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# EUROPEAN DEFENCE FOR SECURITY AND PEACE

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## ABSTRACT

The new geopolitical scenario requires the EU to create a European defence system, also as a European pillar of NATO. The EU urgently needs to develop an autonomous hard power, while also strengthening its traditional soft power. For security and economic reasons, the EU should prefer an integrated defence system to the mere coordination of national defences. Recent polls show that this is also the citizens' preference. A dual model, including an autonomous military capacity and the ability to draw and coordinate national forces, could be set up rapidly, exploiting the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence. A European Defence Union requires adequate financing and democratic governance. EU defence shall be at the service of peace and could be partly put at the disposal of the UN. The EU needs to think out of the box and act with ambition and speed.



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## Executive summary

### Role of socialists and democrats in developing an EU foreign, security and defence policy

Most High Representatives who shaped an EU foreign, security and defence policy belonged to the socialists and democrats political family. António Costa (President of the European Council) has called the first ever European Council meetings specifically devoted to European defence. Moreover, the first articulated proposal for a European army, since the collapse of the European Defence Community in 1954, came from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in the Bundestag.

### A structurally new international situation: The geopolitical reasons for European defence

The material and economic bases of the post-World War II order have collapsed. The main international organisations have failed to make room for ascendant powers. In a multipolar world, they organise their interests increasingly against the West and in new and parallel organisations. The US strategic focus shifted structurally to the Pacific due to the hegemonic challenge posed by China. Therefore, Europe and its neighbouring areas are the preferred locations for tensions and wars, exploiting the EU's weakness and the consequent power vacuum.

Europe is surrounded by powers seeking to fragment the EU by practicing a "divide and conquer" strategy to extract resources from the largest world market and savings pool for their global power politics struggle. The process of EU enlargement requires the EU to be able to

defend the candidate countries; otherwise, it will act as an invitation for Russia to invade them before they can join. NATO's recently approved New Force Model asks Europeans to mobilise 300,000 troops in a month. EU defence, acting as a European pillar of NATO, would turn the transatlantic alliance into a more equal partnership, while granting EU security after the collapse of the American security guarantee.

### The economic reasons for EU defence

Military expenditures are rapidly increasing in Europe to defend our democracies, freedom and social system. However, fragmentation is inefficient. Military expenditures can be rationalised by building an effective European Defence Union, rather than 27 separate national ones. The 27 member states together have the world's third-largest military expenditure. They spend 33% of the USA's expenditure with a capacity of 10%, twice as much as Russia, with no deterrent capacity. Building a European Defence Union is the only way for effective defence. Furthermore, it would reduce the amount by which military expenditures will increase.

### The principles for a foreign, security and defence policy of the EU

Civilian and military capabilities are at the service of a foreign and security policy and require quick and legitimate decisions in the face of a crisis. Foreign, security and defence policy should become a concurrent competence of the EU, with democratic and legitimate governance.

The EU is a peace project, and EU defence must be at the service of peace. This should be enshrined in the Treaty through an article,

similar to art. 11 of the Italian Constitution. Accordingly, as soon as an EU military instrument is created, part of it should be unilaterally put at the disposal of the UN, while starting a UN reform to include the EU as such in the Security Council.

The EU needs to define its defence strategic doctrine, identifying the most pressing threats, as well as the structural menaces and competitors, to shape its defence accordingly. The EU shall favour investments in dual-use technologies so that resources can benefit the economy and wellbeing of its citizens, while contributing to strengthening their security.

### Which model of EU defence?

The creation of European Defence Union does not imply a merger of all member states' military forces into a single European army. A dual model, with some European autonomous military capacity and the ability to draw and coordinate national resources if and when needed, seems more feasible. The EU defence shall be the European pillar of NATO, to be used within NATO whenever possible, and standing alone, when necessary, to contribute to the emergence of the EU's strategic autonomy.

### Financing EU defence

Over time, EU defence should be financed by the EU budget, through taxes and public debt. Tax harmonisation can bring about €239 billion in additional revenue per year at the European level; total defence spending for the 27 member states in 2022 was €240 billion. EU defence could be financed by a combination of the following options:

- 1) Pooling together 20% of national military expenditures, as happened with the reserves of Central Banks during the establishment of the monetary union.
- 2) Pooling the national military expenditure increase compared to 2022 (Russian invasion of Ukraine), as initially proposed by Draghi, just after the invasion.
- 3) Take out national contributions to the European Defence Fund, the European Peace facility and projects carried out under the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO) from the Stability and Growth Pact, not other national military expenditures – as done for contributions to the European Fund for Strategic Investments – as an incentive to create a European defence.
- 4) Use the EU's public debt to finance EU defence, as happened with Next Generation EU.

### Effective and democratic governance for EU defence

There is an urgent need for the complete removal of the rule of unanimity in the decision-making processes of the EU, including in foreign, security and defence policies. The direct responsibility for managing these policies shall be on the Commission, as the European executive branch with responsibility to the European Parliament.

### A roadmap towards a European Defence Union

The creation of an effective EU foreign, security and defence policy ultimately requires

Treaty changes, because passerelle clauses are excluded for defence, and decisions with military implications require unanimity. Although it may take some time, treaty reform should thus begin as soon as possible, but some initial steps can be taken by exploiting PESCO in a more effective and ambitious manner.

The EU shall rapidly implement the 1999 European Council decision to create a 60,000 strong Rapid Reaction Force. It shall then develop the capacity to mobilise 300,000 troops within a month, as provided by NATO's New Force Model. Therefore, there is an urgent need to set up an effective EU Command and Control Centre. To avoid duplication and favour integration with NATO, this could be achieved by bringing the Eurocorps into the EU through PESCO by its members. Eurocorps is already NATO-ready. PESCO could also be used to bring other bilateral and multilateral military cooperations existing among member states under the EU's remit.

### The public consensus for EU defence

A number of opinion polls have shown that there is strong public support for EU defence. For years, Eurobarometer has shown that citizens would like the EU to speak with one voice and be more present on the international stage and in the field of defence. At the same time, they seem hesitant of significant increases in military expenditures. A European defence force can best provide both security and prosperity, by reducing the amount of military expenditure increases, strengthening the EU's deterrence capacity, as well as its ability to promote peace and reform the multilateral world order.

### Historical leadership role of socialists and democrats' in EU foreign and security policy

Citizens' security is a priority for any polity. While right-wing forces attempt to securitise all kinds of policy issues, socialists and democrats have always focused on a comprehensive concept of security that contributes to peace and stability within and outside the EU.



*Socialists and democrats have always focused on a comprehensive concept of security that contributes to peace and stability within and outside the EU.*



Since the establishment of the High Representative for EU foreign and security policy, the Socialists and Democrats Group (S&D) has continuously held the role until very recently, setting the scene for the EU's security policy within this broad approach, while adapting to the evolution of the international arena.

Javier Solana was instrumental in establishing a Common Foreign and Security Policy during his 10-year tenure as High Representative between 1999 and 2009. In 2003, he designed the first comprehensive strategy for an EU Common Security and Defence Policy, entitled "A secure Europe in a better world". That strategy singled out five key threats: terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts; state failure; and organised crime.



