



NATO Foundation
Defense College

NATO 2023

BALANCING PRIORITIES AFTER VILNIUS SUMMIT

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the NATO Defense College Foundation

in co-operation with
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NATO Defense College Foundation

The NDCF is a unique think-tank: international by design and based in Rome, due to its association with the NATO Defense College. Its added value lies in the objectives stated by its charter and in its international network, which make the Foundation a body with considerable freedom of action, transnational reach and cultural openness. The charter specifies that the NDCF works with the Member States of the Atlantic Alliance, its partners and the countries that have some form of co-operation with NATO. Through the Foundation the involvement of USA and Canada is more fluid than in other settings. The Foundation was born in 2011 and is rapidly expanding its highly specific and customer-tailored activities, achieving an increasingly higher profile, also through activities dedicated to decision makers and their staffs. Currently, the Foundation is active in three areas: high-level events, strategic trends research and specialised decision makers' training and education.



NATO 2023. Balancing priorities after the Vilnius Summit, Rome, 6 October 2023.



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ALESSANDRO MINUTO-RIZZO
*President,
NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome*



FOREWORD

This conference on the Atlantic Alliance, the seventh organised by our Foundation, addresses its priorities and the decisions to be made before the 2024 Washington Summit. The international situation is before our eyes, and we do not need many explanations. Our central problem is a bloody war taking place in Europe. The end is not yet in sight and the resilience of our societies is called into question. After an unprovoked aggression has brought about suffering and destruction in Ukraine, the entire Euro-Atlantic community has reacted with resolve and cohesion, accepting to pay a heavy price in order to restore a rule based international order. If, on the one hand, we feel the moral necessity to defend the aggressed, on the other, we hope that a negotiated and fair solution can be found as soon as possible in due time, step by step.

But today we wish to look at a larger horizon and not to focus just on this issue, discussed at length every day. Why doing so? The Atlantic Alliance remains the most important security provider in existence. It wishes to project security outside its borders as it has been said several times since a long time. It is a political-military alliance in this respect and it is a defensive alliance. It has always related to the international community and usually in accordance with the UN security Council.

NATO is sailing towards its 75th anniversary proving to be the most resilient Alliance in history, while the concept of looking at international security at 360 degrees is more relevant than ever, meaning that security is global, it is necessary to look in all directions keeping the guard high and the security dialogue alive.

On the other hand, the present situation, and the presence of threats, including asymmetric threats, also show that multilateralism is a guarantee and needs to be used at its best. There is another angle to look at: that is to have a fresh look at geography; speaking in Rome it is impossible not to feel and sense a concrete and special attention towards the south, where we have old partnerships to revive,

among which the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Both are 20 years old and the strategic situation in North Africa and the Middle East calls not for empty words and programmes, but for new serious deeds to reinforce the weight and the substance of these relationships. Facts create the image of a purposeful interaction with the Global South because what happens is all too real.

In fact, we see an instability epidemic gaining ground in Africa and especially in the Sahel; addressing old grievances and imbalances is an underlying priority but getting new actors that change the way populations are exploited is not helpful both for the people and governments caring for the country's interest. At the same time, we cannot ignore the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region where new partnerships are in progress with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the Republic of Korea. A new chapter that is opening now and finally it is our responsibility to steer a sensible course in those troubled waters.

In conclusion, history is unfolding rapidly before us with new threats as well as potential opportunities. Therefore, it is necessary to take a decisive action towards the South and to consider options regarding the East. As usual, the Foundation aims at presenting an interesting debate: our methodology is to offer a high international level, in a scientific way, in a spirit of respect, addressing the relevant issues of the day. I wish to thank very warmly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the venue and for the extended support, the NATO Defense College as a natural elder brother, the generous support of the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Elettronica S.p.A and our traditional media partners Formiche and Airpress together.

We have been able to gather in this hall several high-level speakers and moderators coming from different walks of life and bringing with them different perspectives: I wish to thank them warmly as well as those in special interventions. Finally, special thanks to the staff of the Foundation for its enthusiasm and its hard work.

After having served at the Italian Embassy in Washington DC and as Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Prague, Ambassador **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo** worked as Head of the External Relations Office of the EEC from 1981 to 1986. In the following years, his career focused on Europe and Space Policy. In 1997 he was appointed Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Defence Beniamino Andreatta, then of his successors Carlo Scognamiglio and Sergio Mattarella. In 2000, Minuto-Rizzo held the position of Italian Ambassador to the Western European Union and to the Political and Security Committee of the EU, of which he was among the founding members. He was Deputy Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic-political industrial area and in the relations with sensitive countries such as those in the Gulf and the Southern Mediterranean. He is the author of the books: *The road to Kabul* (Il Mulino-Arel, 2009); *A political journey without maps. Diversity and future in the Greater Middle East* (Rubbettino, 2013); and *NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership* (New Academia Publishing, 2018).

RICCARDO GUARIGLIA
*Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation, Rome*



WELCOME REMARKS

It is a great pleasure to host you here today at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the balancing priorities after the Vilnius Summit, a current topic of general interest, both for diplomats and scholars. The title chosen for today's conference has to do with the course the Atlantic Alliance is charting after the last successful Vilnius Summit which took place in the midst of the still enduring brutal war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine.

Today more than ever we need the contribution of think tanks like the NDC Foundation along with scholars and researchers in order to consolidate the awareness of the everlasting importance of the Atlantic Alliance vis-à-vis the variety of challenges and threats the Euro-Atlantic community is facing nowadays. It is therefore exactly now, while war has made its return to Europe, that we must confirm our determined resolve to deal with all threats and challenges facing the Euro-Atlantic community, no matter where they stem from, adopting a comprehensive approach. Collective defence remains crucial to provide security over the Allied territory and to its more than 1 billion people. At the same time a series of hybrid threats spanning from cyber-attacks, big data manipulation, disinformation, the possible misuse of disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, are on the rise and deserve all our attention.

Finally, more classic threats and consolidating challenges such as terrorism, illegal migration (very important in this period), arms, drugs and human trafficking are gaining critical traction also being favoured by the ongoing conflict. As we all know these factors have led to a growing political and security instability with mounting pressure on the southern flank of the Euro-Atlantic region. Real challenges indeed come today from Africa. Beside the collective defence which is and remains the core business of the Atlantic Alliance, NATO needs also to reinforce its other two core tasks: crisis management and cooperative security, as Ambassador Minuto Rizzo said. This should be done *inter alia* through a focus on the political dialogue and a practical

cooperation with its partners from the Mediterranean and the broader Middle East.

Let us not forget that political dialogue and cooperation with new partners, these two core tasks aside collective defence, are closely connected with the founding spirit of our Atlantic Alliance; as President Sergio Mattarella said on September 2023, while paying a tribute to the Italian soldiers fallen during the *Resistenza* [the resistance movement against Nazi-Fascism from 1943 to 1945, Ed.], an alliance such as NATO is what allows us to defend the values inspiring our societies. If common values in terms of democracy and multilateral cooperation lay at the foundations of the Atlantic Alliance, it is thanks to initiatives like the one we are attending today here in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that we can contribute to raising awareness on those values.

So let me once again thank you all for the efforts undertaken in analysing NATO's priorities after the 2023 Vilnius Summit. I am eager to learn about your reflections concerning the assessment of the current priorities and challenges of the Alliance as well as the projection towards the south of the main output produced by NATO that is security and stability. I am confident that new food for thought can be shared emanating from a "think out of the box approach", which is mostly needed in today's complex historic moment.

Ambassador **Riccardo Guariglia** is Secretary General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from 6 March 2023. He was First Secretary at the Italian Embassy in Cairo from 1989 to 1992, and Counsellor at the Directorate General for Political Affairs of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serving as Deputy Head of the Balkans Department from 1996 to 2000. First Counsellor at the Permanent Representation to NATO in Brussels, he was responsible for managing Balkan crises and the Mediterranean dialogue. From 2011 to 2014 he was Ambassador of Italy in Warsaw, and then Head of the Diplomatic Protocol of the Republic until 2018. Designated Ambassador in January 2018 and Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he was Ambassador of Italy to Spain and Andorra from 2020 to 2023.

FLORENCE GAUB
*Director, Research Division,
NATO Defense College, Rome*



WELCOME REMARKS

When I left NATO Defense College in 2013 it was a different world, we had just been through the Arab Spring, Mohamed Morsi was still President of Egypt, Russia had not yet occupied Crimea, and of course we had not been through a pandemic. Now I come back, and I find an organization that is actually revitalized and energized by the humongous task ahead of it. I do not perceive NATO as brain dead. I humorously claim that we constitute a vital part of NATO's intellectual capacity.

Therefore, I want to tell you what we are doing now. I started this job in May 2023 and the first thing I did was mapping who else was thinking about the future in NATO and I discovered that there are different people thinking about different futures everywhere: there is the Allied Command Transformation (ACT), there is the Political Security Analysis unit in SHAPE, there is the Southern Hub, the Policy Planning Unit, the office of Net Assessment and many more. Why is this interesting for you? Without a clear definition, we risk duplications and redundancies. Given the current challenges, especially with the situation in Ukraine and other concurrent issues, it is imperative that we genuinely contribute our utmost capabilities.

I come to conclusion with what I think you should expect from the Research Division in NATO Defense College (NDC). Our future time horizon is 2 to 5 years from now, so we do not do neither short-term analysis nor super long-term analysis, ACT does that. I want NATO actionable because everything is NATO relevant. As we just heard, NATO has redefined its mission more narrowly, and so we at the Research Division. If NATO cannot do anything about it, my team is too small to dedicate time to it.

We are, of course, at a strategic level and, most importantly, we have to be terribly original and very unique because what has also changed in the last 10 years since I left, is not just the world at large, but actually the world of research and how our decision makers absorb information. I think that this is something researchers normally do not think about, because we fall in love with problems and we love

to describe them without really thinking about the people that we are supposed to serve, how do they absorb what we produce. I will then use the NDC Research Division resources to invest in new kinds of data and imagery and everything else that we can presently get because the magnitude of the problem is too big to give everything a try.

Obviously, we will work in particular on the future of war, future of Russia and China, as well as narrowing what we are working on, and, of course, on events like the present one to create and disseminate knowledge. I want to thank of course the NATO Foundation, the Farnesina, the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo who have been long-standing partners of the College and I hope you can continue to work together as we sail in a very turbulent time. I want you to expect truly astounding things from us, just give us a bit more time to rewire the machinery.

Dr **Florence Gaub** is Director of the Research Division at NATO Defense College in Rome and President and Founder of the Futurate Institute. She was previously Foresight Advisor at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union as well as Deputy Director at the European Union Institute for Security Studies. As a Researcher of the Middle East Faculty at the NATO Defense College from 2009 to 2013, her career has focussed on the Middle East and North Africa. She holds a Ph.D. in Military Sociology from Humboldt University of Berlin, as well as degrees from Sciences Po Paris, the Sorbonne and the University of Munich.

NICOLÒ RUSSO PEREZ
*Head, International Affairs,
Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin*



WELCOME REMARKS

First of all, I would like to thank the organisers, the NATO Defense College Foundation and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. I would like to stress the importance of this cooperation between public and private entities, since it is very timely: with the NATO 2030 process, the Organization had an important opportunity to embed contributions from experts from the scientific community and from the private sector, all engaged in the challenging task of contributing to the design of the Alliance of the future.

The Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo is today among the largest private foundations in Europe and among the main independent funders, in Italy, of policy-oriented research in the field of international relations, with particular focus on the three traditional dimensions of our national foreign policy - European, Transatlantic and Mediterranean.

Against this background, the Compagnia is supporting the activities of the NATO Foundation. This is a long-term strategy with which the Compagnia has chosen to combine the attention to its local dimension – the city of Turin, where the Foundation was founded back in 1563 - with an openness to international issues. We have done so because the challenges we are facing in our daily lives are local declinations of broader, global, interconnected issues. The NATO Foundation recently was also selected among the winners of a new call for application launched by the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, aimed at exploring the still under-researched issues concerning the multiple links between geopolitics and technology (cybersecurity, big data governance, protection of critical infrastructures) and I want to congratulate the NATO Foundation also for that important result.

