Everyone to Montecitorio: Crosetto, a pragmatic Minister, but it's not enough!

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When the newspaper *Il Foglio* headlines “Less politics, more strategy. The importance of the military in the Chamber”, it highlights the change in perspective: it is not the usual media spectacle, but a finally serious attempt to bring the debate on National Security back to the concreteness of threats, numbers, and operational plans.

Guido Crosetto, as Minister of Defense, has had the merit of breaking an ancient Italian convention: addressing the possibility of a conflict, and the consequent need for rearmament not as an ideological dogma, but as a **fundamental government responsibility**. In this respect, it is correct to define him as the most concrete, and probably the best, Minister of Defense of the last republican decades.

Return to Reality: Crosetto's Methodical Approach

The bill that the Government is about to present to the Council of Ministers involves a potential investment of about **ten billion euros per year**. It is not only about the (much-discussed) voluntary draft, but a complete reorganization of the Defense system projected towards the scenario that intelligence services foresee for **2030**, including a potential Russian attack on a NATO member, in line with German estimates.

The key points of the reform are well defined:

- Establishment of a **Voluntary Reserve Force** of up to 10,000 units, quickly activatable in case of emergency.
- **Significant increase in personnel**: 30–40 thousand additional military personnel over 5–10 years, to reach 135 thousand soldiers in service and a potential of 180–190 thousand mobilizable.
- Official recognition of **Cyber Space** as a national defense domain, with a dedicated “digital weapon” composed of 1,200–1,500 operators active 24/7.
- **Accelerated procedures** for the construction of critical infrastructures (bunkers, command centers), overcoming the slowness of the procurement code.
- **Renewal of intelligence**, to fill the Italian absence of a true military intelligence service dedicated to new sectors (space, cyber, hybrid warfare).

What is the most positive element in this perspective?

The conception, almost revolutionary for Italy, that Defense is not a place for political outbursts, but an **essential function of the State to be built with technical clarity**.

Crosetto is transparent: Italy is unprepared in the face of the threat and the increase in spending is not a favor to NATO, but a mandatory response to others' rearmament. Reality, if ignored, imposes itself.

In this perspective, the **Hearing of military leaders in Parliament** is not a folkloric event, but a crucial training moment for the political class and public opinion. And here *Il Foglio* hits the target: less chatter, more experts, more data analysis, more strategic planning.

The Merit Issue: If Efficiency Is Not Measured, the Reform Fails

Regulations can be updated, new operational areas defined, and a modern “cyber weapon” created, but if the mechanism of **evaluation, responsibility, and career advancement** remains unchanged, the new architecture will rest on obsolete foundations.

In the Italian Armed Forces, in some areas, a culture persists where promotion is still too tied to **bureaucratic formalities** and **established practices**, rather than to the **systematic measurement of operational and managerial results**. Only with the current government have signs of **discontinuity** and a stronger emphasis on **meritocracy** begun to emerge, but many evaluation mechanisms remain effectively inherited from the past.

The future is worrying: today at the top of Defense is **Guido Crosetto**, a figure who has proven to be pragmatic and merit-oriented, but tomorrow, with a change of government, what would happen if these lines were not consolidated into **structural reforms**? Without a profound change in the rules of the game, a different political direction would be enough to bring the military tool back into old logics.

Until commanders are judged on **clear and measurable metrics**, linked to **operational readiness**, **training**, **interoperability**, and the **development of operational capabilities**; until a real mechanism of **service termination for failure to achieve objectives** is introduced, with mandatory exit for those who do not meet minimum standards, the change can only be partial.

It is in this sense that the famous, bitter observation “**from Caporetto to today little has changed**” goes beyond hyperbole: for decades, mistakes have not been analyzed in depth as they would have deserved, the consequences have often been limited, and responsibility has too easily dispersed among procedures, customs, and hierarchical steps.

Behind every projection of force there is a premise: choosing, training, and evaluating leaders based on real capabilities. Without meritocracy, no modernization can hold - Copyright Photo Italian Army

Relations with Companies: the industry must serve, not dictate the needs

A crucial point is the link with the industrial sector. **Crosetto knows the sector in depth** and has always maintained that its sustainability depends on strategic choices being guided by national security priorities, not commercial interests.

The Chief of Defense Staff, **General C.A. Luciano Portolano**, summarized this position exemplarily: **the industry must provide support, not impose its models**. Companies should not impose operational needs on the Armed Forces, nor indirectly write the country's strategy.

