

EU MILITARY FORUM



EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE – EUMC #1/2024



Spanish Defence Staff

**Live Exercise 2023
(LIVEX 23)
in Rota/Spain**

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**The EU's evolving
role in security –
Navigating the urgent
and the important**

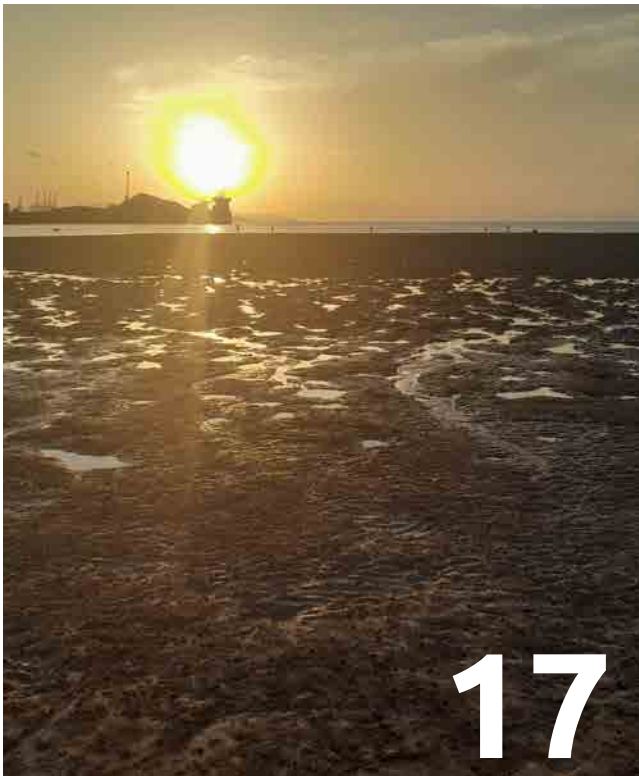
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**At the Horn of Africa's
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Colleagues and friends

I extend to you and your loved ones, and your “teams”, my personal best wishes for a new challenging year. No doubt 2024 will bring its surprises, tragedies and opportunities, given the concerning state of our strategic environment. For us, the military, our task will continue to be to deliver on tasks received, in a timely manner, and tackle the challenges presented. There again, I rely on the continuous support I receive from the European Chiefs of Defence, as the EU military community in Brussels relentlessly strives for results and relevance!

2023 was marked by a series of strategic shifts and upheavals: war in Ukraine, instability in the Sahel, and the overall global degradation of the security situation, which clearly prompted the EU to deeply rethink the modalities and conditions of its presence and actions. Elsewhere in Africa, in Sudan, an evacuation operation had to be conducted, involving EU Member States and regional partners. War broke out in Gaza, between Hamas and Israel, which is having regional effects in Lebanon, Egypt, the Red Sea, the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Arabian Sea, demonstrating the volatility of our environment. In addition, issues such as climate change, and the shrinking space for civil society, add to these wicked problems.

Against this background, the EU made noteworthy achievements in security and defence. These achievements represent milestones along the road to the EU becoming a stronger EU security provider. The European Union Military Committee’s main focus will remain translating and implementing the political priority to support Ukraine. Thus far, more than 39,000 soldiers have been trained by EUMAM, and military equipment of more than 28 billion Euro has been provided. This represents a remarkable achievement for the EU. But, more has to be done, if we want to avoid a Russian victory in this war of attrition.

The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) and its numerous related and supporting work strands remain at the heart of our efforts to implement the Strategic Compass. The conceptual framework of the Military Rapid Response Concept (MRRC), agreed in March by the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) established the EU Rapid Response Force, consisting of EU Battle Groups and pre-identified modules, reflected in a comprehensive database. The development and refinement of Operational Scenarios and Advance planning was to a large extent initiated, and should contribute to both faster decision-making and the identification of EU RDC requirements. The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) roadmap presented to Political and Security Committee (PSC) in January 2023, benefited from military advice, kick-started a series of essential developments on the related aspects of infrastructure, Communications and Information Service (CIS) and staffing. In particular, following the outcome of a conciliation procedure, the creation



General Robert Brieger
Chairman of EU Military Committee



of 55 new MPCC posts (cost-shared national experts) was agreed (from 1 Feb 2024), the post-allocation conferences are ongoing. Work is ongoing on CIS, the European peace Facility (EPF) committee reached an agreement on the reference amount for MPCC's CIS in 2024 to be funded under the EPF (EUR 4.94 M). Together with the confirmed commitment in the 2024 Administrative Budget of EEAS (up to EUR 7.8 M), all funds for 2024 are now allocated. The move to the NEO building by MPCC and the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) will take place in Semester 1/2024. The first military live exercise LIVEX 23 (held within the framework of MILEX 23) was successfully conducted by Spain on 16–22 October in Rota. Nine member states provided military units and even more seconded staff. MPCC provided the Exercise Operation Commander and the EU Operational Headquarters (OHQ) for MILEX 23. A one-off solution for the financing of the related common costs was reached under the EPF. This essential milestone paves the way for similar exercises in the coming year and boosts the discussion for a structural solution for live exercises beyond 2023, as part of the wider discussion on the common costs of military missions and operations, yet to be agreed at the political level. Let me also underline the first implementation of the EU RDC Coordination Conference (EU RDC3) intended to gather the bids and offers required to bring EU RDC to life in the long term with forces and associated capabilities and enablers. This constitutes a new type of broader "force generation conference". Finally, to be thorough, I cannot fail to mention that the EU RDC requirements are also reflected in the 2023 EU Capability Development Priorities agreed by Ministers of Defense in the European Defence Agency (EDA) steering board on 14 November – a process where the EUMC, effectively contributed.

Allow me to pause here for the state of play of our achievements. Our coming year, will be marked by our continuous efforts to further enhance those mutually reinforcing and connected of work strands. From this perspective, I cannot fail to highlight, even if briefly, the tremendous changes underpinned by the various initiatives of the Commission. Those already initiated along the line of the European Defence Fund, European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP) or Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP), but also the coming European Defence Industry Strategy (EDIS) intended to bring the European defense capacity landscape to a new level. Yes, indeed, 2024 will be an interesting year!

The Swedish and ensuing Spanish presidencies of the European Council in 2023 yielded their share of successes, facilitated by a close coordination, critical for ensuring continuity. The current Belgian presidency and the coming Hungarian one are on the same track. Allow me at this point to praise the less visible but very effective informal exchange that was introduced with the Trio Chiefs of Defense (CHODs) format.

As for our EU Military Forum, following its inception, it has now entered a consolidation phase, with I hope ever-more interesting and thought-provoking contributions. Let us use this publication to its full potential in the months and years to come!

Moreover, I conclude with our sincere hope that the subjects covered in this edition of the EU Military Forum will prove interesting for you. Our objective remains the same: to continue to foster and consolidate a stronger European defence culture, by offering some thoughts for your reflection.

Enjoy the reading!

