

Klemens H. Fischer [ed.]

European Security Put to the Test

Perspectives and Challenges
for the Next Decade



Nomos

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When problems are noted before they occur, it is easy to remedy them. But if you wait until they approach, the medicine is too late because the illness has become incurable.

Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince

Preface

Almost thirty years ago, the European Community had turned into a political union. In 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht had placed the European Union on three pillars. The already established supranational market policies had been joined by two intergovernmental elements. One comprising Justice and Home Affairs, the other reaching out for a Common Foreign and Security Policy. It took another fifteen years before the Member States moved forward on their integrational path in signing the Treaty of Lisbon. The main achievement of the 2007 treaty was the full integration of the until then intergovernmental columns into the realm of supranationality, thus establishing a true political Union.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty, for the first time in the history of European integration, featured a set of values the Union shall be committed to. The Treaty of Lisbon enhanced and further strengthened that commitment.

Today, the European Union has a wide-ranging set of measures at its disposal to champion the Rule of Law, human rights, and fundamental values. The Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, fundamentally and conceptually a policy confined to the territory of the EU, shall be mirrored by a Common Foreign and Security Policy that is equally based on the same setting. Both the intra-EU and the extra-EU demeanour shall be guided by protecting those values that are the basis of European integration.

The European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission have most recently decided not only to introduce but to rigorously enforce the principle of conditionality. Whoever fails to obey to the Rule of Law, human rights, and the fundamental values cannot fully enjoy the benefits the European Union offers.

Conditionality is the latest measure introduced to underline and ensure that European integration aims at a Union of Values not only by words. The Union's goal within the realm of the EU is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. The European Common Foreign and Security Policy is more than signing international treaties, expressing one's disapproval in writing, or building Potemkin villages. It is the chosen instrument to uphold and promote the Union's values abroad. With its strong voice, the Union contributes to peace, security, the sustainable

Preface

development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples. It ensures free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The latest European and global developments have shown how fragile the political environment can be, how easy the international community deviates from its rightful course. Many a politics are based upon compromises but the Rule of Law, human rights, and fundamental values rule out any compromise. The EU must reinvent itself every day and adapt to change to maintain its leading role as a values-based community.

This book presents ideas and concepts for this necessary constant renewal.

Vienna, July 2021

Alexander Schallenberg

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Preface

Today's risks and threats and their effects do not know any borders – and neither should our responses. The past year mercilessly demonstrated this fact in the shape of a pandemic, of cyber-attacks, natural disasters, regional conflicts and terrorist attacks.

The last year, however, also produced a joint and holistic look at future challenges, an analysis that makes clear what threats the EU, and therefore Austria, will face in the coming years. This analysis is the basis for the ongoing political dialogue of the Strategic Compass. It is the task of the Compass to provide the European Common Security and Defence Policy with a shared strategic orientation. All Member States jointly define future EU capabilities in the fields of security and defence.

I am convinced that we need a strong Europe capable of action, especially in these two fields. Communication and cooperation are the keystones required for tackling the current security and defence challenges. We must be aware of how future pandemics may develop and what the new threats are that affect all Member States. Austria therefore fully supports the elaborations on the Strategic Compass. Important issues from our point of view are:

- first, that this will increase the effectiveness of EU operations and missions, and
- second, that the progress made in recent years in all key areas of military affairs is enhanced, and
- third, that the security and protection of the population are optimised.

For example, in the field of *PESCO* Projects or the *European Defence Fund* research funding programme. This stimulates the EU Member States to structure and coordinate their military capabilities permanently. What is particularly interesting in these key areas is that not only that the defence sectors of the individual states are involved, but that the input of industry, technology and small and medium-sized enterprises is also required.

The AIES publication on *European Security Put to the Test – Perspectives and Challenges for the next Decade* constitute a further step on the way to a progressing common European security culture and thus contribute to finding European solutions to future challenges.

Preface

With this in mind, I would like to wish you an inspiring read and all of us a successful way forward in an increasingly strong European Union.

