Germany towards the Gcap: the Rome–London–Tokyo axis tempts Berlin

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Berlin is considering joining the joint venture between Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan developing the **Gcap**, the “fighter of the future” of the **sixth generation**. The hypothesis emerged strongly after a significant political move: **Friedrich Merz** reportedly discussed it directly with **Giorgia Meloni**, finding **availability** on the Italian side. A signal that, if realized, would have a dual impact: industrial and symbolic. Because the Gcap is described as **the most important military project under development in Europe**, and because a potential German shift towards the Italian-British-Japanese program would sound like a **blow** to the defensive architecture built in recent years around the **Paris–Berlin** axis.

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Not “just a plane”: the Gcap as a “system of systems”

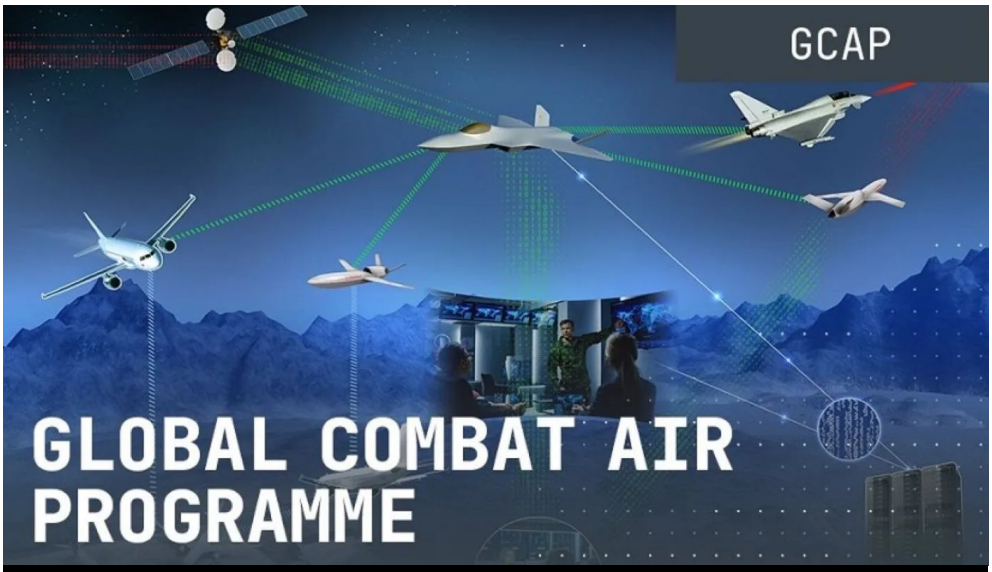
The central point is that the Gcap is not presented as a simple fighter. It is a **“system of systems”**: an integrated platform where the piloted aircraft interacts with **drones**, **satellites**, **combat cloud** networks, and advanced command-control capabilities. In other words, superiority no longer depends solely on aerodynamic performance or armaments, but on the **digital and operational ecosystem** that connects sensors, weapons, and decisions in real-time.

The industrial joint venture, as reported, involves **Leonardo**, **BAE Systems**, and **Mitsubishi**: a triangle that combines European and Japanese capabilities, with direction and a center of gravity also passing through the United Kingdom (headquarters in **England**, in an area linked to BAE).

The Fcas issue: separation from Paris is no longer taboo

German interest in the Gcap intertwines with the crisis of the other major European project: the **Fcas**, born in 2017 around the **Dassault–Airbus** consortium (later joined by **Indra**). The history of the Fcas is marked by industrial clashes over **division of labor**, governance, subcontracting, and decision-making processes. And here lies the political crux: the discussion is no longer so much about *whether* to separate, but **how to do it** without exploding the relationship with France at a time of friction on multiple fronts.

In this context, Berlin seems interested in **saving at least part** of the Fcas program: the **combat cloud**, that is, the network, combat, and control layer that could remain interoperable with other platforms and become a reusable European asset. But on the “common jet” the air has changed: the hypothesis that Europe ends up with **two new-generation fighters**, one “Franco-centric” and one “Gcap-centric”, no longer seems like science fiction.



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What changes if Germany joins: scale, money, and bargaining power

A potential German entry into the Gcap would not be a simple “expansion”. It would be a **transformation of scale**. If Berlin were to order **dozens** (or even “a hundred”) of aircraft, it would change:

- **Economy of the program**: more numbers, greater distribution of fixed costs.
- **Negotiating power** in supply chains, components, and common standards.
- **Political weight** of the project: it would effectively become the backbone of future non-American European combat aviation.

And there is a determining factor: the **funds**. In the cited framework, the Gcap program has entered the development phase and the estimated costs have increased significantly: from an initial setup of **6 billion** to an updated estimate of **18.6 billion**, with a portion still to be secured amounting to **7.831 billion**. In this context, a new “large” partner would have an

immediate advantage: **absorbing part of the increases** and making the spending curve more sustainable.

The political-industrial price: what will Rome ask and what will London ask

If Berlin knocks, however, it is not certain that it will enter “for free”. The implicit question is: **what will Italy ask in return**? In the circulated hypotheses, exchanges and fits in other domains are glimpsed:

- **land platforms** (tanks, vehicles, and components),
- **naval** (with names recalling Italian industrial capacity in the sector),
- **space and satellites**, today central to any “multi-domain” military architecture.

But the “decisive word” would not be only Italian: it would also pass through the **United Kingdom**, which hosts the program's command structure and has specific strategic interests. London, on one hand, wants to have more influence in **European common procurement mechanisms** and access to continental financial instruments; on the other hand, it is pushing to include other actors in the program (there is talk of the British request to open to the **Saudis**). This adds a delicate level: **geopolitical balances, export control, technological standards, and political consensus** among partners.

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A signal for European defense: integration or “two speeds”?

The Gcap–Germany–Fcas affair tells an uncomfortable truth: European defense is entering a phase of **redesign** that does not proceed by slogans (“strategic autonomy”), but by **concrete industrial programs**, money, supply chains, and alliance choices. If Germany were to really shift, even gradually and “after the divorce” with Paris, the message would be clear: Europe would not have a single “champion”, but an internal competition between models, governance, and national interests.

For Italy, however, the game is also an opportunity: to transform its role from partner to **pivot** of a major technological program, with impacts on skilled employment, supply chain, and sovereign capability. For France, on the other hand, the risk is twofold: losing centrality in the “European” project conceived ten years ago and facing a competitor that, by expanding the base, can become **more sustainable and more influential**.

Ultimately, the “elephant in the room” is not just the fighter. It is the question that accompanies it: **who will really lead European technological defense in the next twenty years, and with which alliances?**

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