FINLAND, EUROPE AND THE WESTERN SECURITY COMMUNITY

What next?

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PROLOGUE

Finland, Europe and the Western security community. What next?

Antti Vesala

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For over a decade, the neighborhoods of Europe have been in ongoing turbulence. It's not self-evident that conflicts and disagreements will be solved within rules-based cooperation and established institutions. Recent actions of Russia, China, and Turkey, for example, have raised concerns. Is the EU capable enough to respond to new threats, such as hybrid and cyber warfare? Can the EU as a part of the Western security community respond to all the new challenges, and what options does Finland have – so far as a non-NATO country?

Europe has a long history full of conflicts. Even with all its flaws and shortcomings taken to account, the European Union has succeeded in bringing together many former enemies. But will this story of relative success live on and flourish, or will the weight of our weakness grow unbearable? One of the biggest, and in many aspects, most important members of our community chose to part ways and took with it the most powerful European military force. Hybrid influencing and other kinds of malevolent activity from actors both outside and inside the European society do their best trying to keep the EU weak and scattered especially in the fields of international policy and security.

After Brexit, the United Kingdom is of course still a part of Europe and an important partner for other European nations and to

the EU, too. But some drivers deepen the division between the UK and the EU. One recent example is the AUKUS-pact, which must be seen as a part of a bigger shift of the center of gravity in world politics.[1] The main axle is no longer over the Atlantic Ocean but the Pacific – between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. China has built itself up as a regional military superpower and a global economic superpower. And Washington, of course, wants to build up alliances to counter the red danger in Eastern Asia. On the global chessboard, it is questionable whether the EU should be seen as a player at all – or just a piece that others push around.

As Europeans, we cannot expect anyone outside our own circles to come to solve these issues for us. It has long been clear that they are left for ourselves to be dealt with. The question is: Can we do it? Do we have the will to do it – and if so, what exactly do we need to do, and who is in charge? What kind of preparations are already on the way, and is it enough?

This publication will present some insights on these issues from a variety of backgrounds. Dr. **Niklas I. M. Nováky**, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Officer at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies in Brussels. M. Soc. Sc. **Henri Vanhanen** has worked as a researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and has also worked for the Foreign Ministry of Finland, the European Parliament, and the U.S. Department of State. Dr. Soc. Sc. **Outi Luova** is an associate professor at the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Turku. Dr. Pol. Sc. **Alpo Rusi** is a senior diplomat who has worked i.a. as the special adviser for the president of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, an ambassador of Finland in Switzerland and the Holy See, and a visiting professor in several universities in Finland, Lithuania, Germany, and Britain. Lic. Phil. **Henna Virkkunen** is a member of the European Parliament and former minister of education of Finland.

1 AUKUS is a trilateral security agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, made public on 15.9.2021.

The EU's Russia policy seeks its direction

Alpo Rusi

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During the Winter War (30.11.1939-13.3.1940) Finland was left alone, although, in Sweden, a civil movement was formed, named *Finland's sak är vår*, "Finland's cause is ours". At the same time, the Baltic States would also have needed assistance, because together with Poland they too had fallen victims to the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact between Hitler and Stalin, signed 23 August 1939, and the first phase of its execution. After the war, Poland, the Baltic States, and the Eastern part of Germany were left behind the Iron Curtain.

During the Cold War, few state leaders dared to wish in public that the Soviet Union should break apart; that what would take place on 30 December 1991, when the Soviet Union was dissolved to Russia and 14 independence-driven states, would actually happen. That year, Finland's foreign policy was led by the Social Democrat Mauno Koivisto (the president of Finland from 1982 to 1994),

who supported the Soviet Union's unity to the moment when state flags were changed at the Kremlin. He stalled a couple of weeks longer than the other Nordic Countries to recognize the Russian Federation. Finland announced after an extraordinary government meeting on 25 August 1991, that it would establish diplomatic relations with the Baltic States. Perhaps the decisive factor, when we analyze the reasons behind the fall of the Soviet Empire, was the desire for the independence in these states.

A Finnish diplomat and journalist Max Jakobson stated in August 1991, that "today's realpolitik is a politics of change." The greatest geopolitical change happened south of the Gulf of Finland when the three Baltic States became democracies integrating into Europe. During his term in office (1994-2000) President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari strove to tighten relations with these countries. He visited them regularly, and, in a speech held in Tartu in 1994, he elaborated the idea of the EU's new Northern Dimension, which would include the three Baltic States and the three Nordic EU members, to form a new "green zone" for the EU. Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen saw a different kind of vision for his Northern Dimension policy in 1997: an EU–Russia energy alliance in the European north. Before leaving his office, Ahtisaari led the 10th anniversary commemorating the end of the Cold War, in Jyväskylä, together with the presidents of the Baltic States and Poland and the prime minister of Sweden.

When the Baltic States joined the EU and NATO in 2004, they aligned themselves to a deeper European and transatlantic security cooperation. The historical opportunity to form the EU's northern community was halted for a moment. Changing times, however, demand changing realpolitik. It would be useful for all Baltic Sea

Area democracies to tone up their common interests. In that case, Finland and Sweden would be forced to re-evaluate their models of military non-alignment. The idea of non-alignment is, of course, already in many ways a part of history, because the EU treaties and its article of solidarity 42.7 require a commitment to military assistance as well.

During the current decade, it is justified to strengthen the EU's real Northern Dimension, in other words, the Northern member states' community of the EU. This requires a more unified view of the EU's policy on Russia. Russia is in many ways the Soviet Union's reincarnation. It is once again ruled by one party, security officials, and nomenklatura of a few million members. The political and ideological divide between Russia and the EU has become deeper by the moment.

The European Parliament adopted 16 September 2021, with votes of 494–42–103, a resolution in which Russia is described with harsh terms, and which suggests that the EU should minimize its dependency on Russian gas, oil, and other raw materials, at least for the time Vladimir Putin stays in power. The resolution describes Russia as an empire of thieves, a kleptocracy ruled by a president-for-life surrounded by oligarchs. In addition, this document, composed under the supervision of former Prime Minister of Lithuania, Andrius Kubilus, includes tough suggestions, like promises of military material assistance to the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership, suggestions to sign security pacts with, for example, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, draining of Russia's energy routes, and exclusion of Russia from international SWIFT-payments. Three MEPs from Finland, two Social Democrats and one from the Center

Party, abstained from the vote. They considered this text either problematic to Finland's interests or contradictory to Finland's Russia policy because it would restrict cooperation with Rosatom, which is the main supplier to Pyhäjoki Nuclear Power Plant, currently proposed for construction.