Yours,

General Robert Brieger

THE FIRST EU CHIEFS OF DEFENCE MEETING AWAY FROM BRUSSELS

by Coralie Felblinger

From 17 to 19 October 2023, the EU Military Committee (EUMC) conducted its first EUMC meeting at the level of the European Union Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) away from Brussels, in Seville, Spain (EUMC meetings at CHODs level had always taken place in Brussels previously). Indeed, as Spain was holding the European Union's presidency during the second semester of 2023, the Chairman of the Military Committee, General Robert Brieger, took up the kind offer by the Spanish CHOD, Admiral Teodoro López Calderón, to host this important semi-annual meeting. This invitation also provided the CHODs with the opportunity to participate in the Distinguished Visitor's Day organized on the occasion of the first ever EU military Live Exercise, MILEX/LIVEX 23, which was conducted in the Cádiz area from 16 to 22 October, 2023. Both the CHODs meeting and the exercise were assessed as successes for the European Union, paving the way for further similar events to possibly take place in the years to come.

High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell had the opportunity to visit LIVEX 23, one of the first very concrete steps towards the Full Operational Capability (FOC) of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, in the morning of 17 October. The EU RDC is a key deliverable of the Strategic Compass and an instrument for the EU's ability *"to respond to imminent threats or quickly react to a crisis situation outside of the Union"*. By 2025, the EU RDC should be fully operational, providing a robust, scalable and flexible tool for military rapid response with *"a modular force of up to 5,000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, as well as the required strategic enablers"*. The LIVEX 23 was instrumental in reaching this objective. It marks a milestone in EU ambitions, with the MPCC providing the Exercise Operation Commander and the EU Operation Headquarter (OHQ) for the exercise. In the afternoon, the HR/VP shared his appreciation regarding LIVEX 23 together with the CHODs in his introductory speech to their meeting in Seville. He reassured the Chiefs of Defence of his strong support, in a time when essential decisions are to be made rapidly, if we wish to achieve the Strategic Compass ambitions – and the operationalisation of the EU RDC is indeed our common aim.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM MILITARY SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The Chairman of the Military Committee then opened the meeting with a first session on the perspectives on the short, medium and long-term military support for Ukraine, one year and a half already after the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. The Chiefs of Defence welcomed the presence, for this session, of the Ukrainian Military



**Lieutenant Colonel
Coralie Felblinger**

(French Army)

is the Military Assistant to the Chairman of the EUMC in charge of the EUMC meetings since 2022. She was previously the Military Assistant to the Commander of Eurocorps.



Photo: Spanish Defence Staff

Representative to the EU and NATO, Major General Salkutsan, which added value and insight to the discussions. They underlined the critical importance of the military support the EU and its Member States are providing to Ukraine: extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. They emphasized the value of EUMAM UA and of the “three-track approach” agreed by the Council on 20 March 2023 with a view to speeding up delivery and joint procurement of ammunition, noting the need for long-term sustainability of ongoing support efforts and taking into consideration the future EU security commitments to Ukraine, pending political decision.

They also highlighted the current risks related to the depletion of Member States’ military stocks and the need to immediately strengthen the resilience and production capacities of the European defence industry, at a time when the overall defence and security environment is further deteriorating. They strongly advocated for further work within the EU institutions to establish a more solid integrated framework to support Ukraine, effectively coordinated with relevant like-minded partners.

THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS IN SAHEL

The CHODs then discussed the future of missions in Sahel, focussing mainly on MALI, CAR and NIGER. They stressed the essential importance for the EU to rapidly set the political strategic objectives to be implemented, enabling tailored regional approaches, which will then allow the military level to propose the appropriate military options to fulfil those objectives, within the EU’s integrated approach. There is a general consensus that any future mission must be conducted with an integrated approach, of which the military can be part but where they cannot be the sole and principal actor.

All underlined the need to ensure overall “executability” of the above-mentioned objectives. A faster decision-making process, both at political and military level, is deemed necessary to allow for increased flexibility and adaptability to the Host Nations’ realities and requirements. There is also clearly a need for effective targeted strategic communication and effective countering of disinformation campaigns such as those that have been taking place during the past months.

This EUMC meeting at CHOD’s level took place as the work on the EU Security and Defence Initiative in the Gulf of Guinea was still ongoing. The general agreement is that the Mission Plan for this new mission provides a sound basis for implementing the mandate and tasks in the spirit of partnership expected by our African counterparts.

The third session of the CHODs meeting focussed on the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) and the decision requirements towards its Full Operational Capability (FOC) by 2025. The RDC is one of the main strategic military outcomes of the Strategic Compass. Progress has been made on the operational scenarios, on the provision of forces and capabilities as well as towards full operational capability of the MPCC. The first live exercise (LIVEX) conducted in the Cádiz area, LIVEX 23, constitutes another important step forward. The CHODs welcomed the opportunity to observe LIVEX 23, stressed the particular relevance of this exercise towards the FOC of the EU RDC, and as the EU’s first ever exercise of this kind. They underlined the importance of a coherent build-up of LIVEX live exercises towards the RDC FOC 2025 and beyond, and highlighted the need for coordination of multinational live exercises. They confirmed their willingness to sustain efforts and pledges of necessary personnel, forces and capabilities in order to reach full operational capability (FOC) of the EU RDC by 2025, and beyond, in full recognition of the single set of forces principle. This includes Full Operational Capability of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) as the preferred command and control structure for the EU RDC, without affecting the ability to use pre-identified national OHQs. Equally important is the will not only to reach FOC by 2025, but also to maintain the efforts on all levels beyond 2025.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY'S UPDATE ON THE 2023 CAPABILITY PLAN REVISION

Finally, in their last session, the CHODs received an update by the European Defence Agency (EDA) on the 2023 Capability Development Plan Revision Update. The CHODs commended the EDA for the tremendous work done, took note of the presentation by the European Defence Agency of the Capability Development priorities Plan, and provided their comments in view of the agreement of this document at the EDA Ministerial Steering Board that later took place in November. Those priorities will serve as baseline for defence planning EU-wide. Several CHODs underlined the need to closely coordinate the EU process with NATO processes, and to better identify shortfalls to cover the EU military Level of Ambition, reiterating their previously mentioned concerns regarding the resilience and capacity of the European defence industry.

The EU CHODs demonstrated during this high-level meeting that they remain fully committed to progress on all military-related topics of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), providing their best military advice to the political level and implementing its guidance into effective and efficient military actions. This gathering in Spain allowed for progress on all major issues, and the EU Military Committee congratulated the Spanish presidency on the organisation of this most important event.

As Spanish hospitality was much appreciated by the participants, organizing other EUMC meetings at CHODs level in other EU Member States is now regarded as a possible option, which shall however be considered on a case-by-case basis every semester. The combination of attending the meeting and a day for



Photo: Spanish Defence Staff



Photo: Spanish Defence Staff

high-level visitors at a live EU exercise, allowing CHODs to assess the capabilities of the EU RDC while optimizing their busy schedule, could indeed be repeated. It is also an effective way to give more visibility to this forum, which gathers the highest military authorities of our 27 Member States, but which is, media-wise, not prominent amongst the many EU events organized in Brussels. The EU military aspects are no common know-

ledge in our Member States. Bringing the EU Military Committee to their cities can be a useful tool to make up for this lack of visibility and to inform on the role of the military in the European institutions.

However, the next rotating presidency of the EU being Belgian, one thing is certain: the next EUMC meeting at CHODs level will again take place in Brussels EU Council premises in the first semester of 2024.



