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## What's Next for NATO's Capabilities? Collective Defence and Neighbourhood Stabilization: The Italian Perspective

by Francesca Bitondo and Miriam Peluffo

### ABSTRACT

The document summarizes key elements highlighted during the conference "Quali sviluppi per le capacità Nato? Difesa collettiva e stabilizzazione del vicinato: la visione italiana" (What's Next for NATO's Capabilities? Collective Defence and Neighbourhood Stabilization: The Italian Perspective) organized on 17 November 2016 by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) within the framework of the project "Defence Matters 2016", supported by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division. The conference was devoted to the future of NATO and the development of its capabilities in an increasingly uncertain and unpredictable international system, following the election of Donald J. Trump, the Brexit vote, asymmetric threats coming from the southern and eastern flanks and the relaunching of European defence cooperation. The debate underlined the importance of adapting NATO's capabilities, the need for European countries to take on more responsibility within the Alliance, as well as the reaffirmation of the founding values of NATO. In this framework, Italy can play a major role, both with regard to NATO collective security and to relaunch NATO-EU cooperation.

*NATO | European defence | CSDP | Italy's military policy | Transatlantic relations | US foreign policy | Brexit | Mediterranean*



# What's Next for NATO's Capabilities? Collective Defence and Neighbourhood Stabilization: The Italian Perspective

by Francesca Bitondo and Miriam Peluffo\*

## 1. NATO's capabilities: Development and adaptability

The conference organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) on the 17 November 2016 within the framework of the project "Defence Matters 2016," focused on the major challenges for NATO in the aftermath of the 2016 Warsaw Summit and in view of the next summit in 2017 in Brussels.

From a military perspective, since its foundation, NATO has proved the ability to adapt to new scenarios, by re-structuring its chain of command and institutions, as well as by including – more recently – cyberspace as new Alliance's operational domain. Even in the current international context, characterized by unpredictability and uncertainty, the Alliance should put forward a renewal, to be able to effectively respond to both traditional threats and new challenges to Euro-Atlantic security.

The Warsaw Summit represented an important step forward for the Alliance's capability to evolve. For instance, new threats stemming from the southern flank – illegal migration, terrorism, collapsed states and organized crime – have been finally recognised. The Atlantic Alliance has, indeed, elaborated a new action framework, aiming to respond to the growing need for security, while simultaneously ensuring stability beyond NATO's borders.

\* Francesca Bitondo and Miriam Peluffo are respectively research assistant and intern in the Security and Defense Programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

· Report of the conference "Quali sviluppi per le capacità Nato? Difesa collettiva e stabilizzazione del vicinato: la visione italiana" (What's Next for NATO's Capabilities? Collective Defence and Neighbourhood Stabilization: The Italian Perspective), organized in Rome on 17 November 2016 by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) within the framework of the project "Defence Matters 2016" with the support of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division. Speakers: Luca Giansanti, Director General Political and Security Affairs, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Claudio Graziano, Chief of Defence Staff; Andrea Manciuilli, Head of the Italian Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly; Alessandro Marrone, IAI Senior Fellow; Mauro Moretti, President and CEO Leonardo-Finmeccanica; Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, IAI President; Gerlinde Niehus, Head, Engagement Section, NATO Public Diplomacy Division; Roberta Pinotti, Ministry of Defence.

Furthermore, it was highlighted the importance for the Alliance to maintain a certain degree of flexibility in terms of objectives and means, to effectively address new challenges in an ever-changing geopolitical scenario, characterized by the presence of different types of threat. Therefore, it was stressed the need to adopt a 360 degree approach – concept elaborated also thanks to the Italian contribution – towards the high instable environment that NATO has to face. Such an inclusive approach underlines also the importance of ensuring cohesion and solidarity among NATO members.



From left to right: Gerlinde Niehus, Andrea Manciuilli, Claudio Graziano, Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, Mauro Moretti e Luca Giansanti

Moreover, given the complexity of the security environment, which includes numerous challenges coming from the southern flank and the fight against Daesh, it is highly important to ensure effective coordination with other organizations, *in primis* the EU.

In this context, the potential impacts of certain factors– the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, the UK referendum on the EU, and the re-launch of a “European defence project” – on the Atlantic Alliance in terms of cohesion and solidarity have been analysed.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Trump presidency and Brexit

The conference pointed out how the election of the new American president could be an element of uncertainty for the Alliance. Two important elements emerged from the discussion: on the one hand, it should be evaluated whether what it has been announced during the election campaign will be ultimately realised – particularly, given checks and balances provided by the American political-institutional system. On the other hand, because of such a balance system, it is likely that the foreign policy would be in turn influenced by the American establishment, despite the promise of introducing new elements.

