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Report NATO 2030: Italy in a Changing Alliance

Abstract

In March 2020, a group of experts was appointed by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to examine the situation of the Alliance in these uncertain times and to provide a proposition for the principles of the Alliance for the coming decade. After the completion, the Report mostly stayed under the radar. My goal is to identify those fields in which Italy can take a leading role, or on the contrary: the fields in which Italy has more to do. During my research, my method was to find the Report's most significant recommendations and to assess Italy's position on the issue, trying to find the main implications for Italy.

I identified four major fields in which the changing NATO does lack consensus, and causes intra-Alliance frictions. One of these is the question of Russia. Italy has a good relationship with the old rival, but NATO – not excluding the possibility for cooperation – has a way more negative perspective about Russia. Almost the same stands for China. Italy's and several other Member States' relationship with China causes some controversy among the Allied States. Among other factors, these cause strategic divergencies in the Alliance. Different friends and adversaries, different interests and values sometimes make the cooperation hard. Because of this, it is of utmost importance to improve political coordination and cooperation.

The most important field, in which Italy can take a leading role is the Southern Strategic Direction. Italy is already a very active player in the Mediterranean region, as it is a vital area in Italy's security. I believe Italy will have the military and political power, and most likely also the willingness to be among the leading nations in implementing the findings of NATO 2030, if it can maintain or strengthen its position in the Alliance.

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1. Introduction

During the Alliance's latest summit held in London in 2019, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) meeting of Member States' heads of state and government called Secretary General Mr. Jens Stoltenberg upon to assess the Alliance's recent performance and to provide a programme for the coming decade. In March next year, the Secretary General appointed a Reflection Group of experts. This group consisted of ten 'wise men', Greta Bossenmaier (Canada), Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen (Denmark), Hubert Védrine (France), Marta Dassù (Italy), Anna Fotyga (Poland), Herna Verhagen (the Netherlands), John Bew (the United Kingdom), Tacan Ildem (Turkey), Wes Mitchell (the United States of America) and Thomas de Maizière (Germany). The Reflection Group – led by the latter two – had a massive experience in the field of international relations and foreign policy. They submitted their final report on the 25th of November 2020 to the Secretary General, and it was made available for the public on the 3rd of December 2020.²

The Italian member of the group, Marta Dassù is currently a Senior Advisor of European Affairs at the Aspen Institute. After graduating from the University of Florence, she held several positions, policymaking and academic also. Just to mention some, she is now a Board Member of the Italian think tank Istituto Affari Internazionali and of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. She was also Italy's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy Adviser to the Italian Prime Minister.³

Before introducing the main findings of the Reflection Group, it is worth mentioning that the current Strategic Concept of the Alliance can now be deemed to be obsolete, as it was published in 2010. In the last decade – without exaggeration – one can say that the strategic framework and security environment of the transatlantic Alliance has dramatically changed; therefore, many actors urged the Alliance to keep up with these changes and update this basic document. Since the publication of 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence',⁴ new types of security challenges emerged. Just to mention a few, the rise of ISIS, the aggression on Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, civil war in Syria, terrorist attacks, uncontrolled influx of migrants and refugees, the Arab Spring, and the threat of both hybrid warfare and cyber attacks transformed our vision of the international security environment.⁵

In the 2010 Strategic Concept, it was also stated that the probability of a conventional, Article 5 threat is low,⁶ but the recent developments in the Eastern neighbourhood are causes of concerns. As Walter Russell Mead wrote in the columns of *Foreign Affairs*,⁷ we are living in an age of the returning geopolitics fuelled by the thirst for revenge of the revisionist states.⁸

² 'NATO 2030: Making a Strong Alliance Even Stronger', 23 January 2021.

³ European Council of Foreign Relations, 'Marta Dassù', s. a.

⁴ 'NATO: Active Engagement, Modern Defence – Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization', 19–20 November 2010.

⁵ Daniel S Hamilton, 'Why NATO Needs a New Strategic Concept, What It Should Say, and How to Achieve It, in *Transatlantic Futures: Towards #NATO2030*, ed. by Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs).

⁶ 'NATO: Active Engagement, Modern Defence', 10.

⁷ Walter Russell Mead, 'The Return of Geopolitics – The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers', *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2014.