Nevertheless, the EU must stand up and unite the European democracies not just for the cause of common values but for the basis of common interests. The occupation of Afghanistan, launched by the Soviet Union on Christmas Day 1979, was a wake-up call that led to determined action in European communities to develop a political union. Europe was a bystander when its issues were resolved in the Kremlin and Washington. The French political scientist Raymond Aron stated, as early as in the 1950s, that the keys to abolish Europe's political bifurcation are in its own hands. The weakness of Europe ensured the hegemony of the superpowers. Although Aron might have been generalizing, he wasn't completely wrong.

The evacuation of Afghanistan in September 2021 was once again a reminder that the EU must pursue better foreign policy and work together. The role of the United States in NATO has been central, and there is justification for that. The EU couldn't bring the War in Bosnia to an end, but NATO did. The same pattern repeated itself in the 1999 Kosovo Crisis, although the president of the country with the EU residency had a significant role in the process. Maintaining a nuclear balance and reducing nuclear weapons is not possible without the United States. The EU's strategic autonomy has its limits because the so-called nuclear umbrella relies on the United States. Donald Trump's term showed that the arrangement may involve unpredictability in certain circumstances. The EU must

strengthen its capacity for rapid military response and lead European defense with the support of the United States and Britain.

In the future, the Baltic countries and Finland will be in the same position to the extent that their geopolitical environment remains threatening. Russia will remain unpredictable, and Finland cannot simply remain a bystander on what is happening to the Baltic countries without being isolated by Russia. Russia seeks to weaken the EU and NATO, and its policy towards Finland cannot be separated from this broader strategy.

The new alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) was prepared in secret and was not announced until the second week of September 2021. France was disappointed for a valid reason: it lost a major submarine contract with Australia. However, it is important to note that this was not a "nuclear weapons deal" as Australia's acquisition of submarines from the United States has been dubbed on some platforms. Submarines procured from the United States do not have nuclear armaments even though they operate on nuclear energy, which significantly enhances their performance. The submarines will be available in the late 2030s or slightly earlier, depending on developments.

However, Rana Mitter, Professor of Chinese Affairs at Oxford University, has estimated (The Guardian 17.9.2021) that French-British cooperation will continue to play a key role in European security as a "pillar" of EU defense. According to him, AUKUS will bind the United States to European defense through Britain, even though Britain is no longer a member of the EU. Going further, Mitter sees that, contrary to what the Chinese leadership has commented, it is not a Cold War between the United States and China that is emerg-

ing, but an international liberal system based on various coalitions, called “minilateralism”. AUKUS is the first but not the last step here.

China’s reaction has not been very strong, as it has already realized that the seas around it already have a strong counter-defense capability to counter its expansion. The states of the region have welcomed the establishment of AUKUS. Moreover, China and the United States, the two largest economies of the world, have largely common interests in trade. They may disagree on security but are forced to work together to promote world trade. China's announcement of its desire to join the Pacific Trade Agreement (CPTPP) requires it to adhere to higher standards of workers' rights and environmental protection. At the same time, the agreement is even more important for the major economies of the West.

In the future, the EU must be more determined in its common defense, especially to manage the threat of an unstable Russia. AUKUS is forcing the strengthening of cooperation and military structures in the EU as well. In the next parliamentary term, Germany will also have to decide whether it will, following its pacifist tradition, continue as a second-class military power or take more responsibility for the development of the EU, including its common defense. Meanwhile, the opportunities for Finland and Sweden to separate themselves from the Russia policy of the Baltic states are diminishing.

The Conference on the Future of Europe and the Strategic Compass process:

Finland's priorities for the EU's foreign, security and defense policy

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Introduction

At the time of writing, the EU is in the process of reflecting on how it should handle some of the biggest challenges that it is currently facing. This reflection takes place in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) and the Strategic Compass process, both of which are scheduled to conclude in Spring 2022 during France's EU Council Presidency. CoFoE is a one-year public consultation forum that is meant to give EU citizens a chance to express their views and opinions on how the Union should address major cross-cutting trends such as climate change and digitalization, and how it should reform in different policy areas. The Strategic Compass process in turn is a member state driven initiative that kicked off in 2020 to provide greater political direction specifically

for the EU's security and defense policy and to set new goals and targets for its development until 2030.

Although the scope and focus areas of CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process are different, both processes will have implications for the future of the EU's foreign, security, and defense policies. Regarding CoFoE, one of the 10 topics that EU citizens can discuss on its online platform is 'EU in the world'.[1] Within this topic, citizens can express ideas on the future of EU foreign policy and the Union's external action—many have already done so. Regarding the latter, the Strategic Compass will set goals and objectives for the EU's security and defense policy within four thematic baskets: crisis management, resilience, capabilities, and partnerships.[2] In other words, both CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process provide opportunities for EU member states to shape the future of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and its Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

This paper focuses on Finland's national EU foreign, security and defense policy priorities in the framework of CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process. It argues that Finland wants to strengthen the effectiveness of the EU's external action in general and to boost the Union's resilience against various internal and external shocks in particular. The rest of the paper is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a brief overview of some of the main challenges that the EU has had to deal with on the world stage in recent years. The second explains how Finland would like the EU to deal with these challenges and looks at some of the proposals that Helsinki has put forward in the framework of CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process. The fourth section concludes the paper.

1 Conference on the Future of Europe. Topics, https://futureu.europa.eu/processes.
2 EEAS. Towards a Strategic Compass. 201120_2, 6 May 2021, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89047/tohttps:/eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89047/towards-strategic-compass_en-wards-strategic-compass_en.

Challenges

The EU is facing numerous foreign and security policy related challenges that are global, regional, and internal in character. At the global level, US foreign policy is increasingly focused on the Indo-Pacific region due to China's growing power and influence as well as its increased assertiveness on the world stage. This means that Europe will have to do more for its own security in the future and to be more proactive when it comes to addressing threats and challenges in its own neighborhood and in places such as Afghanistan, from which the US and its European partners pulled out in a chaotic way in August. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed the EU's dependency on external suppliers for key pharmaceutical products and highlighted vulnerabilities in the Union's global supply chains. New technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and quantum computing are creating opportunities for Europe's industry but also risks for the Union and its citizens in the form of increased and more sophisticated cyber-attacks. At the same time, climate change, which the EU views as a 'threat multiplier', is expected to cause significant droughts and food shortages around the world.[3] This is likely to cause more and more people to become displaced from affected regions and encourage them to seek better livelihoods elsewhere, including in Europe. The resource scarcity that climate change is likely to exacerbate may also increase conflicts in Europe's neighborhood.