A POLESTAR FOR STRONGER EUROPEAN DEFENCE

by Tjasa Birsa

“WE DON’T RISE TO THE LEVEL OF OUR EXPECTATIONS, WE FALL TO THE LEVEL OF OUR TRAINING.”

Archilocus



**Lieutenant Colonel
Tjasa Birsa**

(Slovenian Armed Forces)

Since 2022, she has been a Special Assistant to the Chairman of the EUMC in the CEUMC Cabinet in Brussels. She has served internationally and nationally on all levels of command.

Dark clouds loomed overhead, overcasting a pitch-black moonless night, reinforcing the guttural sense of doom among the troops headed toward a distant shoreline, still beyond sight. The open landing craft, dimly lit by feeble red tactical bulbs, provided little to no shelter from the biting wind piercing the soldier’s flimsy clothes, packed tightly onboard the craft, leaving no room for a comfort stretch. Choppy waves opposed the craft’s progress towards shore as the troops were strewn around like rag dolls. The craft’s engines straining at full puff, drowning any sound. *‘Suerte!’*, screamed the Spanish detachment commander, struggling to be barely audible. *‘Bonnes chances!’* was the reply from his French counterpart.

This was no ordinary activity! The military crisis management exercise (MILEX 23) Live Exercise (LIVEX 23), was the first of many planned EU combined joint exercises. The troops hailed from nine European countries, sailing under one flag. The European Union’s (EU) vision of projecting military power in times of crisis is an integral part of the Strategic Compass. And MILEX 23 stands as its polestar!

The Strategic Compass, endorsed by Member States (MS) in March 2022, gives the EU an ambitious action plan for strengthening the EU’s security and defence policy by 2030. The objective of the Strategic Compass is to make the EU a stronger and more capable security provider. In this regard, the document makes concrete and actionable proposals, with a very precise timetable for implementation, to improve the EU’s ability to act decisively in crises and defend its security and citizens.

The Strategic Compass covers all the aspects of the security and defence policy and is structured around four pillars: act, invest, partner and secure. To act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible – and alone when necessary – the EU committed, among others, to establishing a strong EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC). By 2025, an EU RDC will be fully operational, allowing the short-notice deployment of a modular force of up to 5.000 troops in a non-permissive environment.

To this end, MS agreed that as of 2023, regular live exercises would be conducted on land and at sea, with the progressive involvement of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). Onwards, pursuing the polestar!

As one of the initial illustrative steps towards stronger EU Defence, this first field force deployment exercise (LIVEX) was conducted in Spain as the second part



Photo: Estado Mayor de la Defensa

of MILEX 23's wider scope. The focus of MILEX 23 command post exercise was to train and increase the designated EU military strategic-level Headquarters (EU OHQ) ability to plan, command and control a CSDP military operation. Consequently, a following LIVEX aimed to exercise the deployment of assets within a simulated theatre of operations.

The force, composed of 31 units and 2,900 personnel from nine MS (Austria, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain), deployed from 16 to 22 October 2023 to a simulated theatre of operations in Cadiz, Spain, and executed the Operation Plan (OPLAN) developed during the planning phase. The OPLAN was executed at the tactical level by an EU Battle Group (BG)-sized force during the LIVEX under the EU OHQ and subordinated military operational level Headquarters (FHQ) command on the Spanish multi-purpose amphibious assault ship 'Juan Carlos Primero'.

The Exercise Operation Commander and OHQ were provided by the MPCC in

Brussels and reinforced by Augmentees or capabilities from EU MS. Whereas all EU MS supported this joint endeavour politically, 19 MS were represented at the various levels of command, in headquarters, facilities, units and assets in the fictional country of SEGALIA, hosted by Spain.

Drawing from the EU INTEGRATED RESOLVE 22 exercise, the scenario was centred on the fictitious island SEGLIA. It

involved planning for the Initial Phase of a Stabilization Operation, where the EU Force (EUFOR) executed an operation in the southern part of SEGLIA, setting the stage for the subsequent deployment of a larger UN force. In practice, this means deploying troops to re-establish order in a destabilised environment. An amphibious assault marked the transition from sea to land to secure an important harbour,



Photo: Estado Mayor de la Defensa



Photo: Estado Mayor de la Defensa

after which air assets will deploy and support follow-on forces.

In the tactical arena, despite challenging weather conditions, the EU Battlegroup (EU BG) executed an impressive array of activities throughout the seven-day execution phase, including but not limited to the insertion of airborne special operations teams, tactical airlifts, fighter jet sorties, maritime air patrols, Explosive Ordnance Disposal operations and medical and casualty evacuations. LIVEX represents the EU's answer to the inherent requirement for common training and exercises of its personnel to test interoperability and validate Tactics, Techniques and Procedures. Additionally, it is a significant step towards the MPCC's full operational capability, which is anticipated to become the EU's preferred military strategic-level command and control element by 2025.

Hence, this was only the first of many common exercises; the next LIVEX is planned for the second half 2024. Germany will host this upcoming exercise to implement LIVEX 23's lessons.

Thus far, much has been achieved. LIVEX 23 was the first tangible milestone in the EU's way towards a credible, deployable military force. Scanning the horizon, comprehensive implementation of the EU RDC requires the MPCC's progressive engagement in EU exercises. This year's first essential step will be followed by a small-scale RDC LIVEX in 2024, scheduled between 24 November and 20 December 2024.

The LIVEX's overall aim has been achieved. The exercise has undeniably enhanced the interoperability and readiness of participating forces, fostering a strong commitment from MS to train, exercise, and operate cohesively.

However, many challenges still lie ahead, namely the EU common funding of the LIVEX and a stronger exercise control structure. Another challenge for the efficiency of EU exercises and the operationalisation of the RDC will be implementing a communication system for the MPCC to fulfil its role as a strategic HQ.

Considering the three Cs of deterrence, it is undeniable that *Credibility*

and *Capability* are assigned a front seat, whilst (Strategic) *Communication* seems less important. The notion of communication being somehow a featherweight is fallacious. Communicating implies that a particular message is getting through to a desired audience. Actions send a message. European preparedness sends a message. The LIVEX 23 clearly communicated the EU's commitment to act decisively in crises and defend the European security order.

The concept of combined joint European live exercises once seemed a mirage. However, it became an achievable milestone that is now in our rear-view mirror and fading rapidly. For this, we must allow ourselves a pat on the back without resting on our laurels. Progressive engagement and a willingness to contribute are the key ingredients in improving the readiness and interoperability of the EU's RDC and signalling member states' commitment to proactive crisis management. The polestar is visible.

Let's strive for it!



OPERATION ATALANTA – EVOLUTION AND SUCCESS

by José M. Núñez Torrente

On November 23rd 2023, I handed over the Command of Operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, little more than two and a half years since I received the European flag from my predecessor, and I am filled with a mix of emotions. It has been a privilege to lead this remarkable Operation. I have striven to honour the legacy of those who contributed in the past to make ATALANTA the success it is today.

This journey has been intense and challenging, from the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the blow of the non-renewal of UNSCR 2608 (2021), which kept ATALANTA from operating inside Somali territorial waters. However, those constraints have only demonstrated the immense capacity of this Operation to adapt to changing scenarios and to cope with increasing challenges.

