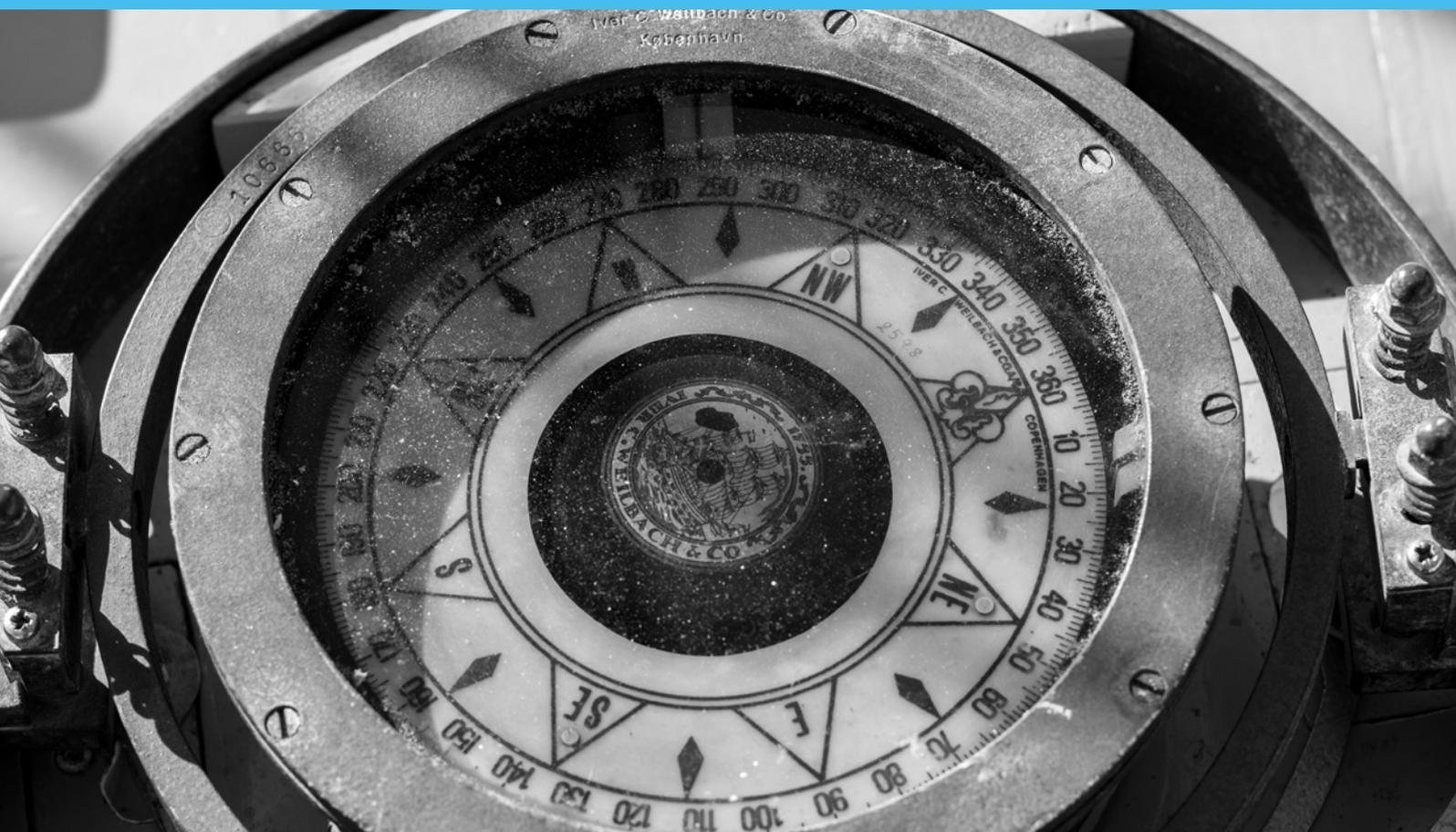


AUTUMN 2021

Strategic foresight: a zero-sum game?

