Hybrid Threat: Palazzo Chigi Takes the Lead but Operational Leadership Remains an Open Question

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The publication in the Official Gazette of the Dpcm on the first National Security Strategy and the change at the helm of the Acn (with the arrival of Andrea Quacivi) accelerate the reform of national defense. This is not a simple bureaucratic reorganization: the executive is acknowledging that the **hybrid threat is no longer a theoretical concept, but the most probable, concrete, and systematic geopolitical scenario that Italy faces today**.

The fragmented architecture inherited from the past has shown significant limitations because it was conceived for a compartmentalized world. Today's reality of hybrid warfare, however, operates in a permanent "gray zone," where state and non-state actors simultaneously strike the country's system on multiple asymmetric fronts, both inside and outside national borders. **The targets include critical and cyber infrastructures, migration flows weaponized as a pressure tool, terrorism, organized crime, speculative financial maneuvers, and cognitive warfare.** Added to these is the strategic vulnerability of underwater infrastructures

located outside national borders – such as gas pipelines and data cables in international waters – exposed to constant sabotage risks.

Faced with such a multifaceted attack, the fragmentation of Italian competences among Defense, the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, and Intelligence Services has become our main weak point. The plan of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Undersecretary Alfredo Mantovano aims to overcome this dispersion through a strong centralization of strategic coordination directly under Palazzo Chigi.

The Military Factor: Why the Defense Doctrine is Irreplaceable

If the institutional framework outlined by the government looks towards political centralization at Palazzo Chigi, a deep reflection opens on who possesses **the real capabilities of execution and response on the ground**. Other civilian institutions, although valid and equipped with high sectoral professionalism, have not developed over the decades the doctrinal and operational background necessary to deal with **asymmetric, hybrid, and systematic conflict situations.**

This type of multidimensional threat presents strong similarities with the complex operational scenarios experienced abroad, such as the **Afghan or Iraqi theater**, where the simultaneous management of security, kinetic attacks, psychological warfare, and criminal infiltrations required a flexible and resilient overall vision. Only the military instrument inherently possesses the capabilities of strategic analysis, advanced planning, and response to structured threats against the Nation.

In this context, leading such enterprises requires non-improvisable skills: **only General officers with a deep knowledge of the different components and solid international operational experience**, gained precisely on the ground in Afghanistan or Iraq, can direct such complex security architectures. Only field leadership firmly anchored to Defense can ensure a coherent response, being able to synergistically rely on the internal support of the **Carabinieri Corps** and the **Coast Guard**, and the external support of the **Guardia di Finanza** , forces already integrated or projected into national defense structures and essential to neutralize asymmetric and economic threats.

The Open Issues of a Governance Yet to Be Decided

Despite the definition of threats and the identification of the military instrument as an essential operational pillar, the final architecture of cyber and hybrid power in Italy remains an entirely undecided puzzle. The transition from decrees to practice will require resolving three crucial issues in the coming months:

1. **The connection between Politics and Military Command:** How will the political coordination authority of Palazzo Chigi integrate with the military's chain of command and control, which holds the actual capacity for structured planning and response?
2. **The fusion of real-time information:** Uniting the intelligence of the Services, the economic-financial analyses of the Guardia di Finanza, and the technological monitoring of the Acn in a single operations room for crisis management.
3. **The management of multi-domain crises:** Establishing the rules of engagement and the chain of command when an attack simultaneously hits the servers of a critical energy infrastructure abroad, while migration pressure flows intensify and cognitive disinformation campaigns occur on the domestic front.

The National Strategy has the merit of mapping the risks and indicating the players involved, but the real chain of command and the future strategic leadership of the sector remain a political and operational game yet to be played.