⁸ Russia and China, as they were described as revisionists in the 2017 Security Strategy of the United States of America (The White House, 'National Security Strategy of the United States of America', December 2017).

Many of the beforementioned circumstances affect the safety of the Mediterranean region heavily. The subject of my research, Italy is one of NATO's most active European Member States when it comes to participation in international missions and operations. Italy is ready and willing to take part in operations started in regions in which Italy's interests are at stake.

My goal with this policy paper is to provide an overview of Italy's possible role in the adapting of 'NATO 2030: United for a New Era' report and to find the Report's main implications for Italy. I try and identify those fields in which Italy can take a leading role or on the contrary: in which Italy has a lot more to do in order to align with the report's recommendations. My main method was document analysis. I examined and assessed Report 'NATO 2030'. Through empirical experience, and aligning the Report's main findings with the concerns of Italy's security environment I introduce and assess those fields that have the most significant effects on Italy.

2. NATO 2030

As it is not a primary goal of this essay, without going into a deep assessment of the Reflection Group's report, I shortly introduce the main drivers and findings of it.

The goal of the Reflection Group was not to create a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance but to set the main directions of the Alliance's future activities. The first and most important recommendation of the Report is to elaborate on a new Strategic Concept. The Reflection Group shares the opinion that the Alliance needs a new strategic framework. It is obvious though, this Report can provide some cornerstones for the new Concept. It is important to highlight that the Report was not accepted by the States; therefore, it is not to be considered an official, commonly shared strategy or roadmap. The report is not a product of a NATO decision-making mechanism, but an experts' report, that can be used to assist a policy- or strategy-making process. However, the report once calls NATO the most successful politico-military alliance ever, the Group made 138 recommendations for the Alliance in almost 70 pages. To sum up, the Report aims to vastly strengthen the Alliance as a political one so the political capabilities shall match NATO's military expertise.⁹

The Secretary General tasked the Reflection Group with providing recommendations in three main areas:

'Reinforcing Allied unity, solidarity, and cohesion, including to cement the centrality of the transatlantic bond; increasing political consultation and coordination between Allies in NATO; and strengthening NATO's political role and relevant instruments to address current and future threats and challenges to Alliance security emanating from all strategic directions.'¹⁰

The document consists of three main parts. In the first, there are the main findings and recommendations of the Reflection Group. In the second part, they provide

⁹ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030: United for a New Era', 25 November 2020.

¹⁰ Ibid. 3.

a kind of security analysis introducing the main security processes that determine the Alliance's security environment for the coming decade. The third part offers a detailed description of the proposals in thematic chapters.

The importance of the recommendations and findings is the lack of shared vision on different issues. One is the (re)emergence of the old adversary, Russia and the new one, China; the eroding democracy in the world and even within the Alliance; the severe strategic divergencies among Member States (partially on the stance towards Russia and China) and the revision of NATO's decision-making process. Among others, I will introduce Italy's standpoint on these issues.

3. Russia

Italy's opinion on Russia is way more positive than the average of the Alliance. For instance, a research conducted by the Pew Research Centre in 2019 shows that the confidence towards Russian leader Vladimir Putin is 38% in Italy, while the median in the European Union is 27%.¹¹ Another research proved that even after the annexation of Crimea, alongside Greece and Cyprus, the overall Italian attitude towards Russia is still friendly, and 'it is unreasonable to expect the positions of Greece, Italy, and Cyprus to significantly move'.¹² This research also underlines that Italy is 'concerned' over Russia's actions.

The Report uses unusually strong language on Russia. It also underlines though, that the Alliance has to continue the efforts for a dual-track approach. It means deterrence on the one hand and maintaining the possibility for cooperation on the other.¹³

The report recommends to 'respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a politically united, determined, and coherent way'.¹⁴ I hardly believe the recommendation will get approval by the Member States (for example, because of Italy among others), but it is also surprisingly recommended that 'Allies must adhere to the common guidelines agreed at NATO when formulating security and defence-related national-level policies toward Russia'.¹⁵ It means that national policies shall be derived from the common NATO policy.

