Security Review 2019

The European Union's Capacity to Act: Main Security Challenges in 2019

Working Group on Security and Defence of the European Student Think Tank

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Preface

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As Europe enters the new decade, the security climate both within and outside of the EU's borders has continued to deteriorate. Geopolitical power shifts and internal political destabilization have forced the EU into a "now-or-never" moment: long talking of becoming a global actor, has the EU proven that it is not only able to provide for its own security, but assert influence on the world stage to maintain its interests? Or will it be overrun by global powers as internal divisions lead to inaction and irrelevance?

Events in 2019 served as a litmus test for the EU's capabilities to meet the challenges of the next decade. Many of these challenges can no longer be addressed by small groups of policy makers, but require full societal engagement. As decisions made today in response to emerging security questions will disproportionately affect European youth over the long-term, we have an outsized responsibility in shaping policy responses. From climate change, the online sphere, and political extremism, to a rising China, resurgent Russia, and withdrawing America, Europe's future is being decided today.

With this security review, the European Student Think Tank has brought together young researchers from across the continent to analyze the top security trends of 2019 with a forward-looking view into the next decade. Recognizing we do not have the credentials of established research institutions, the views expressed aim to give voice to an underrepresented perspective in the European security policy sphere. Such views are vital in crafting appropriate policy for issues that will persist long after today's leaders step away from the stage.

Executive Summary

The European Union's Capacity to Act: Main Security Challenges in 2019

This annual security review aims to give an overview of the main security challenges the European Union (EU) faced as a regional power in 2019. The Working Group on Security and Defence's seven researchers each tackled one key issue, presenting the state of play, context, analyzing developments, and identifying possible future strategies to address these challenges. This edition covers a total of seven issues, divided between two categories: "Europe's Foreign and Security Policy Challenges" and "Europe's Domestic Challenges." Each article under these headings reflect upon one aspect of the EU's posture.

Towards its external environment, what is the political line the EU appears to be taking? Is there a new role to play on the global security stage as the United States (US) seems to waver on its role as Europe's security provider? In light of an uncertain US partner, the security review places EU relations to Russia and China as a priority policy area to examine. Finally, climate change, conceptualized as the "invisible threat," poses future challenges, unseen now, the EU must start thinking about today.

Looking inwards, structural, institutional and domestic challenges undermine efforts to address many of these external issues. Lack of cohesion affects several fields, let alone the structure of common security and defence cooperation framework. Transnational challenges, such as technology and digital markets, require a certain level of political capital to be addressed. However, the rise of right-wing extremism has threatened the stability of the political landscape in Europe, draining political energy as national government's fight for the survival of the democratic mainstream. Such domestic challenges must be resolved before external security challenges can successfully be addressed as a collective bloc.

As 2020 marks the entrance into a new decade full of new challenges for multilateralism and international relations, the EU has a decisive year ahead to prove its capacity to address main security challenges.

Content

Part I:
Europe's Foreign and Security Policy Challenges

2019 marked a milestone in global security developments, with several trends of the past half-decade crystalizing into long-term challenges. With the US largely leaving Europe to deal with the fallout of unilateral (in)action, from the war in Syria, the INF treaty, to climate change, Europe must act collectively to protect its security interests, lest it be overrun by Russian and Chinese powers filling the vacuum left by the US. From Africa to the Arctic, these resurgent and emergent powers are exerting their influence, often to Europe's detriment. Particularly on climate change, Europe must provide leadership to global challenges for its own sake. The inability to act will condemn the EU to international irrelevance in the next decade.

Europe Alone?
An Uncertain U.S Partner

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Even before 2019, there was considerable talk about how, under Donald Trump, the USA began to 'withdraw' or 'retreat' from its traditional global security leadership role. Simon Reich, a professor at Rutgers University, said of Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement that "looking back, many may well claim that June 1, 2017 was the day that America's global leadership ended."[1] Trump's derogatory comments about NATO also prompted much hand-wringing about the future of the alliance[2] [3] while a 2018 article by Daalder and Lindsay encouraged U.S. allies to "leverage their collective economic and military might to save the liberal world order."[4] Robert Kagan and Jeffrey Sachs joined Daalder and Lindsay later that year in prognosticating on the implications of America's abdication of influence.[5]

Two developments in 2019 have, however, accelerated this process. On the 2nd of August, the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty "due to the Russian Federation's continuing violations of the treaty,"[6] while in October Trump withdrew American soldiers from Northern Syria, where they had been assisting Kurdish efforts to fight Islamic State (IS).[7] Both actions were roundly condemned by the international community. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said of the American decision to withdraw from the INF that it "will likely heighten, not reduce, the threat posed by ballistic missiles."[8] Meanwhile the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), America's Kurdish allies in Northern Syria, reacted with predictable horror at the October troop withdrawal and claimed that it would make Northern Syria "a warzone."[9]

These actions aren't the first sign of a fissure between Europe and the USA in how to handle global defence and security issues. President Emmanuel Macron said as much in his recent interview with *The Economist*, claiming that America's "position has shifted over the past 10 years, and it hasn't only been the Trump administration."[10] It has, however, provided new impetus for Europe to step into a new leadership position where these issues are concerned; Macron acknowledges later in the same interview that the October withdrawal in particular shaped his call for a new European approach to defence and security[11] and it's difficult to imagine that Macron would refer to NATO as "braindead" if Trump hadn't repudiated the alliance so publicly.

This trajectory and how it fits into a previously-established pattern of behaviour from the Trump administration makes the need for a European-led response to the vacuum it leaves clear: the more pertinent question, though, is whether Europe is capable of stepping up. There is at first glance reason to be optimistic. The European Union's member states spent a combined €199.3 billion on defence as of 2016,[12] considerably more than Russia's expenditure that year and not far off China's.[13] Moreover, through the UK and France Europe has two permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and the EU has since 1999 had a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

However, there are two key issues with the EU taking up the mantle of NATO and of the USA in particular from a global security perspective. One quantitative. The USA currently spends more than twice as much on defence as the European members of NATO do together,[14] and given that the United Kingdom makes up much of the remainder Brexit will frustrate efforts to transfer defence responsibilities from NATO to the EU.[15] There is also the matter of the almost 90,000 defence personnel which the USA has stationed in Europe.[16] Given that this force is almost as large as the entire Italian Army,[17] replacing even some of these personnel would be challenging in the short to medium term.

