

# The European

## Security and Defence Union

### How to defend Europe?

Strategic ambitions  
in the face of high  
geopolitical pressure



#### Romania – a strong partner in allied defence

General Gheorghiță Vlad,  
Chief of Defence,  
Bucharest



#### Finland in NATO – added value to European defence

Dr Hanna Ojanen,  
President EuroDéfense-  
Finland, Helsinki



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# Games in times of war

by Hartmut Bühl, Editor-in-Chief, Paris

It was an opportunity for the best to measure their strength in fair competition. And the "truce" (*Ekecheiria*), which lasted for several months, prohibited the bearing of weapons in the region of the ancient Olympic Games to ensure that athletes and spectators arrived safely in Olympia and returned home unmolested afterwards. Wars nevertheless continued to be waged in those ancient times, contrary to the widely held belief that peace prevailed everywhere during the Games.

The universal desire for peace nevertheless lived on and was one of the reasons that moved the Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, to create the Olympic Games of the modern era in 1896. "Wars break out because nations misunderstand each other", his thinking went. The Games should therefore contribute to better knowledge and respect for other cultures and national characteristics through personal contact. Coubertin was convinced that, "the Olympic Games will be a potent, if indirect factor in securing universal peace".

More than a century later, an impressive contingent of more than 40,000 French and foreign security staff was on hand in Paris to deter potential terrorist attacks against the 2024 Olympic Games. Under their protection, the French succeeded in mounting an extraordinarily inventive and colourful opening ceremony along the Seine.

Cheering athletes travelled on boats six kilometres down the river to the Olympic flame near the Eiffel Tower and were able to admire, even in the pouring rain, the beautiful backdrop of the monuments of Paris. The equality of people in their diversity was put centre stage in modern settings while France chose to stage highlights from its history in a way that was not for the squeamish!

Driven by intellect, creativity and organisational skills, France demonstrated to the world its bold determination to bring off such an original ceremony that many had predicted would be unworkable and overambitious. In the event, nothing turned out to be impossible. The French people themselves, many of whom were sceptical about the Games in the middle of their capital city and particularly the people of Paris, harried for months beforehand by construction work and security precautions, turned into enthusiastic spectators during the four weeks of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Paris was once again a movable feast.



Hartmut Bühl

The fact that France had no government at the time, since the early elections that particularly benefitted Marine Le Pen's hard right party and precipitated the country into a political crisis unprecedented in the 5th Republic, was forgotten! President Macron, who caused the chaos by dissolving the National Assembly in June, called for "an Olympic truce" which seemed to hold, at least on the surface: the French have hardly ever seemed so united and so proud, as all their domestic political and social conflicts seemed to recede temporarily into the background.

The security measures during the Games were effective and, luckily, nothing went wrong. However, there was little evidence of Olympic peace in the rest of the world. During the games in Paris, wars thundered on elsewhere, including in Europe. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine took on a new dimension with the extension of the conflict into the territory of Russia. In the conflict in the Middle East, the European Commission felt obliged to call on Israel to exercise restraint in Gaza to prevent further civilian victims by the indiscriminate bombing of residential neighbourhoods. At the same time, Iran was threatening to extend the conflict to the whole of the Middle East.

What all this shows is that the Olympic Games clearly have no direct pacifying influence on crises and conflicts. And yet Paris, with its grandiose month-long festival, has definitely revived the Olympic spirit, which, as Coubertin intended, has made its contribution to a "culture of peace", even if it cannot prevent crises and wars.

May Paris turn out to be more than just a captivating but fleeting snapshot in times of war!

Hartmut Bühl



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## Ukraine

### Striking military targets in Russia



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(nc) In a European Parliament resolution adopted on 19 September 2024, MEPs called on EU countries to lift current restrictions hindering Ukraine from using western weapon systems against legitimate military targets in Russia. Adopted with a large majority, the text states that without lifting current restrictions, Ukraine cannot fully exercise its right to self-defence and remains exposed to attacks on its population and infrastructure. The Parliament deplores the declining volume of bilateral military aid to Ukraine from EU countries and reiterates its call for Member States to fulfil their commitment of March 2023 to deliver one million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine, and to accelerate the delivery of weapons, air defence systems, and ammunition, including Taurus missiles. MEPs also restated their position that all EU countries and NATO allies should collectively and individually commit to annual military support for Ukraine of no less than 0.25% of their GDP.

 **Resolution** <https://bit.ly/47UNids>

## Western Balkans

### Borrell meets with regional leaders in New York



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*Josep Borrell with the President of North Macedonia Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova during the Western Balkans meeting in New York, 25 September 2024*

(nc) In the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, High Representative Josep Borrell hosted an informal meeting with leaders of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro on 25 September in New York. Discussions centred on pressing geopolitical challenges, such as the harmful impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and China's efforts to expand its economic influence. Borrell and the Western Balkans' leaders emphasised the need for strategic alignment with the European Union to safeguard regional stability. The High Representative highlighted that the Western Balkans are an integral part of Europe's future and reiterated that EU membership is within reach, provided that the key reforms are pursued with renewed focus. "The leaders must take bold, strategic decisions to advance their European aspirations", said the High Representative.

➤ Please note that the next edition of our magazine (December 2024) will focus on EU enlargement and the safeguard of regional stability

## European economy

### Draghi report – a competitiveness strategy for Europe

(hb) On 9 September 2024, Mario Draghi, former President of the European Central Bank, delivered his commissioned and long-awaited report on the future of European competitiveness. His findings will contribute to the work of Ursula von der Leyen's new Commission. Draghi's report is outspoken: to avoid being left behind once and for all by the United States and China, the EU would have to invest up to an additional €800bn annually. "Without competitiveness, Europe will be incapable of achieving its political objectives", Draghi said in a press conference. He sees three areas of action to reignite growth: first, collective efforts must focus on closing the innovation gap with the US and China, especially in advanced technologies. The second area is a joint plan for decarbonisation and competitiveness. The industry must adapt its energy and climate transition to avoid declining. The third area is increasing security and reducing dependencies. Europe's ability to act as a cohesive power is weakened by a fragmented defence industry market and a lack of standardisation and interoperability of equipment, which was shown in the EU's support for Ukraine: for 155mm artillery alone, EU Member States have provided ten different types of howitzers to Ukraine.

 **Draghi report:** <https://bit.ly/3Y8Famo>



## Middle East

### Iranian attack against Israel – EU statement

(1 October 2024) *"The EU condemns in the strongest terms Iran's attack against Israel which constitutes a serious threat to regional security. The EU reiterates its commitment to the security of Israel. Once again, a dangerous cycle of attacks and retaliations risks fueling an uncontrollable regional escalation which is in no one's interest. The EU remains fully committed to lower the tensions and contribute to de-escalation to avoid a dangerous regional conflict. The EU is and will continue to be in close contact with all actors to this end. We call on all parties to exercise utmost restraint."*

Source: Council of the European Union

## NATO

## New NATO Secretary General takes office



© NATO

*NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left) officially hands over the gavel to his successor Mark Rutte*


(hb) On 1 October, Mark Rutte, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, took office as the new NATO Secretary General, succeeding Jens Stoltenberg, who was at the top of NATO for 10 years. The handover was marked by the ceremonial passing of a historic gavel. At a special session of the North Atlantic Council, Secretary General Rutte outlined his three priorities for the Alliance: keeping NATO strong and ensuring the allies' defences remain effective and credible against all threats; stepping up support for Ukraine and bringing it ever closer to NATO; and strengthening partnerships in a more interconnected world. Rutte also paid tribute to his predecessor, emphasising the important role of Jens Stoltenberg's leadership for NATO's cohesion over the last decade. Rutte, highly experienced in politics and appreciated by Member States for his pragmatism, will have to respond to the question of what the future of European defence will look like, and for that he must bring all Member States behind him. Our magazine wishes him all success in a world in turmoil.

 **Video:** <https://bit.ly/4es9luA>

## Disaster management

## MEPs criticise budget cuts in civil protection

(nc) Following the devastating floods in Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, the European Parliament expressed its deep concern about the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, including large-scale floods, heatwaves, and wildfires. In the past 30 years alone, floods in Europe have affected 5.5 million people, causing almost 3,000 deaths and more than €170bn in economic damage. The summer of 2024 was the hottest on record, in Europe and globally. In a resolution adopted on 19 September 2024, MEPs expressed their dissatisfaction with the recent budget cuts to the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and called for sufficient and upgraded funding to increase preparedness and improve capacity building, with particular consideration for the next multi-annual EU budget. MEPs demand more EU investment in regional and local resilience and want the future EU cohesion policy to focus even more on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

 See the interviews and articles on the UCPM and other civil protection cooperation projects in our Security and Defence chapter, starting p. 39



## Space

## Two new satellites join the Galileo constellation

(nc) The European Galileo satellite navigation system grew further with a new pair of satellites that has joined the constellation. Launched on 18 September 2024 (00:50 CEST) from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida on a Falcon 9 rocket (SpaceX), Galileo satellites number 31 and 32 have been taken to medium Earth orbit and will

reach their final destination at 23,222 km, where they will be tested prior to starting operations. ESA, as the design authority and system development prime, together with manufacturer OHB, has developed and tested 38 satellites since Galileo's conception. The remaining six are ready to join the constellation starting next year, and will be launched in pairs by ESA's new launcher Ariane 6, that successfully completed its inaugural flight in July 2024. Later, the first batch of Galileo Second Generation (G2) satellites, currently under development by Thales Alenia Space and Airbus Defence and Space, will also be placed in orbit by Ariane 6.



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## #ThinkB4Uclick

## European Cybersecurity Month 2024

(nc) European Cybersecurity Month takes place each year in October. Hundreds of activities take place across Europe including conferences, workshops, trainings, webinars, and more, to educate the public about online threats. The 2024 edition #ThinkB4Uclick focuses on protecting against social engineering – a growing trend where scammers use impersonation, phishing emails or fake offers to trick people into performing certain online actions or giving away sensitive or personal information.

 <https://cybersecuritymonth.eu>

News - last update 6 October 2024



How to deal with the shift to the right

# The European Union after the elections

by Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Professor for international relations / former Vice-President of the European Parliament  
and Romanian Defence Minister, Bucharest

**A**s a former Vice-President of the European Parliament (EP), I shall inevitably address the topic of the European Union (EU) after the 2024 elections from the angle of the EP. The hard right has progressed, reflected in the composition of the new parliament. However, this move to the right is not new: after the EP elections of 2014, Marine Le Pen, for instance, became an MEP, sent by the French electorate. Today, she is an honourable member of her national parliament, and has a relatively strong representation of her party in the EP.

This representation of hard right parties has larger consequences due to their connection to their national governments (Hungarian and Dutch, for instance). As expected, this affects both the nominations of the new Commissioners and the new Council.

A difference with 2014 is that this new wave of the hard right has not been prompted by a direct crisis confronting the EU like previously (the economic-financial crisis of 2008-2011, or the migration crisis of 2015-2016). Rather, it has come from the contesting of the EU's (and the west's in general) response to the Covid-19 pandemic and to the war in Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

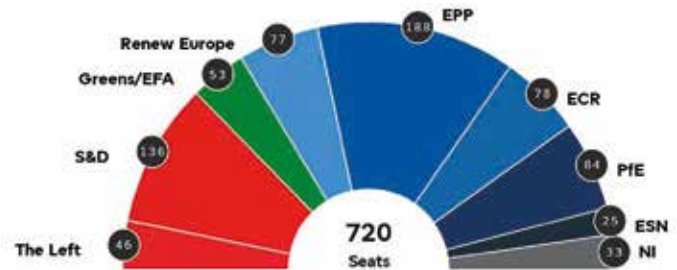
**“If the hard right has been contained so far in the European Parliament, this is not a guarantee that their success in the coming national elections will be easily curtailed.”**

**Prof Ioan Mircea Pașcu**



teaches international relations at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. He became the first civilian Deputy Defence Minister of Romania in 1993 and then served as Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Romanian Parliament and Chairman of the Romanian Delegation to the NATO Parliament Assembly (1996-2000). Having been Romania's Defence

Minister for four years (2000-2004), he was elected Member of the European Parliament (EP) in 2007, where he served as Vice-President of the EP from 2014 to 2019. Professor Pașcu was awarded the Star of Romania (2002) and the Rising Sun, Japan (2017).



European Parliament 2024-2029  
Constitutive session (23 July 2024)

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## The centre holds...

However, the first three major “tests” in the EP – the resolution on Ukraine, the vote on the second mandate of Ursula von der Leyen at the head of the European Commission (EC) and the election of each EP committee bureau – have been successfully passed by the centrist majority. The centre holds! This was partially due to the fragmentation of the hard right – too many personal ambitions of their leaders – and the fact that they did not have the necessary time to familiarise themselves with the new environment.

Supposedly, time will change this situation. Given the new Commission's ambitious programme, one can expect a more resolute opposition to it in the future. The continuation of the Green Deal, support for Ukraine and the efforts towards strengthening European defence and security will most probably be strongly contested by the MEPs of these groups when they reach the EP. This will call for a renewed spirit of collaboration between the centrist groups in the EP, more so than in the previous legislatures.

## ...but the battle continues

However, the intention of the new EC to come to parliament with an important number of pieces of legislation during the first 100 days could only benefit from less opposition, due to the factors mentioned above (fragmentation and lack of organisation of the far right).

If the hard right has been contained so far in the EP, this is not a guarantee that their success in the coming national elections will be easily curtailed. These elections are the main political battlefield to contain the hard right. In consequence, we should brace ourselves for more bad news, which could be overcome only through adherence to the set of common values defining our liberal democracy. If one asks themselves when unity will be most necessary, then the answer is now.

<sup>1</sup> In Romania, for instance, the new narrative asking to leave both NATO and the EU, based on the so-called “mistreatment” of the country by the two organisations has erupted after the aggression of Russia against Ukraine.



## Guest commentary

# The challenges awaiting the new European Commission

by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, President Robert Schuman Foundation, Paris



The results of the European elections of June 2024 produced little change in the majority in the European Parliament and Ursula von der Leyen was elected for a second term on 18 July by the same coalition as before. However, the background against which the new Commission will be getting down to work has undergone substantial change.

Russia's war against Ukraine has confirmed the crying need for more strategically oriented European policies. The total cynicism and brutality of Putin's revisionism and expansionism has acted as a wake-up call for Europeans. Have they, however, drawn all the right conclusions?

The evolution of the world's major economies, all facing environmental and digital transitions, is challenging the current fiscal and monetary orthodoxy. Fiscal restraint leads to stagnation, as the example of Germany clearly shows. In its quest for growth, the European Union must explore new policy avenues so as not to continue being outpaced by the United States or overtaken by China.

At the same time, European citizens have shown that they are deeply unhappy about their governments' European policies. The accumulation of regulations and the method chosen to impose change go a long way to explaining the success of far-right parties at the European elections. The Commission will therefore have to change its approach and find ways of associating businesses and citizens more closely with the decisive choices for the future.

Finally, in the face of new challenges, institutional questions have once again surfaced in the debate about the future of Europe. How can a larger budget be secured? What is

the best way of stimulating more investment? How can foreign policy be made more unified and more effective?

It will be incumbent on the European Commission to come up with an entirely new approach.

To be more "geopolitical", the EU must convince all its Member States, and not just the Commission, to be more pro-active and more effective in their foreign policy. Ursula von der Leyen has certainly become the face of Europe, but she has often done so by encroaching on the powers of member states, provoking irritation and even dissidence. It will be up to Kaja Kallas to give full expression to the role of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on which Josep Borrell made an excellent start but on which the services of the Commission are still a few steps behind.

On economic and fiscal policy, there must be a total reappraisal of thinking and practice. The current orthodoxy holds back growth and innovation which are more than ever essential in these times of transition. In addition, they lead to cost-of-living pressures on households and feed the extremist vote. The EU must also realise that its vast internal market can generate more consumer spending and is not just a means of promoting exports driven by competitiveness based on wage restraint and stagnant living standards.

Such are the new challenges facing the incoming European Commission, which must also include on its agenda a debate about the European treaties. In the light of international developments, it is crucial to take the right decisions; they must be bold and courageous. ■

 [www.robert-schuman.eu/en](http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en)

# European Commission – von der Leyen II

(hb) Ursula von der Leyen, re-elected President of the European Commission, presented her team of Commissioners-designate at the conference of presidents of the political groups in the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg on 17 September 2024. No one is set, all Commissioners-designate will be quizzed in public hearings by the MEPs of the EP's specialised committees, who must approve their nominations. The hearings will take place from 4 to 12 November 2024.

## New priorities

The focus over the next five years will be on improving competitiveness and internal and external security.