It is hard to imagine that Italy will align with the Reflection Group's provisions on Russia. Putin described Russia's relationship as a 'special one' and former Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni called Italian–Russian ties a 'privileged relationship'.¹⁶ The ties between Italy and Russia are based on commercial interests and energy dependency. Italy is Russia's second-biggest commercial partner within the European Union (after Germany), and Italy still relies on Russian energy – Gazprom has also serious interests in the Italian energy sector. Three times Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi strengthened the ties between the countries even personally with his Russian counterpart,

¹¹ Richard Wike et al., '4. The European Union', 14 October 2019.

¹² Jakub Janda, 'What Do European Countries Think About Russia?', 25 April 2017.

¹³ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030', 25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Paolo Valentino, 'Gentiloni – Dialogue with Russia Continues', *Corriere della Sera*, 08 June 2015.

Vladimir Putin. Russia also provided assistance for the severely hit Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic, and Putin's party, United Russia signed a political cooperation agreement with Matteo Salvini's Northern League, a party which became the minor member of the Italian Government formed in 2018. There were accusations about Russian interference in Italian politics and elections. Italy blocked imposing sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea,¹⁷ sparking controversy in the European Union and among NATO Member States. This is one of the reasons why Italy was sometimes harshly called 'Putin's Trojan Horse in the EU'.¹⁸

4. China

The change in the attitude of the Alliance on China is probably the biggest revision on the strategic stance of NATO between the 2010 Strategic Concept and NATO 2030 Report. The standing Strategic Concept does not even mention China (literally by its name). In the NATO 2030 Report, however, it is articulated that 'NATO must devote much more time, political resources and action to the security challenges posed by China'.¹⁹

The Report describes China as follows:

'The scale of Chinese power and global reach poses acute challenges to open and democratic societies, particularly because of that country's trajectory to greater authoritarianism and an expansion of its territorial ambitions. For most Allies, China is both an economic competitor and significant trade partner.'²⁰

What is concerning about China is the vastly different perception of it among the Allies. By some, China is seen as a fierce rival, a competitor, for others, it is a huge economic opportunity.

Italy has a similar relationship with China as with Russia. The centre of its pragmatic relations with China is the system of strong economic and commercial relations. China is the second biggest trade partner in Italy's import,²¹ and China is the 10th biggest export destination of Italy.²²

About Italy's opinion on China, nearly the same can be said as in the Russian case. Italian opinion on China is far more positive than the average European or transatlantic opinion. Giuseppe Conte's two governments consisted of political parties that have favourable opinions on China (Five Stars Movement, League, Democratic Party).

In recent years, we witnessed some serious turbulence in Italian–Chinese relations, though. The transatlantic community was shocked to see that Italy was the first G7 country to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) about the Belt

¹⁷ Jacopo Barigazzi, 'Italy blocks adding name to Russia sanctions list', *Politico*, 13 September 2018.

¹⁸ Artem Patalakh, 'Italy as the Kremlin's 'Trojan Horse' in Europe: Some Overlooked Factors', *E-International Relations*, 11 April 2020.

¹⁹ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030', 28.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 27.

²¹ Osservatorio Economico, 'Principali Paesi di provenienza delle importazioni italiane. Graduatoria in base ai dati del 2020', September 2020.

²² Osservatorio Economico, 'Principali Paesi destinatari delle esportazioni italiane. Graduatoria in base ai dati del 2020', September 2020.

and Road Chinese initiative. This MoU was signed by the Conte Government, and raised concerns among Allied States, most significantly in the United States, which was about to get engaged in a so-called trade war with China. Needless to say, Italy's actions did not ease the tensions within the Alliance. The development of the tensions between China and the USA saw Italy backing out of some agreements with China (i.e. space station).²³

Economic ties are very important for the Italian population. A research published by the Italian Institute for International Political Studies²⁴ in 2020 showed that the biggest threat for Italy is thought to be the economic crisis (54%), while the Covid-19 pandemic was only the second most frequent answer (22%). However, when asked about the biggest global threat, the pandemic came in first (28%), while the threat of China was the 9th most popular answer (3%). From the same questionnaire, it can be seen that Italians think that China has the most influence on international processes (58% chose China from the options available), but also 27% think that China is the biggest threat now on international peace. Interestingly, Italians think the USA is the more dangerous player (10%) than Russia (8%). A very important question was the following: 'What do you think, the United States/the EU/Russia/China is an ally or an adversary of Italy?' While 18% answered that the EU is more of an adversary than an ally, only 20% and 23% thought this about Russia and China respectively. 38% think that Russia is an ally, and 36% think the same about China.²⁵