The EU Strategic Compass and NATO 2030

EVENT REPORT



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Strategic foresight: a zero-sum game?

The EU Strategic Compass and NATO 2030

Ongoing strategic security reviews by NATO and the European Union present an opportunity for both organisations to boost cooperation and strengthen transatlantic security at a time of unprecedented geopolitical challenges, speakers at *Friends of Europe's* annual Peace, Security and Defence summit agreed.

“Transatlantic unity and a stronger Europe go hand in hand,” **Charles Fries**, Deputy Secretary General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the EU’s External Action Service, told the event. “NATO is and will remain central to the European security architecture ... at the same time, we consider that, at the EU level, we need to take more responsibility for our own security.”

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Charles Fries, Deputy Secretary General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the EU’s External Action Service

The 17 November 2021 summit entitled ‘Strategic foresight: a zero-sum game?’ was held in the week when a first draft of the EU’s ‘Strategic Compass’, setting out the Union’s response to the new range of security challenges, was presented to foreign and defence ministers in Brussels. The plan is due to be adopted by EU leaders at the European Council meeting in March 2022.

In parallel, NATO is working on an update of its Strategic Concept to adapt the Alliance to 21st-century realities. The first major overhaul of strategic thinking since 2010 is scheduled for approval at a summit in Madrid next June. Feeding into it is the NATO 2030 reflection process designed to map the path for the Alliance to become stronger militarily and politically, while taking a more global approach.

Although calls for a stronger European defence role have sometimes triggered anxiety in Washington over duplication of efforts or a weakening of commitment to NATO, **Molly Montgomery**, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the United States State Department, was upbeat on the new EU blueprint.

“We really have welcomed the launch of the Strategic Compass,” she told the *Friends of Europe* event in a video link from Washington. “We look forward to having consultations on it as we move forward.”

Montgomery emphasised the current “close relations” between the EU and US, and the “shared perception of the threats that we face and how we need to move forward together as a transatlantic alliance”.

China, military mobility, operations and activities, cyber and hybrid, and emerging security challenges were among the areas Montgomery placed on the US wish list for greater EU-NATO cooperation.

“For us, NATO is the cornerstone of transatlantic security and will always remain so, but we also view the EU as an increasingly important partner,” she said. “We really do believe that a stronger Europe is in US interests, but that it also requires us to ensure that we remain coordinated to ensure that all of these efforts that the EU is undertaking are complementary with NATO.”

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Molly Montgomery, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the United States State Department

Stronger EU = stronger NATO

Those words dovetailed with Fries' assertion that: “By getting stronger, the EU will be a better partner for NATO. It is a mutually reinforcing partnership.”

Among the wide range of government and international officials, military commanders, private sector players and independent experts who participated in the 4.5-hour event, there was consensus that a fast-evolving range of threats showed the need for NATO and the EU to work closely together, and for Europeans to strengthen their security capabilities to the benefit of both organisations.

As the summit was taking place, that need was emphasised by the Russian troop build-up on Ukraine's eastern border prompting fears of a new invasion, as well as the standoff on the EU's frontier with Belarus where the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko despatched thousands of migrants from the Middle East in what Western nations have denounced as an attempt to divide the EU and destabilise the region.

“When we look at what is unfolding on the borders of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania that are faced with a brutal hybrid attack by the Lukashenko regime, every day we see that sending a sign of us being united is important but, more importantly, we also see a clear need for NATO and EU cooperation to respond effectively to the sort of crisis that we are seeing,” said **Kadi Silde**, Undersecretary for Defence Policy at the Estonian Ministry of Defence.

“Adversaries don't just pick military tools or civilian tools, they pick a mix of tools and we in the West need to adapt ourselves to this sort of challenges,” she added. “Expanding and strengthening and deepening EU-NATO cooperation is the way to go.”

João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Minister of National Defence, agreed that such challenges underlined the importance of a combined NATO and EU response.

“ Collective security through NATO is not the solution to all of the challenges that we face, so we have to have the capacity to respond in other manners, including through the European Union.

