

The Future of Europe: Questions, Concepts and Actors

Panel 1 Thursday 29 September 2022 15:15h-16:30h

Factsheet: “The Future of the EU’s Foreign, Security and Defence Policy”

Russia’s war against Ukraine is threatening the European Union (EU) as a peace project. It has highlighted the capabilities, but also the deficiencies, of the EU as a foreign policy actor. The EU took decisive steps to sanction Russia and provide military support to Ukraine. Yet, there is still a gap between the rhetoric of a geopolitical, global actor and the EU’s foreign policy capabilities to take and implement swift and joint decisions. In defence, the EU has taken tentative steps to increase its role already before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, initiating its first ever strategic assessment, the Strategic Compass. The relevant role of NATO in the current crisis makes, however, also clear that efforts to strengthen the EU’s strategic autonomy need to be well-coordinated with NATO. At the same time, the EU has yet to take concrete steps to take responsibility for itself against global threats.

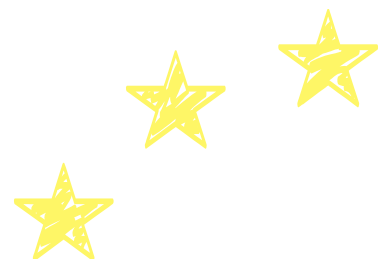
- Is the EU’s institutional structure in CFSP and CSDP fit for purpose?
- What is the role of a post-“Zeitenwende” Germany in EU foreign policy?
- Will the recently found unity among EU member states last in the long term?
- What needs to be jointly addressed by the EU?

Goals

- Ensure cohesion among EU Member States in view of a strong and united position to deter Russia from further escalating its war while boosting the EU’s sovereignty in security and defence.
- Further increase the EU’s actorness and capability in CFSP and CSDP beyond the ongoing war.
- Find an efficient method of cooperation between EU and NATO efforts in defence to ensure a symbiotic relationship rather than unnecessary duplication.
- Develop a proactive policy to support neighbouring and other countries in mitigating the negative impact of Russia’s war in Ukraine on food security, economic as well as political stability.

Challenges

- Differing threat perceptions and strategies with regards to Russia’s war against Ukraine have negatively impacted mutual trust between the ‘Franco-German motor’ and Northern, Central as well as Eastern EU Member States.
- The current institutional structure of unanimity in CFSP harbours a continuous threat of blockade, negatively impacting the EU’s capacity to act swiftly.
- Russia’s war against Ukraine has profound effects on food security, economic performance, and general stability, particularly in the EU Neighbourhood to the East and South.
- The current weaponization of energy and food supplies signals an increase in geopolitical confrontation and conflict, pressuring the EU to develop long-term strategies to defend its interest in a more conflictual world.



Possible Solutions

- Overcoming the threat of paralysis by introducing Qualified Majority Voting for CFSP decisions.
- Increase the effectiveness of military spending by deepening military cooperation within the EU, for example within PESCO.
- Develop European military cooperation in clear coordination with NATO, for example in a 'European pillar' within NATO.
- Maintain, coordinate and increase support of Ukraine, in order to send a strong signal globally that territorial expansion by means of war comes at a very high price.
- As stated by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in his speech at the University in Prague on 29 August 2022, the EU needs to invest in new partnerships – in Asia, Africa, and Latin America – to remain a relevant global player in the multipolar world we live in.

German Dimension

Germany's actions and communication with regards to the ongoing war of Russia against Ukraine have been criticised across EU Member States. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, for instance, accused Scholz of continuing to block more decisive EU sanctions. This stands in contrast to the announcement of the 'Zeitenwende' overhaul of German foreign policy and the commitment of the German government to assume a more active leadership role in international politics. Germany has strongly supported the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO. The German „traffic light coalition“ has been struggling with internal differences. Chancellor Scholz's rather cautious course seeks to avoid anything that could turn Germany into a war party against the backdrop of Putin's nuclear threat potential. Conversely, the FDP and the Greens have pushed for clear support for Ukraine and further arms deliveries. The German government seems to be still grappling with its precise role under new circumstances, but prolonged uncertainty threatens to reduce Germany's credibility, its capacity to lead, and the effectiveness of the EU's policy response in general.