The situation is no less challenging for the EU at the regional level. Russia's continuing war against Ukraine and its disinformation activities in Europe continue to be major concerns for countries across the EU. In Belarus, the regime of Alexander Lukashenko has

3 EU. *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*, June 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

cracked down on pro-democracy protesters following the fraudulent presidential elections of 2020, engaged in aviation piracy by forcing an EU-registered civilian airliner carrying a Belarusian opposition journalist to land in Minsk, and weaponized illegal migration to put pressure on Lithuania. Turkey's aggressive rhetoric and energy exploration activities in the territorial waters of Greece and Cyprus also raised tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2020. The EU's broader Southern neighborhood remains volatile due to the on-going civil war in Libya and turbulence in Africa's Sahel region. The increased presence of Russia and China in Africa has also complicated the EU's ability to conduct CSDP missions the region. In the Central African Republic (CAR), the EU is having to operate a CSDP training mission while Russian-backed Wagner Group mercenaries also operate in the country. The EU's CSDP operations, including the one in the CAR, are also increasingly subject to hybrid threats such as disinformation campaigns that are designed to discredited them in the minds of the local population.

Internally, the EU's decision-making process in foreign and security policy continues to be slow, and its actions often reflect the so-called lowest common denominator among the member states. Despite proposals to move away from unanimity decision-making in certain CFSP areas, the Union has not yet been able to extend Qualified Majority Voting (QMV)[4] to this area due to opposition from multiple member states. The unanimity principle has often prevented the EU from acting timely and effectively when it has been confronted with international crises and challenges. Given that the member states have different strategic cultures that are informed

4 When the EU Council is acting upon a proposal by the European Commission or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a qualified majority is reached if the proposal is supported by at least 55% of the EU's 27 member states and if the supporting member states collectively represent at least 65% of the Union's population. Abstentions count as votes against the proposal.

by their different geographical locations, their different histories, and their different partnerships and dependencies, getting them to agree how the EU should act is often a laborious task. In Spring 2021, Hungary vetoed two EU foreign policy statements: once criticizing Beijing for cracking down on Hong Kong,[5] and another calling for a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians in May.[6]

A related challenge is the erosion of the culture of consensus in the EU Council and larger member states' perceived lack of solidarity towards their smaller peers. Traditionally, vetoing a proposal in the Council has been something that many member states have avoided doing because they have not wanted to shoulder the blame for preventing the EU from acting. In recent years, however, it appears that the taboo over exercising the veto has somewhat decreased, especially from the minds of countries that already have strained relationship with their EU partners. This is partly due to a sense especially (though not exclusively) among Central and Eastern European countries that larger member states such as Germany are not showing sufficient solidarity to them when it comes to addressing their national security concerns. They tend to point to Germany's unwillingness to halt the construction of the Nord Stream 2, which will deliver Russian natural gas to Germany via the Baltic Sea, despite their warnings of how the project will increase Europe's energy dependence on Russia. As a result, they worry their specific national foreign and security policy concerns would not be taken seriously if QMV were to be extended to this area.

5 H. von der Burchard & J. Barigazzi. Germany slams Hungary for blocking EU criticism of China on Hong Kong. *Politico*, 10 May 2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/german-foreign-minister-slams-hungary-for-blocking-hong-kong-conclusions/.
6 *Euractiv*. Hungary blocks EU declaration on Israel-Palestine ceasefire. 19 May 2021, https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/hungary-blocks-eu-declaration-on-israel-palestine-ceasefire/.

Finland's priorities

Finland is one of the EU's leading advocates of extending QMV to CFSP and supports it in the context of both CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process. The Finnish government's 2021 EU white paper notes that '(t)he swiftness and credibility of the EU's common foreign and security policy can be improved by increasing the use of qualified majority decision-making and the principle of constructive abstention.'[7] During Finland's Autumn 2019 EU Council Presidency, Sauli Niinistö, the President of the Republic, also expressed that he supports strengthening CFSP 'even at the risk that it would reduce the powers of the President of the Republic', adding that Finland needs 'to strive for a common European voice and joint European deeds', both as the Council Presidency and as a regular Council member.[8] This is because Niinistö sees that the EU's geopolitical influence is currently not matching its economic weight on the world stage. If the Union were able to act timelier and more effectively when dealing with international crises and challenges, it would increase it geopolitical influence. Although Niinistö did not elaborate what he meant precisely, the statement can only mean that he supports extending QMV to CFSP given the constitutional division of labor between the President of the Republic and the government in Finland's foreign policy.[9]

7 Finland, Government. *Government Report on EU Policy: Strong and united EU – towards a more sustainable European Union*. 28 January 2021, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162704.

8 Finland, President of the Republic. Speech by President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö at the Ambassadors' Conference on 20 August 2019, https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speeches/24119/.

9 Under Chapter 8, Section 93 of Finland's current constitution, which entered into force in 2000, '(t)he foreign policy of Finland is directed by the President of the Republic in co-operation with the Government.' In practice, this has been implemented in a way that the government takes the lead in EU foreign policy matters and the President oversees Finland's relations with great powers. Extending QMV to EU decisions on sanctions, however, would impact the President's field of responsibility given the possibility that the EU could use QMV to impose sanctions on Russia. This would *de facto* reduce the powers of the President, which is why Niinistö's statement has been interpreted as expression of support for QMV in CFSP.

President Niinistö has also expressed support for the idea of creating a new European Security Council (ESC), which was revisited by France and Germany in 2017-2019. It was also raised in the Finnish context by Ilkka Kanerva, a member of the Finnish Parliament and former foreign minister, in July 2020. Kanerva saw that ESC would strengthen the EU's ability to act on the world stage and enhance its capacity to respond to crises and challenges.[10] Niinistö expressed later that he supported Kanerva's suggestion about creating a security council for the EU. Even though the Finnish government has not yet expressed support for creating an ESC, it is worth nothing that there are on-going discussions in the framework of the Strategic Compass process regarding the possibility of creating a permanent EU defense ministers' Council. So far, EU defense ministers have met twice a year in Brussels in the framework of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), which is primarily a foreign ministers' forum. Creating a permanent Defense Council could strengthen defense ministers' involvement in EU defense cooperation and provide greater political direction for it. If the member states agree to create a separate EU Defense Council, it could boost the Union's ability to act more strategically and effective on the world stage.