The topic of this conference is of key importance. The illegal and unprovoked war started by Russia against Ukraine has brought defence issues back to the centre of the political agenda.

Within NATO, the new Strategic Concept adopted in 2022 at the Madrid Summit¹ is the result, on the one hand, of the return of large-scale war on the European continent, but, on the other, also of a process of renewal of the Alliance, which looks at year 2030 in a context of aggressive multipolarism. The Strategic Concept gives priority to Russia among the various challenges facing the Euro-Atlantic space, while also significantly considering China's growing assertiveness. Of Italian interest is certainly the mention of the Southern Region, recognized by NATO as a source of instability as it is vulnerable to interferences from the Alliance's strategic adversaries. The Strategic Concept also highlights how the consequences of climate change must be seen as a source of increased fragility in the Sahel, North Africa and the Middle East.

Aside of the geographic dimension, with the recognition of the strong interconnection between the Eastern and the Southern Regions, there is also the key recognition of the new nature of many challenges that NATO countries and their societies are facing. Along traditional challenges, emerging security challenges are showing potential vulnerabilities in our societies. European states face a full spectrum of threats, including economic and natural-resource blackmail, hybrid and terrorist tactics, military intimidation, and wars of aggression and conquest. Cybersecurity is a clear example: with its crosscutting nature, it is critical for maintaining resilience across most, if not all, functions. Cyberattacks on government websites, banks, utilities, energy pipelines, media outlets and water and sanitation facilities can cripple societies. They can prevent the effective functioning of governments and cause widespread confusion, economic harm and civil disorder. Cyberattacks on energy infrastructure, hospitals, and water services can lead to the loss of life, putting them on par with kinetic means of warfare.

In this context, Italy, at institutional level, but also with its private sector, should take advantage of some of the new high-profile NATO initiatives that can advance its industrial interests and, at the same time, the resilience of our society. The launch of the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund promise opportunities for valuable centres of applied research and start-ups distributed across the national territory, for example in Turin in the field of aerospace.

I conclude my remarks by emphasizing how the topic of today's conference is of extreme interest for any public, but also private, actor. Many thanks to the experts and the Institutional representatives who accepted the invitation to join us today. Thanks again to the NATO Foundation, all the staff and the leadership of the

¹ https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf.

Foundation, and thanks particularly to its President, Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo: this is an event that we, at the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, a private sector player, consider of strategic importance to fostering a better understanding of the geopolitical context in which our societies are embedded.

Nicolò Russo Perez is the Head of the International Affairs Program at the Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, based in Turin (Italy). In this capacity, he is in charge of several grant-making and operational activities promoted by the Foundation in the field of international relations, covering transatlantic and European studies, as well as Mediterranean and emerging countries affairs. Previously, he worked at the European Commission, at the International Labour Organization and was a Senior Associate Fellow at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) in Paris. A council member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and Visiting Senior Fellow at The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Mr Russo Perez is currently also part of the Scientific Board of the NATO Foundation in Rome. He is a member of the Strategic Reflection Group on European affairs set up by the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

ALESSANDRO POLITI
NDCF Director



POLITICAL SUMMARY

The conference discussed two relevant themes: the challenges and priorities of the Alliance; and the 360° security approach, a mainstay of NATO, especially with regards to the Alliance's security projection in the Southern Region (Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative).

The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the possible political evolutions in the US political scene by November 2024 imply three distinct aspects, namely a different responsibility sharing between the European and the North American allies; the need to restore NATO's conventional deterrence and the link between defence expenditure goals and necessary capabilities' generation.

Russia will remain a threat for the years to come, even if this war marks the beginning of a serious economic and strategic decline for this government. Ukraine joining NATO remains firmly an open option, but the defence of the long borders of this country with Russia is a considerable challenge that cannot be met in the medium term, notwithstanding the actual lack of political consensus within the Alliance.

Nevertheless, the Alliance has an obvious duty to keep up a credible deterrence *vis-à-vis* Moscow and, while the nuclear side is technically assured, the conventional side clearly shows the signs of long decades during which investments were concentrated on expeditionary forces. The narrative that the Allies have disinvested in defence for a peace dividend is simply misleading: at global level the drop in defence expenditures after the fall of the Wall (1989) ended by year 2000, even before the terrorist attacks of the 11th of September 2001. The fact is that crisis management, cooperative security and security projection do not require the heavy forces needed in high-intensity warfare: even allies with high defence budgets discovered how insufficient were their ammunition stocks or their heavy units.

Evidently the revamping of production capabilities and the rationalisation of the defence industrial base are indispensable preconditions to achieve these objectives,

considering that financial instruments and rules must be revised in order to sustain an increased multi-year investment. The NATO Innovation Fund and DIANA are important starting points in this direction, together with parallel EU initiatives. Here the important, often overlooked, aspect is that the new EU structures should absorb the already consolidated experiences and best practices of the Alliance to speed up their internal development and management capabilities.

Despite the media hype, this cannot happen in a few years but realistically in a decade of sustained effort not just in spending (a modest increase is needed and not a “war economy”, as told on media), but in acquiring concrete capabilities (units, arms, enablers), logistic support (spare and ammunitions) and in real training to achieve the necessary operational readiness. The conventional gap that was the nightmare of NATO planners during the Cold War has disappeared, but the risk of favouring new Russian military adventurism cannot be understated.

Defence expenditures have also another important function: dispelling the rather imprecise perception that the burden sharing is unequal between the USA and the rest. No matter what the numbers and the deliverables really tell, this is an electoral debate that cannot be overlooked and that must be addressed before the November 2024 elections. It is in the interest of European allies and NATO altogether to offer concrete arguments so that even a more isolationist Administration may have a more sobering assessment on the usefulness of the transatlantic relationship.

The future development of NATO should concentrate on the solidity of the deterrence and defence in Europe, while tackling seriously the risks and threats coming from the Southern Region, collaborating even more with the EU by synergising relative strengths. Only in this way European allies will contribute directly to the security of the Indian Ocean, where a large part of Africa has its shores and the Gulf is a crucial area, and indirectly to the US effort in the Pacific.

Here the debate on the 360° security approach, regarding the Alliance’s security projection towards the partners of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative is showing a significant shift. In previous years the tendency was to concentrate the attention to the Northern and the Eastern border, blithely downplaying the risks and threats of the Southern Region. Today the Russian presence, the different political positions adopted by the Global South vis-à-vis Western discourses and the growing instability affecting vital interests, including the supply chain of nuclear energy and weapons, lead to a different appraisal.

In the region the demand for concrete security guarantees by NATO is put forward. While acknowledging that the USA has shown a serious and diversified commitment in the region, whether with the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the Fifth Fleet, deployments of the Sixth Fleet or by several USAF squadrons, the partners are mildly satisfied with the results of the dialogue with

NATO. The reasons are twofold: a more intense political relationship is desired with the Alliance and, simultaneously, GCC countries do not wish to be involved in a Cold War dynamic (either with us or against us). More precisely they want to keep the traditional relation with the West, avoiding alternative courses towards Moscow or Beijing, but only if their security concerns are seriously addressed and commercial freedom is kept free from ideological strictures.

One idea floated in the discussion was to bring the GCC countries in a NATO Plus security framework, which would mean participating, without expressing a consensus like the allies, but benefitting from a security umbrella to be still defined and negotiated. This suggestion needs to be explored in its ramifications and to find the consensus among now 31 allies, but it provides a feeling of how NATO can define a security projection in a particular security environment with consolidated partners.

Another aspect mentioned, although being much more in the background in the public attention, was terrorism. Terrorism, as NATO's Strategic Concept defines it, remains a direct asymmetric threat to the Alliance in all forms and manifestations. Terrorism is contagious, it is on the rise in the Sahel and coming back as a resurgent Al Shabab in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, the fight against terrorism in the Middle East is continuing because terrorist groups are directly targeting NATO forces in the region.

To terrorism was already connected the aspect of propaganda, disinformation and hybrid operations (even if they were not described as such during the Global War on Terror); from the crisis of Crimea onwards (2014) this facet of political struggle has become much more visible and relevant, because it does directly affect public opinions in the transatlantic community. In addition to Russia as warring party, China is directly involved for its own agenda on a global scale, creating a much more confusing and risky public information environment. NATO, together with the EU, is at the forefront in combating hostile propaganda, but it is probably that also the next Italian presidency of the G7 will bring a further impulse to multilateral collaboration, including this issue in the agenda.

Alessandro Politi is Director of the NATO Defense College Foundation. A specialist in political and strategic affairs, he has worked with different top decision makers in Italy and abroad both in public institutions and private companies. He teaches geopolitics, geo-economics and intelligence at the Italian MFA-affiliated SIOI School.



Belgian Air Force and NATO Frigate Helicopter (NFH) performing a Search And Rescue demonstration, Koksijde Air Base, Belgium.



SPECIAL INTERVENTION

STEFANO PONTECORVO

Chairman, Leonardo Company, Rome



SPECIAL INTERVENTION

I would like to deliver a few short and quick reflections. We experience the social impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine every day: when we go shopping, when we go buy gas, when we go to the bank. It is not only Kiev that ended up under the bombs, but also our model of relations, already greatly threatened by the pandemic. I believe therefore that nothing will ever be the same again and I deliberately use the formula that began to circulate after 9/11. We must rethink our future and NATO is central in that and we must do it with and through like-minded geographic areas. Globalisation, we were used to known, no longer exists. Therefore, NATO is occupying a space beyond that of security to become an economic area and a strong political forum.

For three decades after the end of the Cold War, the old continent enjoyed peace dividends. In 1989 European countries within NATO still spent about 4% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence, by 2014 the percentage had plummeted to 1,4%. Europe as a whole can afford to spend nearly 50% of its GDP on social spending because there are others who spend on their own security and defence, and on ours too, namely the USA.

According to a report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the USA has military spending equal to 3,5% of its GDP and covers nearly 40% of global spending. France ranks sixth and Italy on the twelfth position. If we see the same ranking for social spending, the ranking reverses: the country that spends the most in relation to GDP is France, Italy is the fourth place and the United States comes in twenty-first place, preceded by all NATO member countries. Today this is a “luxury” that is no longer sustainable, at least not on the same terms. Last year Europe spent €320 billion on defence, the highest figure since the Cold War.

As you can see security has direct impacts both on the social sphere and the economic one. As an example, Italy adheres to the single currency system and as such it has to comply with a number of budgetary parameters, and it is also a member of NATO, for which it is going to allocate 2% of GDP to security and defence spending.

Like Italy, other European countries also are part of NATO, but the budget parameters that Europe has given itself “do not communicate” with those of NATO. At the European level, Italy is fighting for security spending to be taken out of the deficit calculation. Next year the European Commission is expected to discuss with Member States the reform of EU’s Stability and Growth Pact.

I am optimistic by nature, and it seems to me that a profound transformation towards a unified thinking is taking place at the European level, a transformation that I appreciate. It is moving away, in my view, from dogmatism to make way for pragmatism – where I come from, they would say *Inshallah*. It will undoubtedly be a slow but inevitable process. It is a process taking place in other countries: China spent in 2022 292 billion dollars 4,2% more than 2021, but 63% more than in 2013; Russia in just one year increased its military spending by 9,2%.

To have a comparison with Europe in 2022, the continent’s military spending increased by 13% over 2021 and touched Cold War levels, but the increase over 2013 was 30%, half of China’s. The European Security System needs major investments in the near future, either to rebalance the relationship with the United States or because we do not know where future threats will come from.

Security has fast response times, partly because the threats are multi-level, and multi-level responses need to be prepared to these threats. This would also require a little more foresight and vision on the part of European authorities.