In that period, following the Second Iraq War, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was the first to articulate a proposal in the Bundestag to create a European defence force, including a 28th European army.<sup>1</sup>

Catherine Ashton managed the creation and development of the European External Action Service between 2009 and 2014. Between 2014 and 2019, Federica Mogherini reacted to worsening security conditions due to terrorism (Bataclan 2015), and in 2016 developed an "Implementation Plan on Security and Defence" that focused on three priorities: (1) enabling the EU to respond more comprehensively, rapidly and decisively to crises; (2) further enhancing the security and defence capacities of our partners; and (3) strengthening the EU's capacity to protect European citizens, working in a coherent and integrated manner on our internal and external security. Furthermore, Mogherini managed to start the first projects within the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO), which was a possibility provided for by the Lisbon Treaty that had not been activated up to that point.

Josep Borrell helped Europe discover the essential nature of its security interests through the "new role of EU strategic autonomy" (2020) and the approval of the "strategic compass for security and defence" (March 2022), while highlighting that "Europe cannot be a herbivore in a world of carnivores" (October 2022).

Currently, António Costa is the first president of the European Council to convene meetings specifically devoted to European defence, which he clearly set as his priority in his first report to the European Parliament on 22 January 2025:

Our Union is a project for peace, that has been stable for decades because we

value our alliances, our economic interdependency, our integrated societies. But to preserve peace, we need to assume greater responsibility for our own defence, our strategic autonomy, our sovereignty. [...] There is an overall sense of urgency and a strategic purpose among us. We are on the right track to build the Europe of Defence.

That sense of urgency and purpose has led me to invite European leaders for an informal meeting on defence on the third of February. This is the very first time the European leaders will get together in a meeting exclusively dedicated to defence to prepare the ground for the next decisions we will have to take, and to provide political guidance for the white paper on defence being prepared by the European Commission and the High Representative. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will join us for parts of our discussions, because Russia's aggression in Ukraine and our resilience from hybrid attacks are shared priorities.

It is in our interest to do more in the field of defence. To become more resilient, more efficient, more autonomous, and a more reliable security and defence actor. This way, the European Union will also become a stronger transatlantic partner, including in the context of NATO.

In this light, this policy brief puts forward ambitious proposals to cope with an unprecedented geopolitical turmoil, which requires a European Defence Union. The aim is to go beyond the nitty-gritty discussion on what is currently feasible, but to address what is necessary to ensure European security and autonomy. The long-term destiny of European citizens depends on the decisions that the EU and its member states take to face the current crises.

## A structurally new international situation: The geopolitical reasons for European defence

After 1945, Western European states enjoyed a long period of peace, essentially through European integration and the American security guarantee through the NATO shield. For Kant, peace is not the absence of war, which is a truce, but the impossibility of war through the creation of supranational institutions to resolve disputes between states through law. This is the reason why war has not disappeared from Europe, but only from the EU. The withdrawal of the US security guarantee is a structural, not a contingent or temporary, feature of the geopolitical scene.

### War around the EU

Today, war is present all around the EU, from Ukraine to the Middle East and North Africa, and it impacts the lives of European citizens in many ways. This situation has three structural causes.

Firstly, the demise of the material conditions underlying the post-conflict world order, centred on the dominance of the West in the major international organisations called upon to manage and sustain it.

In 1945, US GDP accounted for 50% of world GDP, in 2022, it was 15%. In 1973, the GDP of the G7 accounted for 50% of world GDP. In 2022, this figure had reduced to 30%, and no longer even includes the world's seven largest economies. In 1945, the GDP of the USSR was 10% of world GDP, in 1989, it was 10% and in 2022, only 3.5%. In 1950, China's GDP was less than 1% of world GDP, by 1989, this figure had risen to 4%, and in 2022, it reached 18.5% (at purchasing power parity). In 1945, BRICS GDP accounted for under 15%

of world GDP (and 10% was the USSR alone), by 2022, this figure had reached 31%, which was more than the G7.<sup>2</sup>



*The relative decline of the West and the rise of China, India and other players requires changing the world order to get other relevant players to sit at the decision-making table in major international organisations.*



The relative decline of the West and the rise of China, India and other players requires changing the world order to get other relevant players to sit at the decision-making table in major international organisations. So far, the West has failed to propose a comprehensive reform of the current international institutions with this purpose. For example, the decision-making processes of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are dominated by the West. The UN assigns a preeminent role to the victorious powers (or supposedly so) of World War II. This contradicts our professed values of democracy and human rights, because it is not a democratic decision-making system, just as democracy and the rule of law have not always been a precondition for investing or lending funds to governments. This creates an incentive for non-Western powers to act against the current order, increasing tensions and conflicts.



Moreover, the Western-centric order has failed to secure global public goods and the survival of life on the planet: the climate crisis is the result of that order and the economic model on which it is based. Therefore, our values are experienced and interpreted as a mere ideological cloak, which explains why the majority of the world does not sanction Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. All this may lead to the defeat of the values of democracy and human rights, along with the West-centric world order.

Furthermore, the Trump Administration is accelerating the demise of the world order, eroding the legitimacy of international organisations and their ability to provide global public goods. The EU's role to step up in this regard will be crucial. The EU needs to propose a new cooperative and multilateral world order, as an alternative to the nationalist and imperialist perspectives of the global powers competing for hegemony to design a new order fitting their interests.

Secondly, the shift in the balance of world power has led to the structural shift of the USA's strategic focus to the Pacific, with a view to a global hegemonic clash with China.

During the Cold War, Europe was divided into spheres of influence between the two superpowers, being a rich area and the most coveted prey on which the strategic focus of the USA and the USSR was concentrated. Today, the Pacific area is the fastest growing in the world.

The reduction of Europe's strategic relevance, coupled with the fact that the USA has achieved energy self-sufficiency, and indeed, is one of the world's largest energy exporters, has reduced the strategic relevance of the Middle East for the USA, which declined to intervene there, after the Bush Jr. Administration.

Therefore, Europe and its neighbouring areas

are where revisionist powers can foment the greatest tensions, to force the USA to commit resources to non-strategic areas, given the inability of Europeans to ensure their stability. The power vacuum created by the shift in the USA's strategic focus to the Pacific is thus one of the conditions of instability in our neighbourhood.

This is a structural feature, which started with the Obama Administration and its "pivot to the Pacific". Under the Biden Administration, in July 2024, NATO approved the New Force Model, which calls for the deployment of 300,000 European troops within a month, before any US troops, in case of an attack on Europe.



*The Trump Administration is accelerating the USA's decoupling from Europe in security and economic terms.*



The Trump Administration is accelerating the USA's decoupling from Europe in security and economic terms. Firstly, the USA is abandoning Ukraine to take an imperialist stance, opting for power politics, with the idea that the world's great powers can and should divide the world into spheres of influence. Trump seems ready to cede part of the Ukrainian territory to Russia, provided he gets control of Ukraine's rare earth metals and raw materials. The idea that Ukraine should then be victimised together by Russia and the USA recalls the partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary.