Italy is also one of the three biggest recipients of China's foreign direct investments. These (including loans, investments and construction contracts) worth over 25 billion euros since 2000. It is also worth mentioning that some of these investments aim at sectors with strategic importance, for example, energy, transportation and finance. Chinese firms possess or are planning to purchase shares in tire company Pirelli, banks like Intesa Sanpaolo, Unicredit, insurance companies like Generali, energetic companies like Eni and Enel and communications companies like Telecom Italia.²⁶

To sum up, Italy has a far more positive opinion and has way more important economic bonds with China to take a stricter stance as NATO would urge them. Italians still perceive China as a great economic opportunity, rather than a threatening factor, therefore European and Allied partners will have a hard task convincing Rome about taking countermeasures against China; however, in the question of Uyghurs Italy expressed its discontent alongside leading European and NATO nations.²⁷

5. Strategic divergencies

The principle of creating a new Strategic Concept would be to have a common threat perception or at least a common understanding of the different Member States' security

²³ Alessia Amighini and Giulia Sciorati, 'Italy–China Relations in 2021: A Time to Regroup', *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, 05 February 2021.

²⁴ Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale – ISPI.

²⁵ ISPI, 'Gli italiani e il resto del mondo – Le opinioni degli italiani sulla politica internazionale', Edizione 2021.

²⁶ Valbona Zeneli and Michele Capriati, 'Is Italy's Economic Crisis an Opportunity for China?', *The Diplomat*, 18 April 2020.

²⁷ RFI, 'Italy follows France, Germany in sanctioning China over treatment of Uyghurs', 24 March 2021.

issues. As shown before through the example of Italy's relations with the revisionist powers, reaching a shared perception of security and threats, is seemingly far. To top that, there are tensions within the Alliance also. For example, the relationship between Greece and Turkey is far from ideal, but many Member States are concerned over some of Turkey's actions besides Greece. For example, in the Libyan conflict, Turkey and France supported different sides.²⁸ There are also severe strategic divergencies between the Eastern European and founding Member States, as they have different strategic interests, history and even values. Another factor is geography. Countries situated on the Eastern borders of the Alliance have different security concerns than Spain or Italy, for instance. Countering China's growing influence also lacks consensus within the Alliance. The United States thinks globally, therefore the U.S. administration is highly interested in China's growing influence, as it endangers the USA's position; therefore, they pay closer attention to regions the European allies are not necessarily interested in, for example, Southeast Asia. It is not only the ambitions that differ but also the necessities. China (and for some, Russia as well) is a very important economic partner, especially in today's Europe, as the economies are struggling as a consequence of the pandemic-related restrictions. For these countries, the Chinese threat seems distant, but the economic benefits are near and real.

As I explained before, we can wait for Italy to change its view on China and Russia, but most probably in vain. In the past, Italy's participation in international peace support operations and missions could be categorised by Italy's interests in the missions and operations. One type of participation was when Italy stepped up and either set up a national operation individually, joined a coalition, or took part in Allied peace support efforts. Italy is ready and willing to conduct these kinds of operations in a reasonably wide area of interest. This area is called Enlarged Mediterranean. This is the region in which Italy has direct security interests. The operations and missions in the Mediterranean, in North Africa and the Western Balkans are of this kind. The other genre of operations is those which Italy joins to improve its relations with the Alliance, mainly with the United States. In these cases, Italy has no direct interest in the region, the only reason for them to join is to prove their willingness to contribute. Examples of this kind are the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁹

A remarkable decision of the 2016 Warsaw Summit was the establishment of the Enhanced Forward Presence. As an outcome, in Poland and in the Baltic states a battalion-level multinational battlegroup was placed (one in each country), led by framework nations. Italy supports EFP's battlegroup in Latvia.³⁰ It is the third biggest contributor here after the leading nations – Canada and Spain. Italian contribution consists of a heavy infantry company, a reconnaissance platoon, support elements and HQ personnel. This strength of Italian participation is nearly 200 personnel.³¹ This makes the Baltic Guardian Italy's most robust commitment (besides air policing) towards collective defence and deterrence. It is also worth mentioning that Italy tries

²⁸ Xinhua, 'NATO high-level talks kick off amid frictions', 04 April 2019.