All my life I have been a diplomat and as Ambassador Minuto Rizzo taught me, a good diplomat must always keep an open dialogue with the other side and must identify a shared element of contact – a *passe-partout*.

Today, however, I am chairman of Leonardo Company, a company that grew from that seed planted by Cavour in Genoa with Ansaldo. His vision was to make the fledgling kingdom of Italy participate in the process of industrial transformation that had already begun in France and Great Britain, becoming a producer of steam engines.

Today, as then, I believe that technology is the element of dialogue with the other side that must be kept alive, the necessary *passepartout*, a tool that can shorten the distance between the different geopolitical blocks or, at the very least, can bring closer and consolidate knowledge between “like minded” blocs. In a special way, I believe that a key role can be played by aerospace technology, a bridge between countries.

In the current phase of uncertainty, we must aim at strengthening the mechanisms for cooperation between countries and science, technology, and industrial innovation. The aerospace sector, by its very nature, can play a pioneering role in building new partnerships. First because it is a highly innovative, and therefore capital-intensive sector. As such, it requires investment of resources and engineering know-how

that few nations in the world can afford to finance by themselves. Collaboration is therefore a necessity. The second point that makes aerospace central is its transversality: the strategic nature of aerospace technologies today represents the meeting point on which the interest of states and security and that of companies, seeking business opportunities, converge.

Critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, cyber security, that are increasingly central to our industry, require the building of public-private partnerships. Take the space economy sector for example: this is a market that according to a Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) report, could reach the value of 1,5 trillion dollar in the next decade, a huge opportunity. This is also why, alongside the traditional players, large private players, often from other sectors, have entered the space race as have the new industrialised nations.

In an increasingly polycentric scenario, we must have the ability and courage to make collaboration on new competencies systemic and strengthen North-South technological cooperation. This is done through agreed modalities and dedicated industrial programs capable of protecting the strategic needs of the partners involved.

It is important to establish forms of structured dialogue among “like-minded partners”, and international fora such as the G7 and G20; in synergy with each other, we can provide the ideal framework for building an inclusive multilateralism capable of fostering technological development and putting it at the service of security and collective growth.

The world is rapidly changing, but to be able to keep up with the scientific and technological process it is necessary to rethink and apply the words of a great Italian of the last century, Donato Menichella [an important economist and central bank governor, Ed.]: « It is in us, it is in all of us ». That philosophy enabled Italy to foster the economic boom of the 1960s. The international paradigm has changed, but that formula, I believe, is a winning one.

President of Leonardo SpA since May 2023, Ambassador **Stefano Pontecorvo** has been an Italian diplomat and a European and international official for about forty years. He was formerly Italian Ambassador to Pakistan and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Italian Embassies in Moscow and London. He served in the Italian Representation Offices to the European Union and to NATO. He was also the Director of the Stability Pact for the Balkans. He held various positions at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Head of the Financial Office of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Deputy Director General for Africa. Ambassador Pontecorvo was the last NATO Senior Civilian Representative for Afghanistan from June 2020 and he has been awarded NATO's Meritorious Medal for Outstanding Service and the 2022 Amato Lamberti Prize for Social Responsibility.

What are the main responsibilities among allies in facing emerging challenges?

How to balance investments between existing arsenals and new technologies?

NATO
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SESSION I

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES
AND PRIORITIES

CHAIR



OANA LUNGESCU

*Distinguished Fellow,
Royal United Services Institute;
and former NATO Spokesperson,
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Oana Lungescu is Distinguished Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute. She has served under two NATO Secretaries General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Jens Stoltenberg. On July 2023, Secretary General Stoltenberg awarded her the NATO Meritorious Service Medal. Ms Lungescu joined NATO after a long journalistic career with the BBC World Service, where she covered European Union and NATO affairs. She joined the BBC's Romanian Service in London in 1985 and subsequently became Deputy Head and then editor. In 1997, Ms Lungescu was appointed European Affairs Correspondent in Brussels, where she covered every EU and NATO Summit. Between 2009-2010 she reported on European affairs from Berlin.

Are we investing enough and in the right things, do Europeans and North Americans have a coherent vision and the political will to move ahead? Time is pressing, even more now with the war in Ukraine, and a range of elections in Europe and the USA, so it is imperative to move from decisions to actions.

KARL-HEINZ KAMP

*Associate Fellow, German Council
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A DIFFERENT STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITY SHARING

Russia's attack on Ukraine changed everything in security policy and that is why I would like to raise two simple questions. First, what are the challenges now and what changed so much by the war in Ukraine? Second, what are the consequences for NATO's priorities and for burden sharing within the Alliance? Always with a disclaimer that we do not know yet when this war will end and how, that can change once again everything. Let me start with the changes imposed by the war and by the future challenges and five quick points.

First, Russia. Regardless of how this war ends, Russia will face an unprecedented decline economically, politically and militarily: this can mean either a more aggressive Russian government, or a weakening of Russian military strength by burning all its modern weapon capacities without the possibility of military reconstitution, or decolonisation or disintegration of Russia with unpredictable consequences. Each of these scenarios will pose different necessities to NATO with different reactions.

Second point China. Independently from the developments in Russia, China will even more strive for economic strength and military power, just fulfil its perceived role as the future world leading power. This means there will be no cooperative China for the years to come, but a rivalling power with a quick military and economic buildup, particularly in the naval and in the nuclear area.

Third area of change, Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The instability in this region will probably increase. In many MENA countries we have very young societies looking for jobs, something those economies there cannot provide. We have shrinking energy exports that reduce further the state budgets. Plus, the global South is facing the biggest problems due to global warming, and this will likely worsen things. So, the crisis there will especially impact Europe, for instance through more migration or terrorism.

Fourth point, the European Union (EU) and the Common European Defence policy. The EU has proven to be very united, very efficient in implementing the sanctions on Russia, in supporting Ukraine, agreeing an energy policy and in dealing with Ukrainian refugees. Hence the EU became a key security policy player, but not a military player - this has been left to NATO. This means that this idea of the European Defence Union, this autonomous or sovereign body able to enact its own military strategy, it was not very realistic at the first place and now it is fairly dead. It is dead simply because the Eastern Europeans does not want this anymore. They asked themselves where Europe would have been in this war without the United States, and this means that the future lies not in an independent EU but in the close cooperation between EU and NATO.

Fifth area of change, transatlantic relations. The good news is that the West, this idea of freedom democracy and market economy is not dead, but very much alive and this is probably the biggest surprise for Xi Jinping and Putin. Still, the current transatlantic cohesion cannot be taken for granted simply because the USA are a deeply divided country, which makes it fairly unpredictable, and we saw this in recent days: four years of Trump presidency and the mob vandalising Capitol Hill. The USA have lost much of its model character as the beacon of democracy. This means Trump or one of his clones might come back and pose significant challenges for the transatlantic relationship, via an alternative political regime.

What does all this mean for NATO's priorities?

First of all, Russia is likely to pose a threat for NATO in the years to come. At the same time Russia is unlikely to be at the forefront of emerging and disruptive technology simply because it is largely cut off from modern technology by sanctions. Therefore, dealing with Russia requires the classical deterrence and defence approach at NATO's eastern borders, including permanent stationed forces. Talking about Ukraine joining NATO is an option, but we need to remember that it would mean NATO has to defend Ukraine's security at its eastern borders. Ukraine is a big country, the second largest in Europe after Russia, and its eastern border is 1.300 km away from the Polish border. Doing this for NATO would be a real challenge.

Secondly in the Asia-Pacific, NATO will be internally confronted with two different views about this area. The United States have already made this area their top priority, requesting the support of NATO. The USA call for the EU's collaboration as its argument runs that European's vital interests will also be affected if anything goes wrong in the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, most of the Europeans do not conceive NATO as a Pacific defence organisation. Still, despite this dispute, NATO and the EU cannot ignore this change, and this means that we, Europeans, must take more burden sharing in our extended neighbourhood to free US forces to operate in the Asia Pacific. This requires of course on the European side greater maritime

capabilities. Also, NATO can and already does work with countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia or New Zealand.

Thirdly, between these two top priorities of NATO now, Russia and the Asia Pacific, MENA's future is likely to fall behind simply due to two reasons. First of all, many challenges in the Middle Eastern region and in the South region of the Mediterranean Sea, are more socioeconomic and less military, which means terrorism, migration, instability are not necessarily military issues. The second reason is that we have a crisis intervention fatigue in all NATO countries, particularly after Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq and now Mali. Consequently NATO is not ideally suited for these challenges in this region and it can offer mostly supportive elements like surveillance or maritime patrol. This is very much to a large degree a task of the EU.

The fourth and last point regards transatlantic relations. Another isolationist president in the White House cannot be excluded, hence, it is the absolute priority also for NATO to make the transatlantic relationship Trump-proof. This involves countering one of the main points made by Trump, where he was correct by saying "we the USA are still subsidising European security and this is no longer acceptable". Unfortunately, he was accurate in this assessment. Progress has been made on the European side, but still, even the new defence investment pledge might not be enough with all the challenges we have. Germany, my own country, can support the 2% only for the next five years with this extra 100 billion. Some countries do not even try to come close to 2%, which means that the key necessity is still that the Europeans put their money where their mouth is.

Dr **Karl-Heinz Kamp** has been an Associate Fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) Center for Order and Governance in Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia since October 2023. He was the political Director's Representative at Germany's Federal Ministry of Defence until 2023. Prior to that, he was President of the Federal Academy for Security Policy in Berlin. From 2007 to 2013, Dr Kamp was Director of research at the NATO Defense College in Rome. Previously, he held various positions at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bonn and Berlin as well as in the planning staff of Germany's Federal Foreign Office.

CAMILLE GRAND
*Distinguished Policy Fellow,
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RESTORING NATO'S CONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE

My task in this panel is to look at our efforts to restore conventional deterrence. The new security environment imposes to review the requirements of deterrence and defence in an unprecedented way since the end of the Cold war. Before diving into this topic, I would like to start with three preliminary remarks.

First, it is not happening in a vacuum. Conventional deterrence is taking place in a context where we do have nuclear deterrence (NATO is and remains a nuclear alliance) and nuclear deterrence does need to work hand in glove with conventional deterrence and in what we call the appropriate mix of nuclear conventional and missile defence capabilities. The truth is that the massive adaptation, that I am about to describe when it comes to conventional deterrence, is not happening in the nuclear domain. This is because the Allies have not determined that we have reached a point requiring a thorough reassessment of our nuclear strategy, even though there have been notable adjustments in terms of preparedness. However, that is not the current priority.

Second, the adaptation did not start on the 22nd of February 2022. This whole process really started in 2014 at the Wales Summit¹ with the defence investment pledge and with several decisions taken, including an enhanced forward presence on the Eastern flank of the Alliance as early as 2016 and improving readiness, while resuming large scale live exercises; the same things that preceded the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Of course, the Russian war in Ukraine has given not only more visibility, but a significant boost to all these activities; for those who had any doubt about the value of this adaptation, it became absolutely crystal clear that we needed to do it and probably faster and more intensely.

¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

Third, this is not something that happens overnight. This is not a generational endeavour, but a transformation during a mid- to long-term period.

How is the enhancement of conventional deterrence taking place? It involves investing more to rebuild the armed forces and prepare for the future reality. Let us be straightforward about this. The consequences of over a decade of declining defence spending and deep cuts have been evident, leading to diminished combat readiness and, in some cases, hollowed-out forces. To be blunt, in a deteriorated security environment, this puts our defence and deterrence capabilities at risk, necessitating the current effort. It is as simple as that. Perhaps if we had consistently spent around 2% since the end of the Cold War, we would not need to undertake this significant effort today. This underscores the importance of considering both good and bad times in our defence planning.

