Why Italy Needs a National Joint Warfare Centre

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The transformation of the Italian military instrument towards the multi-domain paradigm is now underway. The COVI, Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze, is the hub for planning and directing operations in the five domains and joint exercises. However, unlike NATO, Italy does not have a national Joint Warfare Centre that allows the COVI to train continuously as a true joint warfighting command, that is, a command called to conduct complex high-intensity operations.

In the allied context, the model is represented by the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger and the Joint Force Training Centre in Bydgoszcz. The former is the reference for NATO's operational and strategic training and for the development of joint warfare; the latter is a flexible hub with the motto “Transformation Through Training”, equipped with advanced CIS infrastructures. Both conduct large multi-domain exercises, integrate doctrine, concepts, experimentation, and lessons learned, and are at the center of the Alliance's transformation cycle.

NATO currently deploys about twenty Corps and Division commands that require complex periodic training: from NATO Rapid Deployable Corps to the new multinational divisions on the various fronts of the Alliance. These commands regularly converge on the JWC–JFTC network to be certified and exercised, demonstrating how essential it is to have dedicated poles for warfighting readiness.

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The Lessons of JWC and JFTC for the Italian Case

In the national context, the main reference is the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Italy in Solbiate Olona, a multinational corps command that trains in Stavanger in the Steadfast exercise series, refining its command and control capability. Alongside it, the Multinational Division South has established itself, an evolution of the “Vittorio Veneto” Division and now a NATO multinational divisional command based in Florence, destined to lead the land component on the southern flank.

NRDC-ITA, MND-S, and other equivalent allied headquarters constitute a pool of Corps and Division level commands that in their readiness cycle need repeated and realistic exercises. Today, much of this need is met by centers in northern Europe; an Italian Joint Warfare Centre, built on the model of Stavanger and Bydgoszcz, would allow NATO to offer an additional pole on the southern flank, closer to the Mediterranean theaters where Italy is often the framework nation, easing the load on existing centers.

For Italy, this would mean rationalizing simulation capabilities, giving coherence to the joint exercise cycle, systematizing lessons learned, and providing the COVI with a stable environment in which to fully exercise the function of joint warfighting command together with the main allied Corps and Division commands. Once validated and accredited by NATO, the center could become the natural venue for mission rehearsal, pre-deployment training, and warfare development for many allied countries.

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The Role of COMVIE and the Implications for the Country

In this framework, the COMVIE, Comando Valutazione e Innovazione dell'Esercito based in Civitavecchia, represents the natural candidate to form the nucleus of a future national Joint Warfare Centre. Heir to the Simulation and Evaluation Centre, the COMVIE is the main reference for simulation in support of training and experimentation in the land domain, organizes complex exercises for commands and units, and uses advanced systems to recreate realistic operational environments and validate concepts, procedures, means, and materials.

The next step should consist of its progressive jointness, the expansion of the multi-domain perimeter, and a closer organic relationship with the COVI and the Defense General Staff. This would mean structurally opening the COMVIE to personnel and capabilities from the Navy, Air Force, and other components, integrating maritime, air, space, and cyber dimensions into simulation systems, developing scenarios calibrated to the Euro-Mediterranean theater, and formalizing the role of the center as a provider of operational and strategic exercises for the

COVI and major allied commands.

A Joint Warfare Centre configured in this way would offer NATO a high-value service and Italy a central position in the Alliance's training system, would allow the enhancement of national personnel with great experience in the sector, and would constitute a driving force for the economy of Lazio, thanks to the consolidation of a military and technological excellence hub in Civitavecchia.

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