One of Finland's specific focus areas in the Strategic Compass process is the resilience basket. This is because it is the basket that is the most directly related to the national security of the member states as it seeks to boost their ability to withstand pressure and recover from various internal and external shocks. These include phenomena such as hybrid threats, cyber-attacks, and supply line disruptions. Regarding hybrid threats, Finland would like the Strategic Compass to facilitate a common EU understanding and approach

10 E. Rytkönen. Kanerva haluaa EU:lle oman turvallisuusneuvoston, "Euroopan yli ei enää käveltäisi". *Turun Sanomat*, 7 July 2020, accessed https://www.ts.fi/uutiset/paikalliset/5001132/Kanerva+haluaa+EUlle+oman+turvallisuusneuvoston+Euroopan+yli+ei+enaa+kaveltaisi.

towards countering them, and also to develop a specific hybrid toolbox that would enable the Union to deal with them more effectively. Finland also wants the Strategic Compass to boost the EU's operational capacity to prevent, discourage, deter and respond to cyber-attacks by strengthening the Union's cyber capabilities and facilitating the emergence of a common situational awareness on cyber-attacks. Overall, Finland sees that the EU needs to be better prepared for crises taking place in the cyber domain, also by developing the Union's CSDP missions and operations in a way that they would cover crises in the cyberspace. Finally, as a country with a highly developed security of supply system, Finland is seeking to facilitate the emergence of a common EU approach towards security of supply through the Strategic Compass. Helsinki sees that robust EU commitments in this area are missing and that access to critical resources in times of crises is not assured, which is a shortcoming that the COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted. Therefore, Finland wants the EU to reinforce its security of supply arrangements, also for defense purposes.

Finland has also been a long-time advocate of clarifying how Article 42(7) of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU's mutual aid and assistance clause, could be used in different scenarios. This article states 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,' in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and without prejudicing the character of the security and defense policy of those member states that remain neutral. It is therefore similar in character to NATO's Article 5, although there is an understanding among EU member states that Article 42(7) does not extend to territorial defense. So far, Article 42(7) has been invoked only once, i.e., by France in 2015 following the Paris terror attacks. France invoked Article 42(7) to request that its EU partners contribute troops to various French national,

EU, and international operations so that France itself could relieve some of its own forces from them and redeploy them to the fight against ISIS. However, as a non-NATO country, Finland is primarily interested in the possibility of using Article 42(7) in the event of crisis that would relate more directly to its national security, e.g., cyber-attacks and hybrid attacks. For this reason, Helsinki has been calling for the development of a handbook for the implementation of Article 42(7) in different scenarios, which would also clarify the role that EU institutions and structures could play in its implementation.

Finally, Finland would also like the Strategic Compass to strengthen EU's partnerships with like-minded states and other international actors. Helsinki sees that an extensive network of partners is crucial for the EU's ability to tackle various foreign and security policy related challenges, including those stemming from emerging and disruptive technologies such as AI and quantum computing. This reflects Finland's own network-based approach to security and defense policy: the EU is the most valuable framework for Finland's multinational security cooperation, but Helsinki has also developed a deep partnership with NATO, and extensive bilateral links to Sweden, the US, and the UK. Strengthening the EU's partnerships with the US and NATO are particular priorities for Finland in the framework of the Strategic Compass process, and they build on the work that Helsinki did in this area during its autumn 2019 EU Council Presidency: the efforts of the Finnish Presidency were key in facilitating the agreement on third-country participation in the EU's Permanent Structures Cooperation (PESCO) defense cooperation framework, for example, which was concluded during the German EU Council Presidency in Autumn 2020.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, the EU is dealing with numerous threats and challenges that are global, regional, and internal in character: increased great power competition, supply line disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, hybrid and cyber-attacks, and ineffective decision-making. The CoFoE and the Strategic Compass process provide opportunities for EU member states, including Finland, to address these and other challenges to strengthen the Union's ability to contribute to the security of its member states and to act more effectively on the world stage. Finland sees that the EU's current and future challenges could be addressed effectively in the EU's existing legal framework without treaty change. Helsinki has therefore put forward a set of proposals that would strengthen the EU's external actions and the credibility of its security and defense policy. It remains to be seen whether these proposals will make it to Strategic Compass when the document is drafted in the second half of 2021, or to the final document that CoFoE will produce in 2022. Yet, given the geopolitical context in which the EU exists, the Union cannot avoid taking steps to strengthen its external action and its security and defense policy. If it does avoid it, the EU's influence as an aspiring geopolitical actor will further decrease and it will compromise its own sovereignty and the security of its citizens.

China's normative challenge

Outi Luova

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Our perception of China as a security threat has changed rapidly in recent years. China is often mentioned in reports focusing on so-called hybrid challenges, and tangible examples can already be found from Finland, including a plan from a Chinese research institute to purchase an airfield from Lapland[1], and a case of cyberespionage in the Parliament of Finland, in which the evidence of the possible perpetrator hinted to China.[2] Still, lesser attention is given to China's normative influence. How do Chinese actors intentionally and unintentionally spread norms that challenge European values? How might Chinese values spread through economic cooperation?

1 The Finnish defence Ministry blocked Chinese plans for research airbase in Lapland, YLE 4.3.2021, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/defence_ministry_blocked_chinese_plans_for_research_airbase_in_lapland/11820411
2 Supo identifies China-linked cyber-spying agent in Finnish Parliament hack, YLE 18.3.2021, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/supo_identifies_china-linked_cyber-spying_agent_in_finnish_parliament_hack/11843748

Normative diffusion, as such, is nothing new or an extraordinary phenomenon. Western countries have actively pursued the export of democracy, human rights, and other western values globally and outside their sphere of influence. Even the Nordic Countries together have tried to get the Chinese to adopt Nordic values.[3] So, in that sense it is no surprise, that now as China gets stronger, Chinese actors view it as an opportunity to spread their values to the world instead. Indeed, for Europe, it has been a surprise that a country, that was just a little time ago considered a developing one, now challenges us with its economic power and a competing model for development. Western countries seem to be totally unprepared to notice the normative challenge that Chinese actors are promoting, let alone make critical evaluations of it and prevent the rooting of undesirable values.