I have had the honour to command nine different rotations, dozens of ships and air assets, with hundreds of extraordinary men and women who have demonstrated the highest level of commitment and professionalism in the execution of our mandate.

Over the years, EUNAVFOR ATALANTA has made significant progress in countering piracy and contributed to freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Indian Ocean, working tirelessly to become one of the main maritime security references in this complex area of operations. As milestones of the Operation, no pirate attacks have been registered since April 2019 as well as no successful attacks on World Food Programme vessels under EUNAVFOR protection, having assisted in the delivery

of more than 3 million tonnes of humanitarian aid in Somalia, thereby making a difference in the lives of millions.

At the institutional level, we have also become one of the references for EU defence diplomacy, which places us in a privileged position for the implementation of new instruments such as the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific or the extension of the Coordinated Maritime Presences to the Indian Ocean. In this regard, my first official visit to Egypt, the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Japanese Maritime Self-Protection Force (JMSDF) in Tokyo, and the agreement reached between the European Union and the Seychelles for the prosecution of suspects arrested in actions against drug trafficking and arms smuggling, should be highlighted.

At the operational level, cooperation with regional actors and with our partners and allies in the area of operations



**Vice Admiral
José Núñez Torrente**

(Spanish Navy)

On April 21st 2021, he was appointed as EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Commander. Before that, he served as Chief of Staff for the Maritime Component Commander during National Operations against the COVID-19 pandemic: 'BALMIS' and 'Mission BALUARTE'.



Photo: EU NAVFOR/Op ATALANTA



Photos: EU NAVFOR/Op ATALANTA

allowed us to obtain and share a very comprehensive “maritime situational awareness” and to ensure a quick and proportionate response to any identified threat.

By leading Forums such as SHADE (Share Awareness and Deconfliction Conference), co-chaired with the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), or the Shipping Industry Strategic Meeting; and by participating in others such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCOC), we were able to deconflict security and cooperation activities, to disseminate the maritime situation in the area and to be aware of the needs of both, partners and the shipping industry, in order to be more effective in carrying out our tasks.

On the other hand, the tasks included in the Operation’s mandate are being carried out with very significant success. In this regard, I would like to mention

the tasks against drug trafficking and illegal, unregulated and unregistered fishing, undoubtedly two of the illegal activities of more concern to the Somali society and the other coastal countries included in the area of operations, such as the Seychelles and Kenya.

With regard to the fight against drug trafficking, and beyond the quantity of drugs seized, which currently stands at around 16 tonnes, the operations carried out between April 2022 and May 2023 have marked a turning point in ATALANTA and, above all, we have paved the way for further actions against the financing of criminal networks and international terrorism.

With regard to illegal fishing, strengthened relations with INTERPOL’s central bureau in Mogadishu, sealed with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, have facilitated a much more immediate exchange of information with local author-

ities, which in turn allows us to react more swiftly to combat this scourge.

Currently, this successful EU CSDP operation is fully consolidated, with 16 EU members and four non-EU member states like Serbia, Montenegro, Colombia and South Korea, as well as other nations interested in approaching ATALANTA as diverse as Peru, Chile, Japan, India and Pakistan.

The road ahead has no static reference points. While traditional piracy has been suppressed, we must not decrease our vigilance, as criminal networks retain the capacity and intent to exploit any opportunity or vulnerability; this was, in fact, my main concern when I left the Operation. As we strive to build an incipient Regional Maritime Security Architecture, we must deepen our efforts to educate and train regional maritime forces, enhancing their capabilities to meet security challenges and protect their waters.

On the other hand, new threats such as human trafficking and illicit activities at sea will require our attention and capability to adapt. ATALANTA is called to play a relevant role in the EU's new strategic review, the Strategic Compass, and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

The same date I handed over the Command of the Operation, we celebrated its XV Anniversary, a unique celebration for three reasons. First, because it was about the first naval operation launched by the EU, making it the senior of the military maritime security initiatives aimed at projecting security, in the EU integrated approach to crisis management. Second, because it shows how, after 15 years of successful activity, the Operation proves to be not only vital, but probably on its way to more maturity, given its constant adaptability towards more ambitious objectives. Finally, because, in my opinion, we celebrated the example of what the EU can achieve, with an international, synergic and committed effort by all its member states, in cooperation with its partners.

Let me conclude with my deepest expression of gratitude for all the support by contributing countries, international partners, countries as well as organisations, and most importantly to all personnel, military and civilian, who have dedicated their service to the success of EUNAVFOR ATALANTA.



Photos: EU NAVFOR/Op. ATALANTA

At a time when the security of our welfare is connected more and more with the maritime domain, the world has recognised how the EU has strengthened its policies and enhanced its efforts to ensure that the sea lines of communications are protected. Moreover, ATALANTA is a key tool in the EU integrated approach to a critical region like the Indian Ocean, and has proven to be a champion of the highest values of the EU.

I am confident about the future of this operation, we have increased our efforts to build a maritime regional secu-

rity structure, but the efforts need to be sustained over time. I can only encourage the European institutions and member states to continue with determination to build on the successes we have already achieved, and strive for more.

I am sure that the spirit of ATALANTA, along the highest values that lay at the core of the EU, will continue to beat strong. Thank you very much; it has been a privilege and an honour to serve alongside you.

"Fair winds and following seas". ☒



THE EU'S EVOLVING ROLE IN SECURITY

by Steven Everts

NAVIGATING THE URGENT AND THE IMPORTANT



Dr Steven Everts

is the new Head of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) since September 2023. Prior to that, he was Senior Advisor to the HR/VP for Strategy and Communication at the European External Action Service.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the European Union (EU) often finds itself caught between the urgent and the important. It is constantly presented with crises erupting at its borders, from the dramatic escalation in the Hamas-Israel conflict, to Russia's still-on-going war against Ukraine, to violent tensions flaring up in places like Serbia-Kosovo or Nagorno-Karabakh, to the ever-worsening security conditions across the Sahel. All these crises demand the EU's immediate attention. In this world of crises where time horizons for political leaders are shrinking, the EU's capacity to shape events is under pressure like never before.

At the same time, the EU must also address long-term trends and changes in its strategic environment, including changes in the very nature of the concept of security. In short, the EU must find ways to address both the urgent and the important.

We may live in a world of radical uncertainty. But one thing is clear: the EU can only do so by being clear-eyed about the challenges it faces and by investing in its collective capacity to act strategically. No EU member state, acting alone, will be able to handle these twin challenges of the urgent and the important. They simply lack the necessary scale and heft.

ADDRESSING THE CRISES AND PREPARING FOR A NEW STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

Every month when EU foreign ministers meet in the Foreign Affairs Council, the agenda for their meeting reads like a roll call of the world's ills. EU High Representative Josep Borell has rightly called these discussions 'a valley of tears', where ministers express their concerns, maybe apply sanctions and pass political messages about what the EU would like the parties to do – before moving on quickly to the next crisis, also demanding urgent EU attention.

In political life, as elsewhere, dealing with the urgency tends to trump dealing with the important. Such is the nature of the democratic political system and the pressures of social media. However, it is essential for the EU to balance these short term demands on its engagement with a deeper look at how underlying trends are shaping the global security landscape and what that means for the EU.



