brexit impact on the Euro-Atlantic security – which has still to take place once negotiations will start. These two variables add on the already precarious internal situation in Turkey, with its effect on Ankara role in NATO and its relations with EU – as well as its action in the Middle East. Lastly, the long-standing Cyprus, which if will not be solved continues to impede both an effective information exchange between the two organizations as well as progresses on cooperation.

3.3. The Italian view on stabilizing and cooperating in the Southern flank

Despite the great attention the Warsaw Summit posed on the Alliance's Eastern flank, as highlighted in the first chapter, the final communiqué puts Eastern and Southern flanks at the same political level, by proposing a 360 degree approach to the arch of instability and insecurity surrounding the Alliance. Although the definition of a clear strategy within the Alliance to address the Southern flank is difficult, as directed to a fluid and ever-changing reality, some elements contribute to delineate the Italian view regarding the role NATO could take in this area.

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[95] See the website of the Italian Ministry of Defence: *Operazioni internazionali in corso / Iraq/ Siria - Prima Parthica*, http://www.difesa.it/OperazioniMilitari/op_intern_corso/Prima_Parthica/ Pagine/contributo_nazionale.aspx.

[96] NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, cit., para. 12.

First, also thanks to the Italian contribution it has been possible to elaborate the reference framework for the RAP application also to the Southern flank, by defining its politico-military parameters.[97] The Warsaw communiqué affirms that "As part of the Readiness Action Plan and as a contribution to our deterrence and defence posture, we have established a framework for NATO's adaptation in response to growing challenges and threats emanating from the south."[98] In this way, it has been possible to come to a first delineation of the deterrence posture in the South through the introduction, for example, of a threat category stemming from "non-state actors that have state-like aspirations, capabilities, and resources."[99]

Going beyond the first element of deterrence and defence, the concept of projecting stability refers primarily to partnership and defence capacity building.[100] During the summit, it has been recognized that the activation of NATO missions in the North Africa and Middle East is extremely delicate, and in some circumstances could even result counterproductive for both the region and Euro-Atlantic security. It is, therefore, of crucial importance to Italy to reinforce the political dimension of the Alliance, since the political dialogue and the related institutional and military cooperation are essential to projecting stability in the region. Consistently, for Italy is a priority to revitalize the NATO partnerships, namely Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, going beyond national agendas which have limited dialogue and blocked cooperation. To this end, convening regular meetings, even in informal formats involving representatives of the Allies and partners should be further encouraged.

A further crucial point in the Italian agenda to project stability on the Southern flank is the activation of defence capacity building missions, so to empower the regional actors to counter instability and terrorism on the front line. This kind of activities should also involve partner countries currently stable but whose stability might be mined like Jordan, Tunisia e Morocco.[101] Moreover, it is important to maintain international community commitment on the fight against ISIS, to move in these areas from the training phase to the reconstruction phase – also drawing lessons from the NATO interventions in Kosovo[102] and Afghanistan.

Regarding the maritime security and the migration crisis, the NATO approach towards the Mediterranean should be as pragmatic as possible and should try to optimize missions already in place, to take full advantage of the resources committed. The recent NATO activities in the Aegean Sea have already increased

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[97] Interview, 23 September 2016.

[98] NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué*, cit., para. 42.

[99] Ibid., para. 43.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Interview, 23 September 2016.

[102] Intervention of the General Claudio Graziano at the seminar of the special group on the Mediterranean and the Middle East at the NATO parliamentary Assembly, 28 October 2016. Video available on the Chamber of Deputies website: http://webtv.camera.it/evento/10190.

regional situational awareness, thanks to the information sharing with Turkish and Greek coast guards, as well as with the EU Agency FRONTEX. Perhaps more importantly, they have mitigated tensions between Greece and Turkey by encouraging cooperation between the two sides of the Aegean. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean maritime security is far wider and there is a need to rethink the NATO tools to employ in the region. In this sense, the start of formal cooperation between the EU Sofia mission and Sea Guardian acquires great significance,[103] especially if the Italian proposal to transform Naples into a hub for all the initiatives in the Mediterranean will be approved.[104]

With specific reference to the Libyan scenario, other than the support in countering arm trafficking activities towards Libya provided by the Sea Guardian mission, a further NATO contribution could involve the defence capacity building domain. Actually, at Warsaw Summit the full recognition of the Tripoli's Government as sole legitimate Libyan interlocutor paved the way to the possibility to start assistance initiatives for the formation of its military institutions, to complement the EU efforts in training and build up of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. Given the complexity of the current situation and the sensitivity of a possible large-scale NATO intervention, also considering the 2011 precedent, the Alliance should aim to more tailored contributions able to address the specific needs of the Libyan government. According to this perspective, NATO could contribute to guarantee the control of national frontiers in cooperation with other neighboring Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia.[105]

