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The deterioration of the geopolitical framework has transformed defence from a marginal domain to a pillar of European sovereignty.

The European Union is now forced to accelerate its deterrence capacity by integrating its initiatives with the new NATO parameters, which push the allies towards a spending threshold of 3.5 per cent of GDP. Against this backdrop, the EU has implemented a radical change of perspective: Community action is no longer limited to research and development (R&D) support, typical of the European Defence Fund (EDF), but shifts decisively towards industrial upgrading (Development) and joint procurement (Procurement).

On the development front, the European Defence Industrial Programme (EDIP) aims to strengthen the European Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) through Projects of Common Interest (EDPCI), aiming to scale up production and reduce dependencies on non-EU suppliers.

On the procurement front, the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument makes available €150 billion in loans for the joint procurement of weapon systems, supported by the fiscal flexibility of the National Saving Clause (NEC) to allow immediate investments outside the constraints of the Stability Pact.

Future prospects look to the MFF 2028–2034, where the European Commission proposes an unprecedented investment of €131 billion.

This “quantum leap” aims to institutionalise defence as a structural policy of the Union. For Italy, the fifth beneficiary of SAFE (€14.9 billion), the crucial challenge will be the ability to absorb these resources by 2030, adapting national planning and bureaucratic timeframes, as well as developing synergies with other European players to strengthen the continent’s strategic autonomy, but not to the detriment of the industrial competitiveness of the country-system.