Photo: EUIS

THE NEW WORLD THAT IS EMERGING

When we take a step back and analyse these broader trends, what do we see? Here are the most significant global trends that the EU must factor into its strategic calculations:

- **US-China strategic competition:** The strategic competition between the United States and China has been hardening, extending now across all domains: economy, technology, military and ideology. This rivalry has created a new power-political world where the pressures on others, including the EU, 'to pick a side' are growing.
- **Multilateralism in crisis:** The traditional structures of multilateral cooperation, including the UN sys-

tem, are under unprecedented strain. Countries are increasingly resorting to unilateral actions, and there is a growing normalisation of the use of force and the use of coercion as tools of statecraft. This is a real challenge for the EU which has, for decades, invested in multilateral approaches to managing interational affairs.

- **The 'weaponisation of everything':** Conflict has evolved into a new paradigm where "wars by other means" are becoming more prominent. Cyber threats and the foreign information manipulations and interference (FIMI) are on the rise, affecting not only traditional notions of security but also the stability of entire societies and economies. As a collection of open societies who have long promoted the notion that inter-dependence promotes mutual interests and even peace, this is a painful paradigm shift.

- **Rise of minilateralism and identity politics:** Emerging powers, such as the BRICS, and so-called 'swing states' are increasingly asserting themselves on the global stage. This is coupled with a rise of 'identity politics' not just in national politics but at the international stage too: notions as respect, loyalty, honour and historical grievances are gaining in prominence.

All these security and political trends are happening on top of two macro, world-changing trends:

- **Ever-accelerating technological change:** The world is on the cusp of a technological revolution, driven by advancements in areas like artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing and nano-technology. These revolutions will have profound and transformative effects on societies and economies. We may not know the

exact nature of these implications but we can be sure that there will be winners and losers, which in turn will have geo-political consequences.

- **Runaway climate change:** The urgency of climate change cannot be overstated. Scientists continue to issue dire warnings that the world is on a trajectory toward dramatic environmental tipping points. Again, these will have very serious security consequences. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, aggravating underlying tensions and adding new sources of conflict, including in our neighbourhood or regions of great strategic importance to the EU.

Given these macro trends but also knowing that it faces serious resource constraints, what should the EU focus on? Here are seven key priorities. In other words, the 'big things' affecting all EU citizens that the EU must get right:

- **Crisis management in the Middle East:** The cycle of violence unleashed by Hamas' brutal attack on 7 October and which has led Israel to react with an iron fist in Gaza, is producing untold suffering with thousands dead and no end in sight. Despite all the difficulties, the EU must engage in trying to contain the ongoing crisis and reduce the risk of a broader regional war. It should emphasise the need for humanitarian aid reaching those in need – and do its part to achieve this. Finally, it should demonstrate a solid commitment to upholding international principles and law wherever they are threatened. For many in the world, there is a sense of 'double standards' – the EU's international credibility requires it to address this issue head on.
- **Making sure Ukraine prevails:** Twenty-two months into Putin's war of choice, the EU should continue its full

support for Ukraine, both in terms of financial assistance and military support (both by providing the necessary equipment and by training Ukrainian armed forces). This should include concrete ways to provide longer-term security support to the country. Additionally, the EU should proceed with its historic and strategic commitment to bring Ukraine into the Union. Ultimately doing so is the best security guarantee for Ukraine.

- **Recalibrating EU-China relations:** As the relative weight of China in the global order increases, the EU needs to adapt its approach to China. While economic and other ties remain essential, the EU should not overlook the rise in ideology and the end of collective leadership. The EU should stick with the trypic of treating China at the same time as a partner, competitor and a systemic rival. But clearly, the relative weight among these three factors is shifting. The only way to shape China's future choices is for the EU to be clear eyed and united.
- **Stepping up its engagement in and with the Indo-Pacific:** A more robust approach to China should be matched by a more strategic approach to the Indo Pacific. The EU must recognise that in a globalised world, no region is "far away." Hence, it must deepen its engagement in and with the Indo-Pacific, including by being more engaged on broad security matters (maritime, cyber, FIMI etc.). There is a clear demand for this engagement from our Indo-Pacific partners and we have a real stake in making sure the regional security architecture stays open and rules-based.
- **Getting serious about developing an integrated approach to security:** the concept of security is taking on new, multiple dimensions and the

frequent use of adjectives illustrates. The latest example is the rise in the use of the term 'economic security'. Under the label of 'de-risking, not de-coupling', the EU is screening for excessive dependencies in critical supply chains, access to critical raw materials, and implementing robust investment screening and export controls for dual use goods.

- **Investing more and collectively in European defence:** The EU should invest more in its defence capabilities – and above all do so together. Deepening European defence cooperation is crucial to ensure the EU has the military capabilities it needs in the future. Member states need to make maximum use of the EU's tools and programmes to spur more joint research and procurement. For years, the case has been made for Europeans to take on a greater responsibility for their own security – this is a task that can no longer wait, also in view of the uncertainties of the next US elections.
- **The dual imperative of EU enlargement and safeguarding the EU's capacity act:** Enlargement is back on the EU agenda and for good, geo-strategic reasons. The accession of Ukraine, Moldova, maybe Georgia as well as the countries of the western Balkans should be seen as a matter of years not decades – and as an investment in our own security. Nevertheless, the EU needs to be able to function, and what does not work well at 27 member states will certainly not work at 32 or 35. As a condition for enlargement the EU must improve its capacity to make timely and effective decisions. Implementing qualified majority voting can ensure the EU is able to take key decisions and avoid the trap of weakness and paralysis that unanimity often brings. 

AT THE HORN OF AFRICA'S CROSSROADS: SNAPSHOT ON DJIBOUTI, EU'S KEY PARTNER IN THE REGION

by Sylvie Tabesse

Throughout past two decades, the small country of Djibouti – squeezed in between much larger neighbours at the very heart of the Horn of Africa – has become a unique platform for international collaboration in countering maritime insecurity. It is now not only the logistics hub for the EU's first joint naval mission (EUNAVFOR Atlanta), but also a host for Japanese, Chinese, French and Italian military bases, including the United States' only permanent military installation in Africa. In addition to this, it regularly hosts vessels from other international navies including Germany, India, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Djibouti's geostrategic location and multinational military presence means that the country finds itself often at the forefront of regional power struggles. The escalation of Somali-based piracy was certainly one of those. It resulted in Djibouti serving as an important hub for international counter-piracy operations in the western Indian Ocean region. The outbreak of violence in Sudan of April 2023 has confirmed yet another important use of such a hub with Djibouti providing one of the most optimal evacuation schemes for expatriates fleeing from Sudan. The country's economic expansion, marked with an impressive average yearly GDP growth of 5% over last decade, is to some extent a side product of this significant increase of international military presence.

