

SECURITY MANAGEMENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC IN THE CONTEMPORARY SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: The main features of the Western contemporary security discourse for the past two decades have been hybrid threats as threats to national security and an integrated approach as a way of ensuring the national security. Italy is the only G7 state that does not have a national security strategy. Nevertheless, its security policy is harmonized with NATO, the EU and the leading Western states. Italy recognized the danger of hybrid threats and since 2007 it has undertaken a series of reforms which led to vertical and horizontal integration in crucial executive departments in the field of national security. Through these reforms, Italian security architecture adapted to modern security challenges. On the basis of legal acts, it achieved the vertical integration of departments and bodies competent for external and internal security, intelligence and cyber security, while the horizontal integration was achieved through the existence of collective bodies at the strategic, coordinating and operational level. Thus, the object of this research was the Italian security system in the contemporary security environment with a special reference to the place and role of Italian security management. In that sense, this research aims to answer the following questions: Is Italian security policy aligned with NATO and the EU security policies in terms of hybrid threats and integrated approach? Does Italy meet the organizational and functional conditions for the integrated approach?

Keywords: Integrated Approach, Hybrid Threats, Security Management, the Italian Republic.

Field: Social sciences (Security Studies).

1. INTRODUCTION

Hybrid threats have occupied the security and political discourse of NATO and the EU for the past two decades. Numerous security acts brought by NATO, the EU and leading Western countries testify to that. At the same time, an integrated approach to security is seen as the most effective way to ensure national security in a contemporary security environment. Italy is the only G7 state which does not have a national security strategy. However, being a member of NATO and the EU it had to align its security policy with their security policies. Hence, the scientific problems of this research were defined through the following questions:

1. Is Italian security policy aligned with NATO and the EU security policy in terms of hybrid threats and integrated approach?

2. Does Italy meet the organizational and functional conditions for the integrated approach?

The hypothesis of research is that despite the absence of a national security strategy, Italian security policy is aligned with the security policy of NATO and the EU on key security issues. Furthermore, Italy integrated activities in crucial executive departments while at the strategic level, it has the Supreme Council of Defence (the Council) as a body within which the existing constitutional and political order has the ability to influence the enforcement of the integrated security policy on the horizontal and vertical axis. The scientific goal of research is to provide a scientific description and explanation of the Italian approach to national security and to analyze the capability of its security system to enforce it with special reference to security management.

2. ITALY AND CONTEMPORARY SECURITY POLICIES

Comparative analysis of the security policy of NATO, EU and some leading NATO states resulted in a finding that hybrid threats are identified as one of the major contemporary security threats. "A key characteristic of hybrid warfare is merging activities from all domains of society into a single activity (functional integration), managing it from one centre (organizational integration) and its direction towards a single goal" (Mirković, 2021). In other words, hybrid warfare (threats, tactics) "implies the integration of all resources of national power, thus achieving a new quality through a synergetic effect (Hoffman, 2007, 2009, 2018; Korybko, 2015; D'Agostino, 2010)" (Mirković, 2024, p. 90). Research further showed that "the understanding of hybrid warfare has evolved over time from Walker's thesis about an efficient way

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of warfare by specially trained and prepared units to the state's actions which are carried out through a network of state bodies and non-state actors" (Mirković, 2023, p. 59). A hybrid-related concept is present in Italian security policy. The White Paper on International Security and Defence (Libro Bianco) tackled hybrid threats from a purely military point of view (Libro Bianco, 2015, p. 47). Nevertheless, the position of the Council which stated that in countering hybrid threats a "joint effort of the country system is essential" ("The Presidency of the Republic", 2023) implies a wider understanding of hybrid threats.

The integrated nature of hybrid threats dictates the integrated approach as the only suitable one for ensuring national security. The integrated approach encompasses the usage of all aspects of national power and it is known as a Whole of Society (WoS) or Whole of Government (WoG) approach. Through the integration of activities from all societal domains, this approach produces societal resiliency as "the desired product of a well-functioning WoS approach in countering complex and interconnected dangers such as hybrid threats" (Wigell, Mikkola & Juntunen 2021, p. 2). "The Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) worked out the Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem (CORE). Basic idea is developing resilience of the society through the interconnection between 13 domains (military, diplomacy, intelligence, economy, cyber etc.) in which actors use tools against hybrid activities in order to protect seven foundations of democratic society. CORE can promote cross-sectoral, whole-of-society effort by taking stock of the crucial interlinkages between issues often addressed separately" (Mirković, 2023, p. 59).