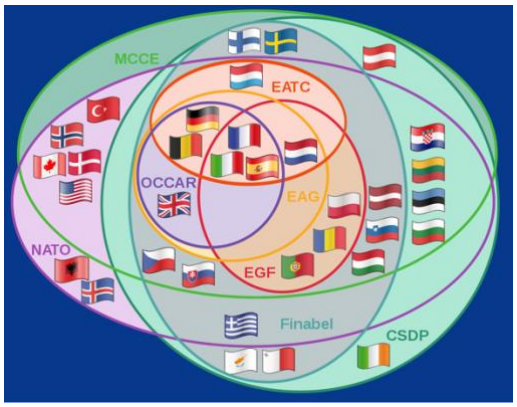

Figure 1 – Losing the 'War on Acronyms': A Venn Diagram showing all of the European-level institutions responsible for defence and security (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

The more serious one, however, is institutional and cultural. For a start, Europe as a whole suffers from significant institutional fragmentation where defence is concerned (see Figure 1). The result of this is the prevalence of "chessboard politics"[18] and friction. There are also significant disjoints between the motives of individual member states; firstly, between neutral states (such as Malta and Austria) and stalwart American allies (such as Poland). Moreover, the International Peace Institute notes that "some European countries are less focused on conflicts beyond their borders and instead are prioritising national security"[19] and there is also a valid argument that, as an economic union, the EU lacks the decision-making mechanisms and best practices that enable defence cooperation.[20] This is because, unlike economic policy, "security and defence… is a field that cannot easily be monetized,"[21] so compromise might not be so easy to find in the same way.

To conclude, while it is clear that Europe needs to be capable of at least partially stepping into America's place on the world stage when it comes to defence and security policy, its ability to do so now is limited. We should commend the vision of statespeople like Macron who promote a European solution to America's step back, while also cautioning them to keep in mind that finding this solution will require significant rationalisation of Europe's institutions and a shift in its focus. There's also the valid question of *which* security issues the EU in particular can tackle effectively; while the EU might be well-equipped to tackle softer 'human security' issues such as climate change or migration, it's hard to see it being able to replace NATO anytime in the foreseeable future.

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Europe Facing a Returning Power: Russia's Expanding Sphere of Influence

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The Arctic Melts and Energy Flows : A Resourceful Year

As a cardinal rule of geopolitics goes, a struggle for power among international actors always follows a power vacuum. As the Arctic ice cover has shrank by 42% since 1980 opening new, faster eastward-shipping lanes and leading to new resources-led competitions, costal states have tried to lay out new strategies to engage in the Artic and exploit new possibilities. The times when the Artic was a low-tension region where practical and non-partisan cooperation was the norm has ended.

Further, five years after the annexation of Crimea, Western European Allies and member states are willing to separate Russia's aggressive behaviour in Eastern Ukraine from the energy needs the Russian gas flows could fulfil. As Russia's actions in the Arctic cannot be considered separately from broader geopolitical tensions with the West and from its international diplomatic isolation, likewise Moscow's energy projects are an instrument of foreign policy that follows a broader strategic agenda. They are not just a "commercial project."[1]

Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2014 described the Arctic as "a concentration of practically all aspects of national security – military, political, economic, technological, environmental and that of resources."[2] More broadly though, Russia's intensions are not Arctic specific, in fact Russia lacks an Arctic strategy per se. Russia's actions relate to the state's need to confirm its global power status and to exploit the primacy it feels as holding in the region over four NATO-member costal states: Norway, Denmark, Canada and the United States.

In 2018, twenty different countries have shipped 20m tonnes of cargo through the Northern Sea Route (statistic doubled since 2017). They reached China and Asia faster by 40% compared to the Suez Canal route time. Speaking at the Arctic Forum in April 2019, President Putin laid out new plans to strengthen the Russian foothold in the region and confirmed Russia expects this statistic to at least quadruple by 2025.[3] As the region and the environmental issue are becoming increasingly securitised following heightened geopolitical tensions and interests of non-regional powers, Russia's Arctic fleet will have 13 icebreakers, of which nine nuclear powered, that will escort ships through the route under Rosatom's control, the state-owned nuclear corporation.[4] In addition, since 2013, Russia has upgraded 7 military bases along the route by supplying them with advanced radar and missile defence systems and equipped its Northern fleet with adaptable sea denial platforms;[5] provisions that bolster its defence and sea anti access/area denial capabilities (A2/AD).

In an environment where Russia employs its oil and gas resources to maintain its influence on its "near abroad," and to exert pressure on Europe when tensions with the West persist, divisions within the EU on

how to approach the Nord Stream 2 project permit Russia's attempts to hinder the EU energy diversification's plans and to further divide the Union.

On October 30th, Denmark granted permission for Russia's Gazprom-owned Nord Stream 2 to be constructed across the seabed of the south-eastern Danish island of Bornholm, citing obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.[6] Nord stream 2 is planned to double the amount of Russian gas passing across the Baltic to Europe, while bypassing Ukraine and thus undercutting the country's energy security. The fine line between commercial interests and geopolitical and security concerns has marked the debate around Nord Stream 2 since its conception. The use of energy as a mean of geopolitical coercion and influence is not new, nor some tactic exclusive to Russia.

The divisive approaches on this project, together with a seemingly softer approach on Russia by leading Western-European powers,[7] point to a trend where EU members states and European Allies are willing to separate Russia's aggressive and illegal moves in Eastern Europe[8] from a supposedly commercially beneficial cooperation with Moscow.