There is no doubt that both regional pressures, as well as purely economic factors, have had a crucial impact on Djibouti's decision to allow for hosting such impressive numbers of foreign troops. The arrangements in this regard have thus been motivated also by a clear opportunity to generate steady revenues from leasing maritime and aerial real estate to partner countries. The US, France, Japan, China and Italy currently pay a combined total of roughly 160 M EUR per annum for basing privileges. In spite of the obvious financial benefits, hosting an array of external actors with often diverging political agendas requires Djibouti to navigate carefully in between various sensibilities of its guests. This was particularly manifested with the opening of China's first overseas military



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Photo: Delegation of the EU to Djibouti



base in 2017. However, Djibouti has so far been able not only to leverage in a skilful manner its material capacity, but also to demonstrate diplomatic strength of unusual magnitude for such a small-size state.

The opportunity for local maritime capacity development offered by the better-equipped and more experienced forces present in and around the capital might have been another push factor behind the unprecedented aperture towards hosting global powers in its territory. As a matter of example, the EUCAP Nestor's geographical remit included Djibouti, even if the programme had limited long-term impact on building capacity to support its maritime security sector. Nevertheless, it assisted the local authorities in updating its domestic maritime legislation addressing piracy and maritime crimes. Both EUCAP Nestor, as well as EU-funded MARSIC project¹ were also headquartered in Djibouti City. Port visits by EU assets to conduct local maritime capacity building training in support

¹ A project on enhancing maritime security and safety through information sharing and capacity Building.

of the Djibouti Coast Guard and Navy were also organised. It is thanks to these activities that Djibouti has been able to provide the World Food Programme with a strategic asset and allowed the naval escorts from the Port of Djibouti of UN emergency shipment convoys.

Regardless of the prevailing motives for close engagement with global powers, however, the country has proven to be remarkably successful in capitalisation on geopolitical interests and in its subsequent transformation into foreign direct investments. Simultaneously, Djibouti has remained very active at a regional level, inter alia by hosting the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as well as the core regional capacity-building organisation – the Djibouti Regional Training Centre (DRTC) – established in 2009 under the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC). Djibouti remains a permanent member and active contributor to the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. Furthermore, it contributes to the African Transition Mission in Somalia and remains actively engaged in the Somali peace process. On top of this,

it currently holds the IGAD presidency for the period of 2023-2024.

Owing to the rapid development of its maritime sector and recognition of the financial benefits from leasing marine infrastructure, Djibouti has published a development plan titled "Vision 2035" and articulated its aspiration to become a multi-modal maritime hub touted as the "Singapore of Africa". Even if commonly perceived as probably too optimistic, this strategic plan heralds a rather high level of ambition with new ports, railways, roads, and aqueducts to be built within its framework. It is designed to provide affordable maritime access not only to Djibouti's immediate neighbours, but also to landlocked Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda – and thus boost Djibouti's integration with the other economies of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Given its location at a crossroads of key global maritime routes, and in a region impacted by a plethora of conflicts and significant socio-economic issues, Djibouti faces a number of maritime security threats. These go beyond the economic impact of Somali-based piracy (at its height estimated at costing Djiboutian economy ca. 50 M EUR yearly), which has been largely eradicated in recent years. Illicit trafficking of humans and goods along the country's coastline, together with regional geopolitical tensions, now emerge as main challenges in the security domain.

As a primary maritime nexus between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the country provides shelter to a significant population of migrants and refugees. Given its location, it is a core transit point for regional smuggling routes and irregular migration via the so-called eastern route – from the Horn and East Africa via Puntland and Yemen to the Gulf countries, as well as the southern route – from the Horn and East Africa towards South Africa. The rise of illegal human trafficking reflects the interlinked nature of

maritime security threats in the region. Former Somali pirates, for example, have also engaged in other maritime criminal activities including arms, narcotic and charcoal smuggling.

According to the official International Organization for Migration (IOM) data, only in first eight months of 2023 nearly 97.000 migrants' entries have been registered. The same agency estimates that Djibouti currently hosts around 180.000 migrants, which come on top of a staggering number of over 30.000 persons with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refugee status. In a country of barely one million inhabitants, such numbers are indeed daunting and make preoccupations over resistance to such an economic burden fully justified.

The European Union (EU) supports the countries of the region in dealing with irregular migration through various initiatives and programmes at the regional, national and local level. In Djibouti, it works closely with both IOM and UNHCR in assisting their efforts to monitor the flows, alert on worrying trends and provide with basic services to the most vulnerable migrants' groups. In addition to this, the EU aims at supporting host communities in building their resilience and in boosting the local economy.

As a firm point on maritime merchant routes, Djibouti quite naturally remains a centre of predominantly service-oriented economic activities. These are mainly designed to support the civilian and military infrastructure facilities that include transportation, communication, construction and banking, among others. Such endeavours, mostly related to transit trade, contribute nearly 80% to the country's GDP. The rural population, however, still depends on agriculture and pastoralism, both of which represent a mere 4% to the country's GDP.

Climate-related factors, such as low rainfall and non-availability of water for irrigation, have been keeping large parts



Photo: Delegation of the EU to Djibouti

of the population below the poverty line. The drought experienced by Djibouti in the years of 2011–2012 has further lowered the country's economic status. The financial losses caused by this natural disaster have created serious difficulties in further recovery. The food and water security were drastically affected and necessity for fresh water supply became evident. This is where the partnership with the EU became crucial.

Access to water and sanitation have ever since been main sectors of concentration for the EU-funded development assistance in Djibouti. The desalination plant, built with the 73 M EUR contribution, produces quality water meeting World Health Organization (WHO) standards, in sufficient quantity and at an affordable price for the city of Djibouti, particularly in disadvantaged areas. It also considerably improves the management of low-cost water and energy supply services, based on the principles of the green economy. We will now be entering in the second phase of the project worth 50 M EUR, where the facility will be significantly expanded and equipped with dedicated solar panels

allowing for a more sustainable energy management.

High costs of energy are hindering Djibouti's economic growth. This is why the EU supports projects aiming at strengthening the electrical interconnection between Djibouti and Ethiopia. Upon completion of this 12 M EUR endeavour, Djibouti is expected to improve the living conditions of low-income households. This project is part of the EU's desire to enable the access to energy to all segments of the population.

These are just a couple of examples of an integrated and joined-up EU approach in the Horn of Africa and towards Djibouti, in particular where virtually all mechanisms and instruments that are at EU's disposal are currently in use. The partnership with our key ally in the region is indeed multidimensional and will further be strengthened after the expected approval of the Mid-Term Review of the Djibouti National Indicative Programme for 2021-2027. I am particularly happy to be part of all these processes as I am fully convinced that resilient and more stable Djibouti means stronger and safer European Union. 

KEEPING THE WORLD TOGETHER? REALPOLITIK, MULTIPOLARITY, SOLIDARITY

by Sven Biscop



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lectures at Ghent University and directs the Europe in the World Programme at the Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels. His latest book is *Grand Strategy in 10 Words – A Guide to Great Power Politics in the 21st Century* (Bristol University Press, 2021).

Politicians, journalists, and yes, academics like to identify turning points. But if every event is a turning point for world politics, all that is left to do is to sit down on the sofa, out of sheer dizziness. Not a good starting point to make sound strategy. In reality, the structure of world politics does not change that often, and not that fast. It has, in fact, been the same for three decades now, since the end of the Cold War, and recent events have not changed it. We are living in a multipolar world. The aim of this Policy Brief is to ask: can we keep that world together?