### Economy

The new priorities of the von der Leyen II Commission are evident in the economic domain in that the Green Deal is embedded in the industrial strategy and the protection of the European economy is now given a predominant role. **Teresa Ribera Rodríguez** (ES) will be the strong representative of the Commission President as Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition. She will be supported by Stéphane Séjourné (FR), designated Executive Vice-President for prosperity and industrial strategy after his compatriot Thierry Breton previously threw in the towel and criticised von der Leyen's leadership style. **Maroš Šefčovič** (SK) takes over the new portfolio for trade and economic security to protect the EU economy from unwanted competition.

### Security and defence

The portfolio of security and defence is given to **Andrius Kubilius**, tasked to work on the creation of a "true European and Defence Union" and to set up a white paper on the future of Europe within the first 100 days of his mandate. However, von der Leyen's mission letter clearly states that Member States will be responsible for their armed forces – from doctrine to deployment, which means that the EU can act in investment, industry, procurement, research, and innovation.

### Crisis management

Preparedness and crisis management is a new portfolio taken over by outgoing Belgian Foreign Minister **Hadja Lahbib**, who will be responsible for leading the EU's growing efforts on crisis management and humanitarian aid.

### Mediterranean and southern neighbourhood

For the new Mediterranean portfolio, von der Leyen designated **Dubravka Šuica** (HR). In cooperation with the new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission **Kaja Kallas** (EE), formerly Prime Minister of Estonia, she is tasked to work on a New Pact for the Mediterranean and will also be responsible for the wider southern neighbourhood, including the Middle East.

### Commissioners-designate:

<https://bit.ly/3MSMCvq>

### Political Guidelines 2024-2019:

<https://bit.ly/47EjZMk>

### Video

<https://bit.ly/3ZYWdbY>

## Other EU top jobs

### President of the European Council

António Costa has been elected by the 27 EU leaders to be the next President of the European Council. This decision is final, and Costa will take over from current President Charles Michel on 1 December 2024.

### High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/VP of the European Commission

Kaja Kallas, former Estonian Prime Minister has been elected to succeed Josep Borrell as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. Before being officially appointed, the European Parliament needs to endorse her nomination, as is the case for the Commissioners-designate.



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## Eurobarometer

# EU citizens, Ukraine and European defence

By Daniel Debomy, European public opinions Advisor, Jacques Delors Institute, Paris

**T**his article is based on the results of the Eurobarometer survey conducted on behalf of the European Commission in April and May 2024 (Standard EB 101). Since June-July 2022, Standard Eurobarometer surveys carried out twice per year among representative samples of citizens in the 27 EU Member States have included questions about the Russian aggression of Ukraine. The results of these surveys provide insight on the issues of threat awareness, support for Ukraine, and the prospect of European defence.

### European citizens are fully aware of the Russian threat

In spring 2024, 79% of EU citizens said that they agree with the idea that the Russian invasion of Ukraine represents a threat to the security of the EU (whereas 18% disagree). This percentage remains extremely high although it has dropped slightly since 2022 (by four points).

In all EU Member States, clear majorities support this proposition: 70% or more in 23 countries and even above 80% in 14 of them. In the other four the percentages recorded are between 60% and 70% (or at least close to 60% in one case).

The Russian invasion is also regarded as a threat to the security of their own country by 75% of the respondents – only one percentage point below the answers recorded in 2022. In all

Member States but one this view is shared by a majority of respondents – the most in countries in the Baltic region (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania), which are potentially particularly exposed, as well as in Portugal. Excluding Cyprus (45%), no country score is lower than 58%.

Besides, 81% of Europeans feel that the war in Ukraine has had serious economic consequences for their country (a drop of seven points since 2022, which can be explained by the EU's ability to gradually face the problems stemming from the conflict). In no country is the opposite opinion shared by more than 35% of respondents.

### Support for Ukraine remains strong...

55% of European citizens (against 40%) are satisfied with the EU's response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia – a very slight drop from 57% in 2022.

There is overall widespread approval of measures taken by the EU, although with reservations in certain countries regarding the most sensitive forms of support.

**Providing humanitarian aid to people affected by the war, and welcoming refugees victims of the conflict:** very large majorities approve these measures in all EU countries – the average European scores being 87% and 83%.

## EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Among the actions taken by the EU in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, **providing humanitarian support to the people affected by the war** gets the highest percentage of agreement.



**87%** (-2pp)  
Providing **humanitarian support** to the people affected by the war



**72%** (=)  
Imposing **economic sanctions** on Russian government, companies and individuals



**60%** (-1pp)  
Granting candidate status as a **potential Member of the EU** to Ukraine



**83%** (-1pp)  
**Welcoming** into the EU **people fleeing** the war



**70%** (-2pp)  
Providing **financial support** to Ukraine



**60%** (=)  
Financing the purchase and supply of **military equipment** to Ukraine





# SPOTLIGHT

**Imposing economic sanctions on the Russian state, Russian companies and Russian personalities:** 72% agree (against 23% who disagree). The degree of approval is above 60% in 21 of the Member States (and even above 80% in the three Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Ireland, Poland and Portugal). It is less high (although still a clear majority) in Greece, Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia. But in two countries this measure is approved only by a minority of those surveyed: in Bulgaria where opinions are quite divided (46% against 44%) and in Cyprus (40% against 54%).

**Providing financial assistance to Ukraine:** 70% of Europeans are in favour of such assistance (against 27%). Those most favourable (above 80%) include the citizens of the three Nordic states, the Dutch, the Irish, the Portuguese and the Lithuanians. In most of the other countries majorities of more than 55% are recorded, while among the Czechs it is 52%, and the Bulgarians are divided equally between 47% in favour and 47% opposed.

**Financing the purchase and delivery of military equipment to Ukraine:** less widespread agreement – 60% against 36% overall in the EU. Here again Swedish, Danish, Finnish, Dutch, Lithuanian and Portuguese citizens are among the most determined (above 80%). But on the contrary this measure is supported by minorities only in five countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Slovenia and Hungary), and the numbers of those in favour and those opposed are practically equal in three others (Austria, the Czech Republic and Malta).

## ...despite a slight erosion

Previous analyses have shown that reservations regarding support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia may result from various factors, depending on the country: a kinship felt with Russians (although not necessarily with Russia's current leader) among other Slavs; a common orthodox tradition which may also concern Greece and Cyprus; the still great influence of pro-Russian political groups and media in some countries; the existence of economic interests linked to Russia; fears of consequences of the war in countries economically fragile that have been partly dependent on Russia; or doubts regarding the effectiveness or cost of the measures taken in a conflict that lasts and of which one cannot see the end.

### Daniel Debomy



is currently Advisor for European public opinions at the Jacques Delors Institute in Paris. He is the founder and managing director of the opinion research institute OPTEM. For more than 30 years, together with his network of partners across Europe, he has carried out numerous qualitative studies on behalf of the European Commission and other organisations.

## Strengthen the EU in defence matters

There are clear perceptions of the need to strengthen the EU in defence matters: 80% of European citizens agree that cooperation in defence matters should be strengthened at EU level (against 15%). Strong majorities are recorded in all Member States – more than 80% in half of them (the Nordic states, the Benelux countries, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Poland, Greece, Croatia and Hungary) and even nearly 70% in the least favourable countries (69% in Bulgaria and Slovakia).

The plan for a common security and defence policy between the Member States is also approved by 77% of citizens overall – and by a clear majority of citizens in all countries (although those in favour and those reluctant are not exactly the same as for the previous question). The degree of approval has remained the same since 2022.

Ukraine's ability to continue to resist Russian pressure depends to a great extent on western aid. The confused political situation in the United States creates uncertainty in that respect, as does, to a lesser extent, the rise of extreme political groups in Europe. In such conditions, the continued support from public opinion in the EU is an important positive factor. Meanwhile, widespread awareness of the threat has made large majorities of citizens increasingly aware of the need to strengthen Europe in terms of defence.

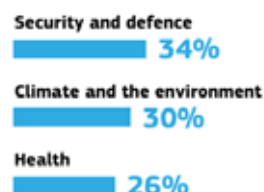
## i

### EU policy actions and areas in the short and medium term

Respondents think that ensuring peace and stability is the action at EU level that would have the highest positive impact on their life in the next year. They also consider that security and defence is the most important area where the EU should take measures in the next five years.



### Top 3 areas where the EU should take measures in the next five years



Source: Standard  
Eurbarometer 101/EC

What geopolitical developments must Europe prepare for?

# The Harris-Trump duel

by Prof Dr Thomas Jäger, Chair of International Politics and Foreign Policy, University of Cologne

**B**efore the warning lights come on again, let's calmly look at American history: very often, geopolitical readjustments in American foreign policy were not made between administrations, but during them. Sometimes, one can only see them in retrospect. Even though President Biden has reversed many of his predecessor's decisions, he has continued others. Biden's Iran policy is closer to Trump's than Obama's. He also did not revise everything that the Trump administration had put in place regarding China. And despite raging against European allies and dropping TTIP, Trump did not break off from them. Could this time be different?

These are the warning lights that have been flashing in Europe for more than three years. When Biden said the US was back, many asked: for how long? Strangely enough, only a few eastern and northern European countries drew political conclusions. The others, Germany in the lead, stared at their own incompetence. They did not improve, on the contrary. And now, just a few days before an election that could have a drastic impact on security and prosperity in Europe, governments are realising that they have been asleep when it comes to preparing for this situation. Many of those who eloquently warned that we must not sleepwalk into the next conflict are responsible for the fact that European states are not sufficiently equipped to preserve their political order.

## Trump or Harris – the effects on Europe

A second Trump administration poses two dangers for Europe. The first is that he will stop supporting Ukraine, weaken NATO and thus withdraw the extended deterrence from Europe. The European NATO states would suddenly have to organise security for themselves. Some would seek to do this in cooperation with Russia. Secondly, the US democratic order would be destabilised from within, which could happen even if Trump's defeat is not recognised. This could spill over into Europe's tense internal structures.

In both cases, China would offer itself to Europeans as a saving hand. Economic cooperation, the containment of Russia and sufficient surveillance technology could appear to some governments in Europe to be a desirable mix to transform their political order.

It will be different if Harris wins the election and Trump concedes defeat. Her administration would initially follow the firm tradition of Biden's alliance policy but would demand much more from Europe. She would therefore expect Europeans to take on more tasks in the Middle East and North Africa, as Obama had already tried to do. She is likely to continue Biden's China policy as well as his Russia policy.



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The relationship with Russia is the great unknown for another Trump administration. NATO's prospects are closely linked to this. In geopolitical terms, this is the most pressing issue for Europe, as tumultuous changes could occur in the short term. In the medium term, the relationship with China is crucial. The fact that good relations with Europe are in America's interests has been a strategic orientation for US governments up to now: Europe must not come under the influence of Russia or China. This interest continues to apply to Trump. Whether he recognises it and acts accordingly is an open question. In his first term in office, he acted so obviously against US interests on several occasions that this cannot be ruled out.

**“The real geopolitical challenge for Europe is not who sits in the White House”.**

## Europe needs to act

But even with a President Harris, foreign and security policy tasks for Europe would increase. European states would be forced to strengthen themselves at a rapid pace. So far, with a few exceptions, they have refused to do so. If they continue down this path, the United States's interest in Europe could decline, not in four years, but in the foreseeable future. If the Atlantic coast opposite the US becomes an open-air museum in decline, American foreign policy investments would be better spent elsewhere. The real geopolitical challenge for Europe is not who sits in the White House, even if it makes a difference. The real challenge is for the larger European states to elect different leaders in order to become capable of acting.

Is there any chance for a de-escalation in the Middle East?

# Iran's new presidency

by Michael Singh, Managing Director and Lane Swig Senior Fellow,  
Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington D.C.

In much of the west, the election in late July of Masoud Pezeshkian as president of Iran elicited sighs of relief. Pezeshkian is, in the international narrative, a “reformist” of a very different stripe than his predecessor Ibrahim Raisi, a “hardliner” in the American and European taxonomy of authoritarian regimes. Whereas Raisi had overseen a dramatic expansion of Iran’s nuclear activities, a tightening of Iran’s relations with China and Russia, and an aggressive new approach to Iran’s regional adversaries, western observers hoped Pezeshkian would seek de-escalation and detente, and perhaps even a new deal with Washington to replace the defunct 2015 nuclear accord.

## Resignation instead of relief

Iranians, in contrast, greeted Pezeshkian’s rise not with relief but with resignation. They have perhaps grown accustomed to a certain rhythm of Iranian politics – repression increases, protests break out and are smothered, and at a certain point the regime permits a “reformist” victory as a political and diplomatic pressure relief mechanism. There was no popular clamor for Pezeshkian, formerly a minor political figure with uncontroversial views; rather, he was elevated by the regime. He was permitted, along with five others, to run by Iran’s unelected Guardian Council, which disqualified seventy-four other aspirants. He defeated former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, whose zealous brand of ultra-conservatism represented a greater threat to Iran’s power brokers than Pezeshkian’s mild centrism. For many Iranians, the key question was not whether to vote for Jalili or Pezeshkian, but whether to vote at all and in doing so risk burnishing the legitimacy of what they regarded as a corrupt and hopeless process.

“The United States and Europe should make clear that they are holding out for real change.”



**Michael Singh**  
is the Managing Director and Lane-Swig Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and former Senior Director for Middle East affairs at the White House (from 2005 to 2008).

Pezeshkian enters office not just with the weakest electoral mandate of any Iranian president since 1979, but with little apparent power to change the policies of most concern to the United States and Europe. He has pledged his fealty not only to the regime but to Iranian leader Ali Khamenei personally, and has offered little indication that he intends to pursue any change to Iran’s regional or nuclear policies. On the latter, he has indicated openness to negotiation with the west, but only providing that the United States abjure the use of pressure and Europe repent of its “self-arrogated moral supremacy” – a position not so different, at least rhetorically, from that of the Raisi administration.

## A more than complex situation

Pezeshkian arrives at a complex moment for the Iranian regime. It is ascendant – at the threshold of nuclear weapons, lashing out assertively in the region, and growing closer to China and Russia, the latter of which has even turned to Iran as an arms supplier. Yet the regime faces political and economic discontent at home, and cannot take further nuclear steps forward without risking military conflict. It is a moment to which a “reformist” may be well-suited – someone who will absorb the political cost of difficult domestic economic adjustments such as reductions in subsidies, while at the same time enticing the United States and Europe into a diplomatic accord that allows Iran to leverage its nuclear progress and regional aggression to obtain sanctions relief alongside de facto recognition of its “advances”.


## Judging Iran by its action

Policymakers in the United States and Europe would be wise to view Pezeshkian’s rise not as cause, but effect – not, in other words, as a development that will change Iran, but as a reflection of a regime that, however confident it may seem, faces trouble at home and abroad and has put a new face forward in an effort to stave it off. In the past, western officials have been quick to modify their policies in the vain hope of strengthening “reformists” in Iran, and may be tempted to do so again. However, like so many Iranians, the United States and Europe should make clear that they are holding out for real change – that sanctions relief will come not in response to a shuffling of personalities, but an end to Iranian policies that have roiled the Middle East and led it to the brink of nuclear proliferation and war. Neither eschewing or pinning their hopes on engagement, the west should judge Iran by its actions, not its elections. ■



## MAIN TOPIC

# How to defend Europe?



***"The recent launch of Operation Aspides and the training of tens of thousands of soldiers in EUMAM Ukraine show that the Union can respond when needed."***

**Jan Joel Andersson (see pp. 26-27)**

***"Regrettably, we needed another war in Europe to understand that there is no alternative to a true European Defence Union."***

**Michael Gahler MEP (see pp 16-17)**





There is no alternative to common defence

# A true European Defence Union needs a Defence Commissioner

By Michael Gahler MEP, Foreign Affairs Coordinator of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, Brussels/Strasbourg

**T**he German chancellor labelled 22 February 2022, the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, as a *Zeitenwende*, a historical turning point. If we look closely, however, that day only marks the peak of a regrettable development that Europeans on their "island of peace and prosperity" preferred to vastly overlook: the renaissance of geopolitical competition and hard power politics with military might re-evolving into an essential currency in international relations.

Already in 2008, Russia demonstrated its willingness to pursue its objectives by military force in Georgia. China takes a more assertive stance and heavily invests in its armed forces, with its navy already surpassing the US', at least in quantity. Furthermore, the conflict in the Middle East destabilises the whole region with the potential of further escalation. In Africa, we can also observe increasing instability and the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes.

## Translating noble ambition into reality

Faced with such a volatile and dangerous geopolitical environment, we need a European *Zeitenwende* by finally establishing a true European Defence Union. Over the last 25 years, noble ambitions have been formulated, papers and strategies have been written, and multiple European structures and instruments have been set up. The ambition has been codified within the Lisbon treaty of 2009, article 42(2): "The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides."