Our increasing economic dependence on China creates fertile soil for Chinese values to spread in Europe. Chinese companies have widened the Chinese economic foothold here by their business acquisitions and investments. At the same time, the Chinese government creates new tools to tighten its grip on Chinese-owned businesses, which enlarges the influence of the party-state through companies abroad.[4] The Chinese government's direct normative lobbying through civil organizations and social media, for example, has been noted in European media, but the interest to report on more subtle influencing, done through economic channels, has been more limited. China can use businesses' and powerful individuals' influence channels to increase acceptance for its development model globally. Perhaps we are witnessing the birth of a new kind of "Red Tycoons".

3 Nordic Council of Ministers (2015). Strategy for International Branding of the Nordic Region 2015-2018. http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/ diva2:783406/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

4 As Chinese citizens head overseas, the party does likewise The Economist, Special report. 21 June 2021 https://www.economist.com/special-report/2021/06/23/as-chinese-citizens-head-overseas-the-party-does-likewise

On the other hand, as our dependence on Chinese companies gets stronger, Chinese companies' operating models that contradict our norms might receive more acceptance. These norms include transparency of decision-making, right to free speech, justice, privacy, respect of nature, and equality, between genders, ethnic groups, and different sections of society. Effects that are distributed to society through economic channels are seemingly less political, and therefore they are not usually considered traditional security threats. For that reason, they seldomly raise discussions, and because of this, the spreading and rooting of these effects can happen without notice.

An alarming example of the diffusion of Chinese norms was revealed in Huang Jaw-Nian's research. He noticed that some Taiwanese media companies had modified their administrative and publishing protocols to match those that the People's Republic of China had standardized, for that they could ensure the continuation of economic cooperation with their partners in mainland China.[5] Studies run by Europeans have found that recruitment protocols and terms in employment contracts, for example, are getting "Sinicized" in Chinese-owned companies in Europe.[6] In January 2021, Netzpolitik reported on Huawei's recruitment methods in Germany that they do not meet European standards.[7] On which issues, and how broadly, are European businesses, trade unions, and employees prepared to give in to their Chinese partners? Does cooperation and competition with Chinese companies yawn our companies towards "rotten compromises" that downplay our values and principles?

5 Huang, J.-N. (2019). Between American and Chinese Hegemonies: Economic Dependence, Norm Diffusion and Taiwan's Press Freedom. *China: An International Journal*, 17(2), 82–105.

6 Antonella Ceccagno and Devi Sacchetto (2019) A Chinese Model for Labour in Europe?, International Migration Volume58, Issue3, https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12616

7 Fanta, A. & Laufer, D. (2021, January 1). "Wolf culture": How Huawei controls its employees in Europe. *Netzpolitik*. https://netzpolitik.org/2021/wolf-culture-how-huawei-controls-its-employees-in-europe/

On the other hand, we should not let the threat of normative influence dim our critical judgment. Many Chinese multinational companies aim to fulfill the criteria of corporate responsibility to strengthen their brand, and Chinese officials demand that Chinese companies operating abroad apply corporate responsibility rules to avoid reputational damage. Although the Chinese government's ability to influence Chinese businesses abroad has become stronger, it still has difficulties controlling them. The main mission of businesses is still to make a profit, and therefore efforts to promote the interests of the party-state through them have, in many cases, been politely ignored or have had minimal effect.[8]

Drawing a line between intentional and unintentional normative influence is thus difficult. To what extent are China's Belt and Road Initiative projects deliberate political influence through economic means, or is the goal of this initiative to just strengthen the global economic environment and make it more suitable for Chinese business? Although the key interest of Chinese businesses in participating in it is to boost profits, China's rising influence could change values and attitudes to be more accepting towards Chinese norms and the Chinese-promoted authoritarian development model within the countries involved.[9] This trend also reminds us about the threat of Finlandization.[10]

In this new situation, it is important to be aware of possible deliberate normative influencing and unintentional normative importing, without automatically jumping to suspicious conclusions about Chinese actors' goals. It is within the European interest to

8 Scott L. Kastner & Margaret M. Pearson (2021) Exploring the Parameters of China's Economic Influence, , Studies in Comparative International Development 56:18–44 https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-021-09318-9

9 Scott L. Kastner & Margaret M. Pearson (2021) Exploring the Parameters of China's Economic Influence, , Studies in Comparative International Development 56:18–44 https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-021-09318-9

10 In German: "Finnlandisierung". Refers to the influence of the Soviet Union on Finland's policies during the Cold War.

avoid toxic xenophobia and act rationally with China. Strengthening knowledge in Europe about how Chinese businesses operate and how the Chinese government's influencing works minimizes the risk that future cooperation with the Chinese produces undesirable consequences. The best way to prevent normative diffusion is to act openly, defining own values and principles, and holding on to them. China's normative challenge forces Europe to define those norms that are most important to it and act in a way that keeps them bright and well defined amongst change.

Further reading

Kastner, S. L. & Pearson, M. M. (2021). Exploring the Parameters of China's Economic Influence. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 56, 18–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-021-09318-9

Ceccagno, A. & Sacchetto, D. (2019). A Chinese Model for Labour in Europe? *International Migration* 58(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12616

Finland should develop its security and defense cooperation without pre-conditions

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The latest edition of the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy was published in autumn 2020. Its main conclusion, underlined right in the beginning, is that Finland's foreign and security policy environment is in an intense state of flux.[1] This refers to a wide range of challenges, in which, among other things, superpower competition, climate change, and hybrid influence characterize the operating environment. However, a key development for Finland's immediate security is related to the report's observations on the tightening of the security situation in Europe: tensions have increased and with them, the security environment has changed into a more unstable direction with long-term effects.

1 Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy.

From Finland's point of view, the changes in the dynamics of international politics have proven to be cataclysmic for its security policy. Russia's military activation and the precipitous attitude of its current regime towards NATO and the European Union have, at least to some extent, restored the need to be prepared for military threats. Although a military attack on Finland is unlikely, rising tensions in Europe have changed threat assessments. A significant turning point for Finland's security policy was the war in Ukraine that began in 2014, which marked the beginning of the current tightening of the European security environment. As a result of the war, both in Finland and in the transatlantic community, the views of the military challenges posed by Russia and, more broadly, of its interests have intensified.

War in Ukraine created a chain of events in the West, in which the NATO and the US countermeasures against Russia, in particular, affected Finland's position as a part of the European security environment. While attempting to match Russia's military challenges in the Baltic and Northern European regions, the need to invest in the region's partnerships, in addition to the Alliance's defense capabilities and planning, arose within both NATO and the United States. In the developed environment, especially Finland's national capabilities and the geostrategic position within Baltic and Northern European security architecture, increased the US's and NATO's interests towards Finland – as well as towards Sweden. Solid proof of Finland's enhanced political weight both in Brussels and in Washington have been its 2014 confirmed status as NATOs Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) and the 2016 signed Statement of Intent (SOI) with the United States, which expanded bilateral defense cooperation.