The hypothesis of a NATO operational support to the legitimate Libyan government largely depend on the achievement of an overarching agreement among the main regional actors and major member states of the Alliance. Such agreement should regard the stabilization of Libya within a regional security framework, power sharing and resources distribution among the various groups, the necessary guarantees for these parties to support the reconciliation process. The NATO political role on this regard is twofold and should not be underestimated. On the one hand, based on article 4 of the Washington Treaty, the Alliance should act more as a forum to build consensus among its members regarding threat perception and actions to undertake in the Euro-Mediterranean region.[106] This is a necessary and important political role: how is it possible to stabilize Libya if NATO member states do not agree on whether to support the Government of Tripoli resulting from the national agreement or the General Haftar supported by the Tobruk Parliament?

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[103] Council of the European Union, *3498th Council meeting Foreign Affairs*, 14-15 November 2016, http://europa.eu/!DN77PX.

[104] Andrea Mottola, "Convegno IAI: La NATO verso il futuro", in *RID Portale Difesa*, 18 November 2016, http://www.portaledifesa.it/index~phppag,3_id,1588.html.

[105] Paolo Quercia et al., "NATO in Libya: A Long-Term Plan for Stability", in *PISM Policy Papers*, No. 11 (July 2016), p. 2, https://www.pism.pl/Publications/PISM-Policy-Paper-no-152.

[106] Alessandro Marrone, "What's new on NATO's Southern flank: security threats and the Alliance's role after the Warsaw Summit", in *Security Policy Working Papers*, No. 22/2016 (September 2016), p. 3, https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_22.pdf.

Besides such internal consensus building, the second aspect of NATO political role, regards confidence building via bilateral and regional dialogue with countries in the region. Counter-terrorism, maritime security, migration flows management, and defence capacity building itself have both an operational dimension, in which NATO partnership can and should move forward, but also and foremost a political dimension. For example, the Western countries should develop a common strategic vision regarding which forces they are training and equipping, by clarifying the objectives and defining allies and adversaries in a clear way. Allies should elaborate this common vision together with leaderships in the region with which they cooperate at operational level. NATO as a politico-military Alliance and its partnerships might serve this scope, also because they represent one of few institutionalized regional fora putting together European and North American countries, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Gulf countries, Algeria, and other relevant actors of the region. This does not mean that NATO has to take a leading role in on-going politico-diplomatic processes. On the contrary, these processes have probably more chances to succeed if NATO stays in the background. Nevertheless, the Alliance can do far more to sustain them at politico, diplomatic and military level.[107]

The aforementioned issues and threats to security do not have an easy and rapid solution, but require a long-lasting engagement. Evidence of this is provided by the raise of ISIS and the collapse of Iraqi security forces after the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, which forced Washington to go back with an *ad hoc* coalition. NATO, as a highly institutionalized alliance, characterized by its own intrinsic politico-military value, helps to stabilize contribution of member states more than a mere coalition of the willings, in terms of both size and duration of the national efforts. Moreover, as demonstrated by the decennial mission in Afghanistan, NATO demonstrated to be able to mobilize a significant number of partner countries, making ISAF something more than and different from a NATO operation *tout court*. Both the stability of the national contribution and the involvement of partner countries would help in managing and stabilizing the various crisis in the Southern flank.

Also in this case, it will be necessary to understand how the Trump presidency will address the Middle East and North Africa, and in particular Libya and Syria. Certainly, the opposition of the new president to robust military interventions abroad when direct American interest are not at stake, like in Libya and Syria, excludes a series of options. However, it is worth noticing that these options have been already *de facto* excluded by the Obama administration in back in 2011. In turn, the possible improvement of relations between US and Russia would affect also the situation in North Africa and Middle East, considering the important and increasing role of Moscow in this region.

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107 Ibid.

3.4. The implementation of the Italian White Paper: an uphill climb

The Italian defence policy in the NATO regarding missions, collective defence or partnerships – as well as in the EU context – obviously depends on the functioning of the military complex, from the single armed force up to the joint level, as well as on the resources at its disposal. The Trump administration does not change this. Actually, Italy could better address the possible request for investing more in defence, which the new President intends to turn to all European allies, by demonstrating at least that resources are invested efficiently and effectively to generate adequate outputs. In this regard, it is necessary a reflection on the implementation of the White Paper for International Security and Defence adopted by Italy on April 2015.[108]

More than one year and a half later, expectations on the changes promised by the White Book[109] gradually left space to a certain degree of disillusionment. In fact, also this reform project became hostage of domestic politics contingencies, which negatively affected its implementation path. This is particularly true considering the priority given to other reforms, among which the Jobs Act first and then the constitutional reform rejected by December 2016 referendum. In addition, changes occurred in the international scenario, with the intensification of crisis in some areas with a considerable military and/or diplomatic Italian involvement – Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Syria and the Eastern flank of the Alliance – contributed to draw the political attention away from the White Paper.