Regrettably, we have not made relevant progress translating that ambition into reality. In 2007, for instance Member States agreed to achieve a level of 35% for joint procurement and 20% for collaborative defence research. According to figures from the European Defence Agency (EDA), until 2022, joint procure-

ment reached its peak of 25% in 2011 and collaborative research exceeded the benchmark with 22% in 2008 only to drop again afterwards, achieving 14,6% in 2022 of which 7,2% resulted from cooperation within the European Defence Fund (EDF).

Russia's brutal war of aggression will most likely have a positive effect for future development in these areas as defence budgets are finally increasing and a stronger sense of cooperation among Member States seems to be developing. At the same time, it appears that Member States have completely forgotten article 42(2) or fear their own courage of 2009. Instead of approaching the Commission proposals for a stronger European defence with an open mind, Member States warn of an alleged "power grab" by the Commission out of a misguided imperative to protect their sovereignty. This persistent small-state mentality is illogic and anachronistic, especially considering that no EU Member State is either willing or capable to provide the means to defend itself.

### A dedicated Defence Union Commissioner

There is no reasonable and cost-effective alternative to a common European approach to defence. That is why we now need to make use of the potential within the treaties in order to ensure our readiness and credibly deter potential aggressors, especially Russia. A dedicated Commissioner for defence plays a crucial role in that regard, provided they are more than a mere defence industry Commissioner but a Defence Union Commissioner (DUC), who paves the way towards a true European Defence Union in the sense of article 42(2).

To that end, the DUC needs to pool all relevant competences, instruments and financial means of the Commission: the common market for defence, research and development, military mobility, industrial capacity building and resilience in defence. Such a Commissioner also needs to improve coherence between the Commission's activities and the ones of the Member States with the EU framework, most notably the EDA and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

This could be achieved by Member States' decision to name that Commissioner their Special Representative for the Defence Union and adapting the existing Council decision in order to make the DUC the head of the EDA and granting oversight over the current 68 PESCO projects. This should be accompanied by the establishment of a Defence Steering Committee, chaired by the DUC, which should ensure that all EU instruments contribute to the agreed objectives within the Capability Development Plan and the defence readiness of the Union.

Even though such a bridge building role of the DUC would be highly desirable, it remains to be seen if Member States are willing to abandon their "power grab" reflexes for the sake of a true and capable European Defence Union. Nonetheless, the DUC's competences within the Commission would already enable him to contribute to a stronger European defence, especially through the EU's legislative power.

### Interoperability and competitiveness

As we observed with Ukraine and the 155mm ammunition, European systems still lack interoperability, each of the four European howitzer systems requiring different ammunition, even though all labelled 155 mm. While there are already standards defined within NATO, they are not of legally binding character. The EU can remedy this deficiency by translating NATO standards, especially for ammunition and components, into binding European law in order to improve interoperability as well as production efficiency.

**“Facing a changed geopolitical environment, we are required to adapt our tools to that new reality.”**

Furthermore, the DUC will need to ensure full implementation of the common market for defence which legally exists since 2011 but is regularly circumvented by Member States through the exception clause of article 346 allowing Member States to deviate from the legal obligations to launch European-wide public tenders. That practice undermines interoperability and competitiveness and makes a thorough review for the related directives necessary with a view of substantially reducing the unreasonable use of that clause to protect mere national industrial policy interests.

Facing a changed geopolitical environment, we are required to adapt our tools to the new reality. To that end, the DUC should thoroughly review the EDF's contribution to the most pressing capability gaps and prepare capability focused follow-up instruments that bridge the gap between research and development, and joint procurement. Last but not least, it is crucial that the DUC pays close attention to European legislation in other areas that risk limiting industrial production capacity or endangering supply lines, for instance in the context of the regulation on chemicals or sustainability reporting obligations.

### There is no alternative

A dedicated Defence Commissioner is long overdue. Regrettably, we needed another war in Europe to understand that there is no alternative to a true European Defence Union to secure our Union's future in security and freedom. However, in the end it is up to Member States to make full use of the instruments the EU can offer.

### Michael Gahler MEP

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has been a Member of the European Parliament since April 1999. Re-elected in 2024, he is currently the Foreign Affairs Coordinator of the EPP Group in the European Parliament.





NATO summit in Washington D.C., July 2024

Europeans must regain the will to defend themselves

# The Europeanisation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Interview with Jean-Marc Vigilant, General (ret), President EuroDéfense-France, Paris

**The European:** General, you have substantial experience of NATO, having been the Executive Assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) in Norfolk, US from 2015 to 2018. In May 2024, in your first interview as the new President of EuroDéfense-France, you said to the French magazine *L'Express* that "NATO must operate with or without the United States and regardless of the level of its investment". What is the rationale behind this, or is it a wake-up call?

**Jean-Marc Vigilant:** Having seen the American defence organisation from the inside, both within NATO in the United States and as part of the American command of the international coalition against Daesh in the Middle East, has made me aware of the extent of Europeans' misconceptions about the relationship between the US and NATO.

**The European:** Could you develop this?

**JM Vigilant:** Firstly, because of their history, Europeans tend to think that they are still at the centre of the world and, by extension, at the centre of our American allies' interests. As memories of the Cold War fade, when Americans and western Europeans shared a common enemy in the Warsaw pact, the link between America and Europe is weakening.

Secondly, since the administration of George W. Bush, American politicians have regularly reminded Europeans that, where security is concerned, "free riders" are increasingly unpopular with the American taxpayer.

Thirdly, despite its war of aggression in Ukraine, Russia is now seen by the US as a regional power and no longer a strategic competitor, like China. This is why more than a decade ago, the Obama administration declared that the US would "pivot to Asia", recognising the increasing economic and strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific region.

Fourthly, both Trump's threat to withdraw the US from NATO, if elected President, because some European allies have not paid enough for their defence, as well as the lack of consensus in the US Congress about the level of American support for Europe and Ukraine, confirm the fact that NATO is no longer the cornerstone of US defence, as it is for the collective defence of European allies.

**The European:** What are the consequences for Europe?

**JM Vigilant:** The best way to resist such potential blackmail is to transform a risk into an opportunity and plan for the worst-case scenario. There is absolutely no question of excluding the US from NATO. On the contrary, Europeans should view NATO as the Americans do: a European organisation with US participation.

**The European:** *Could you imagine that the US might one day leave the continent or sacrifice NATO? Does it not have a strategic interest in using Europe (e.g. Ramstein, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden) as a platform for US forces, wherever they are based, for a multitude of scenarios in the world?*

**JM Vigilant:** I don't believe the US will ever leave Europe. That wouldn't make any sense in terms of its national defence strategy, in which American armed forces are deployed all over the world in six continental "Combatant Commands", including the US European Command. Moreover, I don't think either that the Americans want to sacrifice NATO, because the added value of the organisation is to provide a unique permanent command structure and interoperability for allied armed forces to operate and fight together from day 1.

**The European:** *But will the US continue to be the leading power in NATO?*

**JM Vigilant:** Europeans are simply not aware enough of the global scale of the American national defence organisation. The US does not need NATO to project military power in Europe or anywhere else in the world, because although NATO is larger than the defence organisations of European allies, it is much smaller than the US defence organisation itself. The US considers NATO primarily as a gathering of European allies, with different rules of engagement.

**“With the return of uninhibited violence in international relations and the balance of power, weakness is provocative for a potential adversary.”**

Hence, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) is an American general who also (and above all) commands the American forces permanently stationed or operating in Europe (COM EUCOM). This staff officer simultaneously exercises these two responsibilities on behalf of two different authorities, reporting to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as SACEUR and to the President of the United States as COM EUCOM.

The military bases in Germany you mentioned are American assets that provide support for NATO activities, Ramstein being the only one to host a NATO command.

#### General (ret) Jean-Marc Vigilant

is founder of the strategy consultancy BeVigilant and president of EuroDéfense-France. A trained fighter pilot, he has acquired extensive operational experience on all continents, in the Air and Space Force and at the head of the French armed forces in the Middle East. Expatriated several times in Europe and the United States, he has developed a strong joint and international culture, mainly at the political-military level and in the transformation of NATO's and the EU's military capabilities. As former director of the French War College in Paris, he reformed officer training to adapt it to the changing strategic environment and new forms of conflict.

**The European:** *If there were to be military operations in Europe, who would be in command?*

**JM Vigilant:** The US would maintain the bulk of its military forces under national command, and there would therefore be two concurrent operations, a NATO operation commanded by SACEUR and a US one under the responsibility of COM EUCOM. It has already happened in other areas.

**The European:** *What is the rationale for that?*

**JM Vigilant:** History provides the answer. After the war in Kosovo where the US was particularly shocked by the complex and time-consuming procedures required by the NAC to agree on aerial targets for the NATO air campaign, it declared its preference for a "Coalition of the Willing" over a NATO operation. In the last decades, whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, in the Gulf of Aden, or the Mediterranean, there has always been a mission led by a US coalition side by side with a NATO or EU mission, with different rules of engagement.

During the military intervention in Libya, President Obama clearly stated that he wanted the US to lead from behind and not to take full responsibility for the operation. That is why he prevented US Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III (Commander of US Naval Forces Europe, US Naval Forces Africa, and NATO's Allied Joint Force Command Naples) from commanding the NATO operation. The American led coalition initiated the operation *Odyssey Dawn* to enforce a United Nations-mandated no-fly zone over Libya to protect civilians during the Libyan civil war, and this was followed by NATO's operation *Unified Protector* commanded by its Canadian deputy, Lieutenant-General (Air Force) Charles Bouchard.

**The European:** *Does all this mean the end of American leadership?*

**JM Vigilant:** America considers the war in Ukraine as a European conflict whereas its priority remains the stability of the Asia-Pacific region and supporting Israel. However, all crises are interconnected. China's support for Russia, while it continues to threaten Taiwan, and the fact that most powers in the Global South have not aligned with the west to condemn Russia, illustrate that the so-called international community under American leadership no longer exists.



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However, with 3.5% of its GDP dedicated to defence, the US remains the dominant military power both in Europe and in NATO.

If the European allies want to claim NATO's supreme operational function in Europe, they must make a corresponding financial and capability effort. In a necessary discussion with the Americans, such an approach would lend credibility to the European allies' desire to assume a fairer share of Europe's defence burden with their transatlantic allies.

**“It is perfectly possible and legitimate to imagine a European SACEUR.”**

**The European:** *In case of war, Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is the assurance of common defence.*

**JM Vigilant:** Article 5, to which the Europeans are so attached, offers no guarantee of an automatic American engagement. Should one of the members of the Alliance be attacked, there would have to be a unanimous vote in the NAC for this article to be enforced. Furthermore, unlike its European equivalent, Article 42-7 on solidarity and mutual defence<sup>1</sup>, Article 5 contains no obligations regarding the resources to be provided by the allies.

**The European:** *What could Europe do if the US were not able to support the continent, because they are engaged elsewhere? Is Europe prepared for such a situation?*

**JM Vigilant:** Churchill used to say, “where there is a will, there is a way”. Europe should stand up and fight! War is a clash of wills before being a matter of resources. Victory depends on the defence mindset of its population, its fighting spirit, and the political will of its leaders to prepare for any contingency. Ukraine is a good example! Peace is not a given for ever and the only way to protect it is to be ready to fight for freedom and values.

**The European:** *Europe ruled the world in previous centuries and unfortunately destroyed itself in murderous wars. That is why today, Europe is very pacifist and has given up power.*

**JM Vigilant:** In today's world, where the international order laid down by the winners of the Second World War is challenged and Western supremacy is contested, the Europeans cannot only rely on external help to protect them.

European nations – with or without our American allies – must regain the will to defend themselves. This means becoming a real power again, in all areas including defence, developing some kind of strategic autonomy so that we can dedicate the necessary resources to prepare the military capabilities we need.

**The European:** *And what about a SACEUR of European origin?*

**JM Vigilant:** It is perfectly possible and legitimate to imagine a European SACEUR, similar to Marshall Foch, who was the first supreme allied commander during the First World War. This officer should preferably come from a military credible European nation with the full range of military capabilities, including a nuclear deterrent, and substantial operational experience.

He could be deputised by an American general for easier co-ordination between NATO and American commands. Moreover, a European SACEUR with no other national functions would be able to concentrate exclusively on his NATO role, in other words, defending European territory in close coordination with his American counterpart, COM EUCOM.

**The European:** *Do you see a tendency in the US for a sort of geostrategic division of labour: Asia for the US, the European continent and the Atlantic for the EU?*

**JM Vigilant:** To be very frank, the US doesn't really want European NATO nations to be militarily engaged alongside it in the Asia-Pacific region. However, it would appreciate full political support in its strategic competition with China, although US and European interests do not fully converge in this regard.

The Asia-Pacific being its strategic priority, the US needs to be able to focus on providing stability and security in this region, knowing that European NATO allies are taking care of the security and defence of their own neighbourhood. This could be considered a fair sharing of the strategic burden.

**The European:** *General Vigilant, let me put one last question to you: Do you see any danger of the war in Ukraine spilling over into the territory of the EU?*

**JM Vigilant:** Russia has returned to its imperialist policies. This means that it knows no borders, only fronts. It will probably continue to use hybrid strategies against neighbouring countries, with the risk of escalating into all-out war, especially if it senses a lack of transatlantic solidarity and European willingness to defend itself, as well as internal political hesitation in the European democracies.

The absence of a firm European response from the outset, after the Russian aggression in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine and Crimea in 2014, is the reason why Putin felt confident to do what he did in February 2022.

History teaches us that weakness is proactive, and according to Churchill, that when you choose dishonour over confrontation, you end up with war.

**The European:** *General, thank you very much for this conversation.*

**IRIS publication (French):**

 <https://bit.ly/3Z5Pc8H>

<sup>1</sup> The mutual defence clause (Article 42, § 7 of the Treaty on European Union) states that, “in the event of a Member State being the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter”.



## Striving for a maximum of strategic assets

# Strategic autonomy for Europe – chimera or realistic approach?

by Hartmut Bühl, Paris

**T**he basis for any definition of strategic autonomy is a nation's ability to pursue its national interests by adopting a foreign and security policy that doesn't highly depend on other states.

In the European Union (EU), there is no unanimous understanding on what strategic autonomy could really be. There is, however, a basic assumption that the EU should be capable of making its own decisions and determining its future by combining the ability to defend its territory with allies and act by political, human, economic and also, if necessary, military means, in regions where European interests are concerned.

## Steps towards a European defence

After the **European Defence Community (EDC)** failed in 1954, there was an understanding for a long time that NATO was responsible of the common Euro-Atlantic defence, whereas the EU had set itself up as an economic community. There were small ideas to foster security and defence and only the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 launched concrete reflections on this matter. The **British-French declaration of Saint Malo** signed in December 1998 agreed that the Union needed to be given the capacity for autonomous decision-making, backed up by credible military forces, to be able to respond to international crises when the Atlantic Alliance is not involved.

A year later, the European Council's **Helsinki Millenium Declaration** (December 1999) also set up the Union to contribute to international peace and security, by developing autonomous capacity to make decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises.

A decade later, the 2009 **Lisbon Treaty** became a cornerstone in the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The treaty states that the "common security and defence policy shall (...) provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets" (42-1). It also introduced the "mutual defence clause" (42-7) stating that "if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power".

Finally, the 2016 **Global Strategy** for the European Union's foreign and security policy "nurtures the ambition of strategic autonomy for the European Union", enabling the EU to be a competent partner of NATO.

*French President Macron during his Europe speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, 25 April 2024*

## Reflections on strategic autonomy

The reflection on what strategic autonomy would mean got new wind with French President Emmanuel Macron's speech at the Sorbonne University in September 2017, where he called for "Europe's autonomous operating capabilities, in complement to NATO" and the development of a "shared strategic culture". In a second speech at the Sorbonne (2024), he used "sovereignty" as an alternative term to "autonomy" which may appeal more positively to societies as a cooperative model while autonomy emphasises independence from others.

Macron's call initiated numerous reflections on strategic autonomy, and now, one could have an expanded debate in which not only the China-US standoff plays a role, but also areas such as technology, economy, industrial capacities and deficiencies, energy supply, media and even the European currency.

Finally, among Member States the discussion about the functional and geographical level of ambitions began. The term of "resilience" entered the discussion, and ethical aspects were discussed such as whether strategic autonomy must respect more than its own interests.

The theoretical debate was abruptly interrupted by Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022 and more concrete considerations came into the foreground. A month after the Russian invasion, the EU adopted the **Strategic Compass** which gives the Union an ambitious plan of action for strengthening its security and defence policy by 2030. It is stated that "this Strategic Compass will enhance the EU's strategic autonomy and its ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests".