Finland's increased security and defense policy cooperation has not only been limited to NATO and the United States. Since 2014, Finland has concluded several agreements aimed at expanding defense cooperation with, among others, the United Kingdom, Ger-

many, France, Norway, and Sweden. In addition, Finland has been actively establishing permanent structural cooperation in the EU defense policy, joining the British-led Rapid Reaction Force (JEF) and the French European Intervention Initiative. Other major developments in Finland's defense policy in recent years include the new role and task of the Defense Forces in providing and receiving international assistance, which entered into force in summer 2017. Under the new legislation, it is now possible for Finland to send military assistance abroad and receive external assistance when needed.

Political and legislative projects performed under the banner of defense cooperation may sound like technical solutions, mainly related to the needs of the defense administration. Although defense cooperation agreements or changes in legislation do not bind the parties to military assistance, i.e., do not provide direct security guarantees or create assistance obligations to the parties, they are of great importance in describing changes in Finland's security policy culture and status. President Sauli Niinistö has many times described, how national defense capability makes Finland an interesting partner to the West, should the worst happen.[2] It is no coincidence that efforts to boost Finland's military interoperability have been made, as a result of an intensified security policy environment. By creating strong defense policy networks, Finland seeks to improve its position in the European security system – when Finland practices and talks with NATO, Sweden, Norway, and the United States, for example, on peace and crisis conditions and normal cooperation, it also provides a basis for partnership in exceptional circumstances.[3]

Finland's defense policy in recent years hides a major upheaval: in defense terms, never in its history has Finland been as close to its

2 For example, the President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö's speech at the opening of the 219th national defense course. November 7, 2016 and interview with President Niinistö in Iltalehti on January 17, 2021: https://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/a/940fe711-cf0a-46fe-90e0-39c0ea63b796

3 Government Defense Report 2017.

Western partners as it is today. Perhaps this change is best reflected in President Niinistö's statement during the 2018 presidential election about forming alliances in a situation where Finland would be in the middle of a military crisis. In practice, the statement describes a position in which Finland would act as a militarily allied state; albeit with the difference that an alliance would arise, in certain circumstances, with like-minded actors. Finland's opportunity for cooperation in a crisis is primarily based on the development of military interoperability, geographical factors, and close political dialogue, and not, for example, NATO membership.

Although Finland's international defense cooperation has gradually gained more alliance-like characteristics in recent years, this does not mean a complete turnaround in Finland's security and defense policy. In the post-Cold War World, Finland had a new opportunity for international defense cooperation. The procurement of military materials from the United States with the Hornet jets and Finland entering international crisis management and the NATO partnership opened new doors. Although the security environment changed as the risk of the Great War in Europe receded, Finland developed its national defense and began to build defense and security networks in the West.[4]

An essential consequence of the cooperation that has taken place over the decades has been the increase in both the compatibility of Finland's military performance and the understanding of the strategic standpoints of its Western partners. In practice, when Finland has deliberately removed technical barriers to its membership, Finland has become a more compatible partner than many actual NATO member states. By procuring defense equipment from the West, Finland has also created conditions in which a military

4 In his report *"Koskiveneellä kohti valtavirtaa: Suomen puolustuspolitiikka kylmän sodan lopusta 2010-luvun kiristyneeseen turvallisuusympäristöön"* (2017) Matti Pesu has described in more detail the stages of the internationalization of Finnish defense policy in the post-Cold War era.

crisis in its neighboring areas would already require defense cooperation with partners, at least in the form of security of supply.[5]

Increasing international defense cooperation has proven to be a good way for Finland to maneuver in the current changed security environment. It has enabled closer cooperation with partners who have common interests with Finland in the Baltic Sea region and Northern Europe in a way that has not increased security policy tensions. At the same time, it represents a new phase in Finland's international defense cooperation, when the focus is no longer on crisis management but regional defense.

Finland's strategic message through international defense cooperation has been moderate but clear: Finland will be able to operate together with partners if necessary. At best, under its current policy, Finland can create capabilities that provide military deterrence and raise the threshold for conflict. Finland's history provides examples of how either external military assistance or even the possibility of obtaining it has played a key role for Finland. Material assistance from Sweden in the Winter War[6] or Germany in the Continuation War[7] was considerable. Similarly, the possibility of French and British military assistance in the Winter War served as a deterrent to the Soviet Union, essentially influencing the outcome of the Winter War, although assistance was ultimately not received, and its nature can be disputed.

In the best case, the idea of the deterrent value of possible external assistance can work in the same direction even today and thus increase Finland's foreign policy room for maneuver, for example in its relations with Russia. In the future, Finland should maintain its readiness for both high-level defense policy dialogue and training activities with its partners. As the security environment further

5 Iltalehti 22.6.2016: *Aseet sitovat Suomen USA:han – kenraali Jarmo Lindberg kutsuu sitä sotilaalliseksi yhteistyöksi. ("Weapons tie Finland with the USA – general Jarmo Lindberg calls it military cooperation").*

6 First Soviet-Finnish war, 30.11.1939–13.3.1940.

7 Second Soviet-Finnish war, 25.6.1941–19.9.1944.

changes and Finland sets goals for itself accordingly, the adoption of new political guidelines will inevitably also lie ahead. In any case, it is becoming obvious how non-alignment without military cooperation does not meet the demands of today. Therefore, the view of Finland as a militarily allied or non-aligned country is ultimately too narrow a perspective, as the development of Finland's security policy position in the eyes of its partners in recent years shows – Finland has been able to implement defense cooperation in crises even without being a member of NATO.

It is therefore reasonable to ask what purpose it ultimately serves to define Finland's security policy and position from an allied-non-allied perspective? A polarized setup hides underneath decisions that Finland has made and makes the debate on Finland's position unnecessarily difficult. Non-alignment is already undermined by Finland's membership of the European Union and its commitment to the Union's solidarity clause in Article 42.7. This is a clause that obliges EU countries to aid when a Member State is the target of an armed attack. Although Article 42.7 does not explicitly state like in NATO's article 5 that the use of armed force is included in any assistance, implicitly it does. Finland would therefore be on the winning side if Article 42.7. were to develop in a clearer direction at the political level and be more clearly integrated into the European security architecture. At its best, Finland could get real safety guarantees or at least a stronger safety rope.[8]

One way to strengthen Finland's strategic message in international defense cooperation, both domestically and abroad, could be to update the political positions regarding Finland's international defense cooperation and security policy. As words are also deeds, Finland would need a new security policy vocabulary and the ability to express it. In this respect, the challenge is in the hands of decision-makers.