Secondly, the USA is imposing tariffs, reducing Transatlantic economic ties and considering the EU an adversary. Thirdly, Trump is testing out the "I play you pay" policy on Europeans. He has made it clear he wants to negotiate on Ukraine with Russia, but without the EU or Ukraine. At the same time, he asks European soldiers to guarantee the ceasefire he will negotiate, without being protected by art. 5 of NATO, that is, without any possible US involvement. And he demands the EU bears the costs of Ukraine reconstruction, while the USA takes control of its rare earth metals and raw materials.

Thirdly, the European power vacuum, namely, the inability of the EU to provide itself with a single foreign and defence policy, is the other condition of instability and war in Europe and in our neighbourhood.

The EU, along with the USA and China, is one of the world's three economic poles, all of which have the world's highest military spending. But European spending is totally inefficient, due to the absence of a European defence system. The 27 EU member states spend 33% of the USA's total on defence with a capacity of 10%, that is, most of the EU Member states' military spending does not produce security.

Russia has the GDP of Spain, and therefore, no longer has the economic potential to be an aspiring world hegemon. As a result, its expansionist policy does not provoke an American reaction because it does not directly affect the world's hegemonic confrontation. On account of it having inherited a significant nuclear arsenal and war apparatus from the USSR, the Putin regime adopts an aggressive policy to legitimise itself. Despite its economic weakness, Russia has been able to intervene militarily and install military bases in Georgia, Moldova, Georgia, Crimea, Syria, Belarus and Ukraine, thanks to the European power vacuum.

Europeans spend twice as much as Russia on defence (it was almost three times as much before the Russian invasion of Ukraine), yet they lack any deterrence capability with respect to Russia. Europe has no ability to play a mediating role with respect to the war in Ukraine, a war on European soil. The same is true in the Middle East, despite the fact that the EU is Israel's largest trading partner and the largest donor of aid to Palestine. This is all due to the lack of a European single foreign, security and defence policy.

### Enemies and no American security guarantee

For the first time, the EU is both surrounded by enemies and without the American security guarantee.

Russia's goal is to prevent further integration, a condition that makes its expansionist policy possible. In every way, Russia favours the dissolution of the Union, through funding and propaganda in support of the political forces most hostile to European integration.



*Unlike in the past, the Union's enlargement policy, instead of expanding the area of stability, is likely to provoke military conflicts.*



This new situation means that, unlike in the past, the Union's enlargement policy, instead

of expanding the area of stability, is likely to provoke military conflicts. The first Russian invasion of Ukraine, with the annexation of Crimea and the establishment of troops in the Donetsk regions, took place after Euromaidan and Ukraine's attempt to enter into a partnership agreement with the EU. After Russia's second invasion of Ukraine, there is a clear risk of something similar happening to Moldova and Georgia, using troops already stationed in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh, if they approach the EU. The choice to grant them candidate status requires the rapid creation of a foreign and defence policy that can guarantee their security in preparation for accession. These states have the right to choose membership of the EU, and thus, the right to participate in the European liberal-democratic system and social market economy model. However, we cannot ignore the current geopolitical context, which is different from the past.

China's penetration is through financial means, and it also favours governments that oppose European integration. China has a vested interest in the Ukraine conflict, both economically (the West devotes resources to it, while Russia increasingly becomes its economic satellite) and politically, with the demonstration of the West's inability to secure the world order, and the opportunity to highlight the double standards that characterise its perspective in the Middle East. China's support at the UN for Palestinian positions and for Muslim countries – by a state that persecutes the Uighur Muslim minority – reminds us of the unscrupulousness and political realism of Chinese foreign policy.

The fact that the USA's strategic focus has shifted structurally to the Pacific had already made the US security guarantee more precarious and did not extend to the entire neighbourhood. Trump is essentially withdrawing it altogether. Europeans need to rise to the challenge.

This shift is structural and permanent. Under the Biden Administration – a strongly Atlanticist president – at the Madrid Summit, NATO approved a new defence plan, the New Force Model,<sup>3</sup> which calls for the deployment of 100,000 units to be ready in 10 days, another 200,000 between 10 and 30 days, and a further 500,000 in 30-90 days. The first 300,000 are to be European. US units are planned only as part of the third 500,000 stagger, if needed. There is no better indication that Europe's security will depend on Europeans.

This new defence plan paves the way for the creation of an EU defence system as a European pillar of NATO. Moreover, it could also possibly lead to the adhesion of the EU as such to the North Atlantic Pact (which is different and separate from NATO, which is an ensuing organisation).

### **The EU is the area most impacted by geopolitical crises**

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the price Europeans pay for energy is twice as much as the USA and China. Consequently, since energy is needed to produce and transport anything, the EU risks de-industrialisation and accelerated economic decline in the medium term.

Moreover, Europe is the destination of migration flows that are influenced by intensifying crises in the neighbourhood. So far, disagreements and rising nationalism among member states have prevented a European migration policy capable of managing adequate legal flows. This effectively delegates migration policy to criminal groups of human traffickers.

The EU needs to create legal and safe entry routes while developing the necessary tools to stabilise the neighbouring areas. The EU had the closest economic relations with Russia,

is Israel's largest trading partner, and remains the largest donor and supporter of the Palestinian Authority. Yet, with no European foreign policy or significant military capability, Europeans merely observe crises and are unable to articulate a position or initiative. They hope, from time to time, that the Pope, Erdoğan, Xi Jinping, Biden, Qatar, or whoever else will take the diplomatic initiative to broker a truce or peace in the current conflicts.

Europeans seem unaware that all these crises are attempts to disintegrate the current world order, through a sort of third world war in pieces, as Pope Francis claimed. The EU is reminiscent of the USA in the first phase of World War I, when fighting had already broken out in Europe in the summer of 1914, but the USA did everything it could to stay out of it until April 1917. The reluctance with which Europeans are helping Ukraine – sending various types of weapons months or years later than requested, and/or to a very limited extent, and/or with stringent use constraints – and the fact that they have not yet launched a serious initiative to create European defences, shows their lack of understanding of the new geopolitical situation.

As in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, there is a succession of meetings of the European Council that are bringing together the heads of state and government of the member states, where they unanimously approve conclusions that are a lowest common denominator and are made up of general principles with little operationality. Not even a condominium assembly operates by unanimity. Yet on the most important matters, from foreign and defence policy to taxation and the budget, the right of veto still applies in the EU. A similar situation characterised the Polish Diet and led to the partitions of Poland and the disappearance of the Polish state. The same can happen to Europe.



*On the most important matters, from foreign and defence policy to taxation and the budget, the right of veto still applies in the EU.*



The adage that "the EU is an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm" actually indicates that the Union is strong and that it is the member states which are weak. Again, this can be clearly seen in the economic field, where the pooling of member states' sovereignty, albeit incompletely, has made Europe into an economic giant. This contrasts with the areas where sovereignty has remained exclusively national, where we are dwarfs and worms.

### **The economic reasons for European defence**

Among the main reasons given to explain the need for a European defence, one of the most obvious concerns is the costs of non-European defence, that is, the lack of European defence. The 27 member states together have the third-largest military spending in the world, after the USA and China. They spend about 1.7% of GDP on defence, whereas the entire EU budget accounts for only about 1% of GDP.