²⁹ Alessandro Marrone, Paola Tessari and Carolina de Simone, 'Gli interessi nazionali dell'Italia e la NATO: dalle missioni alla trincea?', *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 12 December 2014.

³⁰ NATO, 'Boosting NATO's presence in the east and southeast', 26 April 2021.

³¹ NATO, 'NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence', March 2021.

to maintain its good relations with Russia, while it also has to prove its solidarity and commitment to collective defence and convince the Allies about its commitment and willingness to take on Eastern challenges. This can be a fruitful deal, as Italy (and also other Southern allies) is in a better position when asking for bigger attention and contribution to counter Southern challenges, if they also deploy on the East.

Another important recommendation of the Report is to create a much stronger political cooperation between the Allies and to formulate a common perspective on the issues in order to speak up in a common voice. The Report offers the North Atlantic Council to be the primary forum for transatlantic dialogue. It also urges the Alliance to hold way more frequent meetings between the Allied States at all levels: heads of state and government, ministerial and experts level. The goal of it would be to reach a better understanding of each others' position on the different security issues and to establish a shared minimum which the Alliance can articulate in the different topics.

Italy has massive experience in participating in international organisations. It is an explicit Italian foreign policy strategy to actively take part in the international organisations' work and decision-making processes. This attitude is assisted by a long history of also leading and taking part in both international military operations and civilian missions. The so-called *presenzialismo* is usually used to describe Italy's massive contribution to international peace support operations, but we can say that this approach also stands for Italy's policymakers' participation in the structures of the international organisations.³²

Italy can also be used as a kind of mediator. As the Alliance does not distance itself from dialogue or even cooperation with China and Russia, Italy, as the country having one of the best relations with these countries among the Member States, can be a mediator in the dialogue with Russia – and to a lesser extent – China.

6. The Southern Strategic Direction

Due to the nature and purpose of the Alliance, since its birth, the Eastern threat was the most important and the most dangerous. After the Cold War, NATO had nearly a calm decade, but from 2001 till now, the security environment is ever-changing; therefore, it is a must for NATO to always adapt to the new environment. Now the security challenges are way more complex than they used to be. The events of the last decade proved that NATO has to face new challenges from the Southern direction. Among other Member States, Italy was one of the loudest actors advocating the importance of security challenges emanating from the South. Later, NATO embraced a 360° approach. The recognition of the Southern threat is a great achievement from Italy. Of course, we cannot talk about NATO's shortsightedness, rather than about prioritisation of security challenges. The main motive behind Italy's reasoning was that maybe the Southern challenges do not pose as an existential threat, but in the long run, they can severely damage the transatlantic security and interests. Italy is

³² Elio Menzione, Stefano Baldi and Antonio Enrico Bartoli, 'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Italy's Presence in International Organizations', 19–20 June 2000.

willing to do more on the Eastern flank if the Alliance is devoted to do more on the Southern one.³³

In 2017, the NATO Strategic Direction South Hub was established in Naples, Italy. The main purpose of the creation of this new element was to increase NATO's situational awareness towards the Southern neighbourhood, to assist the Alliance's decision-making processes with inputs from the South, and eventually to project stability. This new element is not a new military command of NATO. It is a soft power element and is destined to promote NATO's activity in the South, to facilitate dialogue between NATO Member States regarding the South and between NATO and other organisations, primarily the African Union, to provide a kind of early warning system about rising challenges and collect information from the region. This does not mean intelligence but collecting open-source information.³⁴

The expression Enlarged Mediterranean of Italian geopolitics was mentioned before. If we compare the region of this Enlarged Mediterranean and the scope of activity of this new Hub, the resemblance is uncanny. It is a great achievement once again from Italy that it successfully reached that a region that is the most important for the Italian interest has now a NATO body to oversee.