THE STRUCTURE: MULTIPOLARITY

Multipolarity means that there are several poles, or, to use the classic term, great powers, that compete, cooperate and rival with each other in ever-changing constellations. The other states, the “non-great powers”, typically engage in hedging: rather than aligning exclusively with one great power, most prefer to keep their options open and maintain working relations with all of them, because one cannot know which power will come out on top on which issue.

Many in the West behave as if the statement that the world is multipolar implies condoning an evil Chinese plan to make it so – with some help from Russia. Multipolarity is then understood to be anti-Western. But multipolarity cannot be

purposely created or averted. It is just the normal state of world politics, resulting from the interaction between states that seek to increase their power so that they can pursue their interests more effectively.

Throughout history, every great power had several peer competitors, even the Roman Empire: not the Belgian tribes, but the Carthaginians and the Parthians. The Chinese Empire was twice conquered by foreign peoples who created a non-Han dynasty. The British Empire faced France and Russia. The bipolar Cold War was the exception that should not blind us to the rule. And so today the United States has to realise that its unipolar moment, the period in the 1990s when it appeared to be the sole great power, was just that: an appearance rather than reality.

Within the multipolar structure, the balance of power between the poles is constantly shifting. Clearly, China has been gaining power since the turn of the century, while Russia’s military aggressiveness masks that its power has been declining – though not to such an extent that it is likely to disappear as a pole. The EU, for its part, is never quite sure itself whether it is or aims to be a pole. The basic structure, in any case, so far remains multipolar: that is a factual statement without any moral connotation. The question is: how to deal with multipolarity and the tensions between the powers that are inherent to it? Can one bring some order to such a world?



Photo: Author

ORDER WITHIN THE STRUCTURE: RULES

Many in the West understand a world order as an arrangement in which they give the orders. Recent shifts in the balance of power away from the West are decried as undermining the world order. But it is not a law of nature that the West runs the world by itself, nor that it should hold all of the top jobs in the major international organisations (e.g. the United Nations, the World Bank, etc.). This is not a call for the West to abdicate, of course, or for other powers to dominate the world order instead. But an orderly world is possible in which power is shared more equally between more than just the Western powers.

Indeed, that probably is the only way of maintaining a degree of stability. For if other powerful states are denied their fair share in the running of the world,

they will be tempted to undermine the order from without. That can only lead to the world being cut up in rival blocs, which decouple from each other, ending global free trade, and making it impossible to tackle global challenges such as the climate crisis. Each bloc will surely attempt to entice, or even to coerce, other states into joining it, producing an ever greater risk of war. All powers have an interest, therefore, in maintaining a certain equilibrium in the running of the world.

Nevertheless, the risk of a return to bipolarity is real, especially if Sino-American rivalry were to escalate. If China had decided to support Russia's war to the same extent that the European Union (EU) and the US support Ukraine, we would now be in a new global Cold War – but it has not. For sure, the EU has absolutely no interest in provoking such a new bipolarity, for it stands to lose the most from it.

Keeping the world together, therefore, is the main strategic challenge of the 21st century. That requires establishing a core set of rules that all major states subscribe to:

- Peace: do not make war.
- Open doors: do not create exclusive spheres of influence but let all states freely interact with all other states.
- Reciprocity: observe the rules oneself that one wants others to follow.

Historically, even great powers do adhere to rules if that makes it easier for them to pursue their interests than the more confrontational absence of order. Some states thrive on instability and conflict: witness Russian strategy over the last decade. But most prefer stability and a degree of multilateral cooperation in order to build prosperity. Building a rules-based order requires compromise, however.

SETTING THE RULES: COMPROMISE

The rules can no longer just be agreed between Washington and Brussels: other capitals must have a say, and all will have to make concessions. On certain issues, the West will have to lower the bar. That only makes sense, of course, if afterwards all involved do observe the commonly agreed rules, and empower the multilateral organisations that they jointly manage to enforce the rules. Will Russia one day adopt a more constructive stance again or will it continue to act as a spoiler? And will China, which professes to want to join in rule-making, be sincere about it, contribute to consensus, and abide by the rules? The US, for its part, is not actually a party itself to all the treaties that it – rightly – accuses China of violating. These rules order relations between states. Such a *rules-based* world order can be established by consensus. Few states are willing, however, to accept rules on how to run their own societies. A *liberal* world order, in which all states converge towards the same democratic way of life, cannot be enforced. Consequently, full respect for universal human rights within states cannot be a precondition for involvement in setting the rules for relations between states. States and societies change organically; only in exceptional circumstances can change be engineered from the outside.

This is *Realpolitik*. That does not mean that the democratic powers do not have to care about values. But they have to draw the red line in the right place. A value-based foreign policy means, first of not all, not doing anything oneself that violates one's own values. A democracy can cooperate with an autocracy when its interests require it, as long as in doing so it does not become complicit in the violations that the latter commits. To make it concrete: in general, trade with an autocracy is permitted; importing products made in forced labour camps is not. That said, most autocracies have signed the main human rights treaties, so one can and must criticise them when they violate them.

ACTING: THE EUROPEAN UNION

Which role should the EU play in such a world? Is it a great power, at the level of the US and China? Or does it only play a supporting role, as the most faithful ally of another power, the US? This existential question is the core of every grand strategy. The tragedy is that member states remain fundamentally divided about this, and so the Union cannot settle on a consistent strategy. In spite of this obstacle, the EU has been charting its own distinct path in world politics, developing policies that contribute to keeping the world together.


First, under the heading of "Open Strategic Autonomy", or de-risking, the EU is creating the protective – but not protectionist – measures that precisely allow the European economy to remain open. These include inward and outward investment screening; managing dependencies and diversifying supplies, including by re-shoring and "friend-shoring" production in specific areas; and pushing for real reciprocity in terms of market access, with China in particular. The EU should accelerate, however, and decide what exactly will be allowed under de-risking and what not, or the US will decide for it, as it has already done in the area of advanced semiconductors. By working with individual member states, the US has created a *fait accompli* and set the rule for export controls; the policy is not necessarily wrong, but this definitely ought to have been an EU decision, for the single market as a whole rather than a decision by individual member state capitals.

Second, the recently launched Global Gateway must become the EU's "Open Door Policy" for the 21st century. This investment programme in connectivity – in terms of energy, transport and Information Technologies – and in health, education and research, should be grand enough to allow the EU to entice other states, not to push other powers out, but to diversify and build deep relations with

all powers simultaneously. The aim is to avoid a scramble for exclusive spheres of influence. That will require more resources than have now been committed, however.

Third, the EU must assume leadership in promoting "Effective Multilateralism". Multilateralism comes naturally to the EU, but it must play a much more proactive role, both in the existing international organisations and in new, *ad hoc* coalitions, convening democracies and non-democracies that share an interest in concrete solutions for specific problems.

Fourth, the EU's defence policies have failed. After twenty-five years, the Common Security and Defence Policy has not resulted in any significant degree of defence integration. Member states have agreed to create the instruments, but remain unwilling to use them. Meanwhile, the US has identified Asia as the main theatre, while war rages around Europe. Even within NATO, it has become imperative to create a comprehensive European force package, able to deter and defend against all conventional threats to Europe even without a conventional US presence – but still under the US nuclear umbrella.