We collectively spend one and a half times the entire EU budget on defence. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, our military spending was almost three times as much as Russia's. Now, with the massive increase in Russian military spending, European defence expenditure

is about twice as much, but without any deterrence capability against it. We spend 33% of the US expenditure, with 10% of its capability. This means that more than two thirds of our military spending is completely ineffective in terms of security output.



*The 27 member states together have the third-largest military spending in the world, after the USA and China.*



The military intervention of some European countries in Libya showed the situation glaringly. After just a few days, the French and British – who regard themselves as great military powers – ran out of ammunition and were forced to request supplies from the Americans. The difficulties in supporting the Ukrainian war effort confirmed this.

More broadly, the geopolitical scenario has shown how the gradual reduction of defence spending in Europe since the end of the Cold War has resulted in significant limits on our defence capability, which will require massive investment if we wish to restore it. But the financial conditions of member states – in the face of the economic, social and technological challenges highlighted by the Draghi Report<sup>4</sup> presented last September – make it very difficult to significantly increase national defence spending.

Moreover, even if such an increase were to occur, with the current level of fragmented and

inefficient spending, this would not guarantee Europe's security in the slightest. Due to duplication of armed forces across the 27 member states and an excessive number of weapon systems, the European defence expenditure remains highly inefficient. We have significantly more military personnel than the USA, but they are less trained, less equipped and chronically under-resourced. The percentage of our spending on personnel (salaries) is much greater than that which goes into research, innovation, armaments and so forth. In the USA, the opposite is true. We often allocate funds to purchase certain assets but not those to ensure their proper use; for example, we purchase aircraft, but the number of hours our pilots can use them is much lower than in the USA.

All this underscores the urgent need for rapid integration in the field of foreign and defence policy.

### **Principles inspiring an EU foreign and defence policy**

A defence union requires a military capacity that must serve a unified foreign policy. Therefore, defining the priorities of foreign and defence policies is an important step that must be made in parallel with the creation of a European Defence Union.



*The EU is a peace project, and a European Defence Union must be at the service of peace.*





The EU is a peace project, and a European Defence Union must be at the service of peace. The goal is to provide security for EU citizens and to help stabilise crises, contributing to peace. The goal should not be to create a military superpower to compete with the USA and China – and maybe soon India – in a power politics struggle.

To this end, the EU should insert an article in the Treaty, similar to art. 11 of the Italian Constitution, to repudiate war as an instrument of offence against the liberty of other people and as a means of settling international disputes. This article should also consent to the limitations of sovereignty necessary for an order that ensures peace and justice among nations by promoting international organisations with this purpose in mind.

Accordingly, as soon as an EU military instrument is established, part of it should be unilaterally put at the disposal of the UN, applying chapter 7 of the UN Charter (which has never been implemented so far), while initiating UN reforms to include the EU as such in the Security Council. The EU shall invite other countries and regional organisations to do the same to strengthen the multilateral order and the UN's capacity to protect peace.



*Main goals should be to defend democracy, to provide immediate answers to major threats, and to defend EU values and interests.*



The EU needs to define its foreign policy goals and defence strategic doctrine by identifying the most pressing threats, the structural menaces and competitors, and shape its defence accordingly. Its main goals should be to defend democracy, to provide immediate answers to major threats, and to defend EU values and interests.

Defending European democracy from the authoritarian and/or illiberal neo-imperial forces that threaten it in many ways, especially with their "divide and conquer" strategy, must be an imperative.

The first revisionist challenge faced by Europe is the Russian military invasion of Ukraine and its goal to rewrite borders in Europe by force to recreate a Russian sphere of influence, as well as directly enlarging its own territory. The return of high-intensity war in Europe requires providing EU citizens with the public good of security, without which democratic life, prosperity and a strong welfare system are impossible. This may imply, for example, the creation of European air space defences that could also protect Europe from potential ballistic threats.

The war in Ukraine cannot be resolved if it is not ensured that any further Russian military intervention (after those in 2014 and 2024) will be met with a unified response from the EU. To this aim, after the end of military hostilities, the EU and its member states need to provide effective military guarantees to Ukraine. This will most probably occur in a context of further acute geopolitical tensions and will be the most demanding peacekeeping mission in the history of the EU. Given the current lack of political union and ensuing weakness of the EU, it is possible that Trump and Putin may negotiate and impose a ceasefire, providing for the EU to deploy up to 200.000 troops to control the new border. This will most probably be combined with a further pursuit of NATO-driven military

support to countries on the East front. Trump would see this outcome as a victory, as he could claim to have ended the war without committing US troops. Putin would accept with the hope that the EU is shown to be unable to actually implement the agreement, thus leaving open the possibility of new aggression at a favourable moment.

Russian aggressive policies go beyond traditional warfare and include hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, disinformation, propaganda and support for extremist parties (mainly of the right, but also on the left, hiding under false pacifism). Moreover, Russia continues to deepen its influence in Africa and the Middle East through the Wagner militia, a sort of 21st century India Company.

China, in contrast, prefers economic penetration, which is often politically selective, and is used to bring national governments under its influence when key European decisions over relations with China are at stake.

The USA under Trump also considers the EU as its adversary and may adopt differentiated tariffs on specific goods to pit EU countries against one another. His requests to annex Greenland and to increase military expenditures to 5% of GDP are similarly hostile and are meant to divide Europeans, as well as force them to put resources into ineffective national defences. This is carried out with the goal of reducing investments in the European economy and damaging its competitiveness, as described by the Draghi Report. However, the EU should not consider the USA as its adversary, but rather engage in constructive dialogue while developing its strategic autonomy, also through the creation of a European defence.

In our neighbourhood, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are all pursuing regional hegemony in various ways. At the same time, following the

Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023, the current extremist Israeli government is exploiting various tensions to strengthen its military predominance, reduce potential threats to Israel's existence, and increase its penetration and grip on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Among the other major threats that Europe needs to be able to respond to are dangers brought about by failed states. Failed states have multiplied around Europe (in the Sahel, Middle East). Failed states create potential room for terrorism and other threats to EU citizens.



*The EU needs to be able to defend its values and interests in the international arena, including in primary international organisations, and eventually within NATO.*



All these developments together produce an encirclement of Europe that reduces its scope for the pursuit of democratically defined, autonomous interests and values.

The EU needs to be able to defend its values and interests in the international arena, including in primary international organisations, and eventually within NATO.

No European country is currently relevant at the world level. A common representation in the main international organisations is thus crucial to defend the EU's values and interests.

This can begin with the reform and consolidation of those organisations to shape a new, more stable world order.

In a framework of complex and intertwined threats, the continued willingness of the new US administration to provide Europeans with the public good of security from military threats is less certain.

Looking ahead, the geopolitical interests of the EU might require specific answers from Europe itself, since the provision of security by the USA cannot be taken for granted. This strengthens the urgency of further pursuing the creation of a European pillar within NATO in line with EU strategic autonomy. This is meant to strengthen, not weaken, NATO by providing it with further capacity to jointly pursue defence tasks, and turning it from the instrument of American protection of, and hegemony over, Europe, into an equal partnership.



*A European defence would be more efficient and effective than the national systems.*



Setting up EU defence would reduce the needed increase of military expenditure than what would otherwise be necessary if carried out at the national level. A European defence would be more efficient and effective than the national systems because it can successfully exploit the greater economies of scale.