'In the next ten years, therefore, the 360-degree approach to security will become an imperative and the South will likely grow in importance for NATO.'³⁵ If NATO will truly put a bigger emphasis on the Southern challenge, Italy has a great opportunity to take a leading role in it. Its willingness will hardly be a problem, as the security of the Mediterranean is of utmost importance for Italy, and has strong historic and economic ties with the region.

There are some concerning developments in the South, though. We see rising conventional and non-conventional, hybrid threats posed by state and non-state actors. Russian and – to a lesser extent – Chinese interference is strengthening in the area. Russia is building up A2/AD capabilities, while China is gaining soft power influence in the region.³⁶ Because of this, the idea that conventional threats originate only from the East and that asymmetric threats emerge only from the South has become now obsolete. NATO needs to improve cooperation, coordination and interoperability both with external partners like the European and the African Union and third states; and both internally, among its Member States.

According to the Report, the Alliance does not necessarily have to create new types of coordination fora, the existing ones – namely the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and the Mediterranean Dialogue – can be perfectly suitable, just they need to be exploited much more effectively. The Report recommends three main fields to improve these partnerships, these are strengthened political engagement, capacity building and resilience enhancement.³⁷

³³ WPR, 'Italy Pushes NATO to Improve Russia Ties, Focus on Southern Threats', 17 July 2017.

³⁴ Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto, 'Projecting Stability to the South: The Role of NATO Strategic Direction – South Hub', 21 October 2019.

³⁵ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030', 34.

³⁶ Sinan Ülgen and Can Kasapoğlu, 'A Threat-based Strategy for NATO's Southern Flank', June 2016.

³⁷ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030', 15.

7. Decision-making process

The Report failed to attract the attention such a document should have. The two main reasons for this were external: on the one hand, the World was occupied with the presidential elections of the United States, on the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic was raging through the world. One can understand that both issues might affect severely the Alliance's actions. Despite not receiving proper attention, one recommendation of the Report sparked controversy. That very recommendation was about reforming NATO's consensual decision-making process. The Report explicitly accused some countries of blocking the common decision-making process by (*de facto*) vetoing common issues because of national interests.

'NATO unity is also impacted by disputes between Allies. In recent years, some Allies have brought disagreements on external matters into NATO, occasionally straining cohesion, and impeding decision-making. Allowing disputes that are external to NATO to infect the functioning of the Alliance could cause long-term damage to the Alliance.'³⁸

The Report underlines that the consensual way of decision-making is the bedrock of the Alliance's unity, but also suggests introducing timeframe in urgency situations and larger responsibility for the Secretary General in the process. The Report recommends raising the threshold for single-country blockages. It seems natural that finding a consensus in the decision-making process will be harder and harder as more and more nations gain accession to the Alliance, but the Report can be a good starter for a conversation about somehow strengthening, but also simplifying the decision-making process. As little is known about the exact vision on the reform of the decision-making process, Italy's point of view is unknown about this question, but alongside Eastern European countries, any ways circumventing Italian opinion within the Alliance would not be welcome.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, without overestimating Italy's capabilities and power, we can say that Italy can take a massive role in the execution and implementation of a new Strategic Concept based on the Report of the Reflection Group. By its strategic culture and history of taking part in several international organisations' decision-making processes, I am convinced that Italy will not back out from this kind of work. Although Italy's relationship with China and Russia can be seen as concerning, Italy's ties with these nations can even serve the Alliance's interests. Italy has always been trying to promote strengthening the dialogue between the Alliance and Russia, even after the annexation of Crimea. We can assume that Italy will not give up its positive relations and its economic bonds with Russia on the short-term, but with political coordination and dialogue within the Alliance can ease the intra-Alliance tensions. It is a major

³⁸ Reflection Group, 'NATO 2030'. 21.

achievement for Italy and the Southern Member States that the Alliance embraced an attribute that promises a better understanding, early warning elements and elevated situational awareness regarding the Southern Strategic Direction. There are some frictions and severe strategic divergencies within the Alliance.

During my research, I found that Italy has everything to take on a very important role in the Alliance of this and the next decade, if it will have the willingness, political, military and economic power to maintain or promote its status within the Alliance. Among sectoral fields, Italy can take a leading role in the Mediterranean, a region, which probably will continue to rise in importance, and which will keep the Alliance busy.

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