Vienna, July 2021

Mag. Klaudia Tanner

Federal Minister for Defence

Introduction

The pandemic, being in some way comparable to a biochemical attack, and recent cyber-attacks have ruthlessly exposed the EU's vulnerability and weak resilience. The European Union would not have been prepared in any way for a biochemical attack as it was the case with COVID-19. An identical diagnose was to be stated after the latest hacker attacks. Biochemical and cyber-attacks have some aspects in common: one does not see them, one does not smell them, one does not hear them, and one is caught unprepared and by surprise. In addition to manmade challenges, natural disasters draw an equally dark picture of the state of the Union. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands had been hit by flash rains in mid-July 2021, all three countries are highly developed and usually thought to be able to handle extraordinary situations – in fact that natural disaster had caught them unaware.

The key words are preparedness and resilience. Preparedness and resilience in one sector are not enough, Europe must provide comprehensive protection for its Member States and citizens. The different articles of this volume, pooled in three chapters, span from (i) defence questions regarding the relation between the EU and NATO and, at the same time, the EU's quest for more autonomy, to (ii) foreign political questions, evaluating the EU's delicate position in a multipolar world where it advocates multilateralism and at the same time risks being ground between the US, Russia and China, to (iii) strategic questions by shedding light on economic issues such as the influence of monetary policy and the question of how to uphold the Rule of Law, human rights, and fundamental values in an ever disintegrating international environment.

The challenges facing the European Union are so diverse that some critics argue that the Union lacks the capacity to provide solutions and is therefore obsolete. My co-authors and I are strongly arguing in the opposite direction. The dangerous situation and the enormous number of challenges must neither be denied or dismissed nor can be dealt with by a single nation state. Together, we have to take up the gauntlet and meet the challenges by closely cooperating to find adequate and comprehensive solutions. It must not be the lowest common denominator that drives us

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forward. The answer must be that the European Union is more than the sum of its Member States.

This book is thought to be a contribution to the discussion on the future priorities of the European Union. The Community will have to set a course that enables it to act proactively in foreign, security and defence matters and to develop a comprehensive strategy. The book takes up these lines of argument and offers both stocktaking and evaluation of past and present practices, ultimately identifying concrete policy proposals. All authors who have contributed to this volume have dedicated themselves to this comprehensive exercise.

Brussels, July 2021

Prof. Dr. Klemens H. Fischer

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No project like this is possible without the support of families, who bear the burden of long hours of concentrated labour, particularly on weekends. My co-authors and I are grateful to our families for all their support and encouragement they provided.

Finally, it is for the editor to take the blame for everything that went wrong and to ask for lenience – that is what I humbly ask for from my co-authors and every reader.

Brussels, July 2021

KHF

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The views expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent the views of the institutions they are working for.

EU-Trends 2021 and beyond

AIES-Team

Abstract

The following paper explores key developments in 2021 regarding the regional stability in Europe, the political integration of the European Union (EU) as well as its recovery, security and defence, and space policy. Moreover, it outlines possible shifts and risks concerning the most significant trends in connection with the EU's role as a geopolitical actor in these areas. Finally, the article elaborates on Austria's contribution to European security and defence.

Keywords

CFSP, CSDP, PESCO, COVID-19, NATO, China, Russia, Rule of Law.

Quo Vadis, geopolitical commission?

The European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, took office with the promise of building a true “geopolitical commission”. “A stronger Europe in the world” is her motto, while aiming to better coordinate the Union's foreign and security policy towards strengthening multilateralism based on European norms and standards. This year, however, is marked by comprehensive recovery plans following the Covid-19 virus outbreak and significant geopolitical ambitions in the field of foreign and security policy have not yet been signalled. In the second year of the Covid-19 virus outbreak, the EU will play a decisive role in shaping the far-reaching socio-economic developments on the old continent. The Covid-19 pandemic has enhanced the complexity of global affairs, and the EU's geopolitical agenda has clearly suffered from the virus outbreak.

