Future of European Security and Defence Cooperation

European Movement International

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- The EU needs to continue to foster an effective relationship with the US by shaping security and defence cooperation, promoting trade, protecting human rights and fighting the climate crisis.
- The EU-US partnership should represent an anchor for peace, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and security.
- It is of utmost importance to strengthen civil society cooperation in the transatlantic relations by promoting and supporting the setting-up of a transatlantic platform of organised civil society with contact points both in North America and Europe.
- The EU needs to promote a new defence partnership with the US and its international allies to face common global challenges.
- The transatlantic alliance needs to provide robust diplomatic and military support to Ukraine.
- A stronger EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is paramount to deepening and fortifying the transatlantic relations.
- Deepening transatlantic trade offers would be a solid basis to enhance competitiveness and economic growth, while promoting international social and labour standards that safeguard the wellbeing of citizens and leave no one behind.
- The US and the EU, guided by the European Green Deal objectives, must be the axis to drive global environmental and climate action.
- The EU should actively work with our allies to establish and strengthen their own comparable privacy protections to create more opportunities for bilateral cooperation and growth.

INTRODUCTION

The security and defence landscape of Europe is rapidly changing since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022. The return of war to the continent, as well as other major geopolitical shifts, has been a game changer in Europe that led to strong consequences to our economy, decision-making process and politics. It brought into sharp focus the Union's need for closer cooperation in the areas of security and defence. It is crucial to reinforce European Security and Defence Policy through changes in the decision-making procedures and the launch of a Third Convention to reform EU's Treaties. The strength of the European Union (EU) lies in unity, solidarity, and determination; however, the EU needs to be able to protect its citizens and to contribute to international peace and security.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND DEFENCE

The Russian invasion of Ukraine laid bare the need for the EU to take its security and defence policy into its own hands: collective defence should help ensure peace in the continent and neighbourhood as well as contribute to peace efforts globally. Any military actions and EU crisis management require a fully integrated common

foreign policy, also in terms of military powers. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Strategic Compass are the right steps forward, but decision-making procedures are sometimes extremely slow.

The Strategic Compass is the EU's leading policy document for the development of a stronger security and defence Union. Published in March 2022, its objective should be to make the EU a stronger and more capable security provider and to enhance the Union's strategic autonomy and its ability to work with its partners to safeguard its values and interests. For instance, common training of the armed forces of EU Member States, developments of cyber capacities, increased defence spending and joint defence procurements by Member States can make the EU a strong security and defence actor able to protect autonomously its interests and citizens.

Costly, ineffective multiple structures must be avoided through a procurement policy coordinated at EU level. The European Parliament's committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) should have a stronger role in policy formulation and in crisis reaction (right to demand reports, request information from the High Representative in person), while the Subcommittee on Security and Defence

(SEDE) should turn into a fully-fledged European Parliament's Committee. This should be complemented by a common approach to development cooperation, supporting the sustainable growth and democratic integration of other countries and regions.

Moreover, Europe has a responsibility to promote stability and sustainable prosperity worldwide, overcome boundaries and defend universal democratic values, the principles of the rule of law and human rights, free trade and climate protection on a global level. This will involve utilising the EU's economic strength more effectively to defend European interests and values. Maintaining a rules-based international order and achieving European sovereignty will only be possible if European partners make a tremendous joint effort.

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

The EU is currently able to further push for its strategic autonomy in a context where energy and food shortages, security concerns and the economic impact from war in Ukraine make it even more salient. Even though the debate on strategic autonomy has divided Member States before, who imbue the term with different meanings, it represents at its core the EU's increased ability to operate independently and with partners of choice on defence and security matters.

The EU needs to show the necessary political will to advance its defence capabilities. For the EU to become a credible actor, the implementation of the actions listed in the Strategic Compass are of crucial importance. Becoming autonomous means reducing dependencies, especially concerning military equipment and defence machinery. This can be achieved through joint procurements – as suggested by the European Commission in its communication "Defence Investment Gaps Analysis and Way Forward".

To achieve those changes in the often-controversial domain of security and foreign policy, the EU needs democratic support. The European Parliament should invite members of foreign affairs and defence committees of National Parliaments, as well as organised civil society, to monitor the progress made by EU on the path of European security and defence.

UNITED AND COHESIVE EUROPE

The EU should formulate a common

to ensure Member States' cohesion regarding Russia. The EU must act to ensure that European countries at risk, such as Ukraine can receive the necessary support to withstand an attack and restore their territorial integrity and independence. It must stand firmly behind its commitments under the European and NATO treaties.