Struggling to Keep Up

With the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS)[9], the EU called for a common strategic culture to shape its security and defence policies in order to become a security provider for its members states. Both the developments concerning the Arctic and Nord Stream 2 point out how such a common strategic culture needs to come to terms with different national approaches to security.

The EUGS defined the Arctic as "remaining a low-tension area (…) with solid political and security cooperation" and a strategic interest, considering that three EU Member States and two European Economic Area members are Arctic states.[10] Although the EUGS, together with the latest EU document to address the Arctic, the 2016 Joint Communication on *'An integrated EU policy for the Arctic'* proposed an international cooperation fuelled by international organisations in the Arctic as one of the main priorities, the documents lack an implementable plan. Further, they fail to address the security implications posed by Russia's militarisation and trade-control in the region.

At the same time, NATO has tried to keep up with Russia's militarisation and Arctic-adaptable military infrastructure. The US announced in April the commission of a new icebreaker, to be ready by 2024,[11] and started again exploiting the facilities of the Icelandic Keflavik Air Base.[12] Further, with the 2018 Trident Juncture exercise, NATO showed intent to intervene in the Arctic, demonstrating the Alliance's capabilities in response to Russia's own signalling in the region. [13]

On the Eastern European front, the EU's internal divisions reflect NATO's. The EUGS foresees a potential cooperation with Russia where interests positively overlap, such on climate, the Arctic, maritime security, education, research and cross-border cooperation.[14] The Union though struggles to find a unified position on Nord Stream 2, with Western states downplaying the security risks and only seemingly considering its commercial value.

Further, recent comments made by French President Emmanuel Macron in the run-up to the 5th December NATO meeting suggesting a softer approach to Russia have increasingly underlined the divisions characterising today the Alliance, and the EU.[15]

As states that are members of the EU, NATO, and/or the Arctic Council are weary of other organisations' interference on Arctic matters, and because EU policies are based on a very broad and not comprehensive

vision of the region, divisions between Western and Eastern European states hinder both the EU and NATO's strategic approach towards Russia.

Between a Soft and a Hard Security Lies a Common, Comprehensive Approach

If both the EU and NATO are trying to keep up with Russia's moves in an Arctic of growing strategic importance, implicitly acknowledged by way of drafting new strategy documents and implementing plans, security concerns related to Nord Stream 2 highlight the divergent approaches that Allies and EU member states have towards Russia.

With regard to the Arctic, the EU and NATO should draft more comprehensive policies that consider how Russia's attitude in the region could affect EU's trade relations and Allies' security. A potential combined approach stemming from an EU-NATO cooperation in this area could likely offer the most comprehensive solutions, with the EU acting as a soft-diplomatic power and NATO assuring military readiness, not only relying on signalling or containment.

A window of opportunity to cooperate with Moscow will occur between 2021 and 2023 when Russia will chair the Arctic Council. Cooperation on finding agreeable solutions for trade, shipping, and environmental concerns needs to be based on the recognition that the Arctic is a new strategic theatre where Russia has the advantage as it looks to exert influence.

Elsewhere, the EU needs to look at energy flows more comprehensively to sustain its resolution to be a security provider for its members. A survival element for a state's functioning and readiness, energy flows will always bear a significance that goes beyond commercial value. As with Ukraine in 2006 and later in 2008/9, Russia will not shy away from manipulating energy supplies to pressure

Eastern and Western European countries.[16] As such, the EU should continue with its energy diversification plans while keeping a united front where Russia is concerned.

Similarly, if a transactional approach is beneficial for cooperation on counterterrorism, search and rescue in the Arctic and for talks on international arms control regimes, NATO's position should continue to be informed by Russia's breach of international law in 2014.

If tensions between Russia and the West were to persist and heighten, the Arctic region and the energy flows will be the first and most effective tools Russia will have at its disposal to resist and challenge the "West."

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Europe Awakening to a Rising Power: China's Global Ambitions, The Belt Road Initiative

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In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jingping announced the launch of a new global landmark project in Kazakhstan known as The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).[1] Based on the historic ancient Silk Road, the infrastructure strategy would connect Europe, Asia and Africa through the buildup of trading routes comprising of trains, ports and special economic zones. The BRI will cover at least 63 countries, including 18 European countries, and accounts for 30% of global GDP - making it the largest infrastructure project in the history of mankind.[2] The BRI will also reportedly cost a total of US$575 billion at its current projection and may continue to rise in the future.[3] The strategic clustering of these structures would undoubtedly advance the economic interests of China by alleviating its reliance on current supply chains and cutting restrictions to market access.

At the heart of the initiative, China is pursuing its own version of a 'Chinese Dream' and a historical nostalgia for its early advanced civilizations. The question remains, however, whether Western powers and China could coexist and mutually benefit from such developments, or fall into a Thucydides' trap.

The BRI is manifested in six economic corridors that span Asia, Europe and Africa.[4]

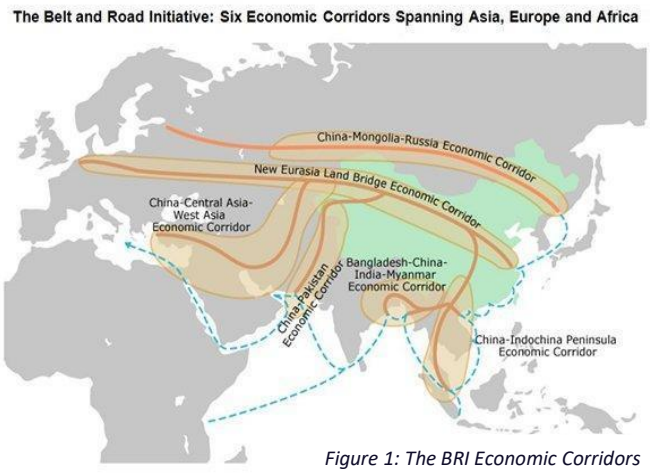

Figure 1: The BRI Economic Corridors

During the 2017 Belt and Road Forum, President Xi reiterated concepts of multilateralism and coexistence by stating, "we will not follow the old way of geopolitical games during the push for the Belt and Road Initiative, but create a new model of win-win and cooperation." Although China remains attractive for countries seeking capital inflows, China has been criticized for providing unsustainable loans to countries, such as Sri Lanka, which makes them susceptible to a "debt trap." The Beijing consensus, for instance, does not oblige countries to certain democratic or economic reforms, unlike its counterpart, the Washington consensus. However, countries have been obliged to concede when its loans are not met, such was the case of Sri Lanka's handover of its southern port of Hambantota to China on a 99-year lease.