The EU and its member states, also in cooperation with NATO, may achieve greater efficiency through joint EU procurement policies based on the reduction of the number of large-scale weapon systems. The EU defence industry may benefit from these efforts, both in terms of rationalising and increasing the effectiveness of current production, as well as in terms of producing new high-technology military tools.

Strategic expenditure needs, such as improvements in infrastructure, investments in long-term capabilities and technology, are of a systemic size for Europe's economy. They must be delivered without putting the social and macro-economic equilibrium at risk, and this requires appropriate tools.

To this end, the EU should pursue different solutions for different tasks, including mobilisation of existing financial instruments (EU budget, European Investment Bank), issuance of joint EU bonds, and specific budgetary rules in the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact that are described in detail in Section 6. The EU should prioritise investments in dual-use technologies, so that resources can benefit the economy and wellbeing of its citizens, while contributing to strengthening their security.

Obviously, foreign and defence policies require quick and legitimate decisions when faced with a crisis. They should become a concurrent competence of the EU, with democratic and legitimate governance, as described in Section 7.

### **Which model of European defence?**

Currently, the EU is considered a civilian power and a model of soft power. This is an important asset and strength that should be strengthened.

At the same time, in the face of increasingly grave wars and geopolitical crises, the EU also needs to equip itself with hard power, with military capability commensurate to its latent potential to cope with these new challenges. This does not mean that it should turn into a military superpower, nor should it neglect those elements of soft power that have characterised it so far.

Over time, several proposals have been made to further develop the EU soft power, which could be revisited. These include the creation of European Civil Peace Corps to help to prevent, manage and transform conflicts. This was called for by the European Parliament from 1995 onward and envisaged by a 2004 feasibility project for the European Commission.<sup>5</sup> The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office proposed the creation of a European Peacebuilding Agency – in close connection with, or within, the European External Action Service – and a common platform for civilian crisis management planning, within a non-violent perspective.<sup>6</sup>

However, the most urgent issue is the development of EU military capabilities within a European Defence Union. European defence constitutes a European public good.<sup>7</sup> Delivery and financing can happen at European or national levels. National delivery and national financing, the least ambitious version of a European Defence Union, involves relaxing the European fiscal rules applied to national governments. National delivery but European financing involves joint support for specific national defence projects. National financing and European delivery implies joint procurement of common capabilities. While European financing and European delivery, the most ambitious option, implies the construction of proper EU-level military capabilities. From a functional and public goods theory, the latter is the option that makes the most sense in several areas, including air defence<sup>8</sup> and nuclear deterrence.

Burgoon, Van der Duin and Nicoli test a large number of alternative models for EU defence,<sup>9</sup> consistently showing that more centralised and ambitious versions (including federal governance, joint capabilities and purchases) are consistently superior to less ambitious versions from a political sustainability standpoint.

Recently, scholars and practitioners called for a rediscovery and revival of the contents of the Treaty Establishing the European Defence Community, signed by the founding countries in 1951 but never entered into force, if a true European Defence Union is to be built, as proposed by President von der Leyen, when she asked the European Parliament to confirm her as the head of the Commission.<sup>10</sup> One of the main features of that Treaty was the creation of a strong central capacity for decision-making and control, alongside a much more limited centralisation of the direct day-to-day management of troops.

Domenico Moro, starting from the analysis of the current reality of national defences and historical experience, suggests that the only possible model of European defence, especially in the beginning, is the dual model, with a limited European military capability, that is, a small federal army, but one that could coordinate the 27 national armies.<sup>11</sup> This was also the case in the USA after the ratification of the Constitution of 1787,<sup>12</sup> with a small federal army that could call on the national militias of member states if necessary.

This EU defence policy and dual model will need to be "stabilised" through a new institutional framework that combines both national and EU tools. EU national armies shall keep (separately) a core defence function of their own borders and domestic territory, as well as the duties (jointly) of the EU, in line with art. 42(7) of the EU Treaty.



In line with the conclusions of the Helsinki European Council (1999) and of the Strategic Compass (2022), common EU defence forces shall be created to perform rapid reaction tasks, which may also require interventions outside the current EU borders, for example, to help stabilise the situation in candidate countries. They would form a 28th EU-led army, which together with the national armies shall constitute a European System of Common Defence, under strong parliamentary control.

Another key aspect is that a European defence is likely to be not only dual but also residual. EU-led defence should be conceived as a European pillar of NATO that can be used independently when the USA is not available to participate and the overall NATO structure is not available. But it should also be designed to be used as often as possible within the Atlantic Alliance, which will continue to be the key defence structure of reference for European countries with respect to overall security assurance.



*A European pillar of NATO would strengthen the Atlantic Alliance.*



A European pillar of NATO would strengthen the Atlantic Alliance. And it could lead to the entry of the EU itself into the structure of the Atlantic Alliance, knowing that the creation of a European pillar of NATO will transform it into an alliance among equals or nearly equals. In essence,

initiating the construction of a European Defence Union based on a dual model means creating, at the European level, an autonomous operational capability on the one hand, and a command and control capability on the other, along with the progressive standardisation of strategic concept, weapon types and so on.

In addition to swiftly implementing the 5,000-strong rapid deployment force for external missions envisaged in the Strategic Compass by 2025, a decision should be made to implement the decision taken in 1999 by the Helsinki European Council to create a 60,000-strong rapid deployment force, which has never been realised, within the current European legislature. This would signal a real will to start building an autonomous European defence capability that would be understood as a European pillar of NATO.

To gain public support (which the last part of this text pertains to) for a European Defence Union, it is essential to make it clear that the creation of a European defence is meant to contribute to world peace and stability and not to exacerbate the current arms race – world military spending has experienced significantly high growth rates from 2018 onward, now exceeding \$2 trillion – or to pursue world hegemonic confrontation. To this end, Alfonso Iozzo and Domenico Moro, of the Center for the Study of Federalism, propose that the EU, in pursuit of its political unity, include in its "Constitution" an article similar to art. 11 of the Italian Constitution that commits itself to promoting peace through shared sovereignty on an equal footing within the framework of global international organisations.<sup>13</sup>

To give immediate concreteness to such a prospect, the EU should commit itself to unilaterally implementing chapter VII of the UN Charter by making a part of its military instrument permanently available to the Security Council. For example, by providing that when the



60,000-strong Rapid Action Force is ready, the 5,000-strong force envisaged by the Strategic Compass will be made available to the Security Council. This would, on one hand, open the door to UN reform – recently discussed at the Summit on the Future – and to the entry of the EU as such into the Security Council, through the Europeanisation of the permanent French seat, and perhaps of the other major regional world organisations. On the other hand, it would push other entities, currently permanent members or aspiring members, to do the same, significantly strengthening the UN's collective capacity to act in defence of peace. Moreover, it would pave the way for the merger of member state participation in other international organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, where such a choice would make the Union the most relevant and decisive actor, and capable of proposing comprehensive reform capable of encompassing the Global South and restoring a world order capable of ensuring stability.