The EU should contemplate structured cooperation to ensure the defence of the borders between Russia and the Nordic Countries and Black Sea, also in the fight against organised crime. In terms of sanctions, further economic sanctions are needed, designed for a long-term perspective if necessary.

Moreover, the EU should support Russian democratic groups in exile and as far as possible within Russian territory and the EU should seek close partnerships in the Caucasus and Central Asia. All these issues must be part of the strategic priorities that EU should have to put on the table for a new Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki II).

The EU also needs to promote a credible enlargement perspective to strategically counter destructive external influences in Europe.

We welcome the decision to grant Ukraine and Moldova EU candidate status. As the Copenhagen criteria should determine the prospect and progress of accession, the EU needs to urgently move forward the accession process with the Western Balkans.

TOWARDS HARMONISED EUROPEAN ARMED FORCES

A fully-fledged European Defence Union, funded by the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) including through European own resources, should feature integrated armed forces overseen by the European Parliament and the Council and capable of conducting peacekeeping, humanitarian, and peacebuilding operations globally. The Rapid Deployment Capacity of 5000 troops, as foreseen by the Strategic Compass, would enhance European defence cooperation and capability development to make the EU stronger and more capable of dealing with crisis autonomously when needed.

PESCO should integrate military contingents from the Member States to establish a coherent EU military force with harmonised social framework conditions. The new military structures should be subject to effective

parliamentary control by the European Parliament and a parliamentary commissioner for the military.

The areas of security and defence need to have a social dimension: the further integration under the Rapid Deployment Capacity or other defence initiatives should introduce same working conditions and social rights for military personnel. Harmonisation and standardisation among EU armed forces should be pursued by paying special attention to human rights and fundamental freedoms of civilian and military personnel. As equality and diversity within the armed forces creates tolerance, strong procedures for raising awareness of discrimination should be put in place without further delay. Gender mainstreaming is also paramount, in line with international conventions such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

Fair remuneration of personnel as well as social protection must be introduced. Members of armed forces should have the right of association without restriction to create social dialogue and provide the right to bargain collectively. The armed forces should be considered part of the public sector with access to information about employment

conditions. Sustainability practices also need to be introduced in the defence sector to ensure that the military adapt to climate change.

COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

The Russian threat to European security is more than a military threat. It emerges from often superior strategic communication efforts in third countries, disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks and a general presentation of a geopolitical worldview at odds with the values that underpin the European Union.
The challenge for the EU is to counter this threat by demonstrating and promoting the advantages of the liberal international order, of which the EU is a key pillar. This entails strong political will but most of all it requires the EU to be an effective and strategic communicator. The Strategic Compass provides the EU with a roadmap on how to respond to the current and emerging threats with the creation of a hybrid toolbox and intelligence sharing framework between Member States. They need to investigate any kinds of hybrid warfare activities after which they need to confront and attempt to communicate with any unfriendly cyber powers.

Massive investment in offensive cyber abilities is key, as well as expanding Europol's remit to cover counterintelligence and improve personal cyber hygiene standards in government system and among all citizens. The EU needs to increase its capacity-building and investments in research and technologies as well as close cooperation with other international partners.

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY AND DISINFORMATION

The EU must face the challenges resulting from the shift of the political debate to the digital realm. We encourage the development of an EU supervisory structure for the digital realm, further transparency regarding the use of algorithms and clear lines of responsibility to ensure that digital platforms do what is necessary to prevent disinformation.

Building on the Digital Services Act (DSA), we support the Commission in its proposal to strengthen the Code of Conduct to combat disinformation. The EU should increase its analytical and monitoring capabilities of Russian disinformation campaigns and set aside adequate funding for concrete projects aimed at countering Russian disinformation within the EU and in the Eastern Partnership countries. It should promote and bolster media pluralism, media literacy and access to factual information. The EU needs to continue to develop ways to build societal resilience to disinformation and hostile information activities.

Digital and technological sovereignty of the EU needs to be achieved by ensuring effective protection of European infrastructures against hostile attacks and maintaining control over European data. The EU should take measures to counter socio-economic divergence and improve conditions for growth and entrepreneurship. This process must begin with the establishment of the digital internal market and the development of an effective and resilient pan-European digital infrastructure.

