Position Paper

of

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Security and safety challenges are among the most vital issues of today’s Europe. Such multidimensional and fluid challenges as terrorism, migration, cyber-attacks, financial crisis, and military conflicts in Syria and Ukraine affect the lives of millions across Europe. The challenges we face have already become the most complex and unpredictable among those that Europe has ever seen since the times of the Cold War. Intensified by the existing contradictions and quickly disseminated due to rapid developments of technologies, the modern security challenges affect all levels – local, national, and international. This is why solutions of such conflicts can be achieved only via coordinated work of different actors that operate on various levels.

Instability, crises, and conflicts in Syria and Libya have resulted in flows of migrants and refugees to Europe. Finding solutions to such Mediterranean unrest as well as efficient countermeasures towards Islamic terrorists’ attacks throughout Europe are a geopolitical priority for Italy. We assume that both domestic and international security challenges are just two sides of the same coin – we should join our efforts and we need to work more closely with each other in building up European security and defence capabilities.

Obviously, recent radical changes to the European security scenario and the burgeoning threats from both “inside and outside of our societies” generate fear and uncertainty. Over the past several years, we also witnessed a relatively capricious US administration. These challenges facing the EU demand us to act consequently, to bring our unity to another level. We must stop hesitating, and we must work out effective answers to our citizens’ growing concerns, we must unite our efforts to advance solutions. We must develop a coherent strategy that is able to cope with the current security and defence challenges, that is able to deter aggression by taking the ambiguity away. The EU needs to evolve: now an active player in confronting current challenges and finding solutions to the crises, it must become a strong proactive global player, be ready and able to provide its security where necessary, to create and use opportunities to its advantage. We call for the necessity to elaborate a new vision of the EU – a safe and secure European Union, whose main aim is to deepen cooperation and coordination, to be ready to solve the current complex security threats and to commit to strengthening its common security and defence.

Ever since the creation of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), based on the Lisbon Treaty in 2017, defence cooperation on various levels among the 25 EU member states have been deepened greatly. Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) provides each participating member states with coherent and comprehensive defence spending plans and examines insufficiency on capability development. The close linkage between the PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF) will be beneficial for the advancement of the military and the industry in both Italy and the EU. Italy has always been supportive of the initiative, the EDF, and wider NATO-EU cooperation. The formation of the PESCO is the first step towards a stronger European defence and its outcome is dependent on our political will and joint efforts in implementing and financing defence projects effectively. We need to do more to increase the inclusiveness, competence, and productivity of our European defence community and be a reliable and complementary force to NATO. Therefore, Italy proposes to establish a European multinational Force (EMF), a Military Schengen Zone (MSZ), and further joint investment on cooperative programmes at both national and European levels under the framework of synergy between the PESCO and the CARD.

The EU must create a strong and usable European Multinational Force ( EMF) capable of conducting all types of operations aimed at preventing conflicts and securing peace and stability. This will allow Europe to move from a purely civilian power to a strong alliance, which possesses sufficient military potential, which is able to provide sufficient guarantees for our security, and which can prevent crises that threaten us. The EMF will consist of European divisions and brigades formed by EU member states “willing to share forces, command and control, manoeuvre and enabling capabilities”. These military forces will be “supported by all the systems that a modern army needs: air cover, air transport, electronic warfare, reconnaissance systems, and others”. We believe that the creation of the EMF within the framework of the EU Global Strategy will be a significant step towards reducing existing divergences and for creating a more integrated European Defence.

The EU initiative of 1995 on the creation of the Schengen area for providing free travel for our citizens in Europe has been instrumental in deepening integration and promoting our development. We call for the creation of a “Military Schengen Zone” (hereinafter referred to as the MSZ) in the EU. This will allow the EMF to move within Europe without spending time on clearances and regulatory procedures. We suggest that a group of the most willing countries begin the sharing of military capabilities and resources. After a while, at a later stage of integration, other countries could join the MSZ. Thus, the MSZ will be a fast and effective solution to possible crises and conflicts that threaten our defence and security.

The European Multinational Force, as well as the Military Schengen Zone, are in line with the need for continual development of ongoing cooperation and co-work with NATO, which creates a strong tandem for transatlantic security. To effectively address all existing challenges, the EU and NATO must work coordinately; they must remain cohesive and capable of employing a wide range of tools and responses. In order to ensure the coordination and effective work of the European Forces, it is necessary to create a solely European Military Headquarters, the Council for European Defence and Security, which would use the services of the new Directorate-General of Defence. Also, this will allow us to deploy overseas crisis missions and have “the capacity to project stability in areas and regions critical to our security”. This will allow the creation of a military force to be ready for deployment in support of both NATO and UN operations in places where and when it is needed.

We understand that the challenges we face cannot be solved if each of us deals with them on their own, because their costs and complexity exceed the capabilities of any country. This gives paramount importance to both our unity and the need to deepen our cooperation in the development and maintenance of security interests and the fulfilment of financial obligations.

Italy regards EU-funded research and development, procurement, and a new system of European military education as inalienable parts of the integrated design of European Defense. Therefore, our intentions focus on developing our capacity for building and ensuring “a robust military-industrial and technological base” (Rattman, 2016) in Europe. To achieve the goal set we suggest “fiscal and financial incentives to support new EU cooperative programs for development and joint purchases of equipment and infrastructure supporting the (EU's) Common Security and Defence Policy” (Kington, 2016), including VAT exemption and loans, as well as ease of access to the EU Investment Bank and the EU Fund for Strategic Investments for EU ministries of defence and companies working in this field. To increase the effect, we must develop and launch EU-funded defence-oriented programs.

New European military training and education are key issues for improving the operational efficiency of our armed forces. We are ready to work together with our colleagues from other European countries on the roadmap to create common European military education and training systems based on existing national areas of excellence. Our EMF requires the best training, mentoring and advising, which can also be achieved through the specialization of European countries in providing educational services in a specific military field, which will gradually result in a specialized and progressive military training of different countries.

To conclude, we argue that the changes that the entire European community needs to take in its aspirations to build a strong Europe capable of providing its own security and defence lie in three dimensions. The first dimension is the need to develop a comprehensive approach to regional crises through the creation of the Military Headquarters. This civilian-military structure will enable us to respond more effectively to emergencies and also apply crisis management where and when it is necessary. The second dimension is the creation of the well-trained European Multinational Force that can successfully explore the advantages of the Military Schengen Zone for its pre-determined tasks and objectives. The third dimension is the joint development of defence capabilities by supporting the much-needed research and development programs, defence industries and technologies. The realization of the above-mentioned goals will trigger a political dialogue on deeper integration, foster the implementation of the EU Global Strategy and allow Europe to play a much important role in crisis management and resolving, becoming a strong pillar for NATO and the UN.

**References**

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