It is essentially about rebuilding and improving. Specifically, it involves mundane tasks like acquiring ammunitions and spare parts. During my time as Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment I used to say that no Defence minister would proudly wear a t-shirt proclaiming, «I bought ammunitions and spare parts». However, this is precisely what they are currently prioritising. While ministers may prefer to launch the latest satellite or acquire a new airframe, these seemingly dull necessities are crucial.

Moreover, it is also about reconstructing the appropriate numbers of major platforms and key enablers. Achieving this balance takes time and involves deciding between maintaining legacy equipment and adopting new technology. The goal is to ensure that NATO remains the most technologically advanced and successful military alliance, playing a pivotal role in preserving peace in Europe.

The third aspect, often unnoticed, is a significant focus on enhancing readiness. This involves intensifying training, exercises, and meticulous planning. While these activities may not be the most visible, they are often the most crucial. Over the past five years, there has been a concerted effort to restore NATO's muscle memory through large-scale live exercises, which have now become a regular occurrence. Testing readiness in this manner is vital for both deterrence and action. It is worth noting that potential adversaries closely observe these exercises, gauging our capabilities. This demands a high level of readiness, placing considerable demands on all militaries involved.

Fourthly, the focus has been on reevaluating the defence posture and the overall defence plan, a core emphasis for NATO over the past few years. The visible aspect of this is the physical footprint, especially noticeable on the Eastern flank of the alliance. However, it also involves strategic planning. Initially, there was an expansion of presence on the Eastern flank in 2016 when NATO collectively decided to establish an enhanced forward presence. This marked the first permanent stationing

of troops, responding to the illegal annexation of Crimea and changes in Russian behaviour.

Currently, there has not been a substantial increase in numbers, although the battle group numbers have doubled. The emphasis now is not just on quantity but, more importantly, on having a more combat-ready presence. In the initial stages, the focus was on determining how much presence was too much in terms of strategic balancing, but now the question is about ensuring that the presence is sufficient. This has led to ongoing discussions on the appropriate level of this non-permanent rotational presence.

The land domain is the most visibly affected, but there is also a keen interest in monitoring activities in the sea and air domains. Air policing is particularly noticeable in the Baltic Sea, and there is a visible naval presence. A noteworthy change is that these forces are now directly under SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) command during peacetime. This is unprecedented since the Cold War, especially for operations within NATO's territory. I believe that conveying a clear message, ensuring solidarity and demonstrating unity are crucial for conventional deterrence. This sends a powerful signal that we are committed and effective. The conflict in Ukraine has not compromised this stance.

Another key aspect is the comprehensive planning process, which includes theatre-wide planning, logistics enablement, training and new operational domains like space and cyberspace. Infrastructure also plays a role in this context.

To wrap up, it is important to highlight that, despite NATO's significant transformation, it is not engaged in an arms race or mirroring Russian policies. The posture remains defensive, evident in the modest numbers – 40,000 personnel – that are far from being capable of invading even Belarus. This restrained approach makes NATO's actions sustainable. It is crucial to recognize that, while Russia is not the Soviet Union, it does pose a certain level of risk.

In conclusion, this ongoing effort is a necessary, long-term endeavour that demands sustained commitment. As emphasized by several experts, the associated cost is relatively modest. The primary goal is to evolve the Alliance's conventional posture in pursuit of lasting peace.

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ERIC TERZUOLO

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THE TRANSATLANTIC BOND: 2% AND CAPABILITIES

While NATO has its problems, I would argue that, on the whole and at this point in time, the transatlantic bond is very solid. In recent years, we have both expanded and refocused our perception of the security challenges we face, reevaluating Russia and adding attention to China. We are seeing new, deeper and better coordinated military thinking on how to meet those security challenges, notably through the Deterrence and Defence concept (DDA, Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area). Equipment and material requirements, and how to accelerate cooperative work on new technologies, are getting a lot of attention.

Of course, all of this takes money. At the 2014 Summit in Wales, after Russia's seizure of Crimea, the Allies enshrined (politically, though not in a legally binding way) the 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) target for defence spending, as well as the target of 20% of defence spending dedicated to equipment. This was a significant step on an issue that already had a long history. Going back to the '80s, I recall very well the vigorous discussions in Washington regarding what we termed "burden sharing" or "Allied contributions to the common defence" and the adequacy of those contributions. And that was a time when defence spending was proportionately higher on both sides of the Atlantic than it is today.

Before leaving for the Vilnius summit 2023, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, very close to President Biden, told the *New York Times* that "2% should not be seen as a ceiling to hit, but really a floor that should be built upon".¹ The Vilnius Summit language on defence spending was very much in this sense, including an "Enduring commitment to invest at least 2% of our GDP annually".² This affirmed

¹ David Leonhardt, "After many years, NATO countries are spending more money on defense," *New York Times*, 12 July 2023.

² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_217320.htm.

that in many cases expenditures beyond 2% of GDP would be necessary. The Summit also reiterated the commitment to invest at least 20% of defence budgets in major equipment.

It is fair to ask ourselves whether the 2% target is in fact a good target. It has come in for plenty of criticism. The “one size fits all” approach arguably does not consider the specific interests, needs and limitations of each member state. But I want to come to the defence of the 2% target (and 20% as well). In the US, we often say: “If it is not broken – do not fix it”, I think that is quite applicable in this case.

For one thing, even if it is just a floor of sorts, it is a commitment agreed by all the Allies and that applies equally to all. I think it is useful to have visible reminders of the basic equality of all the Allies, the equal sharing of burdens and responsibilities. One such reminder is the consensus requirement, which enshrines the principle of equality, but is very often portrayed as a matter of every member state having a veto. That is a rather negative spin. Personally, I prefer to see the consensus principle as a commitment to work together on a fair and equal basis.

I also think that 2% and 20% specifically are good targets, both realistically reachable and something of a stretch for some countries. I would offer two observations based on the 2014 to 2023 defence expenditure data that NATO published in July 2023:³

In 2014, only the US, UK, and Greece were meeting the 2% of GDP defence spending guideline (with Estonia very close). By this year, that was up to 11 countries, including new member Finland, with a considerable number now very close to 2%.

Very interestingly, as of this year, all the member countries are spending at least 20% on equipment. In 2014, only six countries were at that level (US, France, UK, Türkiye, Estonia and Luxembourg)

Of course, Russia’s barbarous invasion of Ukraine has provided a special stimulus to spending on capabilities for sustained high-intensity warfare. But the data also suggest that, broadly speaking, we have been realistic in setting our objectives. To quote Jake Sullivan again: “Incomplete is the grade, but the direction of travel is positive. In other words, we are not yet where we need to be, but we are getting there”.

Having a shared goal that is reachable, and where progress is visible, is very important from a political perspective. NATO is an Alliance of States, with no supranational authority vested in the institution. That is one of the secrets to its persistence and success. But it also means there are 31 (and soon 32) separate national budgets that provide assets and resources for the common defence. The

³ *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2023)*, NATO, 7 July 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm.

decisions on those budgets are national decisions, and they are intensely political.

The West is in a difficult political passage. My own country has, now, an administration that is intensely Atlanticist and public opinion that is 2/3 or more supportive of NATO. But we know from experience that things can change. The ideal of shared responsibility for world order has powerful opponents in the USA, with a mix of “conservative isolationism” and populist and sovereigntist impulses. In the current US political debate, America’s trans-Atlanticists, such as myself, must be able to illustrate that our allies and partners are doing their part as well and that the Alliance as a whole is visibly setting and meeting security goals, as we seek to counter Russian and Chinese efforts to revise the international system.

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ROBERTO MENOTTI

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THE NATO 2030 REFLECTION AND POSSIBLE EVOLUTIONS

I would like to start with a very quick observation that can frame my remarks: I believe that we should probably use a continuum when it comes to what NATO should and can realistically do to face all the challenges that have been mentioned. From the functions, we can derive specific missions and capabilities that will determine investments needed, so the resource allocation. This is probably a simplistic, let's say, sequence but I think it helps frame the conversation.

I would then add that the general approach that recent NATO documents are adopting in general, is that NATO keeps having a regional mandate, but of course is inevitably adopting a global mindset. This combination is very tricky, and I think a lot of what has been said in this panel reflects this dilemma: that we need to do both. There is no way out of the dilemma. It has been mentioned that the Alliance faces a choice between a focus on China and Russia versus the Mediterranean. As an Italian, I am of course involved in that very old conversation about Eastern Flank, Southern Flank and so on. One priority cannot and will not exclude the others.

Coming to the capabilities issue, I have some criticism on how we discussed these things over the past few years in the security community, including within NATO. Sometimes it seems we have been chasing specific capabilities needed for one specific mission, so we basically fell in the classic trap of trying to refight the latest war. It is an understandable temptation, but I think it is a mistake. Chasing the latest experience is usually a mistake. Of course, it is very hard to envisage the next challenge – it is much easier said than done – but it does not make sense to try and rely only on previous experiences. We should play to our strengths, which means that in some cases we can adapt very quickly or we can use new and old technology in surprising new creative ways. We do not need to be too specific in sort of using a crystal ball to imagine what the next big thing will be, we need to use a wide menu

and then be creative and adjust. I think that is a realistic way of addressing some of these questions.

The other warning for the next future is that I think we have become obsessed in recent years with hybrid warfare. Of course, we now know that it has been a strange obsession if we think about it, because Russia was crucial in this whole debate – the same country that has bombed factories, schools, cities, and infrastructure in Ukraine. We should have known because they did the same in Syria for example. So much for “liminal” warfare and all that very interesting literature that I think we should probably re-read and reassess.

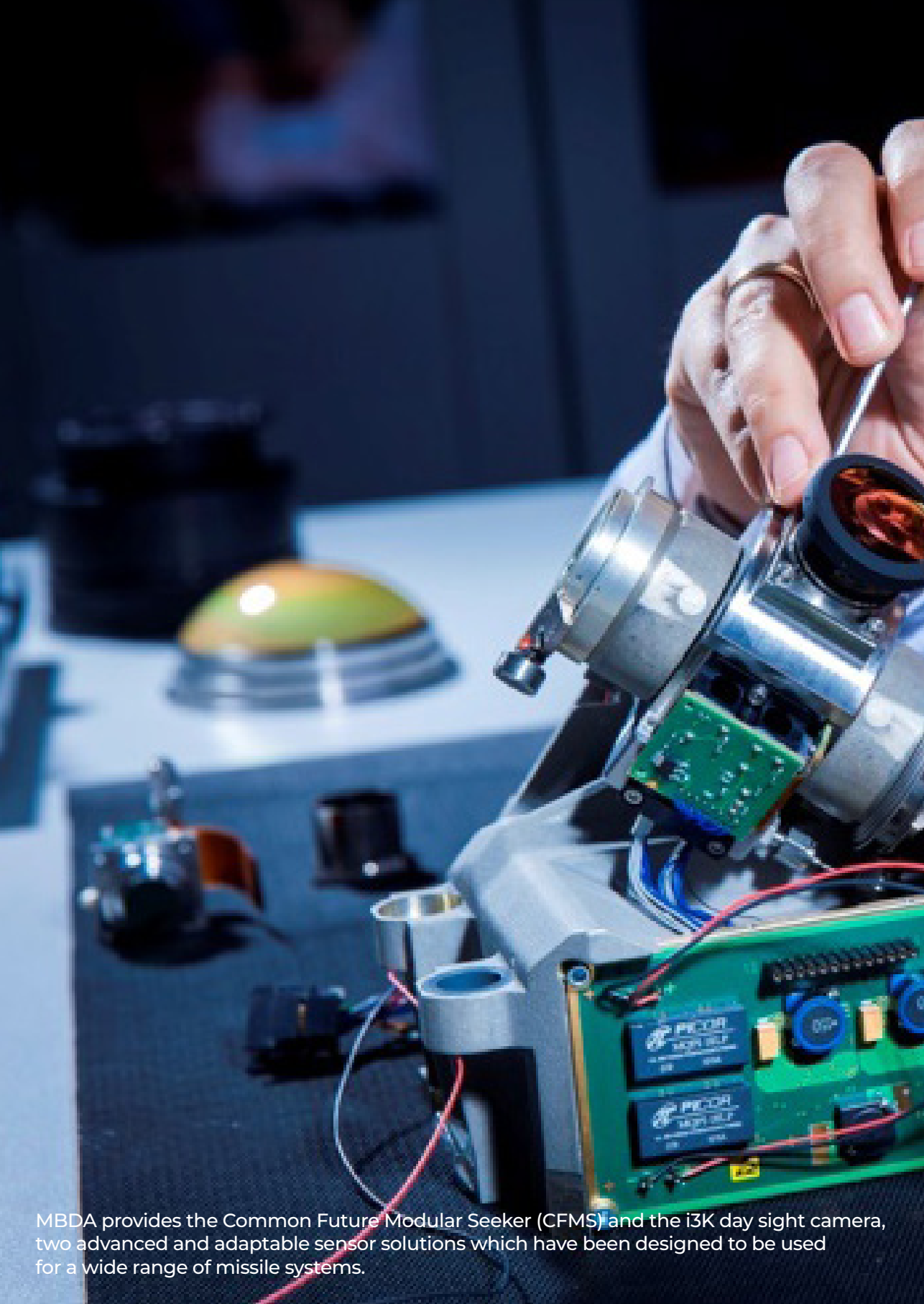
It does not mean that hybrid warfare is unimportant, but I think it should not be the focus of our efforts and I think we are now going in the right direction in this sense by being more open-minded.