8 Vanhanen & Nováky 2018.

A different, broader definition of Finland's position and its defense cooperation would also certainly facilitate the work of the political leadership. However, the difficulty lies in the fact that Finland is not non-aligned, but neither is a member of a military alliance. A concept for Finland's new security policy could be to define Finland primarily as a country that takes care of its national defense and engages in international defense cooperation, and not, in principle, as a non-military or non-aligned country. Such a definition would in no way be radical and would also serve as an outward signal of how international defense cooperation has become a normal and, above all, an integral part of Finland's security. At the same time, it would strip down unnecessary mystique around Finland's security policy alignment and defense cooperation.

Also, a policy that does not impose pre-conditions on Finland's international defense cooperation would be a more suitable expression of security policy for today's environment. The policy of unrestricted defense cooperation has already been applied in the Finnish-Swedish relations since 2015. In the past, cooperation was limited to peacetime conditions, but decision-makers in both Finland and Sweden have adopted a practical perspective in which it is not considered wise to limit the depth or nature of cooperation in advance, due to the unpredictability of the European security environment. In practice, the Finnish and Swedish armed forces have developed their partnership in a direction where all the branches of defense of both countries are able to fight together, under one leadership.

It would be beneficial for Finland to follow a similarly practical approach and policy in its other defense cooperation relations as with Sweden. Given the current security policy situation, it does not make sense to limit cooperation in advance other than by stating that deepening cooperation does not in itself entail mutual obligations. Such a notion has already been made in all of Finland's recent declarations of intent and memoranda of understanding concern-

ing international defense cooperation, but it would not mean that Finland would continue to have the right to choose those forms that best serve its interests.

Updated definitions of Finland's position and international defense cooperation without preceding restrictions could be formalized, for example, in Finland's next government program, and consequently, in the next Government's Defense Report. Rightly formulated, they could increase Finland's attractiveness as a defense and security policy partner and increase the opportunities for decision-makers to act in a situation, in which responding to or preparing for a possible crisis would require multinational capabilities to help Finland and maintain peace in the neighborhood.

There is no reason to doubt that Finland could continue to implement close international defense cooperation. It is based on deeper tensions over European security, built on the differing ways in which Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community define the rules of international policy. These differences will continue to maintain the conditions for close defense cooperation. There is no doubt that the capabilities of interoperability created in the time of peace also have its benefits in the time of crisis.

Sooner or later, Finland may end up at a similar crossroads with its current defense cooperation as with NATO membership: it is possible to build interoperability very far, but in the absence of mutual political commitments, its security policy outcome also includes uncertainties. As Finland is not a member of the military alliance and has no defense obligations, it also does not participate in the preparation of defense plans with its partners, in which its role with other actors in the regional crisis will be defined in advance. Ultimately, the direction of Finland's defense cooperation is determined by the security needs of both Finland and its partners and the greater development of the security environment. However, policymakers have a key role to play, and they will be the ultimate decision-makers for how far they are going to take this cooperation.

The European Union's international policy position should be strengthened

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The Conference on the Future of Europe is currently considering the need for reform in the European Union. One key aspect is the common foreign and security policy. It needs to be more effective. A reform that streamlines the European Union's decision-making is required to deliver a better common strategic vision and to increase the ability to initiate joint action.

There is a need for this, as Europe's neighborhood is historically unstable. The broader international politics has also become more turbulent. The coronavirus pandemic has increased mistrust between states, the confrontation between China and the United States has escalated, and the post-World War II rules-based world order is faltering. Russia aims to strengthen its grip. The US commitment to Europe in general still raises questions with its chaotic

withdrawal from Afghanistan and the new defense cooperation with Britain and Australia, along with the US (AUKUS). At the same time, Europe itself has become a playing field in superpower politics.

Many recent international crises have shown that the European Union is way too slow, rigid, and fragmented in its international politics. It often takes weeks, even months, to form a common position. This undermines both the credibility and the security of the Union. Many of the problems in the EU's foreign policy are largely related to the requirement of unanimity in decisions. According to the Lisbon Treaty's general rule, decisions in the EU's foreign and security issues must be made unanimously. This is required for the broad lines of foreign and security policy, and decisions with a defense or military dimension. For example, the launch of an EU military operation must be decided unanimously.

However, reaching a consensus often requires hard work: it is difficult to reconcile the differing interests and objectives of the member states. The best way to make the European Union's international position more effective would therefore be to increase qualified majority voting in decision-making. It is already the most common way of making decisions in the Union. The Council of Ministers of the EU, acting by a qualified majority, approves an initiative if it is supported by at least 55% of the member states and at least 65% of the EU population lives in those member states.

In certain cases, increasing qualified majority voting would already be possible without changes to the EU Treaties. A decision by the European Council of EU leaders would suffice.

The EU Commission has suggested that, initially, qualified majority voting could be adopted for decisions that include international human rights matters, economic sanctions, and the launch of civilian missions and operations. In addition, changes to the EU terrorist list could be decided by a qualified majority. These suggestions are easy to support.

An increase in qualified majority voting would benefit Finland. Effective EU decision-making generates security, especially for smaller member states, which cannot respond to the turmoil of international politics by themselves.

In addition, EU countries could also make more use of the possibility of constructive abstention. This arrangement allows a member state to disagree with the decision and then would not be obliged to apply it. However, a member state would accept that the decision would be binding on the EU and would not with its opposition cripple the Union's ability to act.

So far, the opportunity has been seized only once in 2018, when Cyprus refrained from the EU's decision to launch a civilian crisis management operation in Kosovo.

Aiming for strategic autonomy

There is a wide gap between the objectives and activities of the European Union's current foreign policy. The goals are big and easy to support but achieving them with the present tools has fallen short. In the EU's most recent foreign and security policy strategy, one of the key objectives for international action is strategic autonomy. The term is borrowed from a French security policy debate.[1]

There is no commonly agreed definition of strategic autonomy. It generally aims to increase the efficiency of international action. Most EU countries interpret this to mean both the Union's independent capacity to deal with crises in its neighborhood and international action independent of the great powers. However, some countries consider that it only applies to crisis management or in-

1 About the concept and the strong French advocacy of it, see for example https://icds.ee/en/does-france-seek-alone-european-strategic-autonomy/

dependent international activities. Finland belongs to a group that emphasizes capabilities for the former.

