



Defense, the Lesson from the Eastern Front: Italy and the Risk of a Decision-Making Bottleneck

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Despite significant financial investments, military readiness on NATO's eastern flank remains deeply uneven. Sounding the alarm is the report **"2026 Annual Battle Readiness on the Eastern Flank"**, published by the think tank **Globsec**, which exposes critical vulnerabilities in mobility and decision-making processes.

The Challenge of Time: The Decision-Making Timeline Index

The core of the study lies in the **DMTI (Decision-Making Timeline Index)**, an index that measures the speed at which a country can react to a crisis. The results show a divide between "agile" nations and sequential systems:

- **The Gold Standard: Finland, Estonia, and Poland.** Finland excels thanks to pre-authorized emergency legislation that centralizes power upon the occurrence of established "triggers," allowing troop movements without new political steps.
- **The Slowdowns: Hungary and Slovakia** show weaknesses due to fragmented decision-making processes dependent on political ratifications that, in wartime, would prove fatal.

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Lesson for Italy: Bureaucracy as a Strategic Vulnerability

Although the report focuses on the Eastern Front, the raised issues offer **urgent points of reflection for the Italian system**, historically plagued by complex regulatory stratification.

1. The Decision-Making "Bottleneck"

The Finnish case demonstrates that modern defense requires **pre-delegated powers**. In Italy, the transition between political authorization (Parliament and Government) and military execution is often mediated by rigid protocols.

- **Reflection:** Would the Italian system be able to manage an escalation in "hours, not days," or would it remain bogged down in the search for immediate regulatory consensus? The lack of clear "contingency legislation" like Finland's represents a risk of decision-making paralysis.

2. Military Mobility and Civil Infrastructure

The Globsec report cites the delays of **Rail Baltica** as an obstacle to defense. Italy, with its geographical configuration and dependence on critical railway and highway nodes (often subject to endless maintenance), shares these concerns.

- **The bureaucratic knot:** In Italy, "Dual Use" projects (civil infrastructures usable for military purposes) must overcome approval processes between the Ministry of Infrastructure, Defense, and local administrations. This fragmentation risks making the transport of heavy vehicles across the Apennines or to ports a logistical nightmare.

3. Maintenance and "Sustainment"

Globsec identifies maintenance as the "real black hole." For Italy, this translates into the need to streamline **Procurement** contracts.

- **Efficiency vs. Rules:** The strict rules of the Procurement Code, while necessary for transparency, often poorly align with the speed required by military logistics. A system that takes years to award a maintenance contract is not a combat-ready system.

Logistics: The Rail Baltica Case

The project to connect the Baltics to Poland by replacing the Russian gauge is plagued by costs that have soared to **15 billion euros** and delays that have pushed delivery to **2035**. This demonstrates that, even with political will, "technical bureaucracy" and funding issues can neutralize strategic advantages.

*"Deterrence depends on decisions made in a few hours, not days," said **Tomas Nagy**, one of the report's authors.*

Conclusions

The Globsec report suggests that security is not guaranteed only by purchasing new tanks, but by **simplifying procedures**. For Italy, the challenge is to transform bureaucracy from an internal obstacle into an asset of efficiency, following the example of Baltic and Nordic neighbors: fewer sequential steps, more pre-delegated authority, and infrastructures truly ready for use.

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