João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Minister of National Defence

“There is an enormous awareness now, including in our public opinion, that the comfortable age that we’ve lived through over several decades has come to an end and the security threats that we face are real, they are palpable,” he said. “Collective security through NATO is not the solution to all of the challenges that we face, so we have to have the capacity to respond in other manners, including through the European Union.”

Speakers stressed that upgraded planning and increased cooperation should be matched with more and better-targeted defence spending to bolster Europe’s security capabilities.

“We can have huge ambitions ... but as long as the majority of European nations is dramatically underfunding defence, we are a group of people whistling in the dark,” said **Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**, President of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs, former NATO secretary general and Trustee of Friends of Europe.

Benedetta Berti, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary General at NATO and international policy and security consultant, was among those who welcomed a greater European commitment to build up defence forces.

“ The important point is this emphasis on capabilities. This is fantastic. The more we remain output-orientated, the better, the more we talk about what can European member states develop together.

Benedetta Berti, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary General at NATO and international policy and security consultant

“The important point is this emphasis on capabilities. This is fantastic,” she said. “The more we remain output-orientated, the better, the more we talk about what can European member states develop together, what kind of capabilities, what kind of concrete input can we use to support our security. That’s much more useful than ... institutions, structures.”



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1. **Charles Fries**, Deputy Secretary General for Common Security and Defence Policy and Crisis Response at the EU's External Action Service
2. **Molly Montgomery**, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the United States State Department
3. **Benedetta Berti**, Head of Policy Planning in the Office of the Secretary General at NATO and international policy and security consultant
4. **General Robert Brieger**, Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces and incoming Chair of the EU Military Committee
5. **Cristina Gallach**, former Spanish state secretary for foreign affairs and former under secretary-general of the United Nations



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Street cats

NATO and the EU were long seen as ‘street cats’, occupying different territories in Brussels and operating apart, with cooperation limited by political issues – such as relations between EU member Cyprus and NATO ally Turkey, the summit heard. However, more recently, they have moved much closer together.

“NATO and the EU have come a long way,” said **Jamie Shea**, Senior Fellow at *Friends of Europe* and former Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO. “They are increasingly speaking the same language; they are more politically and intellectually aligned.”

The two organisations have signed off on two joint declarations setting out 74 areas of cooperation, with a third in the pipeline focusing on areas including cyber defence, disruptive technologies, security aspects of climate change, resilience, maritime security and hybrid threats.

The ongoing Strategic Concept and Strategic Compass processes present a chance for NATO and the EU to put aside past problems and work together in the face of the security challenges recognised by both, a number of speakers said.

“This is an opportunity for improving the cooperation between the two organisations,” explained **General Robert Brieger**, Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces and incoming Chair of the EU Military Committee. “The two processes should be seen as a chance for further deepening our strategic thinking and developing complimentary approaches, while taking into account the different political natures of the EU and NATO.”

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Cristina Gallach, former Spanish state secretary for foreign affairs and former under secretary-general of the United Nations, agreed. “We have a tremendous opportunity - the EU and NATO - to work more efficiently together, to face the extremely complex challenges in the world,” she said. “We have an opportunity; we should not miss it.”

Gallach too welcomed the increased European focus on building up military capacity. She said non-EU allies should not be concerned about the concept of European strategic autonomy, arguing that it will turn European nations into stronger allies to the benefit of both the EU and NATO.

“Member states do not have two sets of capabilities; we only have one set of capabilities that we need to put at the disposal of the EU and the disposal of NATO. Therefore, we cannot afford not to cooperate,” Gallach said. “That is why we need to put suspicions aside when we talk about strategic autonomy. Strategic autonomy is a great opportunity for the European Union ... to become more efficient and be more forceful in these actions.”

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Cristina Gallach, former Spanish state secretary for foreign affairs and former under secretary-general of the United Nations

For **Tania Latici**, Co-lead of NATO2030 Young Leaders and security and defence expert at the European External Action Service (EEAS), it is time all sides put the debate over the meaning of strategic autonomy behind them to focus on strengthening Europeans' ability to provide concrete responses to the myriad security challenges.

