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IN BRIEF

Security and defence policy: An agenda for 2019-2024

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ONE OF THE MAIN CONCERNS THAT VOTERS ARE LIKELY TO HAVE IN THEIR MINDS WHEN CASTING THEIR BALLOTS IN NEXT YEAR'S EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IS SECURITY. THIS MEANS THAT THE EU NEEDS AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA IN THE AREA OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE FOR 2019-2024. MORE SPECIFICALLY, IT NEEDS A SET OF CONCRETE DELIVERABLES, WHICH, IF DELIVERED PROPERLY AND COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY TO EUROPEAN CITIZENS, COULD HELP BOOST EUROPEANS' SENSE OF SECURITY WHERE THEY MIGHT LIVE IN THE UNION.

Day by day, the May 2019 European elections are getting closer. In these elections, citizens from across the EU will elect the MEPs who will represent them in Brussels and in Strasbourg during the next European Parliament's five-year mandate. One of the main concerns that voters are likely to have in their mind when casting their ballots next year is security. An opinion survey from autumn 2017, for example, found that the number of Europeans who think the EU is a secure place to live in has fallen significantly—from 79% in 2015 to 68% in 2017—in the space of just two years.[1] This means that one of the EU's top priorities after the elections needs to be the reversal of this negative trend. Europeans across the Union should be able to feel safe and secure, wherever they might live.

One way in which the EU can contribute towards boosting European citizens' sense of security is by having an ambitious agenda and delivering concrete results in security and defence. After all, this is an area where EU level cooperation enjoys significant public support; 75% all of EU citizens support a common security and defence policy in the EU.[2] Much has already been achieved in this area, especially since 2017. Yet, a lot more can and should be done to ensure that the EU has both the ability and the means to protect Europe and European citizens from the various threats they are currently facing. This author sees that the EU's aims in the area of security and defence for the next five-year period could be divided into four main categories: (1) responding to cyber threats and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-related challenges, (2) further developing the EU's existing institutional structures, (3) improving the EU's political readiness to address crises in its neighbourhood, and (4) strengthening the EU's partnerships with third-countries.

[1] European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 464b*, Report, December 2017, 4, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/80698 on 22 October 2018.

[2] European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 461*, Report, June 2017, 14, accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/78778 on 2 November 2018.

An agenda

First, the EU needs to follow actively and respond to the unfolding revolution in military technology, which is bringing AI-powered weapons systems to the battlefield. The world is currently experiencing an AI arms race, which is fuelled by increased great power competition between Russia, China and the US; new scientific breakthroughs; and new business opportunities brought about by those breakthroughs. An *Economist* special report from January 2018 warned that autonomous weapons systems pose 'daunting ethical, legal, policy and practical problems, potentially creating dangers of an entirely new and, some think, existential kind'.[3] The EU should therefore build on the European Commission's April 2018 communication titled *Artificial Intelligence for Europe* and develop its first-ever AI Security Strategy. Given that the 2016 Global Strategy, the most recent document outlining the EU's overall foreign and security policy vision, contains only one passing reference to AI (i.e. in the context of emphasising the importance of global rules), the AI Security Strategy would (1) provide a comprehensive analysis of the security and defence-related challenges that AI is likely to pose for Europe, (2) provide an overview of the EU's capabilities in this area and identify critical shortfalls, (3) and explain how those capabilities could be used to tackle AI-related challenges.