While the project remains economically focused, security cooperation and regional development in regions, such as Eastern Europe, have direct implications in Europe and across the world. In Europe, China has made a number of strategic economic moves, such as the takeover of the largest port in Europe, the Port of Piraeus in Greece, and the establishment of the China–Belarus Industrial Park to name a few. With several countries, such as Italy signing an MoU with China, the fragmented response of the EU to the BRI will hamper any harmonized efforts to reap maximum economic and security benefits.[5]

The underlying economic objective of the BRI should enable China to meet internal objectives while fostering and generating spatial complementarities and numerous synergies between the various countries crossed in the BRI. Such actions would upset the current international order by drawing countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, Central Asia, and Africa, into China's sphere of influence. Although the initiative is in its early stages, the ambition and vision for China to take back its place as a 'middle kingdom' should continue to raise alarms in Europe and elsewhere. However, a centralized top-down approach is unrealistic for a country, regardless of its size, to maintain control over the entire spectrum of such a project. In conclusion, the BRI is bidirectional and could be lucrative for other powers, such as the EU, to tap into the BRI countries.

China's Growing Influence in Africa

Sino-African relations have dramatically improved over the last decade following the establishment of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation in 2001 - with China going as far as funding and building the entirety of the African Union headquarters. As China begins to take up more of a leadership role in the developing world, it intends on becoming "the de facto leader of the developing world … crystalizing the idea that China is the largest developing country in the world."[6] While bilateral relations between China and the African Union may appear distant from European concerns, Africa has traditionally been a dominant foothold for European countries such as France and the United Kingdom. For instance, post-colonial relations between France and its former French colonies, or more commonly dubbed as *françafrique*, have made France a key player in the region from its military operations in Mali to its monetary control of the CFA franc. The loss of European influence in Africa, in the post-colonial era, could prove to be a strategic misfortune for Europe. The Africa Regional Group in the United Nations, for instance, make up the largest number of member states at 54 countries - giving it considerable international normative and voting power in the General Assembly.[7] Additionally, Africa's abundant resources of oil reserves, uranium and iron would further drive China's growing appetite for economic development. China has already succeeded the United States to become Africa's largest economic trading partner and Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) into Africa will continue to influence African politics and draw it away from its previous colonial powers.

According to China's African Policy, China also emphasizes and stresses its policies of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Africa and seeks to pursue "a new international political and economic order […] safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries."[8] Using Europe's colonial baggage as rhetoric, the construction of a People's Liberation Army (PLA) military base in Djibouti, at the gateway

of the Suez canal, symbolically represent China's first awakening in Africa. If Africa was a litmus test for global political influence, China has undoubtedly already overtaken and will continue to overtake the Europe and the United States in Africa.

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Europe Combatting the Invisible Threat: Climate Change

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Securitization of climate change: A risky but powerful strategy

In 2019, Europe faced a broad societal uprising of young people addressing a matter of global importance that turns out to be seen by many as the invisible, collective threat of our time: climate change. Connected to the increasing prominence of climate change in the political discourse, McDonald[1] and numerous other scholars identify an increased securitization of climate change in recent years that integrates *climate security* into the security agendas. According to Waever[2], securitization is defined as a discursive act of framing a political issue as something that society considers to be highly threatening to itself or the state. This approach that is able to integrate climate security, focuses on the discursive construction of security, rather than assuming that security can be measured and maximized by policies. What once has been 'climate change' is reframed by Fridays for Future and others as 'climate crisis'. What has been a matter of the tragedy of commons being negotiated as soft policy issue is now a matter of life and death. Waever was hesitant to welcome such discourse and discussed the possibility of a militarization of climate change policies that could lead to international conflicts misusing the issue as geopolitical pawn.[3] However, the power of political agenda setting through the framing of threat and security is undeniable.

Climate change can be analysed as risk for national, international, ecological and human security[4]. The approaches differ concerning the question of agency and the proposed strategies of mitigation or adaptation. While states and international organisation used to focus on the dimension of national and international security and favoured adaptation to climate-related developments, the new discourse seems to underline the human and ecological dimensions of climate security and could be a sign for a shift towards serious mitigation. The role of Europe in responding to these new climate-related policy challenges is of key importance for the success of global efforts to mitigate climate change.[5] While the European Green Deal[6] rightly recognizes climate related efforts as cross-cutting theme throughout various policy fields, the following chapters will focus on the external perspective of climate security of the EU and its members.

Europe and climate security in 2019

In 2019, the success of the Fridays for Future movement, started to show clear effects on European policymakers, parties and leaders as they often took up a narrative of climate security and sustainability. The most visible sign of a possible securitization of climate change in Europe may have been the reactions of European leaders and societies during the fires in the Amazonas region in summer 2019. It is not the first time that fires burned down parts of the rain forest, that is important due to its capacity to neutralize a relevant share of the global CO^2 emissions. However, it is the first time climate change as essential security issue is brought to the wide global public with leaders like German chancellor Angela Merkel stating that "*the lungs of our entire planet*"[7] are threatened. French president Emmanuel Macron used the opportunity to identify a climate emergency and triggered a diplomatic dispute with right-wing Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro[8] who is said to tolerate the fires. Macron stated that the Amazonas was a global public good and threatened to block the EU-MERCOSUR free trade agreement if no measures would be taken to stop the fires. Bolsonaro insisted on national sovereignty and identified European neo-colonial tendencies, making an apology of Macron conditional for accepting financial aid to fight the fires.[9] Interestingly, the discourse used by European leaders in the context of this crisis focused on international security and the collective responsibility and commitments of a nation state. Rather structural human and ecological security dimensions that may have led to the crisis were barely considered. Moreover, the European states turned out to be unable to formulate a common position on the issue and certain member state leaders acted as main agents.