This would reinforce what has been done so far with the European Defence Fund, the European Peace Facility and PESCO, which have initiated a number of defence-industry-wide collaborative projects. And on this point, the turning point would be the merger of the two competing projects of the Tempest and the Franco-German-Spanish SCAF, possibly providing appropriate financial incentives to do so.

It would signal the turning point toward the reduction of weapon systems and a true European defence industry, also repeatedly called for by the CEO of Leonardo, Roberto Cingolani, the most important Italian industry in the sector. Then the goal launched by President von der Leyen of strengthening the defence industry to enable Europeans to buy 50% of their armaments produced in Europe by 2030 – currently 78% are purchased from non-EU suppliers, mainly the USA<sup>14</sup> – would become realistic.

With respect to the creation of a command and control structure, one possible solution proposed in various writings by Moro would be the Europeanisation of the Eurocorps. The Eurocorps is essentially a command and control structure, based in Strasbourg. It is the heir to the Franco-German Brigade and is already formally integrated into NATO missions. In addition to France and Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain and Poland are also full members (framework nations). Austria, Italy, Romania, Greece and Turkey are associate members.



*The creation of civilian peace corps, forms of European civil service dedicated to the promotion of peace and international cooperation, could be additional and fundamental elements in the framework of building a European Defence Union consistent with the EU's tradition and values.*



Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands alone make up more than 75% of the defence spending of the 27 member states. With Greece, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, and Romania, it reaches 90%. This means that even an initiative by just the first six countries would have a huge impact and probably bring all or almost all other EU member states along.

If Italy, Romania and Greece were to move from associate members to full members, and the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland were also to join Eurocorps, strengthening its operational capabilities for command and control, and coordination of national defences, one could move swiftly toward the creation of a European Defence Union, including the 60,000-strong Rapid Intervention Force decided in Helsinki.

The issue of nuclear deterrence would then remain to be addressed. A European Defence Union, even dual and residual, implies a strategic doctrine. This necessitates a decision regarding nuclear deterrence.

France is today the only member state that is independently equipped with atomic weapons, and it has no intention of giving them up. But within the framework of NATO, other European countries also have nuclear weapons at their disposal. The creation of a European defence force ultimately requires at least extending the range of this deterrent to the entire EU. Chancellor Scholz, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, had signalled Germany's readiness to invest in French deterrence as part of its progressive Europeanisation. This is the way forward for the Europeanisation of other European nuclear capabilities.

All this does not imply the abandonment of the European tradition of a strong civilian commitment and the specific capacity for interaction between civilian and military components in the framework of reconstruction and peacemaking missions. The creation of civilian peace corps, forms of European civil service dedicated to the promotion of peace and international cooperation, could be additional and fundamental elements in the framework of building a European Defence Union consistent with the EU's tradition and values.

## Financing EU defence

Moving toward a European Defence Union requires agreement on how to finance it. National defence expenditure is financed by national budgets, that is, by taxes and public debt issued by states. When fully implemented, a European Defence Union should be financed by the EU budget, that is, by taxes and European public debt.



*When fully implemented, a European Defence Union should be financed by the EU budget, that is, by taxes and European public debt.*



The taxes or "own resources" discussed at the EU level have the peculiarity, compared to national taxes, of not hitting workers and fixed-income people, but rather speculative financial transactions, the multinationals of the digital economy, polluting productions (i.e., on those who produce and get rich by passing the costs on to the community through pollution of the air, soil and groundwater), imports produced without complying with European environmental standards, single-use plastic (which is producing devastating effects in terms of pollution of marine environments) and so forth. In short, all those actors that member states today fail to tax, due to blackmail pressure of moving their investments elsewhere.

Not to mention that a 2019 Commission Communication<sup>15</sup> indicated that a gradual shift to qualified majority voting on tax matters would allow for partial tax harmonisation – or the abolishment of tax havens within the EU and some deleterious aspects of domestic tax competition – which would result in some €239 billion in additional revenue per year at the European level. Total defence spending for the 27 member states in 2022 was €240 billion.

Recent work has put the total cost of fully replacing American troops in Europe at €250 billion per year (i.e., a permanent increment of costs in €250 billion), suggesting that half of it could be financed through a central investment capacity with a yearly expenditure capacity of €125 billion. Nevertheless, issues remain regarding how to finance such capacity.

The European experience offers us several possible models, which can also be creatively combined, to finance a European Defence Union.



*One could pool 20% of the defence budgets of each member state to finance European defence. This would recognise the dual character.*



A defence union could be financed in a similar way to that done with the monetary union. When we created the European Central Bank (ECB), we pooled 20% of the reserves of the national central banks that were joining together. One

could pool 20% of the defence budgets of each member state to finance European defence. This would recognise the dual character of European defence, with a limited centralised capability (20%) and a preponderant portion (80%) that would remain managed at the national level.

Something similar was in fact assumed by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the German Parliament promised \$100 billion in defence investment. Draghi observed in the Italian Parliament that all European states would be faced with increasing defence spending and reaching the NATO target of 2%. Hence, he called for this increase to be achieved at the European level instead of at the national level. Since European defence spending was then about 1.5% of GDP, this would involve devoting 0.5% to European defence. In practice, this would concentrate 25% of military spending at the European level while keeping 75% at the national level.

One could take advantage of the precedent set by the Juncker Plan and the European Fund for Strategic Investments that provided for national contributions to the fund to be decoupled from the calculation of the structural deficit. This was the first time that a golden rule on investment was accepted, thanks to the fact that the Juncker Plan was centrally, jointly managed by the European Investment Bank, so all member states were assured that national contributions would really be spent on investments.

Instead, the national golden rule has always been rejected, because member states fear that each state would put all kinds of current expenditures under the category of exempt expenditures. A golden rule could be envisaged on national contributions to the European Defence Fund, the European Peace facility and projects carried out under PESCO. In practice, national funds

allocated to European defence would be decoupled from deficit calculations under a renewed Stability and Growth Pact. This would create an incentive for member states, struggling to finance military spending, to instead invest in common European defence. This would allow the overall increase in military spending to be much lower, due to the economies of scale available at the European level.



*A generalised exemption of national military expenditures from the Stability and Growth Pact would be counterproductive.*



On the contrary, a generalised exemption of national military expenditures from the Stability and Growth Pact would be counterproductive. It would not create an incentive to create a European Defence Union and would allow resources to continue to be wasted on inefficient national defences. It would not be accepted by European citizens, who would see that military expenditures are treated differently than investments or social expenditures.

Like in the pandemic, an expansion of the mandate of the European Stability Mechanism and the European Investment Bank could be envisioned to support the creation of a European Defence Union.

Building on the experience of the Next Generation EU, European public debt could be used to finance a European defence capability, such

as joint military projects; transnational military industry programs carried out under PESCO; and joint procurement with regard to defence tools, armaments, ammunition and so on. However, this would take place without transferring funds to states for national projects, as happened with Next Generation EU.

Finally, one can think about virtuously combining these models by providing for the pooling of a share of defence spending from national budgets, coupled with the golden rule with respect to the financing of European instruments by member states, so as to push to increase the pooled share and with the agreement to finance an agreed share of it with European debt.

