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Peace, Security and Defence Summit

Europe after February 24th: how secure is it?

EVENT REPORT



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Event report

This report reflects statements and questions made during the day-long Peace, Security and Defence Summit hosted by Friends of Europe in Brussels on 17 November 2022. This year, the annual flagship event of the Peace, Security & Defence programme was held in the context of the war in Ukraine, following Russia's invasion on 24 February 2022.

Composed of a series of interactive debates, the summit addressed current geopolitical tensions. Focus was placed on the quest for European rearmament in the context of ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine; the role that emerging and disruptive technologies will play in the future of European defence; possible security cooperation between Europe and Africa; and the post-war future of Ukraine, Russia and Europe as a whole.

Speakers and participants considered questions, including:

- Given what we have learned about warfare in Ukraine and elsewhere, which systems are already obsolete and which hold the greatest promise for the future?
- What lessons can we learn from Ukraine's successful digital resistance to Russian aggression for enhancing the resilience of our societies in the 21st century?
- What policy reforms are needed to improve public-private cooperation in the security and defence realm?
- How can regional cooperation organisations, such as the European Union, NATO or the African Union, serve as platforms for building and sustaining common responses to shared challenges?
- How can we ensure that Russia is denied victory in the war but also prevented from continuing the war?

Recommendations

- Boost **private sector** investment in innovative frameworks, such as green defence, through incentives identified by EU, NATO and national policymakers.
- Support the **development of a trustworthy, citizen-focused metaverse**, using EU influence to ensure human concerns are reflected and mitigated in early coding programmes.
- Engage with civil society to learn about **citizen priorities** for international partnerships and cyber-defence.
- Ensure **cooperative, collegial international partnerships** are developed through EU foreign policy.

- Identify opportunities to **develop and export EU digital services**, not just regulation.
- Offer a clear route to **EU membership for Ukraine**, including steps along the way.
- Develop a granular approach to **countering propaganda and misinformation**, tailored to different markets and individuals.

Event summary

Classic and cyber-defence capabilities

Russia's war in Ukraine echoes the darkest days of the last century, said **Antti Kaikkonen**, Finnish Defence Minister, opening the day of debate. "This is a full-scale attack fuelled by outdated imperial sentiments. It is something we hoped would never take place again."

“The important thing is to spend not more, but better

Ludivine Dedonder, Belgian Minister of Defence

In addition to harking back to old sentiments, Russian warfare in Ukraine is far from being the high-tech, modern cyberwar that many had expected and instead relies on traditional kinetic force, he added. "As important as the ability to counter hybrid attacks is, it is still important to have a traditional military reaction force."

With Russia and Ukraine firing between 5,000 and 20,000 rounds of ammunition per day, European countries should assess their own stockpiles of ammunition. Many EU member states are thought to have only enough ammunition for two days of conflict.

"The important thing is to spend not more, but better," said **Ludivine Dedonder**, Belgian Minister of Defence. This should include working towards better European defence and strategic autonomy.

"It's very cool to have advanced cyber-capabilities but if I had to choose, I'd rather have a full stock of ammunition," said **Tomasz Smura**, Director of the Research Office at the Casimir Pulaski Foundation.

Valeriya Ionan, Ukrainian Deputy Minister for European Integration, explained, however, that 24 February 2022 marked "the start of new digital military era". As well as mobilising troops and armaments on the ground in Ukraine, defending digital borders is crucial.

Ukraine plans to continue efforts to digitalise after the war, Ionan added, eventually becoming "absolutely paperless [and] the biggest European IT hub".

A new industrial landscape

Developing the industrial base of European defence requires innovative solutions and a clear signal from policymakers. Moderator **Jamie Shea**, Senior Fellow at Friends of Europe and former deputy assistant secretary general for emerging security challenges at NATO, said the war could be a window of opportunity to send a clear signal to industry.

“The planet can’t be sustained if we don’t change course

Carlos Lopes, High Representative of the Commission of the African Union

Jörg See, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning at NATO, agreed that the war in Ukraine shows it is vital to balance investments in traditional and cyber-defence. The key to success here will be talking to industry and creating incentives to invest in European rearmament.

A more innovative, modern military capability should include ‘greening’ defence systems, participants heard. **Kris Peeters**, Vice President of the European Investment Bank (EIB), former Belgian deputy prime minister and former Flemish minister-president, said the EIB would soon launch a ‘Green Defence Initiative’, encouraging the military industry to be more energy and CO2-efficient.

A new industrial landscape also means rethinking the way in which policymakers and industry encourage innovation research for green technologies more generally, said **Carlos Lopes**, High Representative of the Commission of the African Union and former executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. “The planet can’t be sustained if we don’t change course,” he said. “We need incentives, not just talk about climate change.”

Oleksandr Danylyuk, Head of the Centre for Defence Reforms, former chief advisor to the Ukrainian Defence Minister and former special advisor to the Head of the Ukrainian Foreign Intelligence Service, said there was also a need for ‘smarter sanctions’ to ensure that Ukrainian industry and infrastructure are not undermined by Western sanctions on Russia.