One broad point on investments and how to assess what we are trying to do. I am always a bit worried about the fact that, in places like this and meetings like this, we often forget about public opinion and the fact that we need to become more effective in convincing the wider public that the amounts of money are well spent, and I think the public is not convinced. I think that a majority of Europeans, perhaps even a majority of citizens of the NATO members more generally, are not really persuaded that we are actually spending the money in the best way. It is a constant fight; it needs a lot of patience, and it is almost like a popular science type of effort (public diplomacy), but to continue to make the point is absolutely indispensable. If this does not happen, once you get to the point where you have the difficult choices to be made, the problems begin and sometimes it becomes intractable politically. This happens because there is not enough public support. At that point, even wise policy decisions are not enough in achieving political consensus on a policy course, because the politicians are unwilling to risk losing the support of their voters on them; so winning the public is an indispensable step. I understand NATO is doing a lot about this, but the more the better.

I would add just one point when I think about the Indo-Pacific addition to the list of NATO’s functions. I think we, as Europeans, especially the major European countries, should resist the temptation to refocus our effort on the Indo-Pacific. Instead, we should really do much more in and around Europe. I very much agree with the idea that we should sort of compensate and be complementary with what the United States will be doing over the next few years. Of course, this does not mean we should not be participating, supporting, helping, training with the United States and with the other members of the US-led security network in Asia, (a perfectly good idea), but we should really do more about the choke points that are much closer to home rather than the Taiwan or the Malacca Strait. I think we should really look at what happened recently in Libya, Syria and is happening in the

Sahel. Again, we should tackle both issues, so the Indo Pacific will be increasingly important, but I think it cannot realistically be the priority of the European NATO members, because it will be a huge waste of resources.

Dr **Roberto Menotti** is Editor-in-Chief of Aspenia online, Deputy Editor of Aspenia print edition and Senior Advisor - International Activities at Aspen Institute Italia. Between 2003 and 2007 he worked as a consultant for the Centro Studi Militari di Studi Strategici (Centre of Military and Strategic Studies - MoD). Before joining Aspen Institute Italia in 2002 he was Deputy Director of the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI). In 1997 he was Visiting Scholar at the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), University of Maryland, College Park, MD. Between 1997 and 1999 he was a NATO Fellow with a research project on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue initiative. He has published in specialized journals, among which Journal of International Relations and Development and Limes, as well as edited volumes. Dr Menotti is author of three books in Italian. He has been a lecturer at the NATO Defence College, in Rome, and at Wilton Park in the UK.



MBDA provides the Common Future Modular Seeker (CFMS) and the i3K day sight camera, two advanced and adaptable sensor solutions which have been designed to be used for a wide range of missile systems.



SPECIAL
INTERVENTION

GIOVANNI SOCCODATO

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SPECIAL INTERVENTION

In this debate, we spoke about high-level policy, the importance of investment capabilities and operational capabilities. I think one element, which is key and important for me, is to understand that besides these two levels, there is another lower level, which is industry. In the end, part of these investments is going to the industry to deliver capabilities that consists in systems, solutions, weapons, used to enable our operational capabilities.

NATO has recognized this, the Defence Production Action Plan (DPAP) has confirmed the need to have a robust, resilient, sustainable defence industrial base that is able to deliver capabilities in the long term, deliver them today, and prepare for the future. But we see today that our industrial system across Europe in the Alliance is under stress. DPAP has also called to boost production, which means stepping up the activity level in a short-term ramp-up, but the short-term ramp needs to be prepared. This means you need to have investments, the investments we have discussed before, and these need to be planned well in advance to have the flexibility to make the capabilities available at the right time to ramp up whenever required.

If one asks for an agile, joint procurement in order to facilitate cooperation, common requirements standards and interoperability are what is needed; but, while NATO has a tradition, EU still not, and this complicates any efforts for a prompt delivery of capabilities.

If we want to be able to innovate and keep the technology edge in future, the Alliance and the EU are carrying out very important initiatives. DIANA (Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic) is essential because it paves the way to foster an ecosystem that allows cooperation across industries. It provides access to emerging disruptive technologies in areas where involvement in the defence business has never been considered, like startups and small enterprises. And besides

the research centres and universities, it is starting to create and to impose a dialogue and a necessary interaction to project into the future. But to do that effectively, particularly in Europe, cooperation is key. The fact that we can enable our industries to work together, to share and to work in the same environment is very important.

Looking at our company, MBDA is a very good example concerning collaboration. If my predecessors, more than 20 years ago, did not take the bold move to decide to pull together their industrial capabilities in one strategic sector, i.e., missile defence in Europe, bringing together core industrial capabilities from France, Germany, Italy and UK, into a single company, I think today we will not be able in Europe to express industrial capability in design, development, manufacturing and innovation of complex, competitive missile systems. Across this vital core sector, we have seen today how important it is to have a complete air defence capability.

The fact that we audaciously pulled together different organisations in the past, allows to have today a complete capability across the different domains, from ground-based defence to air to air and surface to surface. But looking forward, I think that it is essential that we keep in mind that one of the significant challenges we have is that NATO and the EU need to continue to foster this kind of cooperative environment. We mentioned DIANA and the actions of NATO Defence Production Action Plan (DPAP), but we want to mention also the European Defense Fund (EDF) and many others.

I think the collective challenge today we have is, on one hand, to fulfil the short-term needs, to boost production, to use what we have to make sure that we can ramp up, we can deliver, we can step up, but then, on the other hand, I think it is essential that we do not lose sight of the future because what we fear as industry is that, by fulfilling short term needs and focussing on them, we lose sight of emerging technologies, new products, that will allow us to keep that technology edge and the leadership edge in products and capabilities for the future.

So while we focus on the short term needs? We need to think what are the investments we consider as a priority today to develop new technologies, new products, enabling future capabilities, and this is a challenge in my view where we will see whether Europe on one side and the Alliance on the other side, will be able really to bring together our nations into a collective effort and to join forces, pooling their investments in delivering innovative capabilities for the future.

This must happen through the whole chain, from the policy and the political approach, sharing the same objective, to requirements that are a priority, to the operational capabilities that our armed forces will deliver and to us, industries, that should be enabled in a way that we can work together and collectively deliver products and systems fit for the current and future needs.

Giovanni Soccodato is Executive Group Director Sales & Business Development MBDA and Managing Director of MBDA Italia since the 1st of June 2023. He joined MBDA after spending his career within Leonardo (formerly Finmeccanica), as Chief Strategic Equity Officer since June 2019 and Executive Vice President Strategy and M&A from 2005 to 2019, covering also different roles including Improvement & Processes and Corporate Sales. Prior to that, Mr Soccodato covered several strategic positions within Alenia Marconi Systems, a 50-50 joint venture between Finmeccanica and Marconi Electronic Systems (then BAE Systems): Business Integration, Business Improvement, IT & Quality and Sales. From 2004 until 2005, alongside the joint venture responsibilities, he was also appointed Vice Chairman and General Manager of AMS SpA.



The Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, meets the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg (Nov. 2022).

SPECIAL INTERVENTION



MARCO PERONACI

Permanent Representative of Italy to the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels



SPECIAL INTERVENTION

I am very pleased to be here to give my perspective on the role of NATO after the Vilnius Summit 2023, a role that is key today for the security of our citizens and for the protection of our democracy. As Foreign Minister Tajani has underlined in many of his speeches, NATO has always been and remains, even more today, a firm point of reference for Italy's international action as it represents the foundation of our security and of our freedom, which, as the events of 24th of February 2022 demonstrate, cannot ever be taken for granted. In my talk today, I will mention and give you some ideas about the Vilnius Summit and Ukraine, about NATO and the Southern Flank. I will also touch briefly on resilience, defence industry, innovation and cooperation with the European Union. These are all issues touched also by the other speakers.

During the Summit in Vilnius in July 2023, the Alliance proved once more its unity and resolution in ensuring our collective defence from all threats based on a 360-degree approach. Together with our new ally, Finland we renewed unconditional support for Ukraine and condemned Russia's unjustifiable aggression; we reiterated our commitment to fight terrorism in all its forms; we worked together to address the systemic challenge posed by China to Euro-Atlantic security; we decided to strengthen our defence and deterrence posture as well as our resilience in the face of growing hybrids and other threats; finally and most pertinently, in the Italian perspective, NATO leaders committed Alliance to look more carefully at its Southern Flank to enhance engagement with our Southern partners by the time of the next Washington Summit in July 2024.

Of course, Ukraine's support is and is bound to remain the priority for the security of the Alliance. Our challenge nowadays is twofold: first, we need to operationalise and fine-tune our support to Kyiv with the one provided at the national and multilateral levels, chiefly by the European Union. Secondly, we need to coordinate with the G7 ongoing initiative for security guarantees to ensure optimal results. Our

staunch reaffirmation of the support Ukraine is duly encapsulated in paragraph 10 of the Vilnius Communiqué.¹

The lode star of our interaction within the international community is the UN Charter and, notably, its article 51 on the inherent right of all countries to self-defence. Reaffirming the defensive character of the Alliance is a point well worth emphasising, especially today when we are confronted by a pervasive hostile Stratcom (Strategic communication) on the alleged expansionist and aggressive nature of NATO.

The comprehensive assistance package (CAP) is another pillar of our action for Kyiv. The enhanced CAP builds on and accelerates the trajectory that started in the Madrid Summit when Allies committed over 500 million euros for urgent nonlethal aid to help the Ukrainian defence sector transition towards full interoperability with NATO.

In Vilnius, we also set out a new, updated strategic vision regarding the overarching security architecture in Europe. Paragraph 12 of the Communiqué states explicitly that the security of Ukraine is of great importance to Allies and the Alliance, clearly postulating the essential value of Kyiv's position in any future European security architecture. From Bucharest, 15 years ago, to Vilnius, the notion that Ukraine and Georgia will be a member of NATO was not only reaffirmed with the sentence "The future of Ukraine is in NATO", but it was also operationalised. In this vein NATO established the NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC).² In this new joint body, Ukraine act as equal members to advance political dialogue, engagement and cooperation. The NUC is already up and running. Its first kick-off session was in Vilnius at the highest political level with the participation of President Zelenski. The G7 Security Initiative set out and agreed on at the margin of the Vilnius Summit is conceptually and practically an essential part of our support package to Ukraine. The declaration and the following bilateral negotiations embody our commitment to the strategic objective of a free, independent, democratic and sovereign Ukraine within the internationally recognised borders capable of defending itself and deterring future aggression. I am proud to recall that Italy was amongst the initial and most active promoters of the G7 Plus Declaration³.