Furthermore, it should be noted that some aspects of the Trump's election campaign are not completely new. Indeed, already the Obama administration recognised, for instance, the request of the electorate to reduce the military commitments

<sup>1</sup> Pictures and a video of the event, as well as video-interviews with speakers and participants (Claudio Graziano, Luca Giansanti, Andrea Manciuilli, Gerlinde Niehus, Fabrizio Coticchia, Luciano Bozzo) are available online: <http://www.iai.it/en/node/6968>.

abroad, thus avoiding the escalation and the indiscriminate deployment of military troops on the ground. Nonetheless, Trump highlighted the American commitment on targeted-base campaigns, such as in the fight against terrorism, trying to avoid large-scale campaigns, like under the Bush administration.



Alessandro Marrone

Similarly, with reference to the burden-sharing question, Trump's request to the EU countries to take on greater responsibilities within NATO, although expressed more vigorously if compared to his predecessors, results to be coherent with the objectives set out in the 2014 Wales Summit. Greater efforts in this regard would also respond to the gradual move of attention of the United States from Europe towards other regions.

Concerning the relations with Russia, it is possible that the American position will change, considering Trump's determination to open a dialogue and to reach an agreement with Moscow, which will definitely have an impact on NATO. In fact, although the concrete achievement of such an agreement is not evident, the efforts of Washington in this sense would force the allies to reflect on a possible content, and in general on the position to be taken towards Moscow. This process could lead to potential divisions between Allied positions in a key moment, where both transatlantic and European cohesion are fundamental for ensuring security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Another element of uncertainty in the current international context is represented by the outcome of the UK referendum. Firstly, it was stressed the importance of managing the Brexit process within a reasonable time framework, while ensuring cohesion within the EU. Secondly, as far as concerns security and defence, Brexit could affect more the EU rather than the transatlantic context.

At the same time, it was highlighted the importance of focusing on the key points of this uncertain framework. On the one hand, it has been reiterated that Britain's exit from the Union does not mean that London will completely exit from Europe: UK will continue to necessarily constitute an integral part of Europe, also in terms of defence. In addition, the UK will continue to play an important role concerning defence structures as a NATO member. On the other hand, it was recalled that current discussions on the European integration in the field of defence should also take the Brexit into account, whose process, however, will be not completed by the next two or three years. It was finally underlined the importance of managing negotiations pragmatically, thus avoiding a possible "continental European protectionism" in the field the defence industry.

### 3. The southern flank and the role of Italy

From the Newport Summit to the Warsaw one, threats facing the Alliance have considerably changed: besides those stemming from the East, related to Russian relations, new ones have been coming from the South. The Warsaw Summit has adopted a strategic and comprehensive vision – a 360 degree approach – putting *de facto* on the same level all the different threats, at least from a political perspective, stemming from the whole “arch of instability and insecurity.”

The NATO southern flank includes numerous threats – such as terrorism and illegal migration – more complex than traditional ones because of their asymmetric and non-conventional nature, whose control remains, nonetheless, a great priority. In this context, due to its geographical position, Italy plays a key role thanks to its long-term vision towards the evolution of these phenomena. Moreover, the credibility of Italy as efficient and liable partner, conquered thanks to its constant presence in various crisis scenarios and NATO's missions, allows Italy to play a relevant role in this context.



Speakers

In order to put into practice the action framework – defined during the Warsaw Summit – for the southern flank and to ensure stability through a comprehensive regional approach, Italy has proposed to make the Joint Force Command Naples a central hub to better coordinate the activities in the Mediterranean region. Such a proposal would be functional for the concretisation of the NATO's project in the southern flank, for the development of greater situational awareness and to project stability in the area. This kind of option could contribute to enhance coordination with other international organizations and it could draw on the solid expertise of already existing Centres of Excellence. Finally, Italy has announced that it will make available the Headquarter of the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps as well as a multinational division with the purpose of defence capacity building.

### 4. The complementary relations between NATO and the EU

In the light of the NATO-EU joint declaration adopted during the Warsaw Summit, the debate of the conference focused on the perspectives of cooperation and coordination between the two organizations. Particularly, with reference to the document signed on July 8, seven areas of strategic cooperation have been identified: (1) counter hybrid threats; (2) broaden maritime cooperation; (3) expand coordination on cyber security and defence; (4) develop coherent, complementary

and interoperable defence EU-NATO capabilities; (5) facilitate industrial cooperation; (6) step up coordination of EU-NATO exercises in 2017 and 2018; (7) build the defence and security capacity and foster the resilience of the partners in the East and South.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of capabilities, the conference highlighted the importance of the complementarity between NATO and the EU in the field

of security and defence and the great benefit that a stronger European pillar in the field would have. In this context, as confirmed by the Minister Pinotti, Italy's commitment to effectively contribute to the growth of European capabilities is based on the idea that it would have a positive impact on the security of the Euro-Atlantic region. Furthermore, it was stressed the great role NATO continues to play in terms of command and control, as well as proven alliance expertise.