## Looking ahead

It is undisputed in expert circles that full strategic autonomy in European security and defence might only be achieved in long-term modus operandi of at least two decades following an agreed concept defining strategic goals, the political support as well as the financing and assured procurement, whereas nations must be willing to give up parts of their sovereignty.

Strategic autonomy is not a restraint on security and defence. As the Union in its current constitutional form cannot afford

full strategic autonomy, it must think and act in a forward looking way, taking care of its unrestricted sovereignty and being aware of the outset of the risks, which lie above all in internal fragmentation as well as in the United States turning away from NATO.



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## Peace is a dangerous utopia

# Averting a war or winning it?

by Jean Dufourcq, Rear admiral (ret) Strategist, Director of La Vigie, Paris

**W**hat is the strategist's view? That war is the culture of power relations and the art of combinations, that peace is a dangerous utopia, and that the regulation of tensions is an absolute necessity, especially in Europe. For having neglected this during the 20th century, the European continent brought two world conflicts upon itself. On two occasions, the United States landed in Europe to restore order and assume the leadership of the west. The 21st century has started with a violent relapse into war following the inevitable collision between a globalised economy and age-old geopolitics.

Eastern Europe has reverted to being an open-air battleground. And the world's forward march is once again being hindered by disorders in Europe. Seven of the eight billion inhabitants of the planet shrug their shoulders with annoyance and move on.

This is a catastrophic situation for seasoned European countries, as it drives a further wedge into the Franco-German pillar which has supported European construction. And many believe that only American military can protect us from Russian pressure, the conclusion being that we must prepare for a major and inevitable conflict with Russia by making massive purchases of American off-the-shelf hardware. Others believe that nuclear manoeuvres would be to freeze the situation, especially if the US deploys tactical missiles in 2026 to ensure the security of front-line countries, as it did during the Euromissile crisis of 1983.

### What role for the French nuclear deterrent?

France, the only European nuclear power of the P5 (China, United States, France, United Kingdom, Russia), with its 300 warheads on permanent alert is not prepared for a high intensity conflict because open war is not acceptable as part of its military strategy. As it will not be ready to field properly a mass of prepared fighting units for another ten years, we must therefore pursue the course of action for which our current defence has been designed, which is to avert (inhibit) a frontal attack against our vital interests and channel it towards other conflicts than a war of military attrition. Because our unique and independent nation is bound by the defence obligation of the Treaty of Lisbon (§ 42-7 – “in the event of a Member State being the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power”).

Can there be any doubt today about France's vital European interests? To make it crystal clear, would it not suffice for the European

Council to adopt a solemn declaration to Russia stating that any challenge to the territorial sovereignty of a European state would lead to apply this paragraph of the TEU? This would be an explicit, unambiguous and solemn warning. Such a stand would carry far more weight than any anti-missile shield, implicitly accepting the idea of war with an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defence, unlikely to be totally reliable in the face of the hyper-fast carriers of tomorrow.

### Strategic ambiguity

It is worthwhile recalling here that the credibility of a deterrent is a combination of proven operational readiness and unwavering political will. And it is up to the aggressor to analyse these factors in detail before choosing to ignore them and running the risk of engaging a nuclear power. The strategic ambiguity here is not the capacity to provide an assured, unstoppable and unacceptable response (France's capacity in this respect is regularly demonstrated). It concerns the existential interests of the European Union, and the unanimous resolve to mount a military response to any violation of the physical sovereignty of front-line European states. This explicit posture transfers the nuclear risk to the aggressor threatening us through our European commitments and it thus becomes incumbent on him to make a rational calculation of the risk of confronting France's political resolve and its capacity to strike, either as a warning or to trigger a powerful and unstoppable response with unacceptable destruction. A combination of explicit signals must therefore respond with at least the same level of intensity as those developed by Moscow over the past two years and which have terrorised Europeans who are woefully unfamiliar with the language of nuclear deterrence and paralysed by the possible strategic default of a second Trump presidency. A duel of political wills must be restored, and Moscow must evaluate the risk – and therefore be deterred – from attacking militarily a European country.

### Prohibiting war

The only difficulties to be overcome are the rejection of nuclear weapons in many European countries, their ignorance of nuclear manoeuvres, their reluctance to endorse French nuclear leadership and doubts about the solidity of European military unanimity in the face of Russian aggressiveness. The dynamic of a conventional war of high intensity must now give way to that of the strong prohibition of war in Europe by high intensity diplomacy. This is the only safe path to de-escalation before the US elections. A strategic balance between Moscow and Kyiv must be sought, under the complicit nuclear umbrella of Washington, Moscow and Paris. Nobody must win this absurd war. ■

 <https://www.lettrevigie.com>



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*Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. In a letter to the President, Mitsotakis together with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk proposed the creation of an air defence shield covering the entire territory of the Union*

The nature of the EU has gradually changed

# What if the European Union became a defence customer in its own right?

by Federico Santopinto, Research Director, IRIS, Paris

As it has gone through a series of crises, the nature of the European Union (EU) has gradually changed, almost unnoticed. When it comes to security and defence, for example, the EU is no longer what it was just a few years ago. A letter written on 23 May 2024 by the prime ministers of Poland and Greece, Donald Tusk and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, bears witness to this. In this missive, Tusk and Mitsotakis propose the creation of an air defence shield covering the entire territory of the Union. What is surprising about the missive is not so much its content as its recipient. The addressee is not the European Council and its Member States, but the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

## Knocking at the right door

The official services in Warsaw and Athens did not go to the wrong address. They did not make any diplomatic blunders. They knocked on the right door, aware that times have irrevocably changed. In recent years, the Commission has become a key player in the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), which must be seen as a major innovation in the history of integration on the old continent. The Member States are therefore no longer alone at the helm of the EDTIB. And if Tusk and Mitsotakis have decided to turn to the Commission, it is because its competences in this area are set to grow in the near future, as are its budgets.



It is true that through its ordinary budget, the Union, and with it the Commission, can do a great deal for the defence industry.

Since 2017, the EU has been able to finance military research and development (European Defence Fund). In 2022, it has adopted transitional programmes to support Ammunitions Production (ASAP) and Joint Procurement (EDIRPA). The previous year, in 2021, the EU even acquired powers to reimburse arms transfers to third countries via an ad hoc budget (European Peace Facility, from which the Commission is excluded). And Member States are currently negotiating an ambitious proposal from the Commission to further strengthen the EU's competences and acquire new ones (European Defence Industrial Programme – EDIP).

### Differing views on the EU's role

But can the EU finance the purchase of complex weapons systems to be pre-positioned in defence of the continent's territory, as Tusk and Mitsotakis' missive suggested? This letter has puzzled other heads of state and government. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, for example, made it clear at a meeting with Donald Tusk a few days after the letter was made public that while the EU's ordinary budget could be used to support the defence industry, it could not be used to buy weapons. Ursula von der Leyen, however, is more nuanced than her compatriot on this subject. In her view, the EU could contribute to the financing of an air defence shield. She said so explicitly when she responded favourably to the Polish and Greek prime ministers, and she repeated it implicitly on two occasions, both

**“Could the Union, one day, co-finance the implementation of a project such as the anti-aircraft shield, as Poland and Greece would like?”**

in her investiture speech to the European Parliament for her second term of office, and in the policy paper she presented on this regard. On both occasions, the President of the Commission spoke of the need to set up, at EU level, genuine "common European projects" in defence, probably referring to a proposal contained in the EDIP to launch European Defence Projects of Common Interest (EDPCI).

### The options for the future are not clear

So where does this leave us? Will the EU be able, in the near future, to move beyond its role as a mere sponsor of the defence industry, and become closer to the role of defence customer? This is not an easy question to answer. At this stage, the EU can neither buy nor stock defence components or equipment on behalf of Member States. However, given the rapid and constant evolution of its competences in the military industry, the cards

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### The notion of defence customer

What are the characteristics of defence customers? Procurement dimensions are important, but it is necessary to distinguish the acquisition of equipment (core procurement) and the funding of technology and capability development through R&D and demonstrator contracts. A defence customer also covers end-users, which interact with suppliers during the in-service phase of programmes, including support, MRO and retrofit. Covering the whole spectrum of capability lifecycle, all these dimensions are required to fully implement a defence industrial strategy.

on the table have been shuffled. In this context, it is not easy to understand what the EU can do today and what it will be able to do tomorrow via its ordinary budget, especially as the way in which the treaties are interpreted in this respect is also evolving. How far are the Member States prepared to let the Commission go? Could the Union, one day, co-finance the implementation of a project such as the anti-aircraft shield, as Poland and Greece would like?

### The EU – an industrial-military player?

If the EDIP were to be adopted as presented by the Commission on 5 March 2024, the EU would take major steps forward as an industrial-military player. It would no longer simply be a sponsor of the military industry, but would move closer to the role of defence customer, without however fully integrating it. As explained throughout this article, the Union would strengthen the position of Member States vis-à-vis their European suppliers, ie the manufacturers. But it would not become a buyer who decides and who holds and disposes of ownership of the goods acquired. Member States are clearly not yet ready to take such an ambitious step towards integration. However, there is nothing to prevent them from taking this next step forwards legally, in both the civilian and purely military sectors. ■

*This article is a short version of an IRIS publication by Federico Santopinto.*

<https://bit.ly/3XzDgtp>

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EU High Representative Josep Borrell  
on board of ITS Fasan vessel during  
his visit to EUNAVFOR Operation  
Aspides, Djibouti, 8 July 2024

Choices must be made for the future

# EU military CSDP missions and operations

by Dr Jan Joel Andersson, Senior Analyst, EUISS, Paris

**T**he European Union's (EU) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has always been about capabilities but also missions and operations to project power and protect EU interests around the world. Currently, some 3,500 military personnel and 1,300 civilian experts are deployed by the EU in Europe, Africa and Asia. For more than 20 years, the EU has deployed troops beyond its borders. What has been their impact and what is the future of the EU as a strategic actor?

## Making a difference

EU military CSDP missions and operations have for sure made a difference. Operation *Artemis* saved lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2003 and Operation *Althea* has provided stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2004, while Operation *Atalanta* has contributed to deterring pirates off the Horn of Africa since 2008.

More recently, in November 2022, the EU swiftly launched a Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) in support of Ukraine and trained 60,000 Ukrainian troops by the end of summer 2024. On 19 February 2024, the EU launched Operation *Aspides*, sending initially four frigates under the EU flag to protect shipping in the Red Sea and northwest Indian Ocean in response to Houthi attacks from Yemen.

However, the record is less clear in other cases. In the Sahel, the EU has spent more than €600m on civil and military missions over the past ten years, training some 30,000 members of the security forces and 18,000 soldiers, but with little lasting positive effect.

## Defining success

EU military CSDP missions and operations are assessed through a regular six-monthly reporting mechanism and in occasional comprehensive Strategic Reviews by the Political and Security Committee (PSC). A key question in these EU assessments is how a mission or operation measures up against its mandate, but also on technical and administrative efficiency. Assessments by external experts tend to focus more on the strategic impact of reducing conflict.

What constitutes success can therefore be difficult to agree on. EU missions and operations can sometimes find competition, as was the case in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya and Sudan, where the governments have turned to Russia's Wagner group for help in fighting rebel groups and to ensure regime stability with little concern for accountability or human rights, leading the EU to suspend security cooperation. Furthermore, EU missions and operations can overlap with bilateral efforts of Member States and other organisations. While cooperation takes place, some competition and duplication cannot be avoided.

EU military CSDP missions and operations are often assessed as having an impact but being limited due to constraints such as lack of resources and unfilled vacancies. National caveats, risk aversion, lack of coordination with other EU programmes, poor strategic communication, and restrictions on providing arms and equipment do not help either.

### What scenario for the future?

Given the mixed record and lessons learned from EU military CSDP missions and operations over the past 20 years, what is their future? With no end in sight to Russia's war against Ukraine, or the conflicts in the Middle East, across Africa and in east Asia, the EU needs to stay globally engaged. But with limited resources, choices must be made on where and how the EU should act. In the following, three alternatives for the future EU military CSDP are discussed.

#### Scenario 1 – Europe first

In this scenario, the EU and its Member States remain focused on supporting Ukraine but also stabilising the Eastern neighbourhood, including the Western Balkans. Building on the widely supported EUMAM Ukraine in which 24 Member States and Norway provide military training to Ukrainian troops, future missions could include military training and capacity building for Moldova and perhaps also Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Depending on the future political direction of the United States,

“With limited resources, choices must be made on where and how the EU should act.”

and NATO, the EU may have to be ready to assume a larger role in stabilising peace and security in the post-Soviet space. Moldova and Georgia are both candidate countries of the Union and in the event of armed aggression against them, the EU would have to act. The current CSDP missions in Georgia, Moldova and Armenia are civilian but could in the future be complemented by military ones.

#### Scenario 2 – Protecting the global commons

In the second scenario, the EU and its Member States continue to support Ukraine but EU military CSDP shifts from training missions to naval operations protecting global trade routes and undersea infrastructure on which Europe's and the global economy rely. Following the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS)<sup>1</sup> adopted in 2023 and building on Operations *Aspides*, *Atalanta* and *Irin* as well as the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) in the Gulf of Guinea and northwest Indian Ocean, the EU can provide significant added value in the maritime domain. Demand for EU naval presence around the world is growing and existing areas of operations can be complemented by new activities in the Indo-Pacific. EU Member States are seemingly

more able and willing to deploy naval forces as several Member States have shown by contributing maritime assets to US-led operations, such as *Prosperity Guardian*, and to the French-led Operation *Agenor* in the Strait of Hormuz.

#### Scenario 3 – Back to the future

In the third scenario, the EU and its Member States stay true to the ambition in the Strategic Compass to be able to respond to imminent threats or quickly react to crises outside the Union. In this scenario, the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) will be at the centre of future military CSDP operations, giving the Union the means to swiftly deploy up to 5,000 troops with the necessary strategic enablers. By 2025, the EU is committed to establishing the RDC, including command & control functions, flexible decision-making arrangements, and an extended scope of common costs in place.

In this future, the focus of EU military CSDP is shifting back from advising, training and capacity-building missions to crisis management and peace support operations at scale.

### Conclusion

To be able to respond early and forcefully to external conflicts and crises is a strategic priority for the EU. The recent launch of Operation *Aspides* and the training of tens of thousands of soldiers in EUMAM Ukraine show that the Union can respond when needed. However, the disappointing results of several EU military CSDP training and capacity-building endeavours in the Sahel also demonstrate the challenges in crafting missions that can deliver lasting impact.

With Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continuing unabated and given the lessons learned from 20 years of military CSDP missions and operations, the “Europe first” scenario outlined in this article emerges as the most likely and preferred option. But given Europe's reliance on seaborne trade and seabed infrastructure, the EU should also take on greater responsibility for protecting the global commons at sea. A combination of Europe-focused missions and maritime operations would not only defend Union values and interests, but also contribute to international security and the common good. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Communication on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy <https://bit.ly/4emUH7o>



## NATO and the European Union

# Avoiding negative power play for a stronger Europe

by Lieutenant General Wolfgang Wien,  
German Military Representative to the Military Committees of NATO and the EU, Brussels



*Third Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation, 10 January 2023. From left to right: the European Council President Charles Michel, then NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen*

**D**ue to rather sparse media coverage, the cooperation between the European Union (EU) and NATO, which reached its first pinnacle in 2003 with the Berlin Plus agreement, has probably largely escaped the attention of the general public. Even though it is also an important achievement of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, in recent years the focus on EU-NATO cooperation has not drawn too much attention.

Given the fact that most NATO allies – the owners of the military forces and assets – are also members of the EU, our priority must be to combine the strengths of both organisations. The reactions to the Russian invasion of Ukraine illustrate the added value of

complementarity between the EU and NATO. Negative power play, especially in times of transition in leadership, must be avoided. Remaining institutional restraints must be overcome – not only by the administrations of both organisations but the Member States and allies must step up their willingness to compromise.

## First shaky steps – the EU as a foreign policy infant

A look back at the post-war transatlantic order explains some of the difficulties in creating security-related congruence in the NATO-EU relationship.



### A broad understanding of security

NATO, founded in 1949 as a regional organisation of collective self-defence, is today an intergovernmental political and military alliance mainly dedicated to the defence of the Alliance's territory, although we cannot ignore that for the past twenty years the focus has also lain on international crisis management. The EU, on the other hand, initially developed as a western European economically based peace project and later as an integration project, has a broader understanding of security, encompassing political, economic, legal and social issues, among others. The Maastricht treaty of 1992 established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as one of the three core pillars of the union, alongside the Petersberg Declaration defining military tasks of a humanitarian, disarming, peacekeeping and peacemaking nature that the Western European Union (WEU) would be empowered to do. The Yugoslavian disintegration process followed by the establishment of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in 1999 and divergent views amongst NATO members on the Iraq war in 2003 reinforced the idea in some European capitals of positioning the EU as an international crisis management actor, particularly in civilian missions.