In order to strengthen internal and external security, the Council of EU in 2015 initiated creating a joint framework to help "countering hybrid threats and foster the resilience" (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 3). "Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats encouraged a whole-of-government approach, with 22 areas for action, to help counter hybrid threats and foster the resilience of the EU and the Member States" (European Commission, 2018, p. 3). It enabled a holistic approach to countering "threats of a hybrid nature by creating synergies between all relevant instruments" (European Commission, 2016, p. 3). "In March 2022, the Council of the EU presented the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence in which it announced the establishment of the EU Hybrid Toolbox which should bring together all civilian and military instruments which are suitable for countering hybrid threats. In the Strategic Concept (2020), NATO announced the enhancement of global awareness and readiness to act across all domains and directions using military and non-military tools in a proportionate, coherent and integrated way to respond to all threats" (Mirković, 2024, p. 90). In 2021, the United Kingdom officially accepted the Fusion Doctrine in their national security strategy, as the new approach to national security. In October 2022, the US introduced Integrated Deterrence as an approach to national security (National Security Strategy-NSS, 2022). In 2023, Germany accepted Integrated Security in the National Security Strategy – Integrated Security for Germany.

Although Italy does not have a national security strategy the ideas of integration and resiliency are present in its security policy. The Council stated that "defence and security must be considered as a common objective for the institutions of the Republic, based on a national security strategy developed by the Government and endorsed by the Parliament" ("Ministry of Defence - Supreme Defence Council", 2023), since new threats, including hybrid ones, require a more effective national security architecture which requires a joint effort of the country system. This joint effort is seen through the integration into crucial executive departments. Firstly, a new model of governance and internal organization of the Ministry of Defence was introduced where the Chief of Defence Staff is the head of the entire military personnel while the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff is the Commander of the Joint Command as the only operational military command. Furthermore, Libro Bianco insists on the multiplicity of fields of action which includes "the use of all available state instruments, including the military one" (Libro Bianco, 2015, p. 19). Secondly, Decree-Law 2017, No. 14 allowed the participation of local authorities and citizens in public policies related to public order and security (integrated security). Integrated security is pursued by the State, Regions and local authorities, each within their own competencies, through agreements and pacts (Giupponi, 2022, p. 9-10) with the Ministry of Interior as the supreme supervisory authority. All the arrangements should be in accordance with the guidelines which are adopted by the Unified Conference (coordinating body chaired by the President of the Council of Ministers) on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior (Decree-Law 2017, No. 14, Ar. 1). Thirdly, since 2007, the entire civil intelligence activities were integrated and subordinated directly to the President of the CoM (Law 2007, No. 124). Lastly, in 2021, all duties in cyber security were entrusted to the newly founded National Cybersecurity Agency (NCA) which is responsible directly to the President of the CoM (Decree-Law 2021, No. 82).

Integration in the most important Italian executive departments related to national security exists due to the reforms which started in 2007 with Law 2007, No. 124. Nevertheless, "it would be convenient to draw up a single document to describe a National Security Strategy" (Marta & Camillo, 2009, p. 17).

“The development of the first Italian National Security Strategy was indicated as a necessity both in the debate in Parliament and in the 2024 Guideline of the Ministry of Defense” (Mazziotti & Coticchia, 2023) and in the previously mentioned Council’s statement. Thus, the integral national security strategy would become a framework for sector strategies and laws that enable the implementation of the integrated strategy’s goals. An equally important effect of presenting a national security strategy would be spreading the awareness of the need for an integral approach among all the members of the Government, which is the cornerstone of such an approach.

3. SECURITY MANAGEMENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC

3.1. THE STRATEGIC LEVEL OF ITALIAN SECURITY MANAGEMENT

The President of the Republic and the Council of Ministers constitute the Italian security management at the strategic level. “The President of the Republic is the Head of the State and represents national unity” (Constitution, Ar. 87). As the Head of the State, the President is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, presides over the Council and the High Council of the Judiciary, issues decrees which carry the force of law, has the right to declare war, and appoints the President of the CoM, the Ministers (Constitution, Ar. 92) and civil and military servants. The President acquires detailed information on the Government’s orientations in security and defence matters through the Council which “examines general political and technical problems relating to national defense and determines the criteria and establishes the directives for the organization and coordination of activities that concern it” (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 2). Without executive powers, the Council is the place which brings together the highest political representatives to discuss the national security issues. This enables a synergetic approach to solving problems. The membership of the Council is constituted in a manner which provides the President with all the necessary information on the issues of national security. The President of the CoM is responsible for government policy, particularly for intelligence and cyber policy. The Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Staff are responsible for external security, and the Minister of the Interior is in charge of internal security. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is responsible for international policy and the coordination of government bodies with the country’s international policy objectives. The Minister of Economy and Finance is superior to the Financial Intelligence Unit for Italy (Decree-Law 2010, n. 66, Art. 3).