“Often in the strategic autonomy debate, we tend to focus more on concepts than on action and, at the end of the day, when I look at our degrading security environment ... action deserves more attention than semantics,” she said.

“I simply don't think we can afford to have a weak Europe in security and defence when around us we see things, such as the American push to complete the pivot to Asia, one coup after another to our south or ... ongoing blatant hybrid attacks and the instrumentalisation of people to our east,” Latici added.

Rather than create a rival to NATO, several speakers underscored how a more robust EU defence capability will fortify both organisations.

“In the long run, Europe cannot afford to neglect its role in geopolitics and therefore has to learn to speak the language of power.

General Robert Brieger, Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces and incoming Chair of the EU Military Committee

“My main argument is EU-NATO cooperation should not be seen as a zero-sum game but as a positive sum that means a stronger EU and also strengthens NATO,” said Brieger. “More strategic responsibility by the EU based on an enhanced European ability to act and transatlantic cooperation are not contradictory, but two sides of the same coin.”

For Europe, Brieger said, making progress on the capacity to act is essential both to underpin security in a neighbourhood where “the only stability ... is its instability”, and avoiding “strategic irrelevance” among the world’s power players.

“Europe is in danger. We are facing all the new threats, external and internal challenges, at the same time,” he cautioned. “In the long run, Europe cannot afford to neglect its role in geopolitics and therefore has to learn to speak the language of power. An integral element of this European strategic responsibility is, and will remain, close cooperation between the EU and NATO.”

The security iceberg

To make the most of that cooperation between NATO and a security-enabled EU, it is essential to define the role of both organisations and the added value each can bring to buttress the response of Western democracies to the array of international threats.

While NATO will continue to make the key collective security contribution under the all-for-one-one-for-all defence pledge enshrined in Article 5 of its founding treaty, there’s an expanding range of situations below that where a strengthened EU can play a vital part.

“Collective security is really on the tip of our security iceberg,” said Gomes Cravinho. “Underneath that, there are many other factors that have an impact upon our security and which would not make sense to invoke Article 5 of the Atlantic Charter.”

He mentioned the type of hybrid threat posed by Belarus on the EU border as an example of where EU-NATO cooperation brings added benefits. Others include the response to emerging disruptive technologies, climate change and maritime security. “To deal with these challenges it doesn’t make sense for us to be separated in our different silos,” the Portuguese minister added.

As well as sectorial cooperation, Gallach pointed to geographical regions where NATO-EU cooperation makes increasing sense, including in the Mediterranean and areas of tension in sub-Saharan Africa. Amid growing geo-strategic rivalry between China and the United States, several speakers raised the role of NATO and Europe in the Indo-Pacific region.

De Hoop Scheffer said it was essential for Europe to define where its security priorities lie: close to home in Africa and the Middle East, or within a broader democratic alliance with the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

“ We need to be able, as the EU, to respond to those strategic voids which are appearing as there is this tectonic shift of the US towards Asia.

João Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Minister of National Defence

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1. **Mary Fitzgerald**, Libya Researcher, non-resident scholar at the Middle East Institute, Friends of Europe Trustee and 2013 European Young Leader (EYL40)
2. **Tania Lațici**, Co-lead of NATO2030 Young Leaders and Security and Defence expert at the European External Action Service (EEAS)
3. **Kadi Silde**, Undersecretary for Defence Policy at the Estonian Ministry of Defence
4. **João Gomes Cravinho**, Portuguese Minister of Defence



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As the US turns increasingly to the east, Europe must be ready to fill gaps that may emerge in the Euro-Atlantic sphere, Cravinho argued: “We need to be able, as the EU, to respond to those strategic voids which are appearing as there is this tectonic shift of the US towards Asia.”

Quantum warfare

Building up defence capacity must focus on innovation, as new technological developments, such as artificial intelligence, hypersonic weapons, quantum warfare and increasingly complex cyber threats, present a growing challenge, the summit was told.

“Our competitors are shaping the environment, they are competing every day, the threats are permanent, they are boundless, and they are simultaneously used ... we have to manage that.