## “A stronger NATO and a stronger EU mutually reinforce each other.”

*First Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation (2016)*

Subsequently, the EU developed and refined its external relations instruments as they are known today, ranging from civilian and military engagement to sanctions packages, through to the current European Peace Facility (EPF), an extra-budgetary instrument aimed at enhancing the EU's ability to prevent conflicts, build and preserve peace and strengthen international security and stability, used most prominently to support Ukrainian self-defence. No other international or regional organisation has such a vast catalogue of measures at its disposal. This shows the complementarity to NATO, which has only limited capacities and expertise for civilian conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation but is the undisputed cornerstone of deterrence and defence.

### The necessity to cooperate

In 2004, following the enlargement process of the EU, the relationship between the EU and NATO became more challenging, when regional and bilateral issues between some EU Member States and NATO allies strained official dialogue and cooperation. However, as many trouble spots remained unresolved after the turn of the millennium and Russia dared to engage in major hostilities in its European neighbourhood for the first time, the need for coordination between the EU and NATO increased.

Consequently, a series of mostly informal meetings took place between representatives in the NATO and EU bodies, and finally, EU and NATO foreign ministers. However, it was

only the annexation of Crimea and part of eastern Ukraine by Moscow in 2014 in violation of international law, as well as several cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, the migration crisis of 2015 and 2016, Brexit and an increasingly self-confident China with global ambitions, that triggered a rethink and underlined the dire need for improved working relations.

### A stronger NATO and a stronger EU

In July 2016 at the NATO summit in Warsaw, then NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, then EU Council President Donald Tusk and then EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker signed the first of the three Joint Declarations on closer cooperation. It stated: "A stronger NATO and a stronger EU mutually reinforce each other. Together they can better ensure security in Europe and beyond."

From now on, the Alliance and the EU should not compete with, but complement each other in certain areas of cooperation.

### The areas of cooperation

Progress on EU-NATO cooperation involving a total of 36 states is published annually. The areas of cooperation today include defence against hybrid threats, operational cooperation at sea and in irregular migration, cybersecurity and defence as well as the expansion of defence capabilities and was expanded to include topics such as resilience, critical infrastructure protection and disruptive technologies. In addition, there is military mobility, the armament industry and research, joint exercises as well as support and training for partners in the Western Balkans and the eastern and southern neighbourhoods in the development of security-related capabilities. In the area of capacity-building for partner countries (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova), training efforts now also develop without major friction.

From a German perspective it is also essential that the agenda around military mobility covering the areas of transport infrastructure, the transportation of dangerous goods, custom matters and the cross-border relocation of material and troops, continues to be driven forward decisively. Since 2019, the Netherlands have been coordinating this project which is the largest of the more than 60 projects of the Permanent Structures Cooperation (PESCO). Its aim is to simplify, standardise and accelerate procedures and modernise (transport) infrastructure in order to be able to deploy troops and material across borders in Europe more quickly. EU Member States Denmark, France, Poland, Spain, Italy and Estonia as well as NATO allies the United States, Canada, Norway and, for the first time since Brexit, the United Kingdom are also involved in this project.

The Europe-wide standardisation of approval procedures and entry processes, the inspection of civilian transport infrastructure such as roads, airports, seaports and inland ports as well as crisis preparedness is of utmost importance for the EU as well as NATO. A possible way forward to further enhance cooperation could be to grant NATO observer status for PESCO projects of mutual interest on a case-by-case basis.

## Obstacles to be taken – improvise, adapt, overcome

Nevertheless, there is an inherent flaw in the cooperation between the EU and NATO as it remains unpredictably informal due to the diverging national security agendas of the 27 and 32 member countries respectively.

### Cooperating informally...

Instead of deciding on a binding cooperation under international law in 2016, the top representatives of both institutions initiated cooperation by means of joint declarations. Consequently, every meeting of EU and NATO representatives takes place informally and even the joint European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) in Helsinki remains an informal institution with seconded staff, lacking a common hierarchy or budget.

**“Let us be honest, the potential  
of EU-NATO cooperation in terms  
of depth and breadth has  
not been exhausted.”**

*LtGen Wien*

The progress reports also give an idea of where cooperation is faltering and the countless legal and technical details that plague the delegates from the EU, NATO and the nations. In areas of cooperation such as the armament complex, issues such as the involvement of non-EU based companies, which is viewed critically by the European arms industry, remain a constant struggle of power and influence. Let us be honest, the potential of EU-NATO cooperation in terms of depth and breadth has not been exhausted.

To this day there is no memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding the dissemination of classified information between NATO and the EU. Especially in the military sphere, this is a major obstacle that hinders operational planning on various levels. As long as we are not able to overcome this with a tangible secu-

urity agreement, the central military pillar of enablement misses an essential prerequisite. A possible way forward could lie on concrete projects that can significantly advance the security interests of both organisations. As a first step, the specialist institutions for procurement, the European Defence Agency (EDA) and NATO Support and Procurement Organisation (NSPO), could enter into an MoU to improve cooperation and standardisation and promote interoperability.

### ...and without a grand joint strategy

Due to the different nature of both institutions and their diverse members, it is foreseeable that the EU and NATO will not be able to jointly develop a big strategy. But they might not need to, if the cooperation develops and strengthens in tangible and pivotal projects and fields of interest – like Ukraine. This, in particular, highlights that competition cannot and must not be the way forward. NATO supplied Ukraine with only modest quantities of non-lethal material and is instead practising deterrence for the purpose of defending the alliance's territory.

The EU, on the other hand, has spread a macro-financial umbrella over Kyiv that is not only devoted to the reestablishment of (critical) infrastructure and civilian projects but also established EUMAM Ukraine. This crucial EU mission was designed to support Ukraine's army and has so far successfully trained about 60,000 Ukrainian soldiers. With the launch of the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) at the Washington Summit 2024, NATO has also entered the stage in terms of training of armed forces and providing support to Ukraine through planning and coordination of training and donations with allies and partners, logistical support, and repair of equipment. From a military perspective, we must ensure that the recently established project, NSATU, does not produce unnecessary duplication in terms of structures, forces and objectives that compete with the EU's established instruments. To mitigate this, permanent EU liaison officers could be established at the NATO HQ and in SHAPE. Such formalised contacts would simplify coordination and increase transparency, not least for non-EU allies.

### Stronger European defence

On the EU side, it will be crucial to demonstrate Europe's willingness to contribute to stronger European defence. The focus here is currently on a powerful and expandable EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) of up to 5,000 personnel that is highly flexible in terms of tackling various crisis scenarios and available on short call. Efforts should be made to ensure the RDC is also considered as a tool that can be used in support of NATO efforts. In order to make the RDC visible as a capable crisis response capability, we should also prepare for a viable support role for existing military efforts – for example in the Western Balkans.

New leadership at the top of NATO and EU administrations can and should give a push for enhanced cooperation in the years to come. One thing is crystal clear: we cannot afford a negative power play between the two most important providers of European security. We must close ranks and stick together – because together we can!

### LtGen Wolfgang Wien



is the German Military Representative to NATO and EU Military Committees. Throughout his 42 years of military service, LtGen Wien deployed three times to KFOR and ISAF. Prior to his current appointment in Brussels, he served as Vice President of the German Federal Intelligence Service. He holds a Master's degree in National Security Strategy from National War College in Washington D.C., US.



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*French and Romanian soldiers during an exercise organised by the NATO multinational battlegroup in Romania at Cincu military camp, 1-5 July 2024*

Reinforcing NATO at the southeastern flank and in the Black Sea region

## Romania – a strong partner in allied defence

Interview with General Gheorghiță Vlad, Romanian Chief of Defence, Bucharest

**The European:** General, you have been the Romanian Chief of Defence for one year now, having taken over the command of your armed forces in a deteriorating geopolitical situation. By hosting one of the eight multinational battlegroups of the NATO Response Force (NRF) deployed in response to Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Romania is at the forefront of NATO in protecting the southeastern flank at the border with Moldova.

**Gheorghiță Vlad:** Indeed, the strategic importance of the Alliance's eastern flank states, including Romania, grew considerably, especially after the North Atlantic Council decided to activate the allied defence plans for the first time, triggered by the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. During the extraordinary NATO Summit in Brussels on 24 March 2022, the heads of states and governments decided to establish four new battlegroups (in

Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary) in order to enhance the allied deterrence and defence posture, both medium and long term.

**The European:** Can you give us more details on the organisation of the battlegroup stationed in Romania and your country's role?

**G. Vlad:** France serves as the framework nation for this multinational battlegroup, with Belgium, Luxembourg, the Republic of North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, and the United States supporting the mission. The battlegroup training activities carried out together with our national forces over the last two years are examples of good military practices. Romania is host to NATO command and control structures which help ensure the integration of allied structures with regional and national ones. The



future decisions and actions of the Alliance in the context of enhancing the deterrence and defence posture will be integrated in the larger framework of implementing the new NATO Military Strategy, in order to deter and defend the entire allied territory.

**The European:** *It is good to hear about this successful cooperation of nations in the NRF's battlegroup on Romanian soil. Let us also have a look at the maritime situation in the Black Sea, where Moscow wishes to block the northern part to prevent access of NATO ships. What is the active role of Romania's navy here, and is the situation under control?*

**G. Vlad:** The Black Sea region is of crucial significance for Europe, being a major crossroads and critical intersection of east-west and south-north corridors. Experts believe that whoever controls the Black Sea can easily project power to the European continent but also in the eastern Mediterranean as well as the south Caucasus and the northern Middle East. A Black Sea functional centre has been established within the NATO Maritime Command,

which focuses on regional specific security issues and maintains tight links with the regional navies. The Romanian Naval Forces designated a series of capabilities to monitor the situation in our areas of interest in the Black Sea region, and to effectively address the challenges of the security situation.



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**“The strategic importance of the Alliance's eastern flank states, including Romania, grew considerably.”**

**The European:** *Can you give us more details on the threats?*

**G. Vlad:** So far, drifting mines have been confirmed and neutralised by the Romanian Naval Forces in the Black Sea – the last one on 13 August. In the trilateral format of Bulgaria, Romania and Türkiye, a Mine Countermeasures Black Sea Task Group was established in order to ensure the safety of maritime traffic against the threat of drifting mines that have emerged in the Black Sea. Also, our country has taken the command of the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group Two for the second time in the last four years. At the same time, Romanian Naval Forces set up routes of navigation for merchant vessels and with warships, helicopters and UAS 24/7 to make sure that recommended routes are free of mines. In support of our mission, NATO allies provide at least one maritime patrol aircraft every day.

**The European:** *Romania is also part of NATO air defence. Are these forces dissuasive enough for Moscow?*

**G. Vlad:** The NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS), with its main component of Ballistic Missiles De-

fence (BMD), represents the main pillars of the Alliance's air defence, and Romania holds a significant role, especially in the Black Sea region. Through the acquisitions of recent years, the Romanian air force has developed the integrated defence capacity of its national airspace, an integral part of the NATO airspace. The current F-16 multirole aircraft programme represents the basis for the next F-35 acquisition. Also, Patriot and radars programmes, anti-drone and detection systems constitute elements of deterrence for a potential aggressor. We host important NATO military infrastructure like the Aegis Ashore missile defence system at the Deveselu Military Base. We provide both early warning and reaction solutions to possible threats that may emerge, fully integrated with NATO command and control. Romania continuously supports NATO extended Air Policing missions as part of the allied assurance measures.

**The European:** *The current modernisation and expansion of the Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base also shows the deep involvement of your country in NATO defence. Do you see this new NATO base as a force multiplier in the southeastern region?*

**G. Vlad:** The Romanian air force is going through an extensive process of development and modernisation at all air bases on the national territory. The Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base is distinguished by its major investments, with national and NATO funds. It is located near the Black Sea coast and the Danube River, in the vicinity of roads, naval and air routes. The possibility of NATO partners using the facility makes this base a force multiplier of great importance, a critical geographic junction. Moreover, the region is pivotal for NATO's eastern flank, especially in the context of deterrence against Russian activities in the Black Sea and support for NATO's Balkan and eastern European allies. The expanded Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base will be one of the largest NATO military bases in Europe. Besides the financial resources and human efforts, it will also encompass a significant operational role, providing

kinetic and non-kinetic effects in the Black Sea region and beyond, representing a major hub for air operations and providing support for other components of the multidomain approach.

**The European:** *This brings me to your own armed forces, which have been renewed and reorganised after Romania's accession to NATO in 2004. The 2.5% of GDP spent on defence shows Romania's efforts as a NATO ally. How will your forces develop in the future?*

**G. Vlad:** We need to design flexible and effective units, with joint capabilities and functions, able to fulfill a wide spectrum of missions on national territory and abroad. Therefore, personnel policies focus on establishing priorities for manning military structures, adjusting planning processes and increasing the reserve from both quality and quantity perspectives. We are pursuing as a priority the gradual improvement in the manning of the units, by increasing the number of students in military educational institutions, and the transition from one military troop service to another.

In order to further maintain professional interest, retention measures have been approved, including salary benefits and non-salary measures, linked to professional development opportunities in career, deduction of transport costs, improvement of medical care and working conditions, etc. We will also continue with the implementation of measures needed to increase the quality of the reserve recruitment pool, as well as to rejuvenate it, by seeking to implement a new form of performing military service as “temporary enlisted volunteers”.

**The European:** *General, let us also talk about armament procurement. Is Romania involved in European projects?*

**G. Vlad:** I want to emphasise that starting in 2023, we developed a plan which allocated significant numbers for armament procurement. At European level, Romania focuses on the col-

laborative approach in the defence sector and achieves more tangible results in addressing capability shortfalls, making the best use of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and European Defence Fund (EDF) initiatives and European Defence Agency (EDA) collaborative projects.

The projects dimension of PESCO is of particular importance for Romania, as it allows us to directly address the identified capability and operational shortfalls. Thus far, we are involved in 22 PESCO projects out of the 66, including two as coordinator, 17 as project member and five as observer. Furthermore, in the context of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and leveraged by increased budget, Romania accelerated the implementation of some programmes by joining some European collaborative procurement initiatives: for instance, in October 2022, Romania joined the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), developed under Germany's leadership.

**The European:** *The EU and its enlargement project also touches your neighbours Serbia and Moldova. Do your forces exchange with their military?*

**G. Vlad:** Romania considers the support provided to the Republic of Moldova as paramount, with expertise and support to facilitate Moldavian strategic planning efforts regarding force development, force generation and force employment in international missions and operations. We are an active contributor of the NATO Defence Capability Building Package dedicated to Moldova, especially through the modernisation of its force structure, military education, capabilities planning, and the development of a very extensive training programme. Starting in October, the country will participate with a Moldavian force structure in the EUFOR ALTHEA operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the Romanian contingent.

Serbia is another key partner for Romania in the region. We remain committed in further strengthening our bilateral relations because Serbia represents one of the most important actors in the Western Balkans and has great expertise in this area of strategic interest for Romania. Bilateral military cooperation in the training and exercise domain remains a pillar to ensure steady and solid growth towards durable partnership.

**The European:** *General, let us conclude with this last question: what added value does Romania's exemplary commitment within NATO offer your armed forces?*

**G. Vlad:** Romania's membership in NATO provides access to collective defence mechanisms, including the Alliance's integrated command structure, intelligence sharing networks, and collective security guarantees. The shift in NATO resources towards the Black Sea includes the establishment of four multinational battlegroups – two of these in Black Sea littoral states Bulgaria and Romania – and agreeing to enhance them from battalion to brigade size, when and where required. NATO member states have also increased their air defence systems within the Black Sea region including increased fighter jets, ground based air defence systems and surveillance flights.

**The European:** *General Vlad, I thank you for your openness and wish your forces every success in their difficult missions.*

## i

## NATO's multinational battlegroups

(nc) NATO has increased its military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance by setting up eight multinational battlegroups, hosted by EU countries and provided by framework nations and other contributing allies on a voluntary and rotational basis. The battlegroups are fully combat-capable formations.