The ideal principle is clear:

1. **Politics** establishes the security strategy.
2. **The Armed Forces** translate it into operational requirements.
3. **The Industry** provides and innovates, respecting the set direction.

In practice, there are three main risks.

First: that programs are designed more to keep **production lines active or regional balances** than to respond to current war challenges.

Second: a subtle form of **systemic influence**, made of promises, explicit or implicit, of high-level positions after retirement, seats on boards of directors, prestigious consultancies, career guarantees for those in uniform who decide today, and the same type of illusions aimed at the political apparatus.

Third: a leadership class and a circle of **“superficial civilian analysts”**, whose alleged competence derives from very short periods of selected reserve, twenty years of *talk shows* without ever managing men or crises, or from former generals who have climbed the bureaucracy and pose as oracles.

If these three vicious circuits are not eliminated, the industry that decides, the revolving door phenomenon, and tolerance towards fake experts, the national interest will regularly be diverted towards partisan interests. The additional ten billion in spending risks consolidating old patterns, instead of building the truly necessary capabilities.

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Obsolete Commands: Agility Needed Against Historical Rigidity

Finally, the command structure.

Italy enters the era of **integrated domains**, land, sea, air, space, cyber, but carries the weight of an apparatus that, in many respects, still seems anchored to World War II: **overly hierarchical, slow bureaucracy in adaptation and jealous of its interforce competencies**. All seasoned with abundant doses of **bureaucracy** (one of the first enemies

that the Chief of SME **Carmine Masiello** decided to "fight," remember?).

In short, the exact opposite of what the future requires.

Crosetto makes it clear when he talks about hybrid conflicts, cyber domain, and the need to quickly integrate all levels of the military instrument:

- **Lean and joint commands**, where Army, Navy, Air Force, Carabinieri, Space, and Cyber operate in real synergy, not just formally;
- **Clarity in responsibilities**: who is the decision-maker, what are the timelines, and what are the consequences in case of failure;
- **Real enhancement of intermediate ranks** (**Non-commissioned officers** and **young Officers**), who in modern wars represent the true engine of rapid adaptation capability.

If the entire chain of command continues to operate with a mindset suited to static fronts and extended times, we risk facing a war of 2030 (hopefully only on paper) with the strategy of 1943. And, in that case, the necessary **cultural leap would remain incomplete**.

Paratroopers of the Italian Army during an airdrop: a tangible symbol of the rapid operational capability that a modern command structure must be able to coordinate in a truly joint context, between Army and Air Force - Copyright Photo Italian Army

Summary: Progress has begun, but the definitive turning point is missing

The action described by *Il Foglio* “less propaganda, more colonels” is a signal of great weight: Politics withdraws for a moment to listen to the technicians, transforming the Parliament (exceptionally) into a **place of serious analysis** on the Russian threat, NATO commitments, and the shortcomings of our system.

Crosetto has put in place:

- **Economic resources;**
- **A long-term strategic vision (2030);**
- **The courage to admit Italian unpreparedness;**
- **The willingness to create new tools and enhance existing ones (cyber, intelligence, reserve).**

For these reasons, it is justified to consider him the most result-oriented Minister of Defense the Republic has had.

But the final result is not yet guaranteed.

As long as the military is not truly evaluated on **responsibility** and **results**, with careers that reward **merit** and not bureaucratic skill; as long as the **compulsory removal** of ineffective Senior Executives remains a taboo; as long as the **industry** continues to direct strategy instead of being a support; and as long as the **command structure** does not free itself from the rigidity inherited from the 20th century, Italy will remain stuck in a military apparatus that appears modern only on the surface, but remains deeply archaic.

And it is here that the political knot becomes decisive. Some of the changes visible today are linked to the sensitivity of the current executive and the Minister of Defense, but without a **structural reform** in this direction, everything remains reversible: a change of majority will be enough to bring the military tool back into old logics.

For this reason, the presence of the military in Parliament is welcome and praise to a pragmatic minister.

But the real revolution will only be accomplished when these orientations are crystallized in **rules** and **evaluation systems**. The turning point signal will be the day when, in addition to listening to the colonels in hearings, we will see the first generals **removed for failing to**

achieve objectives, not for age limits.

Only then will the change be truly **irreversible**, and not yet another makeover destined to fade at the next change of majority.

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