All these factors helps explaining why the implementation deadlines of the main provisions, detailed in the tenth chapter of the White Paper, have been disregarded. In this regard, the Supreme Defence Council of 24 November 2016, in taking stock of the White Paper implementation, stated that "the parliamentary process on the draft law containing some overriding measures and providing for the mandate to subsequent specific bills, will begin shortly."[110] However, with specific reference to those parts of the reform requiring this process – revision of the governance and dispositions on personnel – the timeline usually necessary for the adoption of a law by the Parliament undermines confidence about its adoption before the next general elections. In fact, the lawmaking process would foresee not only a consultation with relevant stakeholders, but also and foremost the reemerge of various oppositions, ideological rather than bureaucratic, to the implementation of the reform, with a further delay. Perhaps, with some further effort, it might be possible to reach its adoption by at least one of the two chambers of the

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[108] Italian Ministry of Defence, *White Paper for International Security and Defence*, April 2015, http://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/Wh.aspx.

[109] On the scope of the White Paper reforms, see among others: Alessandro Marrone (ed.), "The White Paper: A Strategy for Italy's Defence Policy", in *Documenti IAI*, No. 15|09e (May 2015), http://www.iai.it/en/node/4239.

[110] Presidency of the Italian Republic, *Il Presidente Mattarella ha presieduto il Consiglio Supremo di Difesa*, 24 November 2016, http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Comunicato&key=2307.

Parliament and this could favor a more rapid conclusion of the examination in the next legislature. Much depends, however, on the political consensus reached in finalizing the reform. These considerations are even more valid in light of the recent government change, with the transition from Matteo Renzi to Paolo Gentiloni as prime minister following the constitutional referendum lost by the Renzi government. In fact, notwithstanding the strong elements of continuity between the two cabinets – including the reconfirmation of Pinotti as Defence Minister – it is even more unlikely that the implementation of the White Paper will see any advancements in the next months, also considering that other impeding reforms such as the electoral law will surely retain the political priority.

Alternatively, it might be the case to proceed to an implementation for subsequent phases. Namely, by decoupling from the overall reform those parts that meet a double criterion of urgency and feasibility and that can be more easily approved, thus postponing the implementation of those dispositions more problematic and time-consuming. This *modus operandi* would be in contrast with the whole logic of the White Paper as an integrated approach to defence sector, but at least it will enable to partially advance the reform process and avoid to let this strategic document overcome by the events.

In such discouraging context, it is worthy to recall a concept already expressed in a IAI study on the White Paper: aside from delays in the implementation of the reforms linked to the intrinsic complexity of defence sector, the success of this reform remains bound to the willingness of the Italian political leadership.[111] Actually, in light of the depicted situation, the lack of political will at the governmental level is hindering the White Paper implementation. Regaining the political momentum is necessary to implement a reform which entails real changes. Changes which renew and make the military more appropriate to face the current international environment, and more coherent with the Italian national interests and the available resources for the armed forces.

In addition, this delayed implementation has negative repercussions not only domestically, but also for what concerns the quality of the Italian contribution within the Euro-Atlantic framework. Politically, delays in implementing the White Paper, which is a ministerial directive, do not benefit the credibility of Rome with respect to allies, also taking into account that the White Paper has been officially presented both at NATO and EU meetings and collecting interest and appreciation. At the operational level, the missing implementation of White Paper provision could compromise the quality of national contribution within the NATO and EU frameworks in terms of interoperability, efficiency and effectiveness. The constant postponement of the reform implementation leads to take certain decisions – linked to urgent operational needs – outside the strategic framework provided by the White Paper.

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[111] Paola Tessari, Paola Sartori and Alessandro Marrone, "Italian Defence Policy between NATO and the White Paper", cit., p. 34.

For all these reasons, it is crucial that the Italian institutions regain impetus to proceed in the reforming process. It is certainly true that in the last months Italy has been under pressure on many fronts, due both to internal dynamics and international developments. Nevertheless, the very same worsening of some crisis, and the increased effort demanded to guarantee national security, make the implementation of White Paper provisions even more urgent.

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