### Northeastern battlegroups



**Estonia** – Framework nation: United Kingdom  
Contributing nations: France and Iceland



**Latvia** – Framework nation: Canada  
Contributing nations: Albania, Czechia, Iceland, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain



**Lithuania** – Framework nation: Germany  
Contributing nations: Belgium, Czechia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway



**Poland** – Framework nation: United States  
Contributing nations: Croatia, Czechia, Romania, Türkiye and the United Kingdom

### Southeastern battlegroups



**Bulgaria** – Framework nation: Italy  
Contributing nations: Albania, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye and the United States



**Hungary** – Framework nation: Hungary  
Contributing nations: Croatia, Italy, Türkiye and the United States



**Romania** – Framework nation: France  
Contributing nations: Belgium, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal and the United States



**Slovakia** – framework nation: Spain  
Contributing nations: Germany, Slovenia and the United States

Source: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)



OCCAR-EA Director Joachim Sucker (left) meeting with Hartmut Bühl in Bonn, 28 August 2024

## OCCAR's contribution to European security

# The complexity of European and transatlantic defence programmes

Interview with Joachim Sucker, Director,  
Executive Administration of the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR-EA), Bonn

**The European:** Mr Sucker, you have been at the helm as the Director of the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) for the past two years. Is OCCAR a success story?

**Joachim Sucker:** Yes! I definitely believe that – and it is a multi-national success story. The idea of creating an organisation like OCCAR and the foresight of our founders in imagining what role the organisation would play in the European armament business was truly visionary.

**The European:** Could you briefly explain to our readers what OCCAR is?

**Joachim Sucker:** The Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement, OCCAR) was founded in 2001 with a clear mission to manage complex and cooperative defence equipment programmes through their entire life cycle – from the cradle to the grave. OCCAR is an international organisation supported by its currently six Member States Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom on the basis of an international

treaty known as the OCCAR Convention. The Netherlands are seeking to join OCCAR as the seventh Member State.

**The European:** What does OCCAR do?

**Joachim Sucker:** OCCAR's core business is to deliver defence capabilities in a cost-efficient way to the Member States through cooperation. The OCCAR structure also allows other nations to participate on equal terms in specific OCCAR programmes, as long as they accept the OCCAR rules and regulations. At present, we have eight additional nations that are so called Participating States (Türkiye, Netherlands, Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Poland, Greece and Australia) in one or more OCCAR programmes. We also have three Observers (Brazil, Australia and Japan).

**The European:** Could you also give some details on the programmes OCCAR is managing?

**Joachim Sucker:** You asked me at the beginning of our discussion if OCCAR is a success story. The numbers speak for themselves: OCCAR currently manages, on behalf of our na-



tions, a programme portfolio worth over €6bn a year and, importantly, the number of OCCAR programmes that the nations have asked OCCAR to manage in the last couple of years has risen to 22, will further increase to 24 by the end of 2024 and possibly a total of 29 by the end of 2025. We now employ more than 400 staff working at nine locations in Europe.

**The European:** *This ties in with a point that a senior director of the European Defence Agency (EDA) made to me during a recent discussion on the future of European armament cooperation: OCCAR has never been more important for the realisation of veritable European armament procurement, he said. Could you comment on that?*

**Joachim Sucker:** It is really encouraging to hear that our EDA colleagues see us for what we truly are – reliable partners. This is a key message that I continue to deliver to whomsoever will listen. However, by the same token, I must also clarify that OCCAR is much more than “just” or “only” a procurement agency. Of course, if we are asked to do so by our nations, we can manage a pure procurement programme, but our real value added is our “Through Life” management of complex and cooperative

“I believe that it is now time for Europe to take on a greater share of responsibility for its own security.”

defence equipment programmes during their entire life cycle. The EDA was created to define and harmonise defence equipment requirements with its Member States. OCCAR was created to develop and produce defence capabilities on the basis of the harmonised requirements. PESCO (Permanent Structure Cooperation) and the EDF (European Defence Fund) are mechanisms to allow cooperation in the development of these capabilities.

**The European:** *In Europe, for a very long time, we have been inspired by and relied on the capabilities of our transatlantic partner, the United States (US). Isn't it time for a rethink?*

**Joachim Sucker:** Yes, I believe that it is now time for Europe to take on a greater share of responsibility for its own security, as set out in the European Union's (EU) Strategic Compass. The more I see an increase in autonomy in European defence and security, an increase in cooperation between our nations, and a stronger European defence industry, the happier I shall be!

In general, I believe Europe needs to work on reducing the large number of different weapon systems. So, always on the basis of sound capability planning and harmonisation of specifications, nations need to reduce market fragmentation and duplication of efforts. That is the only way to improve standardisation and interoperability, both of which are of paramount importance on every battlefield.

The EDA has set a benchmark of 35% for collaborative European defence spending. We are still a long way from attaining that goal. As Europeans, we really need to get our act together if we are to deliver more capabilities for less money.

**The European:** *The number of OCCAR Member States, Participating States, and Observers is impressive. What is the benefit for these countries to participate in OCCAR?*

**Joachim Sucker:** The benefit for the countries who choose OCCAR to manage their programme organisation is that we have a successful track record of more than 20 years in managing complex, cooperative defence equipment programmes following ISO certified processes.

OCCAR's successes and reputation are also recognised well beyond Europe. We have deepened our cooperation with Brazil through their continuation as an Observer State in the Logistic Support Ship (LSS) programme. Australia acts as both a Participating State in the Light Weight Torpedo (LWT) programme and an Observer State in the BOXER programme, and recently, Japan has become an Observer State in the Medium-Altitude Long-Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (MALE RPAS) programme, known as “Eurodrone”.

**The European:** *Another big player in armament procurement is NATO's Supply and Procurement Agency (NSPA). On what basis do you cooperate with NSPA?*

**Joachim Sucker:** The OCCAR Executive Administration (OCCAR-EA) promotes cooperation on three levels: between nations, between industrial partners and with international organisations like the NSPA. The fact that OCCAR does not compete with other organisations cannot be emphasised enough. Creating a homogenous programme management relationship with NSPA and other important partners is paramount in delivering capabilities for a cost-effective European defence and security environment. In this regard, OCCAR aims at consolidating and further improving its relationship with NSPA/NSPO.

© NSPA



*Trilateral meeting between OCCAR-EA Director Joachim Sucker (right), NSPA General Manager Stacy Cummings and EDA Chief Executive Jiří Šedivý, December 2023*

**The European:** *Can you give our readers examples of this successful cooperation?*

**Joachim Sucker:** A perfect example is the Multinational Multi Role Tanker Transport Fleet (MMF) Programme. EDA, in close coordination with our nations, identified a gap in European air-to-air refuelling capabilities. Following a selection process, the Airbus A330 MRTT was chosen as the most suitable aircraft to fill this gap. The nations therefore decided to transfer the ownership and management of the aircraft during the operational phase to NSPA. OCCAR, in turn, was responsible for the procurement and delivery of

the A330 MRTT to NSPA, as well as the initial operational support. The concept proved to be a great success: after the delivery of the first seven aircraft, on time and on budget, programme management was seamlessly handed over to NSPA as initially planned.

**The European:** *OCCAR is very successful in realising programmes, but how do you acquire a programme in the first place? Is one suggested to you or does your agency make a deliberate attempt to acquire them?*

**Joachim Sucker:** OCCAR is very flexible in terms of participants, programme size and scope, cost or timespan. It is up to the Programme Participating States to decide what they want OCCAR to do and how they want OCCAR to do it. That is our flexibility. Our portfolio is composed of a range of programmes in all domains: air, land, sea, space and cyberspace, and although we focus on complex programmes such as the transport aircraft A400M, frigates or armoured vehicles, we also manage some less complex, but incredibly

**“The fact that OCCAR does not compete with other organisations cannot be emphasised enough.”**

## OCCAR programme portfolio



© Airbus

### A400M

Meets the need for an efficient, versatile transport aircraft. Uniquely combines strategic range, payload and speed with tactical capability.



© OCCAR

### BOXER

8x8 all-terrain heavily armoured utility vehicle. Delivers maximum strategic advantage and tactical mobility in a wide range of operational scenarios.



© DE MoD

### COBRA

Long-range ground-based Counter Battery Radar programme (DE/FR): weapon systems detection, friendly firings adjustment, battlefield data creation, battle forces communication.



### ESSOR

Provides software defined radio solutions to improve interoperability of radio communications among forces on the battlefield.



© DGA

### FSAF-PAAMS

Tri-national sea and land-based air-defence system based on Aster common missiles, designed to counter conventional aircrafts and ballistic missiles.



© DGA-FRA MoD

### Horizon MLU/FREMM

Most innovative naval defence project for refurbishing the Horizon class frigates of Italy (2) and France (2). Activities on board: 2027-end of 2029.



© DCNS

### FREMM

Development/production (2005-2025) of 8 French and 10 Italian multi-mission frigates for Anti Submarine Warfare (AWS), Air Defence (AWW) and General Purposes (GW).



### HYDEF

Covers concept study and initial design for potential future development and acquisition of hypersonic endo-atmospheric defence interceptor.



### HYDIS

Hypersonic Defence Interceptor System that will develop European interceptor for strengthening air defence against emerging hypersonic threats.



© French Marine Nationale

### LSS

New generation Logistic Support Ship for long-range missions of a joint task force. Includes hospital and medical facilities.



© EuroTorp

### LWT – MU90

Top level standard Light Weight Torpedo (LWT) for use by surface vessels, helicopters and airplanes against all submarines.

innovative programmes as well, for instance our Night Vision Capability (NVC) Programme. But it is always our nations who decide what programme they want OCCAR to manage on their behalf.

But that is just half of the story. Of course, we also promote our capabilities and experience to the countries to support their decision-making process. We are in close contact with the EDA and the European Commission which allows us to realise future cooperative programmes without delay.

In my view, OCCAR is very well prepared in the future to implement programmes in close cooperation with other organisations – just as we have done successfully in the past. However, we can of course also manage programmes entirely on our own in accordance with the needs and wishes of our customers, the nations.

**The European:** Allow me one last question on European defence. Will Europe be able to achieve a certain strategic autonomy in some types of equipment, thanks to your com-

mon efforts, by joint procurement and production? If so, what might those types of equipment be?

**Joachim Sucker:** I cannot predict the future of course. What I do know, however, is that OCCAR already manages products that are the backbone of many European armed forces. In strategic and tactical air transport, the A400M is indispensable and a really top European product. In the land domain, the BOXER project that OCCAR manages can be described as a top seller, which will ensure all-terrain mobility for numerous European armies over the coming decades. And in the field of defence against hypersonic threats, which is co-funded by the EU, OCCAR is making a significant contribution to European security.

**The European:** Thank you, Mr Sucker, for the time you have devoted to this conversation. All the best for your organisation's future endeavours!

**Joachim Sucker:** Thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk about OCCAR. ■



© Airbus

#### MALE RPAS

Medium altitude remotely piloted aircraft system designed for long endurance intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance.



© MBDA

#### MAST-F

New generation land combat missile and the main part of renewal of air-ground capacity on TIGER helicopter and on MALE RPAS.



© Thales

#### MMCM

Next generation of mine-hunting capability for operations at range. Comprises Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs)/Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)/Underwater Unmanned Vehicles (UUVs).



#### MMPC

New Class of Patrol Corvette based on monohull concept providing flexible approach for interoperable and deployable capabilities. High green ambition.



#### MUSIS

Multi-mission system delivering space-based imaging capabilities. Common Interoperable Layer enables nations to task space system of other nations in secure way.



© Theon Sensors SA

#### NVC

Ensures common basic Night Vision Capability for dismounted soldiers and military drivers by common development and procurement.



© IT Navy

#### PPA

Multipurpose patrol ship including innovative combat system for missions in all maritime warfare domains, humanitarian aid and antipollution operations.



#### REACT

Covers concept definition, specification, design of an airborne electronic attack capability/architecture to evaluate different European technologies.



© Roberto Santos

#### TIGER

Versatile attack helicopter comprising air-to-ground, anti-tank, air-to-air, reconnaissance and force protection capabilities.



© OCCAR-EA

#### U212

Enables Italian Navy to tackle new complex scenarios in underwater operations. Foresees 4 submarines, a new training centre and related ILS and ISS.



© DGA

#### VBAE

Covers specification/predesign for innovative light armoured vehicle integrated into battlefield information system. Stems from FRIB Army requirements.



## Added value to European defence

# NATO's “Northern flank” state Finland

by Dr Hanna Ojanen, President EuroDéfense-Finland, Helsinki

**F**inland joined NATO in April 2023 – a major decision and a major change in Finnish security and defence policy. Now, after almost a year and a half of membership, where has this membership brought Finland and NATO?

### A safer Finland and a stronger NATO

The general view has been that both Finland and NATO have benefitted from Finnish membership. As Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg put it, Finland is now safer and NATO stronger. This is obviously a politically suitable summary of the situation. It is also true that Finland was seen as a country that was very close to the Alliance even before membership, and as a country that takes its own defence seriously. Notably, it stands out because of its considerable land forces and the size of its reserve. Finland also reached the 2% pledge thanks to its F-35A purchase that was agreed in 2021.

The added value that Finland brings to NATO is, in a sense, tradition. Finland came to the new era of direct military confrontation in Europe perhaps better prepared than many others in that it had not particularly downsized its defence. Also, its thinking about societal resilience and comprehensive security are now better understood and more valued by others than before.

What Finland has also brought to NATO is a long border with Russia, and a bridging position between the Baltic and the Arctic regions.

### An active member country

What we now see is a rather active member. Finland has taken a role in the Air Shielding mission in Romania and in the mine countermeasures group in the Baltic Sea. It is also part of the command structure through a Multi Corps Land Component Command (MCLCC), and there will be a Forward Land Forces (FLF) presence in Finland, too, perhaps from neighbouring Sweden. The Finnish wish of all Nordic countries placed under Joint Force Command Norfolk also came true. Moreover, Tarja Jaakkola, Director-General of the Resource Policy Department of the Finnish MoD, has been appointed as NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment.

With these elements, Finland has reached its goals, as the President of the Republic Alexander Stubb noted in his speech to the Finnish ambassadors gathered in Helsinki in late August. Goals no doubt change in time; the government programme still mentioned a Centre of Excellence as an example of NATO presence that Finland could strive for, but this will no longer be a priority.

### The importance of EU-NATO relations

Alongside these short-term goals, there is more to achieve. The government report on foreign and security policy speaks about the importance of EU-NATO relations. This is indeed one of the cornerstones of security in Europe. European defence has many layers as it has many actors. There is the layer of national defence, dear to Finland, and there is the bilateral layer where the ties between Finland and Sweden are particularly strong. There is a regional and subregional layer too, in addition to the NATO level and the increasing defence-related role of the EU. How these relate to one another may look different in different parts of Europe.

**“Finland is safer and NATO is stronger with Finland as an ally.”**

*Jens Stoltenberg, 4 April 2023*

One might say that there is less “Europe” in European defence in Finland now, in particular because of the growing role of bilateral relations. Sweden remains the main bilateral ally and partner of Finland. Swedish-Finnish cooperation is becoming even closer now; Sweden invests EU funds for military mobility in ways that directly serve Finland, also improving sea access through Norway.

At the same time, defence now has a new bilateral flavour with the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) that was signed with the United States in 2023. This deals with US troops and equipment in Finland and access to military bases, and is of considerable political importance.

There is truth in the saying that Finnish NATO membership became complete only with Swedish NATO membership. Without a doubt, broader Nordic defence cooperation may be one of the new assets to NATO, now that all Nordic countries are members and placed under the same command. Together, they may redefine the northeastern corner of the Alliance and give NATO a new opportunity to engage with a seasoned and ever developing format of subregional cooperation. ■

**Dr Hanna Ojanen**  
is Research Director at the Faculty of Management and Business at Tampere University, Finland. She is President of EuroDéfense-Finland.





© European Union

## SECURITY AND DEFENCE

*"The direct and indirect effects of climate change and new security threats present very significant challenges to the European Union and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. (...) We therefore need to strengthen our cooperation to address the increasingly intense natural disasters and prepare for new threats to our resilience."*

Hans Das (see pp. 40-42)





*Hans Das (left) in his office discussing with Hartmut Bühl, Brussels, 17 August 2024*

Europe must prepare for impending crises

# Civil protection in an evolving security landscape

Interview with Hans Das, Deputy Director-General, DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), European Commission, Brussels

**The European:** Mr Das, in June 2024 I had the opportunity to participate in the 8th Civil Protection Forum in Brussels, which gathered about 1,500 civil protection professionals and policy-makers and was a pivotal moment for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). Could you shortly sum up the achievements of the civil protection community during the last 20 years?

**Hans Das:** Over the past 20 years, the UCPM has become a true success story. What began as a rather ambitious goal to enhance solidarity in the European Union (EU) during emergency situations has evolved into a permanent framework

for close cooperation between 37 countries and an essential feature of European preparedness and resilience against a large array of crises.