The greatest risk remains rooted in the increasing political, economic, and social destabilization following the Covid-19 crisis and the emergence of lines of fragmentation along competing geopolitical and geo-economic interests of external actors in Europe. The deepening of these dividing lines might become the main reason hindering the EU from acting coher-

ently in the arena of global affairs. The diverse agenda of interests and goals set predominantly by the superpowers USA, China, and Russia, or others like Turkey and North Korea, etc. will give further rise to divisions among the European member states and institutions on geopolitical issues. The Franco-Italian clash of positions in the Southern neighbourhood as well as the Franco-German-Eastern European clash of positions in the Eastern neighbourhood will continue posing obstacles to acting geopolitically in a coherent manner. In general, the EU will have little space to operate in the increasingly contested terrains in its direct neighbourhood to the South and East. Building ad hoc flexible coalitions with other regional actors will be decisive, as numerous upheavals, uncertainties, and crises will continue to nurture a volatile geopolitical environment with a direct negative impact on the regional stability and security in Europe. Consequently, the EU and its member states will have to carefully navigate through the complex relations between the USA, China, and Russia in 2021 and beyond.

The presidential election in the USA is a glimmer of hope for Europe. Following the election of Joe Biden, the EU and its member states will again look to the USA in an anticipation of improving bilateral relations. With Joe Biden as President, there is an expectation that the USA will recommit to multilateralism and engage in building stronger transatlantic ties. However, the new Democratic President would also likely demand stronger commitment from his European allies in advancing joint foreign policy initiatives. The latter will therefore seek to further reduce its dependence on America in certain key areas and fields (e.g. security and defence industries and technologies, trade, etc.) and aim to achieve partial strategic autonomy. A self-determined security policy is the sine qua non for this accomplishment, however, it will remain an unattainable goal without a clear and strong political commitment to a European-style regional security order beyond the national interests of the member states. The first-ever elaboration of a strategic compass and the dialogue on four key areas – crisis management, resilience, capabilities, and partnerships – constitute a process that is expected to bring about a positive change in 2021.

With respect to China, the first step in this direction has already been taken. Following the redefinition of the strategic partnership with Beijing by adding “systemic rival” and “economic competitor” to the previous designation of “cooperation partner”, the signing of an investment deal with Beijing signalled a stronger European commitment. Josep Borrell, the EU’s top diplomat, described the future bilateral relations as a „mul-

ti-layered relationship” that would be further characterized by the competition between China and the USA. The EU should therefore choose an alternative path to avoid being pushed even further between the two superpowers, while carefully navigating through their systemic rivalry. Finally, despite the current constraints, the European Commission will increasingly enhance its geo-economic clout while putting the focus on the Indo-Pacific region. Brussels seeks to facilitate an upgrade of the strategic partnership with India and build stronger ties with like-minded countries in Asia such as member states of ASEAN.¹ Moreover, geopolitical gaps which are increasingly appearing in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe will be occupied by powers such as Russia and Turkey and thus further intensify the EU’s conflictual relations with Moscow and Ankara. A common denominator will be achieving a convergence of European positions on Russia and Turkey.

Considering the debate on European strategic autonomy and the future security architecture, further steps will be made towards the division of roles and tasks within the EU. Following the Brexit deal, the successful functioning of the Franco-German engine of European integration will be decisive for the debate on strategic autonomy, which is why this trend will depend on the election of the new German Chancellor in 2021. A weakening Franco-German axis will not only slow down common security and defence initiatives, but will also negatively impact the debate on strategic autonomy.

Reaching the aspired goal of becoming a geopolitical actor would require at least a partial strategic autonomy in European security policy and multi-fora alliances in global affairs. For Europe to become a geopolitical player instead of serving as a playing field for the systemic rivalry between the USA and China, it is necessary to assert European interests, values, and norms internally and to project them externally by forging alliances with like-minded partners. Even though the goal of strategic autonomy is not achievable in the short term, an actual operational and political autonomy coupled with a strengthening of the European industry sectors and a diversification of global supply chains will likely take place starting with this year. A European single market for defence equipment will certainly be another positive signal in the right direction, together with the overall increase of defence spending. Positive game changers

1 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2021). <https://asean.org/>.

would be the improvement of the transatlantic relations as well as the return to normality in the bilateral relationship between Washington and Beijing, the intensification of the European defence initiatives such as PESCO² as well as the strengthening of the European pillar within NATO.³ Conversely, negative game changers will be linked to an increase of the hotspots in the direct European neighbourhood, a worsening of the relationship between the USA and China as well as military tensions along the peripheries of Europe, such as the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh⁴ in 2020.