ENERGY AND HEALTH SECURITY

The EU is facing threats to its autonomy in domains other than defence: energy, food, water and health. The Covid-19 pandemic as well as the current energy crisis have revealed the need for more integrated energy and health policies. Furthermore, the Russian invasion showed that the overreliance of the EU

on Russian fossil fuels was detrimental and should be stemmed as quickly as possible.

REPowerEU is a strong initiative that seeks to reduce the EU's energy dependence on Russia by phasing out fossil fuel imports from the country by 2030. We support the swift creation of a European Energy Union and Health Union, that will quickly allow the EU to diversify energy supplies and increase production of green energy in line with the Union's climate objectives. This means new and shared competences of EU and new supranational powers for the European Commission in the framework of an innovative subsidiarity principle.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ARE NEEDED

The war and the necessity to swiftly impose sanctions on Russia have shown the need for the EU to react faster and more effectively. As was pointed out during the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), changes are needed in the decision-making procedure in instances of emergency. There can be no further postponement of urgently needed reforms of the way the EU takes decisions.

All actions in the area of foreign affairs and security and defence should be co-decided by the European Parliament and the Council based on qualified majority voting (QMV), effectively overcoming the veto powers of single Member States. While treaty change can push the EU to make more coherent joint and rapid decisions, it should not be regarded as a panacea. Treaty change alone will not solve the problems associated with EU security and defence cooperation. Furthermore, Treaty change requires unanimity, which will be hard to overcome.

In the absence of treaty change, the passerelle clause allows the use of the QMV in some instances of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Also, Article 31 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) provides the option for constructive abstention while Article 44 TEU introduces a mechanism that allows a group of Member States (minimum two) to be entrusted by the Council with the 'implementation of a task' in cases where they wish to do so and have the capability to carry it out. This mechanism seems particularly fit for Common Security and Defence (CSDP) missions and operations, allowing for more timely and rapid crisis response.

Other reforms could be led by the Council of Europe, which must be strengthened as a forum for shaping a wider Europe after Russia's ejection. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) remains an important security partner aligned to EU values. The OSCE's scale – 57 participating states across Europe, Central Asia and North America – provides global perspective and experience to Europe's current challenges, particularly, its roles in conflict prevention and resolution, arms control and border management.

The EU should also promote the development of a full-scale foreign policy apparatus with the necessary intelligence, including close involvement of think tanks, media organisations and organised civil society, while strengthening the diplomatic service under the responsibility of the High Representative.

The EU should promote an enhanced, structured collaboration between national foreign ministries and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The European Political Community proposed by the French government can be a format to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between the EU and NATO in Europe and should serve the provisions of the EU Treaties and the Council of Europe Statute.

ENHANCING THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

As the war changed the priorities in the region and heightened the need for the EU to be its own security provider, the Transatlantic Relationship needs to be redefined. There is a widespread misunderstanding of transatlantic relations as a trade-off between a stronger and sovereign EU on the one hand and strong transatlantic ties on the other. In fact, the US – and the transatlantic relations altogether – rely on a strong EU. Strengthening the European strategic autonomy and the EU's capabilities in security and defence are an inevitable element of deepening and fortifying transatlantic relations. The most beneficial defence cooperation between the EU and its transatlantic partners is when Member States have modernised military capabilities ready for deployment. Additionally, the EU needs to be seen as a European pillar of NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members.

Together, the EU and the US should be an anchor for democracy, peace and security around the world, the rule of law, and human rights for all. We detail in length the shape that the Transatlantic relationship should take in our policy position "EU-US relations".

EU-CHINA RELATIONS

The EU must develop a coherent strategy aimed at a constructive and rule-based collaboration and co-existence with China, which is EU's "partner for cooperation and negotiation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival". Considering the ongoing war in Ukraine, the dialogue needs to remain open with China. However, the EU needs to further promote avoidance of Chinese interference in Europe and push for a critical approach towards Chinese investments in vital sectors. The EU must strive to reduce its dependency on China and diversify its imports, in a context where overreliance on autocracies has proven hugely detrimental. In our policy position "EU-China relations", we delve deeper in the topic.

With respect to the EU-UK relations and EU-US relations, please see our Policy Positions here and here.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Only by working together can we provide common solutions to the challenges Europe faces and ensure that Europeans' ambitions mirror the future work of the European Union. By bringing our member organisations together in our Political Committees, we continuously develop new policy positions and put existing ones to good use. Please visit our website www.europeanmovmement.eu to take a look at our main policy positions that guide our current work and get in touch if you would like to join us or support our work.

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