The close cooperation with Member States around emergency response capacity building, training and exercises, along with new dedicated EU resources under rescEU, have significantly increased the EU's preparedness and have led to a robust community of 37 civil protection services that tackle together the shocks of climate change, Russia's war in Ukraine, and other large emergencies that strike our continent on a regular basis.



**The European:** *You mentioned rescEU. What is your experience in that regard?*

**Hans Das:** The creation of rescEU is the most significant development in the history of the UCPM – it is truly a game-changer because it allows the EU and Member States to invest together in expensive capacities that can be used in all member countries of the UCPM to top up their national assets, thus maximising their use and achieving economies of scale. The Commission has, for example, already put in place a seasonal forest fire fighting fleet, which will be replaced by a permanent EU firefighting

**“It is essential that citizens are aware of and understand the risks they face, that they are prepared to withstand shocks and can act as first responders in times of crisis.”**

fleet in the coming years. We have developed large reserves of generators and shelter, medical evacuation and medical care capacities, CBRN modules and stockpiles, as well as multi-purpose transport capacities.

One project that deserves special mention is the collaboration with 10 Member States to build the world's largest field hospital, which will include three medium Emergency Medical Teams and 18 specialised care teams. I am also very proud of the creation of various rescEU CBRN stockpiles. Europe is much better prepared today.

**The European:** *Can you give examples of the utility of these reserves?*

**Hans Das:** Overall, these reserves have made a significant difference during the Covid-19 crisis, during Europe's forest fire seasons, and in Ukraine where they continue to save lives today. Alongside the provision of shelter and CBRN stockpiles, thousands of rescEU generators have, for example, been mobilised to mitigate the impact of Russian bombardments on energy infrastructure. Given the increasing security risks to all Member States, it is both operationally and financially wise to invest collectively in common reserves or stockpiles that can be rapidly deployed when needed.

**The European:** *It is great to hear about these developments and how much has been achieved in past years. But the future will likely be more turbulent. How can the UCPM manage competing priorities?*

**Hans Das:** The direct and indirect effects of climate change and new security threats present very significant challenges to the EU and the UCPM. Climate change is leading to more intense, frequent and unpredictable natural hazards; we have seen many examples of these recently. Cyber-attacks, the disruption of critical infrastructure, sabotage of essential services, forced migration, and possibly even armed conflict are some examples

of the threats we face. We therefore need to strengthen our cooperation to address the increasingly intense natural disasters and prepare for new threats to our resilience.

**The European:** *The world is moving fast, and Europe must act swiftly.*

**Hans Das:** Yes, and this involves building societal resilience, which means preparing citizens with knowledge and capacity, but also better equipping our first responders and developing a comprehensive preparedness strategy. At EU level, we also need to step up the game and make emergency management more effective, for example by enhancing the Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) as a more strategic crisis centre and further developing rescEU to make sure we have the right assets available to respond effectively to any type of threat.

**The European:** *Is the UCPM also prepared for armed conflict?*

**Hans Das:** It is necessary to prepare the UCPM for whatever the future may hold. The risk of armed conflict is part of Member States' and the EU's risk assessment and must therefore be part of that equation. The political guidelines of the next Commission propose some broad ideas, such as a European Civil Defence Mechanism, and the strengthened EU-NATO cooperation in crisis management, which we will look at in the future. The regional dimension of civil protection will also play an important role here as future crises will not cease to cross borders and a resilient eastern and southern neighbourhood also benefits the EU. Preparing for new security threats is not only a defence matter; it is equally important to make structural investments to better equip and strengthen our civilian emergency management authorities, which will have the enormous responsibility to protect the population and cater for their basic needs.

Unfortunately, amid competing priorities, Member States are confronted with many urgent demands for new public



## Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)

(nc) The Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) is a unique initiative established by the European Union (EU) in 2001 to facilitate cooperation among EU Member States and participating non-EU countries in the field of civil protection. The UCPM serves as a platform for sharing resources, expertise, and best practices across borders, fostering a more effective and unified approach to disaster management. The Mechanism pools response capacities from all 27 EU countries and 10 participating countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

<https://bit.ly/47fSpDy>

spending. This means that we will inevitably have to do more with less. However, this challenge can be transformed into an opportunity by making EU cooperation more systematic, continuously innovating and modernising, seeking new synergies – for instance, preparing for security threats also prepares us for other major crises – and fostering cross-sector collaborations, including partnerships with the private sector.

**The European:** *This is an interesting point. Could you elaborate on the possible synergies between boosting traditional civil protection and preparing for civilian crisis management in response to security threats?*

**Hans Das:** The UCPM's response to the war in Ukraine, the largest operation ever conducted at the EU level, highlights the synergies between civil protection and crisis management during conflict. From an emergency management perspective, the needs generated by natural disasters and security threats often overlap. They often require the same, or very similar, response capacities. Energy, shelter, medical aid, transport capacities are standard resources required for any civilian crisis management. Investments in our preparedness for climate-related disasters will often also benefit our readiness to deal with the effects of security threats on the population.

Ukraine will remain a key priority for the UCPM, for as long as it takes. In an extraordinary Team Europe effort, the UCPM has already provided 150,000 tonnes of vital assistance to Ukraine, and every week new support is delivered. We must learn the lessons from Ukraine's experience, prepare for potential conflict within our own borders and the response this would require.



© European Union/DG ECHO

Hartmut Bühl and Hans Das studying maps in the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), Brussels, 17 August 2024

**The European:** *What kind of conflict could it be?*

**Hans Das:** The hybrid attacks witnessed across the EU in the past months already serve as stark reminders of the existing threats and vulnerabilities. Combined with the Kremlin's dangerous rhetoric since the start of the war, emergency managers across the EU are well-advised to demonstrate vigilance and step up preparedness, just as NATO is doing on the defence side. Military capability development should be accompanied and complemented by more civilian resilience. We need the physical means and the manpower to protect our populations from all scenarios.

**The European:** *What is the role of the UCPM in this context?*

**Hans Das:** The UCPM can provide a useful framework to tackle these challenges together at EU level, provided that it is further adapted and reinforced. This is also exemplified by the strategic alignment of important parts of the EU's disaster resilience goals and the NATO resilience baselines. Policy and programmatic progress will take some time. Unfortunately, today's unpredictability of events means that we must be ready to act at any moment. On top of upscaling resilience and capacity, we must also understand what it means for European civil protection to operate in scenarios of collective defence and anticipate scenarios where civil protection operations coincide with NATO interventions. Planning on both sides needs to account for civil-military cooperation.

**The European:** *You mentioned the importance of societal resilience to disasters. What is your intention for improving engagement and communication between citizens and authorities at local levels?*

**Hans Das:** This is an area in which Europe can learn from some other parts of the world. It is essential that citizens are aware of and understand the risks they face, that they are prepared to withstand shocks and can act as first responders in times of crisis. Some Member States, particularly in the Baltic and Nordic regions, are already moving in this direction in response to new hybrid and security threats. Under the UCPM, we can support such efforts via the EU Disaster Resilience Goals, which in part focuses on increasing citizens' risk awareness as well as guiding policy development and project financing toward this objective.

**The European:** *What does this mean in practice?*

**Hans Das:** With the related PreparEU campaign, for example, the UCPM is planning a public communication effort to bring disaster prevention and preparedness awareness into the everyday lives of EU citizens. This will include activities, such as training in risk communication, and using behavioural science to encourage disaster resilient behaviours. The special report on civilian and defence preparedness, commissioned by the President of the Commission and being drafted by former Finnish President Niinistö, will undoubtedly also provide insights for policy discussions with Member States in the coming months.

**The European:** *Mr Das, thank you for this conversation. We wish you all the best with your endeavour.*

## The resilience revolution

# NATO and the EU are committed to a safer tomorrow

by Carola Frey, Expert and Project Manager, Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC), Bucharest

As resilience has emerged as a prominent buzzword in recent years, civil protection has quickly followed suit. While these two concepts resonate deeply with the European Union's core principles, for NATO, they mark a significant shift. Traditionally seen as the embodiment of military power, NATO's embrace of resilience and civil preparedness represents an important evolution in its strategic approach.

## Resilience as a transatlantic core value

NATO's Article 3 underscores resilience as a core value for the Alliance. It's all about being ready to handle and bounce back from any major disruptions, whether they're natural disasters, technological failures, or attacks, and to be ready to move forward with renewed strength and adaptability. Civil preparedness, which includes safeguarding civilian populations and critical infrastructure is a cornerstone of NATO's comprehensive strategy. This focus on civil protection ensures that NATO's civilian defence mechanisms complement its military capabilities, enhancing both deterrence and defence. Key structures like the Resilience Committee (RC), the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), the Civil Protection Group, and various Centres of Excellence (like, but not limited to, the ones in Sofia and Vicenza) institutionalise this focus, demonstrating NATO's commitment to comprehensive preparedness.

As threats evolve, NATO evolves too. It's not just about being ready for war; it's about being prepared for anything that comes its way. This is also where the Layered Resilience concept comes in, blending civilian and military efforts to create a stronger, more adaptable defence. The idea is simple: it's much tougher to attack an Alliance that's not only militarily strong but also prepared and resilient across all fronts. In essence, NATO's goal is to make it clear that attacking a well-prepared Alliance is a much tougher challenge than one that's just powerful on paper.

## Ensuring the safety of EU citizens

For the European Union (EU) on the other hand, resilience and civil protection were fundamental aspects of its approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens. The EU has long recognised the importance of civil protection as a means to manage and mitigate the impact of various emergencies. The EU's commitment to civil protection takes form in the shape of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), established with the specific purpose of fostering cooperation among member states by preventing, preparing for, and responding to disasters.

At the core of the UCPM is the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), a 24/7 hub that monitors and coordinates disaster response efforts across Europe. The ERCC is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and resources, ensuring that the EU can respond swiftly and effectively to crises.

The EU's emergency toolkit rescEU is packed with firefighting planes, medical teams, and crucial resources to handle disasters of all kinds – from wildfires and flash floods to earthquakes and epidemics. As climate change ramps up and security issues get trickier, countries need all the help they can get. Take the recent situation with Russia's invasion of Ukraine: the EU quickly swung into action, using rescEU to deploy medical evacuation services as well as assistance from its medical/CBRN, energy and shelter stockpiles hosted in various locations across the EU. To put it into perspective, since 16 July 2024, the UCPM has shipped 149,762 tonnes of aid directly to Ukraine and through UCPM logistic hubs.

## A long-term vision

These resilience-focused strategies are more than just solutions to immediate threats; they foster a long-term vision. Whereas a reactive approach was once the norm, today's proactive stance, embraced by both NATO and the EU, emphasises anticipation and preparedness. By placing resilience at the core of their strategies, these institutions are not merely responding to challenges but are proactively shaping a comprehensive framework that enhances their collective security and stability in an ever-evolving geopolitical environment. ■

### Carola Frey



is an expert with deep knowledge and hands-on experience within the Department of Research, Analysis, and Training of the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC) and coordinates the International Cooperation Department. The E-ARC, based in Bucharest, Romania, is an inter-agency hub and research body, tasked with promoting and pursuing NATO and

EU resilience targets. Currently, E-ARC functions as a public institution subordinated to the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

 <https://e-arc.ro/en>



A powerful instrument for solidarity

# The Union Civil Protection Mechanism – Germany's experience

Interview with Ralph Tiesler,

President of the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK), Bonn

**The European:** Mr Tiesler, I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about civil protection and your experiences with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) in which 37 countries participate today. But I first would like to ask you to describe in a few words the tasks of the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK), which was founded in 2004 and which you have been heading since 2022.

**Ralph Tiesler:** To put it briefly: we provide safety. The more elaborate answer is that the BBK is a federal service centre offering a wide range of services for authorities at all administrative levels, organisations and institutions involved in civil protection in Germany. To give a few examples: we train top executives in decision-making, we warn the public in case of disaster, and we contribute to the planning and preparation of civil protection measures as part of the national security system. From an operational perspective, we also coordinate German efforts within the UCPM.

“The UCPM is not only a powerful operational tool but also an expression of European solidarity.”

**The European:** The UCPM was established by the European Commission in October 2001 with the aim of strengthening cooperation in civil protection between the Member States of the European Union (EU) and 10 participating states.<sup>1</sup> When an emergency hits, any country around the world can request assistance via the UCPM, which was upgraded in 2019 by the creation of rescEU, a reserve of European capacities to assist more rapidly in disasters. Does the UCPM keep its promises?

**R. Tiesler:** I wouldn't say “promises” but yes, in the last 20 years the UCPM has largely contributed to the safety of half a billion Europeans. That was only possible by EU Member States and the participating states pooling their resources to support each other under a joint framework. However, the UCPM is not only a powerful operational tool but also an expression of European solidarity. In that regard the UCPM is more than the sum of its parts, so to speak.

**The European:** Is there any effort on common standards enabling teams to better understand different approaches and work interchangeably when a disaster strikes?

**R. Tiesler:** We are working towards common understandings and procedures, especially to allow interoperability. There are, for instance, general requirements defined for all modules within the UCPM. That's not standardisation, of course, but it's a step towards it. Another example is the EU Host Nation Support Guidelines. Even though they are non-binding, all countries requesting international assistance will be asked to adhere to the guidelines so that both hosting nation and incoming team know what is expected of them and what they can expect in return based on a common understanding.



Ralph Tiesler (left) during the interview with Hartmut Bühl, Bonn, July 2024

**The European:** *What are the top products that the BBK can deliver, if requested to assist? Can you give some examples and experiences?*

**R. Tiesler:** The BBK's prime responsibility in international civil protection scenarios is coordination. Our German Joint Information and Situation Centre (GMLZ) is our national focal point for civil protection matters, including the UCPM. It initiates and supports the deployment of German capacities, experts as well as in-kind assistance. In 2022 and 2023, Germany, with all its civil protection actors, contributed to the mechanism with the deployment of 42 experts and 14 modules and delivered in-kind assistance to over 20 affected countries.

**The European:** *In Brussels, Germany with its BBK and the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) has the reputation of being excellently positioned when it comes to civil protection, crisis management and humanitarian aid, and fully contributing its capabilities to Europe.*

**R. Tiesler:** Well, that is a flattering statement. But ultimately, that's what we are expected to do. What I can tell you is that BBK and THW work closely together to improve our knowledge and procedures to be well prepared for the challenges of today and tomorrow. We also do that, of course, in close collaboration with all the other committed German civil protection actors. We all also contribute largely to the UCPM and its many different aspects. Be it in our newly established EU

Competence Centre within the BBK or the many operational modules Germany offers, to name but a few.

**The European:** *On the other hand, Germany is seen as too hesitant when it comes to stockpiling for rescEU. Is it correct to say that your country doesn't want to take an active part in it, be it vaccines, personal protective equipment, protected vehicles, or others?*

**R. Tiesler:** No, that is not correct. rescEU is supposed to be a "last resort" solution that affected states can draw upon if their own resources or the ones from the European Civil Protection Pool (ECPP) are exhausted. However, Germany has always emphasised the importance of the ECPP that is based on resources of the contributing states. That being said, there are certainly some low and high impact scenarios where rescEU is very useful. That's why, from the beginning, Germany was also engaged in rescEU.

**The European:** *How exactly is Germany involved here?*

**R. Tiesler:** Several German actors are involved in rescEU. When it comes to stockpiling, the Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe and the German Red Cross jointly operate a rescEU medical stockpile since 2021. The Johanniter also operate the rescEU mpox antivirals stockpile. Talking about operational assets, the federal state of Lower Saxony is hosting two rescEU firefighting airplanes since 2023. And on the federal level, THW, BBK, and the Federal Police are currently establishing a rescEU CBRN decontamination capacity.

**The European:** *I heard from the Union of the Mediterranean (UFM), that Tunisia is expanding its own crisis protection mechanism on the example of Germany's voluntarism in civil protection. Here I see a sort of export of qualities. Are there more excellencies?*

**R. Tiesler:** It wouldn't speak of "excellencies" because I feel that in civil protection, there aren't that many one-size-fits-all solutions that can be easily transferred from one country to another. But true, our system has its strong sides, its number of well-trained and highly motivated volunteers being one. THW and BBK both have international projects, for instance with Tunisia, where we jointly try to find solutions to specific challenges and strengthen their system. But that is a joint endeavour from which we both benefit.