Furthermore, the new president of the European Commission, former German defense minister Ursula von der Leyen, laid out the "European Green Deal" as her first policy priority during her presidency[10] that started on 1 December 2019. She envisions Europe to be the "*first climate-neutral continent*"[11] by 2050. Elaborating on the external policy dimension of the European Green Deal, the European Commission laid out in December 2019 that climate change is a "*threat multiplier*" and source of instability that "*will reshape global geopolitics.*"[12] Given examples for such threats are environmentally caused conflicts, food insecurity, population displacement and forced migration and are rather part of a national security discourse partly framing the victims of climate change as potential threat through migration and favours adaptation rather than mitigation. According to the European Commission, changing temperatures could lead to 25 million to 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050.[13] However, also elements of ecological and human security and a rather ambitious commitment to mitigation can be found in the communication of the European Green Deal and it may have the potential to be a comprehensive strategy for a broad transition.

In 2019, the policy developments on European level seem to point towards a paradigm change concerning external climate security policies of the EU and certain, engaged member states that bring up the topic in bilateral and multilateral settings. However, specifically trade continues to be an ambivalent issue for

Europeans due to the dilemma between liberal free trade and environmental protectionism as tool for climate security.

What Should be the Role of the EU? Climate Diplomacy, Trade and a United Europe

On a global scale the biggest emitters are China, USA and the European Union, while the average emission level per capita is highly dependent on the average income in a country. This implies the prospect of countries witnessing increasing growth to become bigger emitters in the future. The European Union played a key role in bringing the complex and structural issue of climate change on the world stage since the 1990s. In its external policy strategy focusing on multilateral approaches, climate change was one of the few cases where a European unified external strategy was possible.[14]

Nevertheless, the EU's external action concerning climate security is far from being sufficient to take on the massive task ahead. Bergamaschi argues that the EU lacks inter-departmental coherence and coordination across the different institutions. He sees a necessity of equipping the EEAS with the means to assess climate risks globally and demands a more strategic and long-term approach to climate diplomacy.[15] This would enable the EU to better monitor mitigation efforts but also support partner countries in their long-term strategy of adaptation to already unavoidable consequences of climate change. Instead of focusing exclusively on national and international security, human and ecological security should be considered as key priorities. Bremberg[16] argues that the EU lacks an institutional home for climate security and should learn from and engage with the United Nations more intensively.

When tackling climate change, the European Union and its members also have to recognize and tackle certain structural causes of climate change. The Amazonas fires and destruction of the rain forests are deeply rooted in the extractivist economic logic of the world market and Latin Americas role in the global supply chain.[17] The agricultural products produced on the soil of the burnt down rainforest are often exported to Europe. It is understandable that European policy recommendations based on the principle of sustainability are perceived as neo-colonialist, if they threaten to undermine the economic model of the regions delivering primary resources to global markets. Therefore, rather than only a security topic, climate change should be regarded as the result of a structural economic pattern that needs to be addressed. Through its significant economic norm setting power, the EU can try to set incentives and conditionalities for countries to apply to certain environmental standards and multilaterally continue to insist on broad climate alliances to combat the *invisible threat*. This would include a reform of the global trade regime and the proper consideration of human and ecological security.

The European Union has the historical chance to champion a global green transition. Not only the world climate, but also a fair part of the future of a common European foreign and security policy depends on Europe´s success in climate security, a field where Europeans have more coherent interests than in any other external policy field.

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Part II:

Europe's Domestic Challenges

Internal challenges are affecting the EU's political and institutional capacity to respond to external challenges. In fact, Europe is clearly divided when it comes to a common defence strategy and security apparatus. This lack of common vision affects cooperation in many fields, one of the most striking examples being digital network threats. Having a coherent vision is essential to foster cooperation and enhance decision-making, both internally and externally. However, the political destabilization of Europe, caused in large part by the solidification of the far-right in national parliaments, has led national governments to manage domestic strife, leaving little capital to address wider security issues.

Europe Divided: Fostering the Cooperation in the Field of Defence

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External threats to collective and individual security have recently raised the EU's awareness concerning its need for a more integrated and coherent security and defence strategy. However, bridging the gap between vision and action remains one of the most challenging issues, as it has been since the attempt of the Pleven Plan to establish a European army in 1950[1], and the joint approach to security and defence in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1989, that should be further associated with "*political will*" according to Federica Mogherini[2]. In June 2019, 74% of European citizens expressed themselves in favor of a common security and defence policy among Member States[3], a number that has been relatively stable for the past two decades, showing that a more complex world appeals to a need for a more integrated response.

As such, security, along with migration and climate issues, can be considered by far one of the three top priorities[4] for the EU. But efforts to translate security policies into action have been undermined for many years because of a lack of common vision, leadership and governance in Europe, more particularly between the "Big Four."[5] In fact, the traditional opposition between France, Germany and also the UK (which argues for a "à la carte" cooperation) does stress how different their views are on how the EU security apparatus should look like. France has been proactive to drive the European defence agenda since its Pleven Plan, proposed half a century ago. President Macron's recent interview to Le Monde on Friday 8 November also highlighted defence capacities where not sufficient enough to address challenges and threats, and even qualified NATO, the current safety organization in Europe, with a brain-dead formula[6]. Germany (and also the United States) was first in responding to this declaration, reminding this was the most "strategic partnership" in history.