General Philippe Lavigne, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation

“Our competitors are shaping the environment, they are competing every day, the threats are permanent, they are boundless, and they are simultaneously used ... we have to manage that,” cautioned **General Philippe Lavigne**, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

“We need more and more innovation to adapt faster, to be agile and we need innovation coming from our societies, open innovation, in order to continue to get the advantage,” he said in a pre-recorded interview from Allied Command Transformation in Virginia.

The technology is moving fast and although NATO has what Lavigne called “the best military thinking package in a generation”, it still has to accelerate change to keep ahead of its rivals amid an increasingly complex tech landscape.

“The new plane will not be a new plane in the future. It will be a system of systems, it will be sensors linked to platforms, linked to space, linked to multi-domain. That's collaborative warfare,” the general explained.

However, there was a word of caution against over-reliance on technology from **Ian Bond**, Director of Foreign Policy at the Centre for European Reform in London.

“Russia's seizure of Crimea was low-tech; the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan was no-tech,” he wrote on the summit's chat line. “How does NATO avoid reliance on vulnerable technology like GPS, satellite comms and space-based sensors and how does it ensure that it can defeat adversaries that don't rely on superior technology but on better tactics?”

Speakers underscored the importance of working with the private sector to ensure the latest technology is available to defend against offensive threats from authoritarian regimes and rogue players.

“We have complex issues to solve and the world is volatile, and it is in a state of disarray,” cautioned **Jane Frankland**, award-winning leader, best-selling author, speaker and women’s activist.

“National, international and online threats are becoming progressively integrated as our enemies develop new means to exploit vulnerabilities across borders, and between the cyber and physical worlds,” she added, naming China, North Korea and Iran among the countries developing more effective offensive cyber capabilities. “We have more threats, more costly breaches, and the speed and intensity of these attacks continue to challenge every part of our ecosystem.”

Technology presents a “great opportunity” for further EU-NATO cooperation, said **Andrea G. Rodríguez**, Research Fellow at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB). She welcomed the Alliance’s push to set up the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) by 2023 to provide a network of technology test centres and accelerator sites to harness civilian innovation for security. It could cooperate fruitfully with the EU’s proposed innovation hub within the European Defence Agency, Rodríguez said.

Innovation efforts should focus on quantum computing, AI, hypersonic and some bio technologies, she added, “the technologies keeping me up at night”.

“We are entering a time in which everything is hyper-connected,” Rodríguez said. “With quantum computing and quantum communications and other quantum applications that may emerge, it will be like going to war with horses, instead of like going to war with tanks, because the capacity lead will be so big,” she cautioned. “The first one who gets it will have a strategic advantage. That’s something that, as NATO or as Europe, ... we shouldn’t let happen.”

Under a cloud

Unfortunately, Europe is lagging dangerously behind in the race to develop tech security, cautioned **Pierre Pozzi Rocco Belforti**, Chairman and CEO at Worldstone, a private investment firm in venture capital.

He warned that US and Chinese rivals have raced ahead in areas such as cloud computing. The lack of venture capital, shortfalls in regulation, the cost and time needed to register patents and other factors have undermined Europe’s innovative landscape, leaving the continent dangerously dependent and vulnerable as new technologies emerge.

“The European Union is the world leader in democratic values. That’s fantastic, but I can tell you we’re becoming the vassals. We are going to be, quote unquote, colonised by artificial intelligence and data,” Pozzi Rocco Belforti predicted.

“AI will overtake nuclear weapons in 20 years. Why? Because nuclear weapons can destroy and kill, you don’t need to destroy and kill with AI, you go from the inside,” he added. “We’re really not only losing our world position today, we’re losing our sovereignty.”

One way to overcome an innovation backslide is to focus on people and leadership, looking beyond the usual pool of personnel, said Frankland.

“We’ve used the same types of people, those who are male and those who have typically come from a military intelligence or STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] background,” she said. “Having the same types of people in our industry has limited our thinking capacity, limited our innovation ... as the cyber attacks grow and become more creative, and hackers become more collaborative and businesslike in their approach, we really need to follow their lead.”