**The European:** *Mr Tiesler, may I ask for your conclusion on the UCPM?*

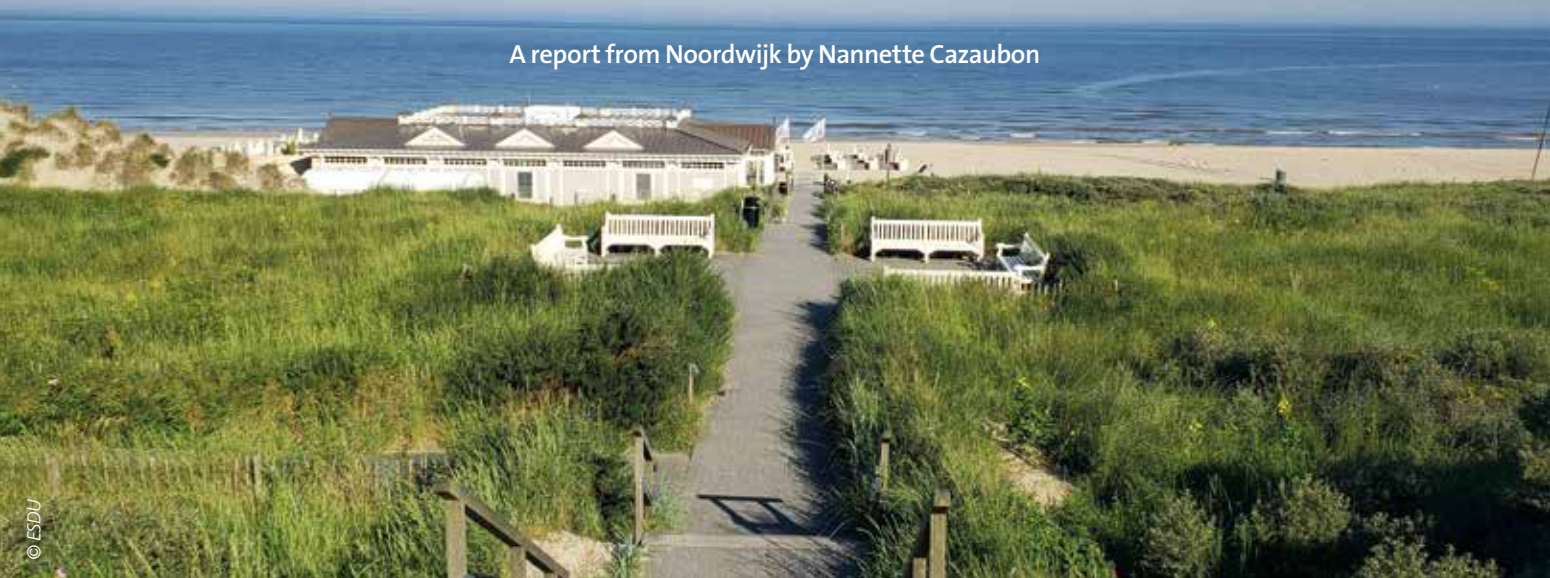
**R. Tiesler:** The UCPM has proven time and again its effectiveness and is a valuable tool as much as it is a strong symbol of European solidarity. However, the UCPM is more than just "response" and also includes the areas of prevention and preparedness. It's this triad that makes it so strong. This and the countries' commitment to contribute their knowledge and resources. Hence, Germany and the BBK will continue to extensively support the UCPM and contribute to the safety of German and European citizens.

**The European:** *Thank you, President, for this conversation.* ■



# Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in civil protection moves forward

A report from Noordwijk by Nannette Cazaubon



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*The great value space can offer for civil protection was highlighted during the second Steering Committee meeting of the programme for "Prevention, Preparedness and Response to natural and man-made Disasters in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean" (PPRD Med). Held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, from 24 to 26 June 2024, the event marked an important step in the implementation of this remarkable project running until July 2026 and being synonymous with solidarity, progress and resilience. Civil protection officials from eight of the ten partner countries participated in the meeting,<sup>1</sup> alongside the PPRD Med leadership team, representatives of the European Commission and the European Space Agency (ESA).*

## From Paris to Noordwijk

Eight months after attending the first PPRD Med Steering Committee meeting in Barcelona and reporting on it in our magazine,<sup>2</sup> editor-in-chief Hartmut Bühl and I travel from Paris to Noordwijk, ideally located on the North Sea coast.

The Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin overlooking the dunes offers perfect conference facilities and the opportunity to continue informal discussions among participants at one of the typical beach restaurants, but not only that: the hotel is located close to ESA's

European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), and we will have the chance to visit it together with the other participants.

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**Nannette Cazaubon**  
Deputy Editor-in-Chief

## A culture of preparedness and resilience

Having first discovered PPRD Med (see box, p.47) last year in Spain, we now know more about the project launched in June 2023 in the context of a dramatically changing disaster risk landscape in the Euro-Mediterranean basin. In a region that is warming 20% faster than the global average, the frequency and intensity of disasters is expected to increase, which in turn will overstretch regional and national civil protection capacities. The PPRD Med collaborative programme was established to help participating countries in the Mediterranean region to prepare for and proactively reduce the risk of such disasters, including earthquakes, floods, wildfires and industrial accidents.

Space technology and satellite imagery play a crucial role in the programme, as Earth observation has the potential to, for example, identify vulnerable areas and monitor the impact of natural or man-made disasters in real time. Promoting the use of the full potential of space technologies for civil protection and providing training in this field is one of the cornerstones of the PPRD Med programme.

I am eager to learn about the progress made over the last eight months.

## Visit to ESTEC

First, we are joining the other participants in visiting ESTEC on the eve of the official opening of the meeting. Having dealt intensively with the topic of space in the last issue of our magazine,<sup>3</sup> I am delighted to visit this large-scale site where ESA operates a spacecraft environmental test centre with supporting laboratories specialised in systems engineering, components

<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. Egypt and Morocco were unable to attend the meeting.

<sup>2</sup> <https://bit.ly/3A4KqHf> (pp 34-36)

<sup>3</sup> <https://bit.ly/3BMvmpw>



and materials. We learn about fascinating space projects of the future and enjoy a tour of the laboratories, one of them recreating a Martian landscape.

## Opening

Tristan Simonart, Team Lead International Cooperation at the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), welcomes us at the next day's opening of the meeting. Juha Auvinen, Acting Director of DG ECHO's Unit C - Neighbourhood, Middle East, South-West and Central Asia, confirms in his speech that the European Commission "attaches great importance to the Mediterranean cooperation in civil protection". Pascal Legai, Senior Security Advisor at ESA, states in his address that the agency, in close cooperation with DG ECHO and PPRD Med, intends to accelerate the use of the full potential of space assets in the field of civil protection.

## National roadmaps

A significant milestone and highlight of the meeting is the signing of the PPRD Med National Roadmaps by the eight partner countries present. Philippe Geffroy, PPRD Med project Team Leader (ISTC) explains to me that these roadmaps set out the priorities of each country, allowing for individual adaptation of the actions taken under the PPRD Med programme. Their signing signifies the partners' strong commitment to the initiative and paves the way for the next "technical and technological" phase.

## Technical briefings

Following several technical briefings given by the experts of the PPRD Med team (e.g. flood simulation tools, the upcoming PPRD Med digital platform, the link between natural and industrial disasters), Christopher Leigh Topping, Head of the Civil Security Programme Office, takes us through ESA's Civil Security from Space (CSS) programme, which aims to enable civil protection actors to act faster by using space-based technical solutions.

## Pilot projects

I am particularly interested in the session dedicated to PPRD Med pilot projects carried out in the partner countries, addressing the main risks related to floods, forest fires, earthquakes, and natural disasters triggering industrial accidents. Delegates report the lessons learned of their country-specific pilot.

Tunisia outlines the results of a simulation of a breach in the largest of the country's 33 dams, Sidi Salem, while Mauritania

reports on the interaction between both natural and technological risks and the use of modelling tools to help avoid so called cascade effects. Lebanon reports on its running pilot on flooding and industrial risks, in particular the danger related to storage of dangerous substances, illustrated by the explosion in the port of Beirut in 2020. And Israel presents its cooperation in disaster management with the Israeli Meteorological Service (IMS) currently developing a new algorithm for urban flooding. We are also briefed on volunteerism in civil protection in Tunisia and a transboundary test-case between Algeria and Tunisia on the simulation of dam breaks in border regions.

## Entering the next stage

At the end of the two-day meeting, Hartmut and I are of the same opinion: eight months after the first meeting in Barcelona, the programme has made great progress: most countries have not only succeeded in defining their priorities in national roadmaps, but many have participated in the workshops and training courses offered, demonstrating their willingness to move towards lasting progress.

The next stage of the PPRD Med project is a big challenge: an operational doctrine, outlined at the meeting, should be developed by each country, aimed at integrating new generation tools into the national response and decision process and setting out guidelines for strategic and operational decision-making in the event of a disaster. The development is planned in three phases between July 2024 and July 2025.

## A great spirit

Again, Hartmut and I have been impressed by the meeting's remarkable spirit of mutual respect between participants from the PPRD Med countries – beyond cultural differences, political tensions or even armed conflict. The merit of the PPRD Med programme is to promote not only Euro-Mediterranean collaboration but also trust and bilateral cooperation between the partner countries.

The third Steering Committee meeting will take place at the end of January 2025 in Aix-en-Provence, France. We will carry on following the project during its next stage.



Visit to ESTEC, 24 June 2024



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## PPRD Med

The programme, with ten partner countries, brings together the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), which provides €3m funding over three years, and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Bolstered by the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), PPRD Med is implemented by the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC) and supported by the European Space Agency (ESA).



[www.pprdmed.eu](http://www.pprdmed.eu)



# Shelling test proofed the reliability of Stoof International's cutting-edge armour technologies

It is a sad reality that conflicts are increasing around the world. Military forces can end such conflicts, but restoring lasting peace requires long-term humanitarian and public recovery work. Since civilian forces face the same risks as military personnel in their areas of operation, their means of transport must be adequately protected.

## Adequate protection in civil-military missions

Civilian vehicles deployed in crisis areas must be inconspicuous, armoured against weapon fire and explosives, and keep their mobility in the event of an attack to ensure that personnel can safely leave the danger zone.

**“Because we have the necessary skills, we consider it our ethical responsibility to do everything possible to protect people.”**

*Fred Stoof, owner of Stoof International*

Stoof International's armoured civilian off-road vehicles and special security vehicles provide this protection for a variety of threat scenarios and extreme terrain and climatic conditions.

The test of a Toyota 300, equipped with armour protection using technology developed in Berlin, convincingly demonstrated the competence of market leader Stoof International in the armoring of civilian vehicles.

## Security standards and adapted logistical services

As part of sustainable and comprehensive support, customers benefit from sound expert advice. With service points in many crisis regions and a dedicated mobile service team, Stoof International is prepared to provide a comprehensive service as quickly as possible.

## Basic models and development

In order to cover the wide range of possible deployments of various international organisations, Stoof International uses, amongst others, base vehicles from manufacturers such as Toyota, Nissan, GMC and Mercedes-Benz. The company's Toyota Land Cruiser 300 Trojan is optimised for missions in particularly difficult security situations. Special security vehicles such as the ATT, a tactical armoured personnel carrier, are used by various special police units. ■



*Government testing procedures and certifications guarantee consistently high security standards. Controlled by the German National Ballistic Testing Authority, vehicles armoured by Stoof International are ballistically tested to comply with the protection levels defined by the European Committee for Standardisation (VR 7 and VR 9 according to VPAM BRV Edition 3, VPAM ERV Edition 3 and STANAG 4569 AEP-55).*



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New requirements elicited by the war in Ukraine

# *Zeitenwende* for CBRN Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

by Sebastian Meyer-Plath, Managing Director, BLÜCHER GmbH, Erkrath

Since Russia's brutal all-out attack on Ukraine in February 2022, the German expression *Zeitenwende* (epochal change) used by Chancellor Olaf Scholz to describe the overhaul of Germany's foreign and security policies, has found its way into English and other languages. The Russian aggression has also triggered a sort of *Zeitenwende* in the field of CBRN Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

## Worldwide increase in PPE demand

Even though there has been no officially confirmed use of traditional chemical warfare agents (CWA) in the two and a half years of this war, it appears that the invasion of Ukraine has made some countries think about their inventory of chemical protective equipment. This has resulted in a drastic increase in demand all over the world, which has brought international suppliers close to their maximum manufacturing capacities.

The raw materials and the ensuing production of textile compounds required must meet very particular specifications. The cutting and sewing of CBRN protective suits are not as easy as usual garment manufacturing, they require special machinery and training, as well as quite an effort in qualifying and auditing new cutting and sewing partners.

**“With Russia's continuous effort to destroy critical infrastructure in Ukraine, every attack results in the release of a plethora of toxic chemicals in various forms.”**

The usual quality assurance processes involve governmental agencies who perform production release and acceptance tests. They are already working at full capacity, which substantially adds to the current delivery times.

## Obstacles for suppliers

To meet the demand, suppliers of CBRN air-permeable protective clothing must adapt, which will take time and effort. Given the reticence of most governments to enter into long-term delivery contracts for CBRN protective equipment with defined timelines and quantities, the enthusiasm of industry to invest in more manufacturing capacity is limited.



Recent European directives like the 2024 Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the 2022 Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, as well as the upcoming ban of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) – widely used in the production of yarns and the treatment of oil and water repellent textiles – has further complicated this endeavour.

Furthermore, indirect difficulties result from the EU taxonomy, making any attempts by companies serving defence markets to get interim financing from banks a real challenge since their business activities are not deemed sustainable, therefore hindering the bank's objective to be labelled sustainable itself.

These external influences are tremendously slowing down the momentum of *Zeitenwende* for PPE.

### Release of chemical substances in Ukraine

Though there has been no confirmed use of CWA in Ukraine, fighting on the battlefield is, however, not at all free of chemical substances used to support operations. The employment of irritants like teargas and riot gas has been reported many times on both sides, with the goal of making opponents don their respirators, thus minimising their effectivity. Quite a few irritants produce pain by affecting the skin and will substantially limit operational capacity.

**“To meet the demand, suppliers of CBRN air-permeable protective clothing must adapt, which will take time and effort.”**

#### Sebastian Meyer-Plath



© Daniel Schuman

is Managing Director at BLÜCHER GmbH. After graduating in Microbiology at the University of Bonn, he joined Bruker Daltonics in Bremen and held various positions as a Product Manager and Head of Military Sales. After a term with the German bio startup Advalytix GmbH in Munich, he joined Smiths Detection in Watford as the VP Sales & Marketing. Coming back to Germany,

Mr Meyer-Plath became the President of the Bruker Detection Division before joining BLÜCHER GmbH as Managing Director. He currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the CBRN Defence Corps of the German army as a reserve officer.

With Russia's continuous effort to destroy critical infrastructure in Ukraine, every attack results in the release of a plethora of toxic chemicals in various forms, such as liquid solutions in water, gas or aerosols (vapours, smoke, dust).

Though some of the chemical compounds released as a result of the attacks can have an immediate effect, the bigger issue is the long-term risk of exposed personnel because these substances can be carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic to reproduction.

The war in Ukraine is also the first large scale conflict where we are seeing a massive use of UAVs and drones of all sorts. This carries the danger of new release mechanisms for chemically based effectors.

The usual release from shells or grenades filled with the irritant and an explosive release charge limits the variety of usable irritants to substances able to withstand the temperatures and pressures involved in such an approach. Instead, UAVs and drones allow the much easier use of spray canisters, substantially increasing the catalogue of usable chemical compounds.

### Review of the current doctrine and training regimes

Currently, the most comprehensive catalogue of standardised tests for CBRN PPE is the NATO AEP 38. The various tests and their corresponding conditions (e.g. concentrations of substances) are mostly designed for testing against CWAs and do not yet fully encompass threats from new substances. Therefore, NATO expert panels must either make sure that the tests are also validated for this extended list of threats, or develop new testing regimes taking all the new chemicals and release scenarios into account.

Whether the end users, i.e. soldiers, security personnel or civil protection units, will don CBRN PPE if there is a threat of "other" chemicals being used on them will always depend not only on availability but also on the assessment of the balance between the physiological burden of wearing PPE and the potential risk of injury or limited operational performance. This calls for a review of the current doctrine and resulting training regimes.

### Adapting to the new situation

The war in Ukraine has indeed marked a *Zeitenwende* for PPE, its users and the supplying companies. It touches all areas, from the question of whether currently available technologies can sufficiently protect, whether the design of protective gear is suitable for the changing threat scenarios and operational concepts, the ability of the industrial supply base to ensure the supply of PPE in time and in quantities required, up to the question of what needs to be changed in the current complicated and ever conflicting landscape of rules, directives and inadequate standards. All parties involved, from NATO and the EU down to the smallest enterprise in the supply chain, need to acknowledge the challenges and start adapting to the new situation – now! ■

# TAURUS KEPD 350

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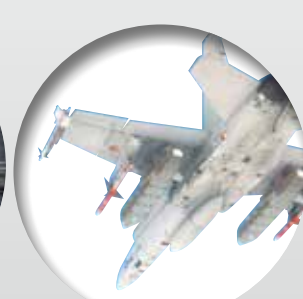
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