There is also disagreement between the member states on what threats the EU should focus on independently. Most member states want the Union to at least be able to counter cyber security threats from its own neighborhood and non-regional security and defense threats. However, there is also a minority among the member states, to which Finland belongs, who would like the EU to develop its ability to respond to threats related to regional defense as well.

Gradually, the use of the term strategic autonomy has also extended beyond foreign and security policy, particularly for European industrial policy. The EU Commission wants to limit the growth of external influence in strategic industries such as artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, which allow independent international action. The Covid crisis fueled this debate. It highlighted how dependent Europe is on many critical supplies and raw materials, especially from China. Therefore, resilience and security of supply have now risen into a very high priority on industrial policy. This is related to European competitiveness in general, but it also has a strong security dimension.

Searching common direction with a compass

To make common decision-making and operation more possible in the field of foreign and security policy, the European Union needs a clearer common direction and vision. The overall picture and goals need to be clarified. To meet this need, member states launched in 2020 a process, which aims to provide the Union a new strategic compass. It is an initiative of the German Presidency, which is due to be completed during the French Presidency in spring 2022.

The compass aims to help member states build a more cohesive strategic culture - an understanding of what threats the Union should be able to tackle, how it should act, and what its common interests are. Aligning the direction is not very easy when member states' perceptions of threats are very different. They are largely tied to their geography and history, of which, under normal circumstances, only one can change, and that too, can only be done slowly and in the long run.

Acts and efforts towards a common understanding and view are much needed. As a cornerstone for the work, the EU External Action Service commissioned a joint threat analysis, which also involved national intelligence services. On this basis, the work has continued. At its best, the strategic compass can increase member states' understanding of the threats and challenges facing the EU and the direction of its security and defense policy. However, there is a danger that, despite all the groundwork, the policy paper may remain quite general due to differences in interests. Then it would not fulfill its purpose.

Broad security concept

The Strategic Compass initiative does not focus solely on the EU's traditional security and defense policy. The Union's security policy agenda has expanded in recent years. Today, it also covers hybrid and cyber threats, capacity-building, security issues related to climate change, and security of supply. All of them fall within the scope of strategic autonomy.

When we talk about the European Union's common security and defense policy, we consider security in its broader concept: it includes external border security, the fight against terrorism, crisis

management outside the EU, and preparedness for various hybrid threats. Yet quite significant steps have also been taken in the field of traditional defense policy. The previous EU Commission, presided by Jean-Claude Juncker, presented several new initiatives in this regard. Indeed, as many experts have noted, that in five years, more progress was made than in the previous fifty years combined. The background for this was, especially, the crisis in Ukraine and the return of Russian power politics, but also the uncertainty raised by US President Donald Trump and his visions regarding the US commitment to defending Europe. In the words of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the European Union was forced to wake up to the realization that "we must take fate into our own hands."

During the Juncker Commission, the European Union launched, among other things, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), set up the European Defence Fund, and set out to develop cross-border military mobility. In particular, the PESCO project is exceptional in the field of EU defense, as it contains several binding legal obligations on participating countries. Among other things, the countries involved are committed to increasing national defense budgets, investing more in defense research and technology, developing strategically important capabilities, and participating in cooperation in the defense industry.

The need for this is obvious because although the EU countries' combined defense budgets are the second largest in the world after the United States, member states still make defense investments largely separately. Separate projects and procurements are wasting resources.

The Commission and France promote the EU's common defense

Although progress has been made, it has still been slower than expected. The reason is money, and beneath that, a lack of political will. When the member states agreed on the EU budget framework for 2021–27, the financing of defense projects eventually fell far short of the Commission's proposals. However, as ongoing crises in the neighborhood show, the current fragmentation of the European Union's international presence and capacity cannot continue. Member countries need to stand up, trust each other and make the most of cooperation.

Expectations are now on the rise. In September 2021, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made her annual "State of the Union" policy speech, with defense policy being one of its highlights. This was not expected, as the Commission has recently been quiet about defense. This is despite the fact that Commission President von der Leyen came into office directly from the post of the German Minister of Defense, and initiatives adopted by the Juncker Commission provide good material for the future.

Therefore, more vigor is needed if something significant is to be achieved in EU defense, and that is what the Commission is now trying to do with hard pressure from France. A separate EU Defense Summit is now planned for the French Presidency in spring 2022. The joint defense alliance, AUKUS, launched by the US, Australia, and Britain has further encouraged the preparations, as it surprised the European Union and deeply offended France, whose long-negotiated submarine deals with Australia collapsed at the same time.

In addition to France, Finland has been an active advocate in developing European foreign and security policy. The EU report published in January listed Finland's goals as, among other things,

strengthening the EU's global role and influence and promoting the Union's values and interests more decisively. Finland has also found support for its EU Security Council initiative. President of the Finnish Republic Sauli Niinistö has also supported increasing the EU's role in foreign and security policy, even though it would reduce the power of the President of Finland.

It is a positive sign that there is a shared view that the EU's common defense should be enhanced. Yet there is a lot to be done. At the same time, Finns should not be lulled into the fact that common European defense could somehow make up or replace joining NATO. Almost all members of the European Union are also members of NATO, and therefore, have no desire to build overlapping structures. Thus, the idea of EU defense mainly covers those areas where NATO does not currently operate. And correspondingly, those sections that Finland lacks, including not being a NATO member, will also be missing in EU defense cooperation. The most important of these are NATO's security guarantees. These are not replaced by Article 42.7 TFEU, even though Finland has high hopes. In practice, the exact content or process of the EU's mutual assistance clause has still not been defined, although particularly, Finns have urged this from the Commission and the other member states. There has been little interest. As part of the Strategic Compass, some work has been done in this regard, but it is still unclear whether it will ultimately produce anything concrete.

The EU, when capable of independent, rapid, and effective decision-making, with the ability to react militarily where necessary, would be a great contributor to the stability of Europe and its neighborhood. It is also in Finland's current and future interest to pursue this goal. At the same time, we must be prepared for the possibility that the European Union will not move forward very quickly here. Improving and sharpening the European Union's capabilities in common foreign and security affairs is necessary, but NATO will continue to be the foremost military alliance of the region. Finland should also therefore aspire to become its member.

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