European Integration – the Covid-19 legacy and ambitious future plans

The Covid-19 crisis and its multifaceted implications on the health and medical sector, the socio-political balance, as well as the economy and single market have strikingly overshadowed all other developments and challenges the European Union has faced in 2020. Practically all policy areas of the EU and its member states have been directly or indirectly affected and shaped by the virus, since dealing with its outbreak consumed large portions of Europe's political capacity, while simultaneously limiting the scope of governmental and European decision-making. Thus, the majority of anticipated measures to promote European integration had to be put on hold, as the pandemic unambiguously gave rise to the defining forces of the Union: national authority vs. European cohesion. The need to introduce national medical, political, economic, and social Covid-19 coping mechanisms pushed many governments to unprecedented limits, exposed their self-interests, and (re)enforced some nationalistic tendencies. However, whilst consequently weakening European solidarity, the Covid-19 crisis has also made it abundantly clear that no member state can successfully and sufficiently face such challenging times alone.

The full extent of the crisis' various effects and damages is yet to be determined and can most likely not be adequately assessed until the first half of 2022 at the earliest. Nonetheless, the Portuguese Presidency

2 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) (2021). <https://pesco.europa.eu/>.

3 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). (2021). <https://www.nato.int/>.

4 Improving Prospects for Peace after the Nagorno-Karabakh War (2020). International Crisis Group. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/b91-improving-prospects-peace-after-nagorno-karabakh-war>.

of the Council of the European Union has ambitiously signalled to start implementing the recovery program as pronounced in their Presidency's motto: *Time to deliver: a fair, green, digital recovery*. Following this slogan, Lisbon had formulated three key priorities: endorsing a European recovery that is leveraged by the green and digital transition, introducing the Social Pillar as the central aspect for safeguarding a fair transition, and enhancing the strategic autonomy of the EU.⁵ Building on the recovery instruments outlined by the previous German Presidency and on the extraordinary €1.8 trillion budget-and-recovery package that EU leaders adopted in mid-December 2020, the Portuguese Presidency initiated the next phase by focussing on implementing first measures.⁶ The Slovenian Presidency has announced a similar motto: "'Together. Resilient. Europe.'" and will seek to contribute to strengthening the EU's resilience to health, economic, energy, climate and cyber issues. Widespread vaccination programmes, the desired silver bullet to end the Covid-19 crisis, pursued by the EU through its vaccination strategy and negotiations with Big Pharma, resemble yet another potential seed of discord. Strong criticism emerged from various member states, Germany amongst others, that the EU purchased too little BioNTech/Pfizer vaccines, despite the fact that the EU Commission has secured a total of more than 2 billion doses from seven different producers.⁷ Whilst countries like Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Germany put pressure on the EU to speed up the vaccination procedure, European stakeholders and the European People's Party were defending the Union's vaccination strategy by stressing that organising the vaccine procurement jointly was the right decision and a strong sign of solidarity.⁸

5 Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (2021). With the motto 'Time to deliver: a fair, green and digital recovery', Portugal takes over this Presidency with three major priorities for the EU. <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/news/with-the-motto-time-to-deliver-a-fair-green-and-digital-recovery-portugal-takes-over-this-presidency-with-three-major-priorities-for-the-eu/>.

6 Bayer, L. (2021). POLITICO EU Influence: Portuguese priorities — Recovery in focus — Who's meeting Vestager? Politico, 8. January. <https://www.politico.eu/newsletter/politico-eu-influence/politico-eu-influence-portuguese-priorities-recovery-in-focus-whos-meeting-vestager/>.

7 Deutsch, J. (2021) The EU's coronavirus vaccine blame game. Why so slow? Politico, 4. January. <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-vaccination-blame-game-is-it-all-the-eus-fault/>.