“The Government of the Republic is made up of the President of the CoM and the Ministers who together form the Council of Ministers” - CoM (Constitution, Ar. 92). “The President of the CoM conducts and holds responsibility for the general policy of the Government and ensures the coherence of political and administrative policies, by promoting and coordinating the activity of the Ministers” (Constitution, Ar. 95). Intelligence and cybersecurity matters are centralized and under the direct control of the President of the CoM who can delegate the functions that are not exclusively attributed to him only to a Minister without portfolio or to an Undersecretary of State (Delegated Authority) (Law 2007, No. 124, Ar. 3; Decree-Law 2021, No. 82, Ar. 4). In performing its functions, the President of the CoM is assisted by the Interministerial Committee for the Security of the Republic (CISR) or the Interministerial Committee for Cybersecurity (CIC).

CISR has the function to advise, propose and discuss the guidelines and general purposes of the intelligence policy. It is chaired by the President of the CoM and consists of the “Delegated Authority, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Economy and Finance” (Law 2007, No. 124, Ar. 5). The centralisation of intelligence policy and the CSIR’s guidelines enable harmonized intelligence activities which produce a single intelligence basis for decision-making. This also ensures the rational usage of intelligence resources and better coordination of all the elements of the intelligence community. Although the military intelligence service (RIS) is not a part of the Intelligence system, through membership of the Minister of Defence in CSIR, CSIR’s guidelines could become a framework for military intelligence.

CIC has advisory and supervisory functions in the field of cybersecurity policies. It proposes the general guidelines and framework for national cybersecurity policy to the President of the CoM, “exercises high surveillance on the implementation of the national cybersecurity strategy and promotes the adoption of the necessary initiatives to foster effective collaboration at the national and international level” (NCA – Implementation Plan, 2022, p. 42). CIC is chaired by the President of the CoM and other permanent members are “Delegated Authority, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of the Economy and Finance, the Minister for Economic Development, the Minister of Ecological Transition, the Minister of University and Research, the Minister for Technological Innovation and the Digital Transition and the Minister of Infrastructure and Mobility” (Decree-Law 2021, No. 82, Art. 4).

3.2. COORDINATING LEVEL OF THE ITALIAN SECURITY MANAGEMENT

The coordinating management is composed of a network of managers whose tasks are to organize, coordinate and control the enforcement of the strategic objectives in a particular administrative area. The Secretary of the Council collects and processes all the information related to competencies of the Council and coordinates the implementation of the relevant resolutions and directives by the competent bodies. The Secretary is assisted in performing his duties by the Secretariat Office, which consists of military and civilian personnel (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 6 – 7).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is entrusted with the tasks pertaining to “political, economic, social, and cultural relations with foreign countries and international organizations” (Decree-Law 1990, No. 300, Ar. 12). The Ministry operates through a network of embassies, permanent missions to the international organisations, special diplomatic delegations, consular offices, and Italian cultural institutes in order to promote the Italian interests in the international arena. The Minister is obliged to coordinate the activity of this network and to ensure that the international activities of other Italian “ministries and government offices are consistent with the country’s international policy objectives” (“Home - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation”, 2024). The Ministry of Defence is responsible for the military defence and security of the Republic. It is directed by the Minister of Defence who is superior to military and civil administration (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 10, 15). “The Minister of Economy and Finance is responsible for policies for the prevention of money laundering and financing of terrorism. In order to implement these policies, the Ministry of Economy and Finance fosters cooperation between the Financial Intelligence Unit for Italy (UIFI), the sectoral supervisory authorities, professional bodies and the police forces, and also between public and private sector bodies” (“Financial Intelligence Unit”, 2024).

