

Seminar on “What EU Foreign Policy Do We Want?”

Shifting Geometries: The EU’s Foreign and Security Policy Revolution by Alexandru Coita

An unprecedented constellation of events has prompted, during recent years, a step change in EU foreign policy thinking: the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Donbass conflict, the wave of terrorist attacks stemming from Europe’s entanglement in the Middle East, the related migration wave that affected core EU states coupled with momentous political change across the Atlantic and in the UK to create an unprecedented sense of urgency. The EU response has been to boost the speed of incremental additions to its common foreign and security policy architecture, setting the stage for a revolution that could lead to significant re-alignments both within the EU and between Europe and its Transatlantic allies.

The 2016 EU Foreign Policy Strategy recognizes the critical juncture the EU is facing and outlines a three-pronged approach focusing on protecting EU citizens while responding to external crises and supporting the resilience of its partners. The Union introduced the concept of strategic autonomy and subsequently moved to enact much-needed actions to build an institutional backbone for its foreign policy and security needs.

But Europe is not there yet. The litmus question for the future of EU foreign and security policy is **what are Member States willing to give up to shore up their security**. This is a question of money and sovereignty. First, are member states willing to trade off much needed investments in the economy for greater contributions to the defense budgets. Given the pressure put on national budgets by both populists and street movements, the answer is far from a foregone conclusion.

Second, **are EU member states willing to give up sovereignty in exchange for greater coordination in the foreign policy and security arenas?** This decision translates in moving to QMV in the EU Council, as per the Commission Communication of 9 September 2018, which is based on TEU Art. 31(2) and Art. 31(3). A related question is: **are core Member States willing to give up sovereignty in relation to Central and Eastern Europeans, in the context of an increasingly disjointed Europe?**

Finally, if the answer to the two above questions is YES, there is a third critical issue that will determine Europe’s strategic position. The recent step up in EU security cooperation has produced deep misgivings in Washington, similar to the post-St. Malo period. **While the US demands that Europe step up and shoulder more responsibility within NATO, it is seemingly reluctant to see this at the expense of procurement contracts or control within NATO. Can the US have its cake and eat it too? Or will a stronger Europe drift farther from its American partner?**

Hard as it is to give a confident answer to the above questions given the critically volatile international security environment, extrapolating current trends **could lead to a landscape where**

a hard-shell Europe revolving around old EU Member States is flanked by Central and Eastern European countries gravitating in some sort of grey zone. As a result, some of the Eastern Member States could revert to strengthening their strategic ties with America or Russia, while drifting away from Core Europe. These processes are currently visible and they could be precipitated by decisive actions to build a strong foreign policy and security identity for the EU.

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