These vision gaps prevent from any meaningful integration when it comes to security and defence. According to Jan Techau, the EU has always relied on "economization" to forge compromise, from treaties to commercial deals. Issues have been expressed in monetary value, which has been easier for "counting" and making sure everyone would get what they want. But defence policy does not, and can't, fall into this monetary expression. In doing so, Europe has become a "low-trust policy market"[7], making the EU political system a leadership avoidance scene.

The European crisis management scene is a highly fragmented scene and its tools and capabilities are not coordinated enough[8]. The EU has considerable institutional duplication when it comes to defence, including multilateral or bilateral initiatives, none of them including all 28 Member States. One striking example is the comparison between the EU and the United States' weapons systems - 30 for the US and 178 for the EU[9]. This duplication shows a lack of coherent security and defence policy in regard to the

generated impact. Research has also demonstrated that each year, because of a lack of coordination between Members States, there is a yearly loss comprised between 25 and 100 billion euros. Fostering cooperation in the field of defence may come first with a better optimization and resource organization.

This is what the main security and defence policy effort of the EU is articulated around. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the former European Security and Defence Policy, is EU's comprehensive tool to address international security issues and conflicts, relying on military and civilian aspects. Recent risk developments have revitalized its importance, and in 2017 the creation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence and Security (PESCO) was approved. This is intended as a solution to the problem of fragmentation and duplication of security tools. As of today, 25 Members States out of 27 decided to participate in PESCO's projects (47 in December 2019), which range from military trainings to crisis responses[10] in coordinated settings. This framework of cooperation, whose Secretariat does support Member States both at the Council level (overall policy and decision-making) and Project level (management and implementation), does not again meet full consensus but constitutes a step forward to address duplication of efforts and resources, and strengthen defence cooperation among Member States[11].

However, the European Union has considerably evolved in the past decades, turning into a fast-paced changing structure, from enlargement to the Eastern countries, and the now debate of the United Kingdom remaining or not in the organization, which makes it harder to find the right balance in terms of cooperation. This is particularly striking in the sense that the successive enlargements have created rifts in threat perceptions, influencing the vision each country of what a common security apparatus should address. For example, Russia has been expanding its sphere of influence in the recent years, which worries neighbors and/or former Soviet countries, such as Estonia or Latvia, but also economic partners such as France or Germany, while Portugal or Switzerland do not see this expansion as a direct threat for them.

In fact, Brexit has recently been a factor of destabilization in Europe, but its security implications are now worrying. Though it was one of the three founding members of the former CSDP, established through the Treaty of Brussels in 1948, alongside with France and Benelux, its now future withdrawal from the EU would have severe security impact, both in terms of capabilities and in terms of EU cooperation. On the one hand, UK is one of the EU's strongest defence power (which possess a full spectrum of military capacities, including nuclear deterrent), and on the other hand, it has been one of the most important contributors, with 328 million euros given to the CSDP in 2018, which corresponds to 16% of the overall budget[12]. If security matters might not be directly affected by its withdrawal, defence-related activities, such as research or military deployments, might be. Other argues that Brexit might not be as worrying for the progress in the security and defence integration. In fact, the UK hasn't joined the PESCO initiative and has been a recurrent blocking actor when the CSDP was being shaped. David Cameron's Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, was hostile about CSDP, which resulted in a reduced British participation in CSDP's missions (notably in Afghanistan and Iraq)[13].

Internal and external threats to the EU both are risks and opportunities for the organization to foster its role as a security provider. There is undoubtedly a high degree of convergence on the need for security and defence strategy. Unity will be key to foster cooperation on the subject matter. For the new European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, the EU can play an international security role if the common European foreign and security reforms are conducted well. This will be done by having a "*truly integrated foreign policy that combines the power of EU Member States and the potential of their joint action, with the coordinated mobilization of EU instruments*"[14].

Indeed, 2020 will be a decisive year for Europe's future security and defence framework of cooperation and Brexit could actually facilitate the progress towards defence integration if the UK is no longer involved in the process. From a broader perspective, it poses the challenge of having a structured and unified European political model.

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Europe Online: Digital Networks Threats

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In 2019, online extremism continued to pose a severe threat to Europe's security. This review examines the trajectory of online extremist communities as well as new EU efforts to combat them throughout the year. In both the online and offline spheres there is an apparent decline in jihadi and rise in far-right terrorism. The roots of this phenomenon appear to be in the concentrated efforts of the EU institutions in combatting jihadi terrorism contrary to the dispersed framework of identifying what constitutes far-right extremism.

Moreover, this year saw new forms of exploiting technological means in order to grow extremist communities online. The example of the Christchurch attack that was livestreamed demonstrated the potential of tech tools in luring in more supporters and vastly disseminating extremist messages. The troubling proliferation of online extremist content has pushed the EU to establish new initiatives, especially those promoting cross-sector collaboration. A proposed bill on online terrorist content and a crisis protocol for responding to terrorist content online are the most prominent examples of such initiatives.

Success in Limiting the Reach of Jihadi Terrorist Groups

While jihadi terrorism remains one of the most severe threats to Europe's security, in 2019 Jihadi terrorists' online reach declined in an alignment with a decrease in attacks in Europe. Indeed, the number of Jihadi terrorist attacks have been steadily declining since a surge in 2015. This year in Europe there were approximately 10 fatalities from jihadi terrorist attacks including from the Paris and London stabbings in October and November.

Overall, this decline could be attributed to increased European efforts in terms of policy (see below), successful disruptions of online networks as well as geopolitical developments in the offline sphere including the death of IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

Among the reasons that jihadi terrorist attacks have declined is the efficient disruption of online communication networks. In 2019 European efforts significantly succeeded in disrupting these networks and limiting the spread of propaganda online. One of the most successful operations of the year was Europol's Referral Action Days. These days are part of Europol's EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU), an initiative established in 2015 in order to help internet service providers, states and other organizations to

detect and remove jihadi terrorist content. Throughout 2019, the EU IRU organized a number of Referral Action Days in order to remove terrorist content and accounts on a massive scale in collaboration with tech companies. During such days in November and December, Europol in conjunction with heavily exploited social media platforms including as Telegram, Google, managed to remove more than 2,000 terrorist accounts as well as severely limit the reach of the IS-linked media network Nashir News Agency.[1]

Failure to Restrain the Empowered Far-Right

2019 continued to witness the growth of online far-right extremist communities in accordance with trends in recent years. This year's attacks across Europe and the world surfaced specific patterns in their motive and execution. These patterns include common narratives as well as the use of technological means to disseminate an attacker's actions.