The Minister of the Interior is responsible for the protection of public order and security, civil defence, civil protection policies and fire prevention, the protection of civil rights, citizenship, immigration, asylum and public aid, and the regular establishment and functioning of local authorities, as well as exercising state’s functions through local authorities (Decree-Law 1999, No. 300, Ar. 14). As a national public security authority, the Minister coordinates the activities of the police forces with the assistance of the Public Security Administration (Law 1981, No. 121, Ar. 1, 2). The Italian police forces are the State Police, the Carabinieri, Financial Police, Coast Guard, Prison Police and State Forestry Corps at the State level and the provincial and local police. The Minister chairs the National Committee for Public Order and Security as an auxiliary advising body which is composed of an “Undersecretary of State for the Interior, acting as Vice-President, the Chief of Police-Director General of Public Security, the Commander General of the Carabinieri and the Commander General of the Financial Police” (Law 1981, No. 121, Ar. 18).

The Presidency of the Council of Ministers is an office managed by the Secretary-General which provides the President of the CoM with the technical, advisory and legal support. This office has a complex structure which includes the Department of Security Information (DIS) which is governed by the Director-General, also who serves as the CISR’s secretary. The DIS coordinates the entire civil intelligence; exercises control over the AISE and the AISI; informs the President of the CoM of the operations of the intelligence services; collects the information, analyses and reports from the AISE and the AISI, the Armed Forces and the Police Forces, the State administrations and also from private research bodies; promotes and guarantees the exchange of information between the AISE, the AISI and the police forces, etc. (Law 2007, No. 124, Art. 4). The President of the CoM uses the DIS for the exercise of his competencies in order to ensure full unity in planning and performing activities by the intelligence services.

NCA was established to protect national interests in the field of cybersecurity (Decree-Law 2021, No. 82, Art. 5). The Director General is appointed by the President of the CoM and also serves as the secretary of the CIC. The NCA operates in synergy with other executive departments. “In this context, the intelligence sector (the DIS in particular) is called upon to provide the NCA with useful information...” (Matassa, 2023, p. 644-645) along with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence. National CyberSecurity Cell (Nucleo per la cybersicurezza - NCS) is established within the NCA in order to support the President of the CoM and to enable better coordination with other services. The periodic meetings of the NCS have enabled “inter-institutional coordination at the technical-operational level amongst the various administrations involved” (NCA – 2023 Year in Review, p. 14). Furthermore, the NCA is the Italian National Coordination Centre established in each EU Member State for the purposes of the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC).

3.3. OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF THE ITALIAN SECURITY MANAGEMENT

Managers at the operational level are obliged to enforce strategic goals and priorities. The Chief of Defence Staff is the highest military position and he is responsible to the Minister of Defence. He is

appointed by the decree of the President of the Republic, after the deliberation of the Council of Ministers, on the proposal of the Minister of Defence. He is superior to the Chiefs of Staff of Armed Forces (the Army, the Navy and the Air Force), to the Commander of the Joint Command and the Commander General of the Carabinieri, limited to the military tasks. The Commander of the Joint Command is Deputy Chief of Defence Staff in charge of operations which is appointed by the decree of the President of the Republic, after the deliberation of the Council of Ministers, on the proposal of the Minister of Defence (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 25, 29). The Carabinieri have an autonomous position within the Ministry of Defence, with the rank of Armed Forces. It is a military police force with general competency and public security service with the special prerogatives conferred by the current legislation (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 90, 155-157, 160).

The Intelligence system of the Italian Republic is headed by the President of the CoM and it is composed of the CISR, the Delegated Authority, the DIS, the foreign intelligence service - AISE, and the interior intelligence service - AISI (Law 2007, No. 124, Art. 2). The Italian intelligence community is composed of civil and military intelligence services and several civil agencies. AISE and AISI are civil security services which are established by Law 2007, No. 124. AISE is entrusted with the task of collecting the information about threats to "the independence, integrity and security of the Republic" from abroad and it "may carry out operations on the national territory only in collaboration with the AISI" (Law 2007, No. 124, Ar. 6). AISI is responsible for information collection "within the national territory in order to protect the political, military, economic, scientific and industrial interests of Italy" (Law 2007, No. 124, Ar. 7). The President of the CoM appoints and dismisses, after consulting the CISR, the Directors of the AISE and the AISI. Financial Intelligence Unit (UIFI) is part of the intelligence community and it was established within the Central Bank of Italy (Banca D'Italia). As a central national agency, the UIFI works in collaboration with the Financial Police on the collection of information on potential cases of money laundering and financing of terrorism ("Financial Intelligence Unit", 2024). Military intelligence service – RIS is the staff element of the Defence General Staff which carries out tasks exclusively related to the military and military police. The RIS acts in close liaison with the AISE according to rules approved by decree of the President of the CoM, issued after deliberation of the CISR (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66, Art. 30). The Joint Military Intelligence Centre (CII) operates within the RIS and integrates intelligence efforts across the Armed Forces in order to enhance joint operational effectiveness (Verneti, 2024). Computer Security Incident Response Team – Italia (CSIRT Italia) is a technical-operational structure within the NCA which deals with cyber incidents ("CSIRT", 2024).