The Vilnius Summit marked a further step forward in the Alliance's reflection towards the South, working closely with like-minded allies and thanks to a strong Italian push at the highest political level, the leaders approved a specific mandate

¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm.

² NATO-Ukraine Council https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_217652.htm

³ <https://www.g7plus.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ADOPTED-Declaration-The-g7-High-Level-Summit.pdf>

requesting a NATO fresh recommitment on challenges and opportunities stemming from its Southern Flanks, including, but not limited to, NATO's Mediterranean front.

Indeed, there is a common arch of instability running from the northeastern boundaries of our Alliance to its immediate southern neighbourhood. There is a clear symmetry of threats in both the Northeastern and Southern Flank. Those threats can erupt suddenly out of the multifaced instabilities in the MENA regions, exacerbated by external factors, including Private Military Contractors (PMC) presence, economic cooperation by third parties, strategic dependencies, climate change, food and energy crises. The recent series of coups in the Sahel strip proves that disruptive dynamics are already in place. The Alliance of the Sahel states signed by Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali is the first indigenous kind of agreement to which we should pay more attention. This is why Vilnius further directed Alliance to act more effectively in crisis prevention and management, including cooperative security. We should develop the image of the Alliance as a friend for our partners by transforming the concept of partnership towards interactive and participative models, such as is the case of the NATO mission in Iraq.

A key driver for any future enhanced role of NATO in the MENA region is political engagement at the appropriate level including with regional and subregional organizations like the African Union, the League of Arab states, the GCC and The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 2024 we will have the chance to reinforce our bonds with our partners of the Mediterranean dialogue and of the Istanbul cooperation initiative as we celebrate the anniversaries of their establishment.

Security is a whole of society effort. The Ukrainian war is a tragic reminder of this truth, and therefore another growing strand of NATO's work concerns resilience and the fight against cyber and other threats. Resilience is about addressing real Allies' potential vulnerabilities; it is something very concrete. The critical enabler for our individual and collective defence. The implications are multifold and eminently practical: ensuring continuity of government, providing essential services to the population, including energy supplies, food and water, critical infrastructure, civil support operation, namely functional communication, and transport systems.

In Vilnius, NATO leaders converged on defining a series of collective resilience objectives that each ally is now called to adopt and implement. Resilience remains a primary national prerogative, but international coordination is viewed as a fundamental enabler, including of course the European Union level.

Italy is very active in this area, considering how vital it is for us to protect, among others, critical undersea infrastructures in the Mediterranean. Therefore, we have acted swiftly to ensure that resilience becomes a truly 360-degrees NATO effort

from the Baltic Sea to the Southern shores. Later this month, a high-level bilateral meeting with NATO will occur in Rome. We are working to build an effective framework of regular consultation and collaboration that could also serve as a best practice among allies.

Initiatives like the NATO Digital Ocean Vision Strategy under evaluation for the enhancement of maritime situational awareness, is key for the sensing and dissemination capacity of the Alliance to achieve cognitive superiority and effective decision making. NATO resilience requirements should also pave the way to stronger synergy with the European Union in its regulatory and budget functions. Military mobility, energy, cyber and infrastructures are examples of high potential areas of complementarities with the EU.

Of course, continued dialogue and exchange with the private sector is fundamental due to today's broad reliance on commercial actors to provide critical service. When we look at the thick network of pipelines, data and energy cables crossing the Mediterranean and connecting our country to Europe, Africa and the rest of the world we get a vivid picture of how important resilience is to face vulnerabilities and disruptions.

No defence, no army can exist without a solid logistics and a more consistent procurement basis. This is why innovation, defence industry and NATO have always gone hand in hand. A plan to strengthen the defence industrial basis of the Alliance is under implementation. Renewed emphasis is laid on defragmentation and rationalisation of the weapon system to boost procurement capacity. New efforts are also made to coordinate with similar EU plans to increase its defence industry to maximize interoperability and complementarity.

A common reflection is especially carried out on energy needs and diversification, the sustainability of the supply side and accessibilities of fundamental raw materials, including rare earths.

In less than two years of fighting, weapons and ammunition transferred to Ukraine have highlighted the need for urgent replenishment of our livestock piles. Thus, the EU defence industry policy experienced unprecedented acceleration.

At the same time, Allies are increasingly aware of the need to preserve and possibly develop our technological edge in the areas where it still exists. This is even more urgent now that we are confronted with the exponential development of artificial intelligence and quantum technologies that can strongly impact on war-making.

NATO supports technological innovation through the NATO Innovation Fund at the DIANA startup accelerator. A new growth cycle of defence investment and procurement is before us, we should seize the opportunities it offers regarding the spill over and Civ-Mil applications. It is, therefore, vital to strengthen NATO-EU cooperation and coordination. Italy is a firm believer in NATO and EU

complementarity. NATO can establish requirements, standards, and targets for Allies procurements, while the EU can regulate member states' markets and the demand and supply side incentives. But we must be honest. So far, coordination has been too limited and slow, preserving fragmentations and tolerating inefficiency.

Let me conclude by underlining something often underestimated by our domestic public debate on defence industry. We are going through a new phase in NATO characterised by the enlargement, Finland Sweden and then Ukraine and others, a growing budget, and an overall Alliance re-energisation. Allies' procurement, NATO tenders, and support to dual use and innovations are, therefore, an important opportunity for the Allies and Italian companies as well as for our industrial national economy. This will be especially true if we leverage our twin membership in NATO and EU and if we work together with other Allies to build a common stronger Euro-Atlantic industrial and technological base, which will ultimately be the decisive factor for our defence and deterrence in the 21st century.

Ambassador **Marco Peronaci** took on the role of Italy's Permanent Representative to NATO in Brussels in January 2023. Before assuming this role, he was ambassador to Brussels as Italian Representative on the EU Political and Security Committee. Formerly, Ambassador Peronaci held various roles at the MFA including Special Envoy for Brexit, Spokesperson, Diplomatic Adviser to the Minister of the Interior, Ambassador to the EU in Brussels, and Diplomatic Adviser to the Minister of Justice. In 1998 he received from Japan the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Golden Rays with Grand Collar. In 2018 he was awarded the Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

How to reinforce
the Alliance's
security projection
in the MENA
region?

How can cooperation
with Southern
Region countries be
improved?



SESSION II

PROJECTING SECURITY IN A NEW ERA: LOOKING SOUTH

Since October 2018 the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI)
supports Iraq's security.

CHAIR



FLAVIA GIACOBBE

*Journalist and Director,
Formiche and Aipress, Rome*

A professional journalist, **Flavia Giacobbe** is Editor in Chief of Formiche Magazine, Airpress Magazine and the bimonthly Healthcare Policy. She moderates important events on issues related to defence, aerospace and geopolitics. Her focus is also on health policies, environment, economics and cyber. Ms Giacobbe is often guest on TV news programs. She is on the Advisory board of CRS4, the Interdisciplinary Research Centre constituted by the Sardinia Region. In the past, she collaborated with the newspaper Il Tempo and was a television journalist for Odeon TV. She graduated in Political Science at the University of Roma Tre.



*The strategic importance
of the Mediterranean and
MENA region and in general
of the South it is something that
will be central in the upcoming
G7 that will be held in Italy.*

FLORENCE GAUB
*Director, Research Division,
NATO Defense College, Rome*



MD AND ICI: DIPLOMACY IS BACK

If I had to give my remarks one title, I would call it “Diplomacy is back”, what you also heard in the previous discussion, especially in Karl-Heinz Kamp’s remarks, namely that the region has been framed, since the ‘90s if not before, very much in terms of capacity building. When it comes to the NATO side, we help them to get better military or police forces. I think in that period NATO was more akin to the EU, acting in a transformative engagement mode. On the negative side, the region was seen as an exporter of instability, especially Iraq, but also, of course, an exporter of terrorism, migration, things that we can call NATO internal security issues.

The Arab Spring should have been our first indication that this was changing because, Dr Sager will probably confirm this, in 2011, we discovered that the Gulf had both a diplomatic power and military mind and was able and willing to deploy so to shape the region. But I think Ukraine should make us truly wake up and understand that this is not the region we are used to dealing with for essentially two reasons. First, in geopolitical terms, the region is a bargaining area that Russia has deeply penetrated already. There is also a massive legacy of our engagement that is neutral to negative. Let me give you a few numbers: first of all, you know that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) abstained in the Security Council resolution on Ukraine and in the General Assembly. Algeria also abstained. If you think they are irrelevant, I invite you to rethink this: UAE is, of course, a significant air power now, and in general a non-negligible military power, and so is Algeria.

When it comes to the invasion of Ukraine, the region is decidedly undecided what to make of it. When you look at the at the surveys, you see that 39% of Jordanians think the invasion was completely unjustified, and, more importantly, 37% say they do not know. You have another poll across the region: 24% of the most significant sample says the invasion of Ukraine is NATO’s fault, 13% say it is Biden’s fault, 16% say it is Russia’s fault, the vast majority 42% say they do not know. And, interestingly, of those who know, the largest component say it was NATO’s fault, because it expanded when it should not.

Of course, Russia deployed a significant strategic communication beforehand and has dominated the region in that regard.

So, if you're thinking, what and why should we care? Well, we are losing the geopolitical battle, or we are really on the defensive regarding the Global South's narrative when it comes not just to Ukraine but the geopolitical contest in general. This takes me to a harder point, if you are not worried enough yet. Back in the '90s, the Allied Joint Force Command Naples (JFC Naples) did a study on what could happen if the Soviet Union had attacked the Southern Flank and came to the conclusion that it would have been significantly easier for Moscow to hurt us compared to the Eastern Flank. I see an echo here, because we are having exactly the same conversation. I was not there then, but during the Cold War, the South was probably seen as a minor flank and the Eastern Front was considered the real problem [and in the II WW the until June 1944 the view was rather similar, Ed.]. Today the mental scheme is the same, but in reality, the East is in the South.

Let me help you with some facts. Russia has expanded its Mediterranean Squadron since 2013, after disappearing in 1992 (during the Cold War the Soviet Navy 5th Eskadra, SOVMEDRON, kept an average of 30 ships with peaks of 100 at crisis times). Now, at any given time, you have 10 to 15 Russian vessels in the Mediterranean. In Tartus the Voenno Morsky Flot has expanded its naval support point and near Latakia the Khmeimim air base was built ex novo. Moscow's next move is to look at an access to the Libyan port of Tobruk. In the worst case, Russia, would like to deny US naval supremacy, but its long-term plan is to challenge NATO's naval supremacy in the Mediterranean.

Moscow is, of course, not alone; China and Iran are also getting into the Mediterranean. So, what I invite you to do is to stop seeing this region as a backyard of Europe that needs some capacity building, or perhaps needs to be prevented from coming to Europe with bombs or with little money as terrorists and migrants and instead consider it as a geopolitical entity in its own right, that is currently courted heavily by Russia and others and China of course.

Consequently, I would like to replicate at the same classified level the study that JFC Naples did at that time and see where we stand today; I seriously hope that the outcome would be different, but in the meantime let us face reality now. Russia is in for the long game, and while much Russian engagement in the Mediterranean has been belittled for not being as successful, it has engaged and developed this capability over the last ten years and will continue to do so.

The second thing is, and this is where I am looking at Dr Sager, we need to engage diplomatically, and we, of course, have a new Assistant Secretary General now who knows the region really well and needs to understand that there needs to be a concrete diplomatic outreach effort, coupled with the United States Strategic Communication, to change the conversation.