Narrative-wise, this year saw a rapid spread of various far-right conspiracy theories that prompted deadly attacks. One of the most common examples is the theory of the so-called "Great Replacement" or "White Genocide." These refer to a supposed conspiracy by Jewish communities to eliminate white populations by promoting mass immigration of non-white people into Europe and the US.[2] The October Halle attack in Germany, where a man unsuccessfully drove into a synagogue on Yom Kippur day and eventually killed two people on the street, was predicated upon this theory.[3]

These theories have become increasingly popular amongst ever-growing decentralized online communities and are likely to prompt further attacks. Their popularity could be attributed to a phenomenon called "echo chambers." These are insulated communities where radical and often non-factual information flows.[4] Simply put, as users of social media tend to engage with content that confirms their pre-existing views, their feeds are filled with one-sided information and that often leads to the adoption of even more extreme views.

Another pattern identified in this year's attacks is the use of technological means to disseminate extremist content and gain visibility. The most used tool is livestreaming. The method of livestreaming terrorist violence was coined by the perpetrator of the New Zealand Christchurch mosque attacks in March 2019. The perpetrator who killed 51 people, livestreamed the violence for approximately 17 minutes. While the video was watched by 200 people as it unfolded, the clip was later grossly disseminated across social and traditional media platforms. Facebook alone removed 1.5 million videos of the attack within 24 hours.[5] Similarly, the perpetrator of the Halle terrorist attack streamed his video for over 30 minutes on gaming platform Twitch, a video that was viewed by over 2,200 people.[6]

A Contrast in Combating Jihadi and Far-Right Terrorism

The apparent decline in the spread of jihadi and rise of the far-right propaganda prompts us to look into the reasoning behind this contrast. Contrary to jihadi terrorist groups, there is a lack of a consistent framework to help identify and efficiently combat far right terrorist groups. Firstly, there is a lack of an

unequivocal definition of far-right terrorism at the pan-European level.[7] In addition, there is no right-wing proscribed groups list on the EU or UN level. These two parameters pose a severe obstacle in classifying extreme right-wing content online as terrorist.

EU Efforts to Combat Online Extremism

EU institutions launched a few initiatives in 2019 aimed at combating online threats on the policy as well as operational levels. Two major ones have to do with the dissemination of terrorist content online.

In 2019, the EU commission introduced to the parliament a bill named "Preventing the Dissemination of Terrorist Content Online" that aims at disrupting the spread of extremist propaganda. Some of the bill's numerous measures received extensive negative coverage from various experts and organizations over freedom of expression concerns. These measures included the establishment of upload filters (algorithms that would automatically detect and block the upload of terrorist content) on tech platforms, the ability of EU states to refer content to service providers for deletion on the basis of their terms and conditions and a one hour deadline to remove any referred content. Upon the first reading of the bill in the European parliament in April 2019, many of the controversial clauses were scrapped or amended, a development that was welcomed to an extent by civil society organizations.[8] Since October 2019, the bill has been in trilogue state where it is debated by the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union (EU) and the European Commission.[9]

Other EU institutions have introduced an initiative for combating online threats through cross-sector collaboration. That is the "Response Protocol to Online Crises" developed by Europol and the EU Commission's Directorate-General of Migration and Home Affairs. The protocol would assist EU institutions, private companies, member states and members of the civil society including the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and Tech Against Terrorism to swiftly disrupt the dissemination of terrorist content in the event of an attack.[10]

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Europe Destabilized: The Far-Right & Shifting Political Landscape

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Pro-European democrats could breathe a collective sigh of relief this past summer, as the largest EU voter turnout in 20 years (50.6%) driven by youth (+14% under 25 years, +12% 25-39 years)[1] largely mitigated gains made by far-right parties[2] in the European parliament. While partially contained at a European level, many national and local elections in 2019 signaled a growth in far-right support across Europe, carrying worrying implications for the stability of European democracies and the physical security of its citizens.

Throughout 2019, far-right parties continued to make at the national and local level. In Germany, the AfD became the second largest party in the eastern states of in Saxony and Thuringia, outperforming Angela Merkel's CDU in the latter. The Finns Party narrowly missed becoming the largest party in the April 2019 national elections. Estonia's EKRE, after winning its first seats in 2015, more than doubled its gains to nearly 18%, making it the third largest party. In Spain, VOX doubled its seats in the November national elections, becoming the nation's third-largest party after only entering the legislature for the first time in April 2019.

As far-right parties solidified their hold in parliaments, mainstream parties have lost their traditional governing majorities, and voters expressed openness for unorthodox coalitions (particularly amongst young voters[3]). Previously unthinkable coalitions have therefore become tempting options to secure governing power. Mainstream parties' level of tolerance of the far-right in governing positions has varied considerably, but three main strategies appear: Non-cooperation/*cordon sanitaire*, co-opting policy, and governing coalition, each carrying an accompanying cost.

Where non-cooperation pacts reign, such as Germany[4] and Sweden,[5] governments cordon off the far-right by delegitimizing their politics as incompatible with basic democratic values, but remain in fragile coalition or minority coalitions. The far-right's strength lies in consequently becoming a large, if not the only, remaining opposition bloc and ability to garner voter support by playing victim of political exclusion. Maintaining non-cooperation and a *cordon sanataire* becomes increasingly difficult as mainstream voters become frustrated with the politics of unorthodox left-right grand coalitions or the ineffectiveness of minorities governments, pushing some to vote for the far-right, seen as the only true political alternative. Over time, the temptation to cooperate with far-right parties grows as they gain an ever-greater percentage of votes and establish a permanent presence in legislative bodies.