A trustworthy digital transition

Working with the private sector and investing in defence capabilities can help build a more secure online environment for Europe and its partners.

Kavya Pearlman, Founder and CEO of XR Safety Initiative (XRSI), said many people were sceptical of the fully ‘immersive’ metaverse, which is expected to be the next iteration of the internet. This gives Europeans an opportunity to demand online trustworthy ecosystems that are coded for human wellbeing at an early stage.

“Get human concerns in at the start of the process,” urged **Richard Spearman**,

Senior External Affairs Advisor for Security and Resilience at Vodafone Group. He agreed that privacy and security should be built into the metaverse by design.

“Trust by design is good,” said **Mark Boris Andrijanič**, Member of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, and former Slovenian minister of digital transformation. Acknowledging that Europe is lagging behind China and the US when it comes to technology, he said that working with civil society to find technologies “that help rather than hinder” citizens’ lives can lead to better legislation. “The EU should focus on exporting digital services, not just regulation.”

Kira Rudik, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament and Vice President of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), stressed the importance of both online and traditional security capabilities. But she said tough security legislation and the ability to protect data should have been developed earlier for the online world.

“ Trust by design is good

Mark Boris Andrijanič, Member of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Despite EU and Ukrainian success in countering online misinformation, Russia was still winning the narrative around the war noted **Mariam Kintsurashvili**, Director of Programs, Generation i. “Russia uses an individual rather than an institutional approach to propaganda,” she said. To win over audiences in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, Europe now needs to do the same.

Reframing Europe’s role in the world

The war was also considered as an opportunity to increase multinational cooperation, both within the EU and beyond. Moderator **Holy Ranaivozanany**, Head of Outreach, Advocacy and Partnerships at the Africa-Europe Foundation, said the role that international partnerships play in resolving conflict is “an essential conversation. What kind of global strategy is needed for global security?”

“ The only difference between Ukraine and the EU is the distance from the aggressor

Oleksandr Danylyuk, Head of the Centre for Defence Reforms

“This is our common war,” as Danylyuk put it. “The only difference between Ukraine and the EU is the distance from the aggressor.”

The EU and its partners face a new technological cold war between democracies and technocracies, summit participants heard. More than ever, it will be vital to keep European values at the heart of efforts to defend and rebuild.

A new, more European approach to cooperation could be central to world peace and stability. Instead of “a one-way street” on which wealthy countries try to simply

pay for security in Africa, the EU model is “more participatory – a partnership model,” explained **David Korpela**, Head of Cabinet of the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.

International lessons in diplomacy

This EU model itself, however, came under criticism, as the world looks to resolve conflict and restore peace.

“Europe looks at African security too much through a European lens,” said **Elissa Jobson**, Chief of Advocacy at the International Crisis Group. She asked the EU bloc of countries instead to think about what actions mean for African citizens.

Local citizen concerns in Africa and elsewhere are often more likely to focus on crime prevention, healthcare and education than on terrorism, speakers argued.

Alexander Stubb, Director of the School of Transnational Governance at the European University Institute and former Finnish prime minister, said: “The West, especially Europe, needs to adopt a dignified foreign policy. That means more dialogue and cooperation. Less monologue and arrogance.”

Stubb described the UN Security Council membership as “implausible”, with the 15 membership seats not reflecting the modern geopolitical landscape. A reformed, more regional structure could help a post-war world, with membership given to groups of countries in, for instance, North America, Europe or Asia, rather than to individual states.

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Remember Ukraine

Ukraine and its citizens remained steady constants at the heart of talks across four panel debates and multiple interventions.

Speakers called on the EU to deliver on a promise of future EU membership for Ukraine. Warning parallels were drawn with NATO membership talks with Ukraine, which have stopped and started several times since in 1992 but not yet led to membership.

Küllike Sillaste-Elling, Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called on the EU to fulfil Ukraine’s candidacy status, accompanied by practical measures towards full membership – something she said had never been done for Ukraine’s NATO membership.

“Restoring all rights to Ukraine includes the right to join any union or international organisation,” said **Dmytro Zolotukhin**, Founder of the Institute of Post-Information Society and former Ukrainian deputy minister of information policy. “We cannot declare that war is over until this is done.”

“ Ukrainians are fighting our war. That leaves us with a great responsibility to support them

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Moderator and former secretary general of NATO

Ultimately, said **Veronica Tsepalo** of the Belarus Women’s Foundation, “the legitimacy of Putin goes down when Ukrainians win. No one has any doubt that they will.” The Russian president will then be changed not by politicians but by the investors and industry managers in Russia after the war.

Moderator and former secretary general of NATO, **Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**, who is also a Trustee of Friends of Europe, Belgian Minister of State and Chairman of the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael, summarised a sentiment widely expressed at the summit: “Ukrainians are fighting our war. That leaves us with a great responsibility to support them.”