Dr **Florence Gaub** is Director of the Research Division at NATO Defense College in Rome and President and Founder of the Futurate Institute. She was previously Foresight Advisor at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union as well as Deputy Director at the European Union Institute for Security Studies. As a Researcher of the Middle East Faculty at the NATO Defense College from 2009 to 2013, her career has focussed on the Middle East and North Africa. She holds a Ph.D. in Military Sociology from Humboldt University of Berlin, as well as degrees from Sciences Po Paris, the Sorbonne and the University of Munich.

IAN LESSER

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SOUTHERN REGION PARTNERSHIPS AND THE INDO-PACIFIC ISSUE: MAKING STRATEGIC SENSE

Let me share three points with you. The first one is very much Dr Gaub's point about the East and the South. That is quite a good way to put it. There is a nexus between these two theatres; they are not entirely separate. Historically, the Southern Flank was in some ways a subordinate theatre for NATO during the Cold War, even afterwards, but that is not the kind of situation we have today. Today, we have a war, and the battle is in the East, and that shapes our thinking, but some things can go wrong.

Let me put it that way. In the South, I would not be so worried there are people around the table who know more about that faraway war; I would not be so concerned about Russia challenging NATO in the aero-naval domain and becoming a peer competitor in any true sense in the Mediterranean. I do not think they are in a position to do that, and even so with unconventional units like the "Wagner Group", because they can be considered brittle assets. That said, is there a potential for things to go badly wrong in the South that would be escalatory? Absolutely and we think about the escalatory possibility of what is happening today in Ukraine; we tend to think about the Baltic or perhaps the Black Sea, which is correct. And yet, some things can go wrong on Turkey's borders in Syria or in Libya, the Sahel or in the Mediterranean; there could be an escalator with Russia. There is this connection, and of course, our partners in the South are stakeholders in this. As you mentioned, there is also the longer-term question of China, and we think about China's bearing on the European security environment in many ways. This is, first and foremost, something that would be felt in the South in terms of infrastructure and their stake in security, which we can debate. Still, in terms of their long-term role, I suspect

they are going to be more exciting actors in the Mediterranean in the future than they will be in Central and Eastern Europe. That is yet another connection that we think about over the longer term.

The second point I would make is that, and this is about - allow me to comment as an American analyst - making assumptions about what the United States does in the future. There is a common assumption that over time, the United States will be spending more time reconfiguring its military posture to deal with challenges in the Indo-Pacific. That is certainly true. We had a little bit of a debate about American politics earlier, and probably the only thing Republicans and Democrats agree with in Washington today is a more hawkish view about China, and this is obviously meaningful for Europe in its own debate about strategic autonomy and NATO is a deep stakeholder in this. Still, there is an important question to be asked, I think it is an uncomfortable one, and people don't often address it, and that is: is this transition something slow and gradual, something a decade from now, or is it something that could happen next week? If something happens, i.e. there is an incident in the South China Sea or Taiwan strait or something like this in Europe, NATO could suddenly find itself in the position of having to compensate for this, not as a matter of future strategic autonomy and aspirational planning, but as something that would happen next week or next month. I do not know the answer there, but you rarely hear it put that way.

Again, will NATO become a kind of military security actor in the Indo-Pacific? To answer your question, this is very unlikely, and it is probably not proper to put it that way, but is it a stakeholder above all through this question of what the United States will be doing? Absolutely.

The third point I would make, the final point, is to talk about NATO's engagement in the South as a window onto something Florence Gaub has already mentioned this. This broader question of relations with the global South and Ukraine has crystallized this challenge. If we were in this room three years ago, no one would use the term "Global South", but now it is in every discussion. I am not as pessimistic about differences between North and South regarding Ukraine, Russia or even China. Yes, there is ambivalence about sanctions. Is there a question in public opinion which needs to be more engaged in this in the South? Absolutely, but at a fundamental level, look at those successive votes in the UN General Assembly about morality and legality. We are on the same stage. The question is, what do you do about it? And there are countries in the Global South that would like to keep this all at arm's length, and it is understandable. But it is a much more fluid "Global Order" that everyone is talking about, and that brings us to this question of what you do with the Partnerships.

We could have a long conversation about that. There is a set of technical,

operational things that we can engage with in the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and that, you know, there is an established set. A set of new things could have to do with energy transition and many other things and broadly about connectivity. But there is also a big political task there. If we want NATO to be a core vehicle for transatlantic debates about the big things happening in the world, you have to put some value on this Southern engagement as a window into that bigger space. I think it can certainly play that role; if you talk to Partners in the South, what you hear very often are two things: if you want to do more with us, tell us what your strategy is in the South and secondly, if you want to do more with us restart these very active high-level political dialogues which used to exist at a time when there was, in fact, less to talk about.

Dr **Ian Lesser** is Vice President at The German Marshall Fund (GMF) of the United States and a member of GMF's executive team, managing programs across the organisation. He also serves as Executive Director of the Transatlantic Center, the Brussels office of the GMF, and leads the GMF's work on the Mediterranean, Turkey, and the wider Atlantic. Prior to joining GMF, Dr Lesser was a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center, as well as Vice President and Director of studies at the Pacific Council on International Policy. Dr Lesser is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and the Pacific Council on International Policy. He serves on the advisory boards of the Delphi Economic Forum, the Atlantic Dialogues, the NATO Defense College Foundation and the Turkish Policy Quarterly. A frequent commentator for international media, he has written extensively on foreign and security policy issues.

ABDULAZIZ SAGER
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GCC-NATO COOPERATION: A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE MAKING?

The idea of ICI (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative) in 2002 started when I suggested up at a Doha conference organized by the NATO and RAND Corporation. I said we need cooperation between the Gulf countries and NATO. At that time, it was an essential message post September 11. I talked about the current situation at that time, the threat that we started facing from neighbouring countries, and the situation that developed in Iraq later on.

In 2004, I was in Istanbul as a witness of the initiative; I was thrilled to see everybody there, so I think it was a good thing. I wish Saudi Arabia would have been convinced to join then. Still, four Gulf countries (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE) joined the ICI, while Saudi Arabia and Oman have not. I do not think they have any special serious objections about joining the ICI. Still, if I see what has been achieved with the ICI, maybe I would say that the ICI had not provided what they were looking for, which is a serious problem in the region. Florence Gaub said correctly that we must look at the geopolitical situation differently. We need to look at the region and how it is affected by the overall situation. The region feels there are serious threats that exist, and with those threats – whether energy vulnerabilities, issues of maritime interdiction, terrorism, sectarianism, problematic domestic issues still representing a grave problem, the region was and is still looking for a real security guarantee.

We do not make any mistake by saying we have a direct relationship with key member states of NATO, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, etc. Moreover, we do receive military supplies. The USA stands out given that it has shown a serious and diversified commitment in the region, whether with the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), the Fifth Fleet, deployments of the Sixth Fleet or several USAF squadrons. NATO itself did not contribute much. If you look at Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to the real

training that has been provided, which is very much appreciated and very much liked, NATO did not look at us in the region as an important geopolitical territory that requires a proper security framework. The ICI does not provide that sort of a security framework, instead the ICI is a menu you can choose from. To be sure, there is an academy in Kuwait; there are many ambassadors here; and many meetings, conferences, and workshops take place, but in reality, this is not sufficient. It should not be a surprise that the Gulf region feels it had no choice but to also look East. These countries did not turn East, but given their vulnerabilities, they have looked at China and at Russia as possible partners.

I was at the Munich Security Conference when I asked Secretary Blinken about this issue. I said that the GCC states are trying to maintain a balanced relationship when it comes to Russia. This includes condemning the Russian aggression in Ukraine, preserving Ukraine's unity over which there can be no compromise, and objecting overall to waging war, aggression or occupying land. The GCC states did vote in the UN in support of Ukraine and many resolutions have been issued at the Gulf Cooperation Council. At the same time, the GCC countries do not wish to find themselves in a situation of having to choose "either, or". Secretary Blinken's answer to me was quite clear: "There is no balance with aggression." Looking today at the Ukrainian situation, this raises different questions however.

We might be at the beginning of a new Cold War era. Do you need a friend, that has been close to you for a long time, to be closer to you or do you want them to move away from you? The only reason our Gulf countries look at BRICS and at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is that they felt they have been neglected in a way, marginalized, not given the necessary protection, although we possess important resources for energy. The GCC states have been very balanced regarding their approach to the global economy. At the same time, there is a strong feeling of not getting the needed recognition and the security guarantee that is required.

What I would propose here today here is that we think out of the box in terms of the idea of a NATO Plus. This reflects my personal view. Can we bring the GCC countries in a NATO Plus security framework, which would mean participating but not having a say-so in the consensus on new members? If this NATO Plus can provide a security umbrella, a guarantee for us, we are not going to look East or turn totally to the East, because the bottom line is that we would still like to maintain our relation to the West.

Indeed, it is with the West that the GCC states have a long relationship, where most of the weapon systems are bought from, where our military doctrine was formed, and where our good long-term economic relations will remain. At the same time, if the GCC states do not get their needed guarantee, if are refused when asking for new weapon systems, and they are kept out from the required security

umbrella, one cannot blame them for looking for alternatives.

The NATO Plus idea would not involve the GCC states in the decision-making process of NATO, for example, when it comes to whom to accept and whom not to accept. With the current threat from Iran when it comes to its nuclear program, to energy security, to maritime security, as well as Iran now providing drones and missiles in support of the Russian war effort in Ukraine, it is quite clear about whom NATO can rely on. I still think the GCC states are a valuable, important, and reliable partner that can work together with NATO.

Dr **Abdulaziz Sager** is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Saudi Arabia with a well-established presence and worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe. Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, Dr Sager is author and editor of numerous publications, and frequently contributes on major international media channels such as Al Arabiya, France 24, CNN and BBC. Dr Sager also chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in 2015 and 2017.

AYDIN KILIÇ

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FROM SYRIA TO THE SAHEL: COUNTERING THREATS TO MD AND ICI PARTNERS

Unfortunately, we have plenty of challenges and threats in the South. I especially want to focus on the Sahel area because it is the hot spot for now, and Sahel is facing multi-dimensional challenges. We still witness the proliferation of terror groups in this region and organized crime. Also, climate change is putting a heavy strain on the area, and there is almost always the case of weak governance or ill governance or even ill administration because many parts of the Sahel are run or controlled by non-state actor groups. These groups have guns and they hold the area, while the central government's role is limited. There is no void, but not necessarily government control. Military coups are also making a comeback for Africa, and the happening of military coups is not uncommon. Still, according to researchers, after the end of the colonial era, between 1956 and 2001, there were 80 successful and 108 unsuccessful coups. This is a large number, and following the 2000s, basically until 2019, the number of military coups was halved. Now, we see a resurgence, and we must keep an eye on how this trend will continue.

But one thing has not changed: all military putsches are almost always executed for the same reasons, i.e., corruption, mismanagement, poverty and lack of security. It is a persistent motivation. Deprivation continues to be a significant challenge for the region because over 40% of the countries or population in this region is witnessing extreme poverty, including Niger and Burkina Faso, and climate change is also contributing to poverty. We will see more impact. As we have witnessed in Libya, we are seeing unpredictable weather, such as droughts, floods, and land degradation being a significant challenge for the area. The desert part of the Sahara is expanding, and we will see a substantial reduction of up to 50% in grain production, affecting the livestock in the area. This is also a reason for a high number of internally

displaced people. We are seeing millions of people either internally displaced or irregularly migrating to the North or the South, and of course, Mediterranean dialogue countries are within the significant countries of destination, and with climate change, I think we will see more migration and more challenges in this domain.