In an attempt to stem a rising right-wing challenge, center-right parties may co-opt far-right policies into their agenda, as in the UK[6] and the Netherlands,[7] ushering previously fringe ideas and policies. These include more authoritarian policies, often immigration, and/or the normalization of demonizing rhetoric towards minorities and political opponents. In this process, the center-right parties may themselves become radicalized. The UK Conservative Party's transition from pro-EU to "Brexit or bust," even when UKIP to their right-flank had ceded to be a political threat, exemplifies this process.

Where non-cooperation pacts have fallen apart, as in Finland[8] (2015) and in Austria[9] (2017), coalition governments are formed, fully legitimizing extreme politics.[10] However, as the collapse of the Austrian and Italian far-right coalition governments, and the reconfiguration of Finland's political landscape as it jumped from crisis to crisis between 2017-2019,[11] demonstrate, governing with the far-right does not guarantee stability. When completely in power, as in Hungary and Poland, democratic norms and practices erode completely.[12]

To varying degrees, the strategies in all cases result in mainstreaming previously far-right politics. The consequences, both the European Fundamental Rights Agency[13] and OSCE[14] have found, is that this normalization of far-right ideology and political hate speech across Europe has fueled violent right-wing extremism. Indeed, right-wing violence has increased 320% over the past five years, accounting for 17.2% of all terrorist incidents in the West in 2018.[15] So concerning were these developments that, for the first time since 1999, the European Parliament to adopt a resolution expressing concern on the normalization of neo-fascism and racism and accompanying violence in May 2019, calling on member states to condemn hate crimes "by politicians and public officials as they directly normalize and reinforce hatred and violence in society.[16]

As right-wing violence and hate crime rises, so too do fears amongst Europe's minorities. Amongst Europe's Jewish community, four out of five believe their security situation has deteriorated in recent years, with young Jewish Europeans (16-34) "considerably more likely" to experience antisemitism than older cohorts and 41% considering emigration out of fear for their safety as Jews.[17] Though to be sure, anti-Semitic violence is not perpetrated solely by the far-right. For people of African descent, between 5-14% reported to be a victim of racist violence in the previous five years, with 65% of the perpetrators reported not to have a minority/ethnic background.[18] Perhaps most disturbing, is that minorities only rarely report such incidents to the police, believing that nothing would change were they to submit a report.

In light of several far-right terror attacks and foiled plots, the EU counter-terrorism coordinator has expressed the urgent need to further strengthen its approach combatting right-wing extremist violence.[19] Indeed, it cannot be stressed enough that member states need to cooperate and share best practices in combatting networks of right-wing extremists. Yet, though vital in providing short-term security solutions, doing so only addresses the symptom of an issue not its root cause.

To turn the tide against the far-right, mainstream parties need to address the concerns of far-right voters through democratic means, bringing them back into the political fold. For too long, the dual-core issues of immigration and national identity have been left to the political extremes to claim as their own. Mainstream democratic parties must provide satisfying answers to what it "means to be" German, French, British, Swedish, etc. to take back control of their national conversations. Here, there is an opportunity for democratic parties to reinvigorate national politics and redefine what it means to be "European" in the 21st century.

Youth have an outsized role in creating this democratic European future. No, it is not an inter-generational battle between older conservative voters and young leftists. Rather, it is an intra-generational battle as the far-right rallies Europe's youth. In Belgium, the leader of Vlaams Belang is 26. In France, the National Rally's (formerly Front National) top EU candidate was 23; the Danish People's Party top candidate was 29. In Spain, the chief spokesman of Vox and member of parliament is 27. In Italy, 17% of youth aged 18 to 34 voted for Salvini's Lega Nord in 2018 compared to just 5% in 2013. [20] In Germany's Thuringia state election, the AfD was the strongest party amongst under-30 at 24% of the vote.[21] Young democrats' failure to take advantage of this moment of political realignment will leave the definition of Europe for illiberal nationalists to define.

With citizens and national governments occupied with securing their democracies, the political capital for greater EU integration is sparser than ever. Nowhere is this more so than with a common security and defense policy—a particularly coveted competence even for mainstream parties and national governments. Sparring a substantial external shock, expecting a common security and defense policy to emerge from this political gridlock, even as the EU finds itself exposed to ever more security threats, remains a faraway federalist dream.

There, however, is reason for optimism. In Finland, on December 8th, 2019, after half a decade of rising right-wing populism and political turmoil, the youngest prime minister in the world, Ms. Sanna Marin, 34, took office, leading a center-left coalition with four other parties headed by women, three of whom are under the age of 35. Such democratic youth engagement to create a broad political consensus will define the future of Europe. As a young political project, the European Union finds itself in a situation not unlike the birth of many other modern states defining their national character. At the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787, Benjamin Franklin was supposedly asked, "Doctor, what have we got? A republic or a monarchy?" To which Franklin responded, "A republic, if you can keep it."

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[2] "Far-right" is used as an umbrella term to encompass a political ideology "centered on one or more of the following elements: strident nationalism (usually racial or exclusivist in some fashion), fascism, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration, chauvinism, nativism, and xenophobia. Far-right groups tend to be strongly authoritarian, but often with populist elements," (Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism (November 2019), http://visionofhumanity.org/reports), accessed December 21, 2019

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The European Student Think Tank, abbreviated as EST (est. 2010) is a student-led NGO whose aim is to empower European youth and strengthen European democracy. We are a network of international students and young professionals of different backgrounds, who work towards improving young people's participation in the EU policy-making process and facilitating their identification with European values.

Working Group on Security and Defence
http://www.esthinktank.com/working-groups/working-group-on-security-and-defense/

The Working Group on Security and Defence (WGSD) of the EST includes a range of young researchers using different thematic lenses to analyse the diverse implications of the security issues affecting Europe, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, and by delivering security briefs, research articles and policy reviews.