We must not forget, however, that the fundamental problem is not resources. Europeans spend 1.6% of GDP on defence, one and a half times the EU budget, more than twice as much as Russia. The issue is to spend together to create a European defence and military industry, overcoming unacceptable waste due to maintaining 27 completely separate and distinct national defence structures. This is absurd if we consider that in recent decades these national forces have acted mainly in the framework of multilateral missions and almost none acted alone, nor have the capacity to do so.

### **Effective and democratic governance for EU defence**

A key issue in moving toward a European Defence Union is to identify an effective and democratic system of governance. That is, one that is able to decide and act in the indispensable timeframe when confronted with the urges and needs that may arise in the defence arena. It would make no sense to create a European military instrument

without ever being able to use it because of a decision-making system that is paralysed by assigning a veto right to each member country.

The link between foreign, security and defence policy is obvious. A European defence, like any military instrument, must serve a foreign and security policy. The same issue arose during the attempt to build a European Defence Community in the 1950s – and many of the contents of that Treaty, later not ratified, continue to retain their relevance and validity. Back then, France, with Monnet and Pleven, proposed the creation of a unified European army. Italy, with Alcide De Gasperi, starting with a proposal by Altiero Spinelli, posed the problem of also creating a European Political Community.

Creating a European Defence Union ultimately requires political union, that is, equipping the EU with a true unified foreign and security policy. This implies creating a democratic European governing structure responsible for foreign, security and defence policy. That is, of a Union that truly speaks with one voice in the world.

To do this, we need to give the Commission the powers of EU representation that it currently has only in trade matters, where the Union has exclusive competence and the Commission negotiates treaties with other countries, as well as representing us in the World Trade Organization. You cannot have a European foreign policy if member states sit in international organisations instead, each with different positions.

Recently, on the UN resolutions on the Gaza ceasefire, member states were divided into for, against and abstaining. Given the difference of opinion, some mistakenly conclude that a European foreign policy is impossible. However, in each European state, there are people and parties with these different positions: diversity of opinion in politics is normal. This is possible because in

the member states there is a government capable of taking a position. The same is true for the EU: to have a foreign policy you don't need unrealistic homogeneity of views, but institutional instruments that can decide democratically, without the need for unanimity.



*To have a foreign policy you don't need unrealistic homogeneity of views, but institutional instruments that can decide democratically, without the need for unanimity.*



Ultimately, political union and EU representation in international fora implies the Europeanisation of the French seat in the UN Security Council, just as monetary union was the Europeanisation of the German mark. Of course, this can be done gradually. For example, it can be accomplished by providing for the participation of a Commission Representative alongside the French one, and with the latter's commitment to abide by the decisions and positions taken at the EU level. Eventually leading to direct EU representation at the UN.

This would be made easier if the EU, when establishing its own autonomous defence capability, decided to unilaterally apply chapter VII of the UN Charter, as suggested earlier. It would be a very strong boost to regional integrations in other areas so that they could be represented as such in the Security Council. That is, it could



have an extraordinarily positive effect in general with respect to the various processes of integration, and thus, stabilisation of different areas of the world, as well as at the level of cooperation among all these major areas on the world level.

All this implies strengthening the European Commission's governing competencies and powers, which is the embryo of a parliamentary government of the EU, because it is the executive that manages the budget and policies and is accountable to Parliament. During elections, European parties present their candidate for the presidency of the Commission in addition to their program, similar to what happens in national parliamentary elections. This would help to provide democratic legitimacy to the process of forming the European executive.

The choice to have the first ever defence commissioner shows that the Commission is moving in the right direction, as long as he proves he is not just a commissioner for the defence industry. In addition, the powers and competencies of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy need to be strengthened to make him a true Foreign Minister. The European Parliament created a defence committee. Above all else, changes are needed to the decision-making process on these competencies, moving beyond the unanimity rule in the Council, to qualified majority voting. This is essential to be able to make decisions in reasonable time, especially in the face of crises.

While unanimity makes blackmail by individual states possible, sometimes for issues that have nothing to do with the decision to be made, but simply to take advantage of the opportunity posed by unanimous decisions on an urgent matter pressing on everyone, to get something in return on completely different dossiers. This testifies to how unanimity is a system that is as inefficient as it is undemocratic.

## **A roadmap towards European defence**

We have an interest, even a need, to build a European defence. To proceed we need a plan, leadership and a decision to do so.

It is unrealistic to think that European defence with a significant deterrence capability, adequately funded, and with democratic and effective political governance can be created at the snap of a finger. A path to a political and defence union will be needed. Monetary union was also achieved through three stages, under a path and sequence defined in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, and with a deadline by which to achieve them, 1999. The same must be done now to restore international subjectivity to Europeans, with a unified foreign, security and defence policy.

This could start with the immediate implementation of the small 5,000-strong rapid intervention force envisaged by the Strategic Compass, and an agreement to implement the 60,000-strong force decided in Helsinki by the European Council in 1999 by the next European term (2029). Preferably providing that, having reached the second stage, the 5,000 unit can be made available unilaterally to the UN, while inviting other permanent members to do the same. This could help start a reform of the UN that would see the EU as such as a member of the Security Council – possibly initially through a side by side with France.

At the same time, we should proceed with the strengthening of the Eurocorps, as a command and control structure capable of precisely managing and coordinating operations and possibly contingents of national units. Its Europeanisation could be initially obtained through PESCO. PESCO should be used to bring under the EU's domain all existing bilateral and multilateral military cooperations, like the Franco-German Brigade, the Baltic Naval Squadron, the Nordic

Defence Cooperation, the Joint Expeditionary Force and the European Intervention Initiative. Then all this could find a more refined legal form as part of a reform of the Treaties.

A decision should be made to merge the Tempest and SCAF projects by providing financial incentives through the European Defence Fund to pave the way for a European defence industry and standardisation of weapon systems. While the legal basis used for joint procurement of vaccines could be used to initiate a European defence procurement system.



*Is indeed a matter of giving the EU new competencies and powers in fiscal and defence matters, and changing its decision-making mechanisms and institutional balances, to create an effective and democratic European governance system.*



Then there remains the issue of defining a European strategic doctrine, including on the subject of nuclear deterrence. Initially, one solution could be the extension of the French one to the entire EU, in exchange for joint investment in its strengthening, and the use of the nuclear capabilities held by some European states under specific agreements with the USA and NATO.

Some argue that all this requires "only" the political will to do so. Indeed, PESCO can be used ambitiously and creatively to move in this direction. However, a European Defence Union ultimately requires a political union, and thus, calls for a comprehensive reform of the Union, that give legal form to a comprehensive agreement covering military, financing and governance aspects. It is indeed a matter of giving the EU new competencies and powers in fiscal and defence matters, and changing its decision-making mechanisms and institutional balances, to create an effective and democratic European governance system.

### **Public consensus for European defence**

A European Defence Union may be necessary, affordable and achievable. But in a democratic system, the key question is whether there is public support for it. A number of polls have shown that there is strong support in public opinion for European defence. For years, the Eurobarometer has shown that citizens would like Europe to speak with one voice and be more present on the international stage and in the field of defence.