Demographics are another challenge in this region because the highest rate of population is now seen in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by the Sahara, and we will see 2050 another billion of people living in Africa. We will also see another youth bulge, and they will look for opportunities; they are seeking employment, and if they fail, which is highly likely, we will see increased frustration, and they will look to go somewhere else. This will put extreme strain on the region. Migration or irregular migration is creating another problem in the area, namely a huge brain drain. Usually, the first ones who can move are people who are well trained or capable or at least have the means to travel to find another job or a living in another country or area. Climate change-induced migration is the greatest challenge for the area. Of course, climate change is almost synonymous with water scarcity because we are having problems already with fresh water, which will create more friction and competition for resources. We have seen what has happened in the Lake Chad region. It had a significant impact on the security of the area. Eleven of MENA's countries are already among the most water-stressed countries. Food security, whether for the Gulf countries or Middle Eastern countries, is relatively assured. But Egypt, for example, is importing 80% of its wheat, and not surprisingly, it is coming from Russia and Ukraine.

Terrorism, as NATO's Strategic Concept defines it, remains a direct asymmetric threat to the Alliance in all forms and manifestations. Terrorism is contagious, and now we see that it is on the rise in the Sahel, also a comeback against a resurgent Al Shabab in the Horn of Africa. The fight against terrorism in the Middle East is continuing because terrorist groups are directly targeting NATO countries in the region.

Terrorism is also extremely complicated to manage because I remember well what happened when ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) took control of Mosul in 2014. Apart from death and destruction, we found that its impact on the ground was much more complicated. We have investigated, for instance, child recruitment by terrorist organizations and their reintegration in civil society. It is very different from other age segments and highly challenging, because there is an enduring social stigma, that creates deep mental scars, and these are our future generations in the region. We need to do something for these children and teenagers now that they are grown-ups.

I want to emphasize maybe one of the most critical domains is the information battle because we are fighting an information battle in the region for the South or Middle East, and this also requires a calibrated strategic communication to counter China and Russia. I believe this communication battle requires urgent attention with a clear strategy. You can easily see how Chinese and Russian propaganda and activities are impacting because if you go and check United Nations resolutions and voting patterns, I think it is clear, unfortunately, that colonial and slavery memories are still very present. It is over for us, but this is playing against our interests, and China, especially Russia, seem to be using it quickly. They are also challenging rule-based international order because they put fewer strings attached when they offer support. I would not say unconditional, but this doesn't prove easy. How to counter it? I think the key to countering is building trust, and building trust is not binary; it will take time and is based on past experiences. To build trust, we also need to win this information war. Without winning the information war, we are doubtful we will win this war. Finally, when assisting these countries we must avoid a stovepipe approach that floods local governments and population with uncoordinated initiatives. We need to streamline our efforts and simplify and deconflict our engagements or partnerships in the South.

Brigadier General **Aydin Kiliç** is the Director of the NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub at the NATO Joint Force Command, located in Naples, Italy where he also serves as Turkish Senior National Representative. Brigadier Kiliç was assigned to the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre in 2010 as the Middle East Branch Chief where he served for three years during a time of turmoil in the Middle East. In 2013 he was assigned to the 34th Border Brigade as Provost Marshal. Brigadier Kiliç served in the Turkish Army HQ as Project Support Section Head. In 2016 he was assigned to the Turkish General Staff HQ as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Project Officer and worked on defence planning and acquisition. Brigadier Kiliç attended the Staff Officer Course in the National Defence University in 2018 and Eisenhower School in Washington DC in 2019. In 2020, he graduated from the Command and Staff College. He was then assigned to the 1st Mechanized Brigade as Deputy Commander.



Flags of Ukraine and the European Union,
with the emblem of NATO.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



GIULIO TERZI DI SANT'AGATA
*President of the Senate Committee on
European Union Policies, Rome*



CONCLUDING REMARKS

I came here with the idea to underline the importance of cohesion, solidarity and the necessity of sticking together among NATO Partners, Euro Atlantic institutions, among NATO Nations especially, but the more I am listening to this intervention this afternoon, the more I am convinced of the great importance of the wide array of partnerships which exist between NATO and countries which are not *stricto sensu* a member of the Atlantic Alliance.

The NATO alliance is a security organization which has a global mission nowadays, even more so because we know what is happening. I would like to reserve a few remarks about a key element of the situation that is a major challenge that we are facing today, which is certainly a military and security challenge, but is eminently political and even more so because it is the challenge of keeping our Nations, public opinions, our people engaged in going on, in being together and in facing all the multiple crises that we have in front of us. These multiple crises are in contradiction with the need for resilience and deterrence that we feel necessary and therefore, when we address the question of how time affects the resilience of our people and the problems that our people have to suffer due to the security situation, we go straight into the issue of a communication strategy against disinformation.

The NATO Vilnius Summit was quite straightforward on this issue in para 64 of its Communiqué: “We will continue to address disinformation and misinformation, including through positive and effective strategic communications. We will also continue to support our partners as they strengthen their resilience in the face of hybrid challenges”. In this context I think that deterrence cannot be achieved solely by military means, it is eminently a combination of political action, economic decision, communication strategy and constant attention to universal human right, legality and the rule of law.

When it comes to strategic information, we see how Beijing and Moscow have been applying the same bullet points to a common narrative designed to conduct

their hybrid war against the rule-based international order. For instance, the 28th of September 2023, the US State Department published a report entitled: How the People Republic of China seeks to reshape the global information environment.¹ The report provides undisputable evidence of an ongoing effort by Beijing to create a community of digital authoritarians waging an undeclared information war. The report continues “The People Republic of China efforts will reshape the global information landscape, creating biases and gaps that could even lead nations to make decisions that subordinate their economic and security interests to Beijing’s”.

China is here mentioned in a NATO context because there is a coordinated, an objectively very similar strategy in spreading misinformation and disinformation among our member states. I think there are also some lessons that the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) showed us in Rome, when they presented a report on democratic defence, indicating how Italy can lead the fight against Russia and disinformation. Quoting the report “The last decade has seen a rise in hybrid tactics deployed by Russia and other players such as China. Such tactics include the use and abuse of information as part of the pursuit of broader strategic aims and, with next elections to the European Parliament, influencing opinion in countries such as Italy could prove an attractive strategy for foreign powers”. In particular, the reason why I am sharing the report of ECFR is for this suggestion: “Italy [and all countries facing misinformation] should seize opportunities to strengthen the battle against disinformation, such as: encouraging the next European Commission to incorporate this task into its mandate; and placing the topic in Rome’s forthcoming G7 presidency programme”.² This is another element that will be very important because the G7 in the past had already taken a clear position and we have to continue and intensify this action”.

A very interesting report was released the 30th of June 2023 by the European Commission which revealed that approximately 410.000 social issue and political election ads on Facebook and Instagram were removed for violating Meta’s transparency rule.³ Italy accounted for the highest number of removed posts, with

¹ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/HOW-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA-SEEKS-TO-RESHAPE-THE-GLOBAL-INFORMATION-ENVIRONMENT_508.pdf.

² Democratic defence: How Italy can lead the fight against Russian disinformation <https://ecfr.eu/publication/democratic-defence-how-italy-can-lead-the-fight-against-russian-disinformation/>.

³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Digital Services Act – Application of the risk management framework to Russian disinformation campaigns, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/764631>.

62.000, followed by Germany with 50.000, Spain with 43.000, and France with 42.000. Another report from the European Commission found that engagement with Kremlin-aligned content on YouTube increased by nearly 90% since the war began, and engagement on TikTok more than doubled.⁴ Online platforms have supercharged Kremlin's ability to wage information war, thereby causing new risks for public safety. The media has been covering the election results in Slovakia.⁵ In Slovakia, posts that violated platform policies were viewed at least 530.000 times within two weeks after the Digital Service Act was implemented. A candidate for the prime ministership claimed that people in Slovakia have bigger problems than Ukraine. However, his political party failed to recognize the fact that if we do not take decisive action to push back against the attack on democracy and the attempt by Russia and China to reshape the international order in their image, the problems will only grow bigger.

That is why I am fully convinced that we need to stand by our commitment to deter and avert future hybrid aggressions. As President Eisenhower in his 1961 Farewell Address put it aptly and presciently about technology and undue influence: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together". The "unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex" is first and foremost coming from China: it comes from the Chinese military-industrial complex that Beijing defines "civil-military fusion".

⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, Digital Services Act – Application of the risk management framework to Russian disinformation campaigns, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/764631>.

⁵ Code of Practice on Disinformation – Report of Meta for the period 01 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 <https://cdn.nextinpact.com/data-next/file-uploads/Meta-July-2023.pdf>.

The 17th of November 2022, Ambassador **Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata** was sworn in as Minister of Foreign Affairs by the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano. Throughout his career, Ambassador Terzi di Sant'Agata held various roles, including responsibilities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome and Diplomatic Postings in Paris, Tokyo, and Kampala. Notably, Ambassador Terzi di Sant'Agata served as Italy's Ambassador to Israel during a period marked by significant events, such as the Second Intifada and efforts to support the Road Map for peace. As Italy's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Terzi di Sant'Agata focused on humanitarian issues and civilian protection in conflict zones. He also played a key role in promoting regional stability in areas like the Horn of Africa and fostering international cooperation on various fronts. Additionally, he engaged in eDiplomacy efforts to enhance direct communication with citizens through social media platforms.



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale



Fondazione
Compagnia
di San Paolo



ELTGROUP

NATO 2023 Balancing priorities after the Vilnius Summit

*High-Level Conference organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation
in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,
the NATO Defense College, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo,
Elettronica S.p.A.*

Rome | Friday, the 6th of October 2023

*Venue: International Conference Hall, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,
Piazzale della Farnesina, 1*

14,50 – 15,10 *Welcome Remarks*

- **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome
- **Riccardo Guariglia**, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome
- **Florence Gaub**, Director, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome
- **Nicolò Russo Perez**, Head, International Affairs, Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin

15,10 – 15,20 *Special Intervention*

- **Stefano Pontecorvo**, Chairman, Leonardo Company, Rome

Session I

Assessing challenges and priorities

The Strategic Concept sets a coherent risks and threats picture for the strategic planning of the Alliance, which is the most relevant security provider at international level. In order to keep a credible defence and deterrence, new investments in emerging and disruptive technologies are essential, to which the new Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) will give a strong impulsion. What is the most effective sharing of responsibilities and resources among allies vis-à-vis persistent and emerging challenges? How to balance investments between strengthening existing arsenals and new technologies?

Chair: **Oana Lungescu**, Distinguished Fellow, Royal United Services Institute; and former NATO Spokesperson, Brussels

- **Karl-Heinz Kamp**, Associate Fellow, German Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin
- **Camille Grand**, Distinguished Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations, Brussels
- **Eric Terzuolo**, Professorial Lecturer, School of International Service, American University, Washington DC
- **Roberto Menotti**, Editor in Chief, Aspenia online; and Senior Advisor for International Activities, Aspen Institute Italia, Rome

Q&A Session

16,50 – 17,00 *Special Intervention*

- **Giovanni Soccodato**, Managing Director, MBDA Italy, Rome

17,00 – 17,30 *Coffee Break*

17,30 – 17,40 *Special Intervention*

- **Marco Peronaci**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels

17,40 – 19,10

Session II

Projecting security in a new era: looking South

The 360° security approach, a mainstay of NATO, regards both deterrence and defence and the Alliance's security projection.

What has to be done to revamp the essential partnerships in the Southern Region (Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative)? By next year, allies are due to reconsider those relationships and take decisions to adjourn them, building upon long-established cooperation (i.e. the Istanbul Summit in 2004) and the growing strategic importance of the MENA region.

Chair: **Flavia Giacobbe**, Journalist and Director, Formiche and Aipress, Rome

- **Florence Gaub**, Director, Research Division, NATO Defense College, Rome
- **Ian Lesser**, Vice President; and Executive Director, Brussels Office, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels
- **Abdulaziz Sager**, President, Gulf Research Center, Jeddah
- **Aydin Kiliç**, Director, NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub, NATO Joint Force Command, Naples

Q&A Session

19,10 – 19,20 *Concluding Remarks*

- **Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata**, President of the Senate Committee on European Union Policies, Rome



A session during the NATO Vilnius Summit (11-12th of July 2023).