A similar logic was also underlined in a joint proposal of the Italian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Defence,<sup>3</sup> published by the French newspaper *Le Monde*, which has put forward the debate on European security and defence and has led to the draft of a joint document of France, Germany, Spain and Italy.<sup>4</sup>

From an industrial point of view, in the long run, it was stressed the need to develop a "third offset" strategy in European military industry, as in the United States, in order to produce a single, interoperable European defence, able to support a single industrial system. To be credible, European countries should invest more in security. Such a reconfiguration of duties and responsibilities within the Alliance would counterbalance political emerging military powers, such as China. The debate showed the importance of a cohesive Europe that will gradually take on more responsibilities in the field of defence and avoid counter-productive duplications.



Conference participants

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that on the occasion of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting of 6 December 2016, 42 concrete proposals have been presented within the seven proposed areas for cooperation in the joint statement.

<sup>3</sup> Gentiloni and Pinotti: "Establishing a Schengen-like Defence Agreement to Respond to Terrorism" (La Repubblica, Le Monde), 11 August 2016, [http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/gentiloni-e-pinotti-una-schengen.html](http://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/gentiloni-e-pinotti-una-schengen.html).

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Beesley, "Italy and Spain Warm to EU Defence Co-operation", in *Financial Times*, 12 October 2016.

## 5. Relaunching the culture of security

A further challenge that NATO has to face concerns the relaunch of the culture of security. Besides the concrete growth of military capabilities, NATO needs to relaunch its founding values. However, only little attention has been paid to this dimension.



Roberta Pinotti

The Alliance should therefore put forward two main objectives. On the one hand, NATO should put back to the front some fundamental concepts such as solidarity and trust, in order to effectively respond, politically and strategically, to the current threats. An effort involving all member states, particularly European allies, is required to contribute to the Euro-Atlantic security. Each country should assume more seriously its own responsibility, investing more and more consistently in security, regardless to what Washington says. On the other hand, the relaunch of the culture of security should be promoted with greater commitment, thus raising awareness of the public opinion. The latter represents a key element. Given the current high insecure environment, characterized by great challenges requiring international effort and collective responses, citizens need to be aware of the reasons leading governments to increase the defence budget. Governments, NATO and the EU should contribute together to respond to this point.

## Conclusions

To sum up, NATO is called once again to show its ability to adapt to new emerging challenges. Besides challenges from the South and the East, additional factors have made the security environment even more complex, such as the result of the British referendum and the election of Donald Trump at the presidency of the United States.

In this context, the adoption of a 360-degree approach by the Alliance is of great importance. However, it should be supported by a growing contribution to European collective defence in terms of military capabilities and investments, as well as by relaunching the founding values of the Atlantic community.

Equally important is the collaboration with other organizations, primarily with the EU, to contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. In this regard, it has been stressed the importance of ensuring complementarity between NATO and EU, as well as the mutual benefit deriving from a stronger pillar in the European defence.

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In this context, common understandings in terms of threats and sharing values make greater cooperation not only necessary, but also beneficial for both actors.

Italy, because of its history and geographic location, as well as thanks to its credibility as a reliable partner of NATO, can play a leading role in such a new security environment – from the challenges coming from the south to NATO-EU relations, as well as the dialogue with Russia.

To conclude, as Ministry Pinotti underlined, despite the uncertain and unpredictable scenario, NATO is still a solid and integrated organization, and will continue to adapt to new challenges.

*Updated 9 December 2016*



### Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Founded by Altiero Spinelli in 1965, does research in the fields of foreign policy, political economy and international security. A non-profit organisation, the IAI aims to further and disseminate knowledge through research studies, conferences and publications. To that end, it cooperates with other research institutes, universities and foundations in Italy and abroad and is a member of various international networks. More specifically, the main research sectors are: European institutions and policies; Italian foreign policy; trends in the global economy and internationalisation processes in Italy; the Mediterranean and the Middle East; defence economy and policy; and transatlantic relations. The IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*AffariInternazionali*), two series of research papers (*Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Papers*) and other papers' series related to IAI research projects.

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

T +39 06 3224360

F + 39 06 3224363

[iai@iai.it](mailto:iai@iai.it)

[www.iai.it](http://www.iai.it)

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