A specific survey on European defence surveyed a representative sample of the Italian, French, German, Spanish and Dutch populations to ascertain the level of support for European defence, based on its possible characteristics.<sup>16</sup> This survey differentiated the type of cooperation (coordination of national armed forces or joint armed forces), the size of cooperation (NATO-type Brigade, about 5,000 personnel; NATO-type Army Corps, 60,000 personnel), sources of funding (increment in progressive taxation, increment in flat taxation, Eurobonds or transfer of pre-existing resources from national armed forces), voting mechanisms at

the political level (unanimity of participating states, majority of participating states, majority of participating states and the European Parliament), the presence or absence of joint procurement, and the presence or absence of the possibility for countries involved to decide not to participate (opt-out) from specific missions. The result is that the greater the level of ambition of European defence, the greater the consensus for its creation.

The current turmoil and the new Trump Administration can only strengthen European citizens' support for European defence. Citizens are ready. During the pandemic, they saw and understood the importance of the EU in their lives. Joint action at the EU level made it possible to have more vaccines, at lower prices, and in all member states, rich or poor, at the same time. ECB action has enabled states to borrow at acceptable costs to meet production blocks.

The first €100 billion of European public debt financed the SURE program to cover the cost of national layoffs, covering 25% of European workers. The second, €750 billion, financed the Next Generation EU that enabled European countries to recover after the pandemic. Europeans saw clearly that the Union creates strength.

Today, they feel the need for protection, and they understand that it can only come from the EU, not from member states. In a global context in which continent-sized states – such as the USA, China, Russia and India – confront each other, member states are unable to guarantee their own security and project stability in their neighbourhood. The fact that the 27 member states have the third-largest military expenditure in the world without having deterrence capabilities against Russian aggression is the clearest demonstration of this.

After World War II, Toynbee famously observed that Europeans were like the inhabitants of the Greek polis of Hellenic civilisation and the little states of the Italian peninsula of the Renaissance. They faced the choice between uniting and having their civilisation survive, or remaining divided and succumbing in the face of states of a much greater size. High Representative Borrell summed it up by saying that Europeans must decide whether to be a united player or the divided playing field. Today, this is there for all to see. And citizens seem to realise it.



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He is president of the Tuscany section of the Union of European Federalists. In 2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, when member states closed borders and stopped trade of medical equipment and no common EU response was in sight, he launched an appeal for a European answer to the pandemic with Daniel Innerarity that proposed using the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to strengthen the healthcare system, to invest together in vaccines – giving extraordinary powers to the Commission – and to create EU debt to finance a recovery plan. The appeal was signed by several hundred intellectuals and public figures, and published across Europe by the main newspapers on 10 March 2020.

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Established in 2013, CesUE has rapidly developed into a main actor on European issues in Italy. CesUE also manages Euractiv Italia, the main online media on the EU in Italy. Through its many activities and projects, CesUE promotes European and global integration and counters all forms of nationalism and discrimination.



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PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FEPS POLICY STUDY  
April 2024

Mathieu Blondeel, Cleo Davies,  
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Edited by Maria João Rodrigues

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December 2024

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**A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH TO EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE**

**A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS**

**ABSTRACT**

The global order is pronouncedly turbulent with multiple crises unfolding around us, including armed conflict and war. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the war in Gaza have amplified the feeling of the EU and the rest of the world being insecure and vulnerable to military threat. Meanwhile, the EU has sought to prevent gendered inequalities and injustices through the adoption of Gender Action Plans and taking an active stance on the UN Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Several EU member states have adopted feminist foreign policies (FFPs), seeking to combine that move with increased military expenditure in times of instability in Europe. Seemingly they see no contradiction in spending more money on defence and committing themselves to feminist transformations. Similarly, the EU has adopted a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) with some of those initiatives containing a commitment to gender equality and justice globally.

While the EU is nowhere near adopting a full-scale feminist stance on defence and war, it could engage in a more thoroughgoing set of reflections on what an explicit feminist approach could bring to the EU as a global security actor and involve several stakeholders in such deliberations. Moreover, the Union's CSDP initiatives should be informed by intersectionality, taking cues from some of the member states' FFPs in this regard. This policy brief reflects on the specific question of whether it would be possible for the EU to adopt a feminist approach to security and defence policy, assessing the Union's feminist credentials to date, and providing a set of policy recommendations on the compatibility between FFP and enhanced military expenditure.

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
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EU Affairs Branch

**POLICY BRIEF**  
February 2022

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**ELEVATING THE EU'S ADDED VALUE AS A SECURITY PROVIDER**

**STRENGTHENING THE UNION'S PEACEBUILDING CAPABILITIES**

**ABSTRACT**

Current debates about European strategic autonomy have tended to focus on narrow conceptions of autonomy where the concept is solely understood in military and defence terms. Envisaged in such a way, strategic autonomy equates to a 'l'ite en avant' which fails to resolve existing shortcomings in EU external action. This brief argues that it is in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation, post-conflict peacebuilding and resilience-building where the real EU's strengths lie and that any vision of strategic autonomy should take this as the starting point. Otherwise, this debate only risks increasing the existing gap between the Union's ambition as an international security actor and its practice. The policy brief identifies four distinctive areas where the EU's added value lies, namely, in relation to its integrated approach, the emphasis on multilateralism; its relative adaptability and flexibility; and a normative approach which has privileged non-coercive means and increasingly bottom-up approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. The purpose of this brief is to identify the strengths of the EU in these areas, but also shortcomings so that current debates about strategic autonomy can be geared to addressing these problems. Specifically, the brief argues that the EU and its member states should focus on strengthening the EU's engagement in key areas, improving co-ordination within the EU but also with other actors, and ensuring buy-in from member states by promoting inclusivity, but also differentiation within the policy area. Placing the need to strengthen the Union's peacebuilding capabilities at the centre of the debate could thus help shift the existing narrative towards one that is more sensitive to the comparative advantages of the EU as an international security provider.

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STRATEGIC AUTONOMY SERIES

**A NEW GLOBAL DEAL**  
REFORMING WORLD GOVERNANCE

Edited by Maria João Rodrigues

**POLICY BRIEF**  
March 2023

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**PROGRESSIVE PATHWAYS TO EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY**

**HOW CAN THE EU BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT IN AN INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING WORLD?**

**ABSTRACT**

The debate on European strategic autonomy (ESA) has gained new momentum with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, even though the idea of European autonomy has been present throughout the history of EU integration. The main idea behind the concept of ESA is the EU's ability and means to enhance its freedom from a set of external dependencies – and also to enhance its freedom to conduct its policy autonomously and in line with its fundamental values and interests. Yet does the EU have the capacity and agency to set priorities and make decisions autonomously in its external action? What political, institutional, and material steps are needed to achieve strategic autonomy? Guided by these questions and in search of a progressive answer to them, FEPS, the Fondation Jean-Jaurès and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung conducted a research project looking into three policy domains in which it is vital for Europe to attain the necessary freedom and wherewithal to pursue this objective of ESA: security and defence, economy and trade, and digital and technology. This policy brief summarises the main findings of our ESA research project. Overall, Europe must adapt to the new and challenging global realities. To do this, the EU needs to act with more unity and coordination in different domains, as well as to build resilience and reduce its external dependence on certain fundamental resources.

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