Second, the EU needs to further develop its existing institutional structures in the field of security and defence. The first priority is to maintain the current momentum to transform the EU into a more credible and capable international actor, which has been driven by instability in the Union's neighbourhood, the UK's Brexit referendum, and the 2016 US Presidential elections. This momentum has already led to the establishment of Permanent Structures Cooperation and the launch of the European Defence Fund, for example. However, both initiatives are in their infancy and their success will depend on effective direction and the political leaders' willingness to invest both time and financial resources in their fine tuning. EU member states also need to be pushed to increase their defence spending to ensure that Europe will have sufficient financial resources to develop and adopt new technologies and to protect and defend its citizens. In 2016, they spent only 1.3% of total EU GDP in defence.[4] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has noted several times that, after the UK has left the EU, 80% NATO's total defence spending will come from non-EU NATO allies.[5] This is unsustainable if the EU wants to be a credible and capable international actor and take steps towards strategic autonomy. By making the effort to spend 2% of GDP in defence, the EU would make clear that it wants to continue to be a security provider rather than slowly but surely transform into a mere security consumer. This would also increase the Union's appeal as a partner on the world stage. The EU should also develop its mutual assistance clause (i.e. Article 42(7) TEU), which was invoked for the first time after the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks. More precisely, there should be a better understanding of the scenarios in which the article could be invoked and the assistance that an attacked member state could expect from its EU partners.

Third, the EU needs to improve its political readiness to address autonomously low- to medium-intensity crises in its southern neighbourhood in the Middle East and North Africa Region. In addition, the Union needs to become more prepared to address high-intensity crises and crises in its eastern neighbourhood (i.e. ones involving Russia) in cooperation with its international partners, especially the US. The EU's security and defence policy has existed for 15 years now, and more than 30 military and civilian operations have been launched in its framework primarily in the Balkans and Africa. Yet, the Union continues to struggle when it is expected to intervene even in relatively low intensity crises. In 2014, for example, it took the EU three months and five force generation conferences to launch a modest 750-strong operation to the Central African Republic to contribute to the provision of a safe and secure environment in the conflict-ridded country. Another symptom of the EU's

[3] *Economist*, 'Autonomous weapons are a game-changer', Special Report, Man and Machine, 25 January 2018, accessed at https://www.economist.com/special-report/2018/01/25/autonomous-weapons-are-a-game-changer on 16 October 2018.
[4] Eurostat, 'How much is spent on defence in the EU?', 18 May 2018, accessed at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20180518-1?inheritRedirect=true on 16 October 2018.
[5] See, e.g., NATO, 'Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the opening session of the Munich Security Conference', Speeches & transcripts, 16 February 2018, accessed at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_152209.htm on 16 October 2018.

intervention wariness is that the Union has still never used its battlegroups, even though the first ones became operational in 2005. Thus, although France's new European Intervention Initiative is not an EU instrument, it is a step to the right direction because it seeks to increase the participating countries' readiness to intervene in crises by facilitating the development of a common strategic culture.

Fourth, the EU needs to develop new partnerships in the field of security and defence and enhance the existing ones. Most urgently, the EU needs to develop a partnership with the UK. Although the UK will continue to be involved in Europe's security architecture after it has left the EU by the end of March 2019, it is important that the Union develops a new and ambitious partnership with London when it comes to security and defence as soon as possible after Brexit. The reason for this is that the UK has many highly positive attributes that make it an indispensable partner for the Union: it has one of Europe's largest military budgets, it maintains a full-spectrum capability that allows to intervene in low-intensity crises and fight conventional wars, it has a highly developed and competitive defence industry, and it does not hesitate to stand up against Europe's adversaries. Thus, the EU should seek to involve the UK in its security and defence policy and in initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation as far as is politically possible for post-Brexit British governments. The EU should also consider opening the European Defence Fund for British companies on a case-by-case basis, especially when they are cooperating with EU-based defence companies.

Conclusion

This is by no means a complete security and defence agenda for the EU for 2019-2024. The Union will also have to deal with many other issues that were not mentioned in this brief paper such as the on-going war in Ukraine's Donbas region, the civil war in Syria and the forthcoming reconstruction of the country, as well as hybrid warfare. However, the agenda outlined above provides the EU with a set of concrete deliverables, which, if delivered and communicated effectively to European citizens, could help boost Europeans' sense of security wherever they might live in the Union.

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