8 Eder, F. (2021). POLITICO Brussels Playbook: Filling Merkel's shoes — Regulating Facebook — Shaming the Scrooges. Politico, 11. January. <https://www.politico.eu/article/politico-brussels-playbook-filling-merkel-s-shoes-regulating-facebook-shaming-the-scrooges/>.

It is yet to be seen whether this blame game will spread more dissatisfaction and disunity in the upcoming months. Against this background and the lessons learned from the health crisis, demands to better coordinate comprehensive medical measures through setting up a European public health institution are increasing, a trend which might shape the Covid-19 legacy in 2021 and beyond.

Apart from the all dominating Covid-19 crisis, a positive sign of EU integration unfolded in March 2020, as the European Council gave the green light to opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The decision was made after overcoming fierce resistance particularly from France, blocking the process in the past due to its demands to reform the accession process. The long-awaited enlargement package was finally released in October, representing a new chance to revive the stalled enlargement process with the Western Balkan countries.⁹ However, the start of the membership talks and agreement on the negotiation framework were blocked yet again by Bulgaria in November, due to populistically charged disputes over North Macedonia's history and language, and are still on hold. This year's EU-Western Balkans summit is expected to provide new impetus and solutions for this region.

Regional Stability in Europe

Europe's regional stability has been heavily put to the test recently by undergoing challenging times, a trend which is most likely to continue in 2022. Given the complex crises that the EU is currently facing, brought on by the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is implausible that the EU will get back to its status quo ante soon. The latter is highlighted by the fact that Covid-19 exacerbated the existing problems that the Union was already dealing with, like the polarization of society, disrespect for EU values, and rising distrust in the governments of the member states.

Europe's regional stability is endangered by diverse and at the same time major challenges. This includes the possibility of terrorist attacks, the

eu/newsletter/brussels-playbook/politico-brussels-playbook-filling-merkels-shoes-regulating-facebook-shaming-the-scrooges/.

9 Brzozowski, A. (2020). Commission seeks to revive enlargement with new package. Euractiv, 5. October. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/commission-seeks-to-revive-enlargement-with-new-package/>.

weakened economies of member states, the decline of democracy, increase in corruption, spread of disinformation, and the emergence of EU-wide protests. Certain EU member states have been experiencing a Covid-19 induced increase in authoritarian government tendencies that led to a further decline in democracy. This is a factor of uncertainty for the regional stability of the EU, because it represents the undermining of those pillars on which the Union is built upon, as well as a destabilization of its unity. Poland and Hungary are considered the most affected countries. The right-wing-oriented governments of both states repeatedly demonstrate that they do not adhere to the common EU values and norms, such as the rule of law, human rights, and freedoms. The Covid-19 pandemic reinforced this trend and opened new opportunities for such countries to further pursue their authoritarian tendencies. The “forced” compromise that was reached at the end of 2020 in regard to the conditionality of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, as well as the NextGenerationEU COVID-19 recovery package, clearly showed that Hungary and Poland stand together on this matter and are not planning to redirect their course towards full-fledged democracy. Thus, any sanctions process can only be initiated by the EU Commission after the European Court of Justice (ECJ)¹⁰ rules on the new mechanism. The newly formulated compromise deal will most likely turn out to be ineffective in practice. The latter shattered the very aim of the initially promising clause that could have achieved a positive change regarding the adherence to the rule of law. This makes it clear that the battle for stronger democracy fought by the member states is far from over and will be a decisive battleground throughout 2021 and beyond.¹¹

Fake news and hybrid threats should be considered as a major destabilizing factor for the future of the region, which became an even more dangerous phenomenon in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. Online disinformation in times of the pandemic proved to be a powerful tool of deception that resulted in an increased polarization of society and a growing distrust towards governments. Furthermore, it continues to impede the effective implementation of anti-corona measures imposed by govern-

10 Zalan, E. (2020). EU leaders unblock budget in deal with Hungary and Poland. *EU Observer*, 11. December. <https://euobserver.com/political/150357>.

11 Walker, S. (2020). Rule of law fears remain in Poland despite EU compromise. *The Guardian*, 11. December. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/11/eu-fears-hungary-poland-compromise-not-end-of-story>.