“ In security, countless studies have shown that women and men gauge risk in very different ways ... We need more women to come into our system. It’s not that women are better than men, it is just that they’re different. We’re different and when we come together, we can do a better job, we can evolve, we can solve problems faster.

Jane Frankland, award-winning leader, best-selling author, speaker and women’s activist

That means greater gender diversity. “Women do offer a strategic and a competitive advantage to business,” Frankland added. “In security, countless studies have shown that women and men gauge risk in very different ways ... We need more women to come into our system. It’s not that women are better than men, it is just that they’re different. We’re different and when we come together, we can do a better job, we can evolve, we can solve problems faster.”

Murky waters

The Peace, Security and Defence summit also saw the launch of the executive summary of *Friends of Europe’s* latest European Defence Study, authored by Senior Fellow **Paul Taylor**.

In ‘[Murky waters: the Black Sea region and European security](#)’, Taylor argues that NATO promised Ukraine and Georgia more than it could deliver by declaring in 2008 that they could one day join the Alliance without saying when or how. When Russia took military action against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, the two countries were left to fend for themselves.



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1. **Jane Frankland**, Best-selling author of *IN Security: Why a Failure to Attract and Retain Women in Cybersecurity is Making Us All Less Safe* and women's activist
2. **Andrea G. Rodríguez**, Research Fellow and Project Manager at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB)
3. **General Philippe Lavigne**, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation at NATO
4. **Pierre Pozzi Belforti**, Chairman and CEO of Worldstone and Aerendir Global Technologies



“The truth is that neither Americans nor Europeans are willing to go to war with Russia over Ukraine and Georgia. Nor are they willing to risk rushing them into NATO to test whether President Vladimir Putin is bluffing or not,” Taylor says.

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Paul Taylor, Senior Fellow for Peace, Security and Defence at Friends of Europe and Contributing Editor to Politico

Instead, NATO should help the Ukrainian and Georgian armed forces to strengthen their own deterrence and resilience with training, equipment, more frequent joint exercises and intelligence sharing.

For its part, the EU needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for the Black Sea region and raise the level of political engagement with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova in an ‘Eastern Partnership Plus’.

Conclusion

Overall, summit participants found broad consensus on the need for NATO and the EU to agree on common threat assessments as an important way to identify forward strategy and potentially allocate resources.

At the same time, a clear set of priorities must be associated with those threat assessments: NATO, the European Union and the United States cannot operate in all areas simultaneously. They must define how they maintain basic collective defence guarantees, particularly in the light of Russia’s increased bellicosity. In parallel, tools have to be developed to confront regional insecurity, climate-based security issues, terrorism, cyber threats and a host of hybrid challenges that may fall short of NATO’s Article 5 defence pledge.

Geographical priorities also need to be defined as Europe confronts instability in its neighbourhood alongside more far-flung challenges highlighted by the intensified rivalry between the United States and China.

“Where should we have our priorities? Where should the European Union have its priorities? Is that in the immediate neighborhood ... the Western Balkans, the Black Sea North Africa?” asked de Hoop Scheffer. “You can’t be everywhere and anywhere, you’re not going to pay attention to the whole world.”

The political and military leadership in both organisations need to work more closely together to engender a mutual understanding and common values.

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Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister of State, President of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs, former NATO secretary-general and former Dutch foreign minister

On the European side, a more agile and better resourced EU military capability has to be developed that can be deployed efficiently and swiftly when it is needed.

“We must invest more in critical capability shortfalls because the EU has to promote its own industrial and technological defence base, and we need to reduce the fragmentation of our defence markets,” said Fries.

Greater recognition is needed of the importance of technological innovation and diversity in driving forward capabilities and changing the very nature of the security and defence landscape.

“We need leadership from the top, we need to create a regulatory culture which moves at the speed and with the flexibility of the market and innovation, otherwise are going to fall behind,” said Shea. “We need to work on the overall ecosystem and use all of the talents ... particularly when it comes to gender, we've learned that skills are important, and we need to develop them.”