Police duties are performed by the Public Security Administration, which is a general term for a massive and multilevel police network which reflects the regional character of the Republic. At the top of this network is the Department of Public Security as a central authority who is responsible for the implementation of the policy of public order and security and the direction of the State Police. "The Department is headed by the Chief of Police – Director General of Public Security, appointed by the decree of the President of the Republic, after deliberation by the CoM, on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior" (Law 1981, No. 78, Art. 5). The same procedures are made for the Commander General of the Carabinieri and the Commander General of the Financial Police. The Prefect is the provincial public security authority that performs all functions and duties of the Ministry of the Interior, at a provincial level, which are not delegated to other bodies. The Provincial Committee for Public Order and Safety is established as an auxiliary body advising the Prefect in the exercise of his powers. The Quaestor is the head of police headquarters in the province (Questura) and thus he represents the provincial public security authority which operates at the technical operational level and also serves as the local public security authority for the province capitals. The police commissioners are local public authorities responsible for the police stations which are established outside of the province's capital, in small municipalities and districts of cities. Where police stations are not established, the powers of local public security authority are exercised by the mayor as a government official. The police commissioner and the provincial commanders of the Carabinieri and the Financial Police have to inform the Prefect and the Quaestor on everything that has to do with public order and security in the province (Law 1981, No. 121, Art. 13, 14, 16, 20).

4. CONCLUSION

Italy is the only G7 state that does not have a national security strategy. Nevertheless, research showed that its security policy is harmonized with NATO, the EU and the leading Western states. Italy has undertaken a series of reforms since 2007 in order to adapt its security system to security challenges. Through Law 2007, No. 124, the Intelligence system was founded, intelligence agencies were reorganized and all civil intelligence activities were centralized and subordinated to the President of the CoM. In the

same manner, with the Decree-Law 2021, No. 82, the entire cyber security activities were vested to NCA, which is directly subordinated to the President of the CoM. The reforms in military affairs (Decree-Law 2010, No. 66) resulted in the changes in the chain of command. The President of the Republic is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, followed by the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commander of the ISOC. The Council serves as the President's headquarters through which he acquires all relevant information on national security.

The Ministry of the Interior experienced many reforms in order to adjust its structure to the specific character of the regional state and the security environment. The Minister is at the top of the organization of the Ministry. Public order and internal security are enforced by the Public Security Administration, which is a multilevel structure composed of the Department of Public Security at the State level, the Prefect and Questores as provincial public security authorities and the police commissioners as the local public security authorities. At every level, there are the organizational units of the police forces which are subordinated to the public security authorities. Although the Republic has exclusive competencies in the field of public order and internal security with the exception of local administrative police, Decree-Law 2017, No. 14 allowed the participation of local authorities and citizens in public policies related to public order and security. This means that based on the arrangements which are in accordance with the guidelines for the promotion of integrated security, the provincial and local police forces can perform duties related to public order and security. These guidelines are adopted by the Unified Conference on the proposal of the Minister of the Interior.

In the four mentioned domains, collective bodies (the Council, Unified Conference, CSIR and CIC) were established as advisory and supervisory authorities whose members are the heads of the most important executive departments. This facilitates the horizontal integration at the strategic level and it also enables the managers at the coordination level to enforce duties in their competence through an integrated structure of their departments in a synergetic and coordinated manner. Horizontal integration is also facilitated through the existence of collective bodies at the coordination and operational level with similar functions as CSIR and CIC.

To sum up, it can be stated that the research provides answers to all questions identified in the introduction. However, the basic hypothesis was only partially confirmed. The place and role of the Council within the security system are not different from the role of the CSIR or CIC. Moreover, CSIR and CIC seem to have more executive power than the Council. Nevertheless, the security system of the Italian Republic is well structured and governed while the collective bodies with the advisory and supervisory authority at the strategic, coordination and operational levels facilitate performing national security objectives in a synergetic and coordinated manner.

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