



The War in the Living Room and the Experts Without Uniforms. Tricarico: Defense Culture Needed

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There is a scene that repeats itself, punctually, every time the world starts to creak: maps on the screen, red and blue arrows, solemn words (“doctrine”, “deterrence”, “red lines”) and commentators pontificating as if they had slept in the trenches. Then, if you scratch away the veneer, you discover that many of those “gurus” have never worn a uniform, have never seen how decisions are made under pressure, have never had operational responsibilities. Yet they explain to the military what they should have done, and to politics what it “must” do, with the confidence of those who never pay the price for their certainties.

General Leonardo Tricarico, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, has put his finger on the sore spot: while the media scene was occupied by “improvised experts” and new prophets of security, the world of Defense – he argues – would have let it happen without an adequate reaction. It is an uncomfortable but useful denunciation: because it does not only speak of talk

shows, it speaks of a cultural void that has existed in Italy for years and that, when a crisis opens, is filled by those who shout the loudest.

The Bologna-Modena Case: The Fuse That Ignited Everything

The fuse, this time, was academic. The story arises from the account – which became public – of a course requested for a group of officers and cadets and denied by the Department of Philosophy of the University of Bologna. The controversy became national: accusations, political reactions, protests, and counter-protests. In the end, the operational solution arrived: the course will be held in Modena, within the area of studies related to Strategic Sciences.

Here one can take sides, discuss whether Bologna was wrong or if it was dragged into a symbolic battle. But the point that remains is larger: as soon as the words “military” and “university” are pronounced, a Pavlovian reflex is triggered in Italy. On one side, those who cry “militarization” as if it were a contagion; on the other, those who respond with indignation regardless, as if any caution were betrayal.

And in the middle, to make an audience, they return: the amateurs on the loose.

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You Don't Need a Uniform to Understand. You Need the Method

Let's be clear right away: it is not true that without a uniform you cannot talk about war, strategy, security. There are very serious scholars, diplomats, analysts, technicians, humanitarian operators, war journalists: real skills, often more up-to-date than those of someone who only has “the resume” on display.

The problem is not the civilian. The problem is improvisation masquerading as authority.

The military (the real one) knows something that is very rare on TV: the difference between opinion and evaluation. Evaluation has sources, hypotheses, margins of error, consequences. Opinion is a well-packaged phrase, ready to be relaunched. And when the second disguises

itself as the first, disaster happens: complex conflicts are simplified, tragic choices are turned into multiple-choice quizzes, propaganda is confused with analysis.

The result? An audience that gets used to “understanding everything” in three minutes. And a policy that, if it does not have its own Defense culture, ends up chasing the dominant narrative of the day.

Tricarico's Provocation and What Lies Beneath the Surface

Tricarico used heavy words about Bologna, going so far as to compare it to a “Soviet”. One may not agree with that language (indeed, it often doesn't help). But it would be convenient to stop at the verbal clash and ignore the issue: he speaks of a “rooted inculture of Defense” in the country, starting from the political-institutional level.

And here there is no metaphor that holds: just observe how much space we leave to improvisation when talking about armies, missions, deterrence, military spending, “dual use” technologies, ethics, and security.

Paradoxically, the very outcome of the affair – the relocation of the training course to Modena – indicates a sensible path: training, contamination, cultural tools. Defense culture, in a democracy, is not “militarizing” society: it is making it mature.

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Why Amateurs Cause Damage (Even When They “Get a Prediction Right”)

The damage is not just the single nonsense said live. It is the collective habit of reasoning poorly:

- **Compulsive Tacticism:** commenting on the move of the day and losing the strategy (political objectives, constraints, long-term).
- **Armchair Determinism:** “just do X and it all ends”, as if war were a switch.
- **Commanded Moralism:** alternating cynicism and indignation based on the wind, without a compass of law, ethics, and national interests.

- **Confusion Between Desire and Reality:** “it will happen this way because it would be right”, which is the quickest way to be surprised.

And when analysis becomes entertainment, democracy loses a piece: because public control over Defense choices (which is sacred) requires solid information, not theatrics.

Three Concrete Things to Take Oxygen Away from the “Prophets”

If we want to reduce the market of improvisers, we need antibodies. Some are simple, almost banal:

1. Transparency on Authority

In every serious public discussion, those who speak should declare what they really know: experience, field, limits. Not for “titles”, but for intellectual honesty.

2. Structured Training (Civil and Military)

More university courses on security, defense, ethics, technology; more exchanges with the Armed Forces; more strategic culture in administrations.

3. Less Timid Defense Communication

If institutions leave the field, someone else will occupy it. Communicating does not mean propaganda: it means explaining, contextualizing, educating to doubt.

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In the End, It's Not a War Between “Unarmed” and “Military”

It's a matter of the country's maturity.

A country with a Defense culture is not a belligerent country: it is a country that knows how to distinguish analysis from pose, competence from vanity, debate from cheering. It is a country where the university does not fear confrontation with institutions and where institutions accept confrontation without demanding reverence.

And above all, it is a country that does not let itself be told about war by those who only know it by hearsay, but demands – from anyone who speaks – rigor, humility, responsibility.

News link: https://corrieredibologna.corriere.it/notizie/politica/25_dicembre_16/bologna-tricarico-generale-soviet-a0a1d460-7748-480d-a4c4-784f0056cxlk.shtml?refresh_ce