Finally, the EU must never forget to show solidarity. World politics is driven by states pursuing their interests. The ultimate aim of grand strategy always is to preserve one's way of life. But the EU is prosperous enough to offer aid to those who fall victim to the power politics of others, even when its own interests are not directly at stake. Indeed, the legitimacy that this can bring will be in the EU interest. *Realpolitik and solidarity* can go hand in hand. 

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NEWS

EUMC AWAY DAYS, 25TH – 27TH SEPTEMBER

Under the patronage of the Spanish Presidency of the Council, the EU Military Committee met in Madrid for a 2-day discussion on the current situation in the Sahel region (possible adaptation of future CSDP engagements), and how to enhance timely and effective military contribution to the overall EU decision-making process and support to the people on the ground. Furthermore, participants discussed the concept of “Space” in a broader context. *“Once more, the Away Days represented a good opportunity to deepen debates on current issues, while engaging directly with relevant military and political authorities from the Member State hosting the event”,* said General Brieger upon departure.



Photo: Spanish Defence Staff

OFFICIAL VISIT TO BELGIUM, 3RD OCTOBER

In early October, the Chairman of the EU Military Committee paid a visit to Belgian authorities. He was officially welcomed by Admiral Michel Hofman, Chief of Defence, and was thoroughly briefed on the status of Belgian Defence.

Additionally, the pillars of the upcoming Belgian presidency of the Council in the first semester of 2024 were discussed. The successful day ended with a visit to the 15th Wing Air Transport Command to witness Belgian military capabilities first hand. *“Today I don’t only want to say thank you for hosting the official visit and to ensure me that Belgian Armed Forces are mission ready. Today I also want to say thank you to Belgium for being a good host nation and for the support throughout the term of my chairmanship”,* General Brieger said.



Photo: Belgian Defence Staff

MAJGEN JOHANN FRANK, EUMC CABINET DIRECTOR ATTENDS EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY CONFERENCE, 10TH OCTOBER

The 3rd European Defence and Security Conference touched upon the most pressing and crucial policy topics and strategic challenges linked to strengthening the European defence industrial policy. *“Delivering the closing remarks on behalf of the chairman, General Brieger, in front of this audience is a privilege”*, Major General Frank said in the beginning. Afterwards the critical elements brought up by key personalities from the European defence and security landscape (EU Officials, Ministers from Member States, Military representatives, CEOs, industry representatives and researchers)

were summarized to draw a conclusion. The lessons identified from the war in Ukraine surely played a big role in the considerations. *“We can only succeed if we seize the opportunity to conclude long-term, sustainably secured agreements between politics and business based on a clear future strategic defence concept”*, was the key message to be delivered by the Chairman.



Photo: JJ de Neyer/tripbyque.be

OFFICIAL VISIT TO GREECE, 8TH – 10TH NOVEMBER

The official visit to Greece was opened with military honours and a wreath laying ceremony to properly commemorate the fallen. Following these events, General Konstantinos Floros, Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, welcomed the Chairman and the General Staff briefed him on the status quo of the Hellenic Armed Forces.

General Brieger then had the opportunity to discuss recent developments at the south-eastern borders of the EU together with the Deputy Minister of Defence, Mr. Ioannis Kefalogiannis.

The discussion also addressed future CSDP engagements as well as other security related topics, with both sides agreeing on the importance to strengthen common defence capabilities. The visit concluded with a tour of some well-known and breath-taking cultural heritage sights in Athens. *“Seeing all these relicts from the past should be a reminder to look forward and work together towards a prosperous and secured future for our citizens”*, the Chairman admonished.



Photo: Hellenic National Defence General Staff

FAC MEETING, 14TH NOVEMBER

In mid-November, General Brieger took part in the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting in Defence format. The focus was on the continuous support to Ukraine as well as current affairs such as the latest developments in the Middle East but also

on the further implementation of the RDC according to the Strategic Compass.

The agenda point on Assistance to Ukraine started with a video message from the Ukrainian Minister of Defence Umerov, who thanked the EU for its mil-

itary support and expressed in detail the most pressing needs. The current affairs agenda point touched on CSDP missions, especially in the Sahel zone, as well as on the situation in Israel and the wider region.

EDA STEERING BOARD MEETING, 14TH NOVEMBER

In the light of the FAC meeting, the Ministers also met in the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering board configuration where they adopted the three-year planning framework for 2024–2026.

The Chief Executive of the EDA, Jiří Šedivý, presented the revision of the Capability Development Plan, highlighting the 22 revised priorities.

General Brieger then recalled the EUMC's active contribution to the Capability Development Plan revision and commended the remarkable work of the EDA and the close cooperation with Member States. He also emphasized the agreed High-level Capability Goals in coherence with the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and confirmed the readiness to work on the further implementation of priorities with the EDA.



Graphic: e.da.europa.eu

HALIFAX INTERNATIONAL SECURITY FORUM, 17TH – 19TH NOVEMBER

In November, General Robert Brieger, participated in the Halifax International Security Forum on behalf of the High Representative Josep Borrell. For the first time, the EU attended the Forum as an official partner, alongside NATO and the Canadian government.

General Brieger gave an overview of the current security and defence policy situation. In his keynote address *“For as long as it takes: Victory in Ukraine”*, he emphasised the role of the European Union in regards to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. He furthermore elaborated on the emerging developments in China, the conflict in the Middle East and the challenges in Africa, especially in the Sahel region. He then referred to the constant implementation of the Strategic Compass and the advancement of the necessary military capabilities, such as the further development of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC). General Brieger added that all of these activities would be difficult to manage without like-minded partners, especially the transatlantic ones. At the margins of the forum, General Brieger had informal side talks on the subject of transatlantic relations with the Canadian Chief of Staff General Wayne Eyre.



Photo: Halifax International Security Forum

OFFICIAL VISIT TO ESTONIA, 29TH NOVEMBER – 1ST DECEMBER

General Robert Brieger, Chairman of the Military Committee of the European Union, visited Tallinn end of November to meet with representatives from the Estonian Defence Forces, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence League, as well as from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Defence Committee of the Riigikogu (unicameral parliament of Estonia).

“The meeting took place at an extremely important time, when changes are taking place in the European security architecture. Ukraine will continue to rely on the European Union’s long-standing commitment to secure a free and democratic future for

itself in Europe. We must continue to support Ukraine for as long as needed,” said General Brieger. General Brieger also noted that he was keen to visit Tallinn, as he felt it was important to send out the message that the Allies are united in opposing the unjustified aggression against Ukraine and that Europe’s eastern flank deserves and receives the highest attention.



Photo: www.eeas.europa.eu

SPANISH SEMESTER CLOSING CEREMONY, 14TH DECEMBER

General Brieger attended the military closing reception of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

“When we met for the opening ceremony in July – said the General – I recalled the challenging circumstances in which Spain would find itself, with all the unpredictability surrounding the security of our borders, and the heavy program accompanying the implementation of the Strategic Compass. Now, I can only acknowledge that we are successfully one-step further. Just to point out a few milestones, we had the first ever Chiefs of Defence meeting outside Brussels this semester, as well as the LIVEX23 alongside. Together we certainly put a better spotlight on the security of the European Union. On behalf of the whole Committee, we are grateful to what Spain

has managed to accomplish in the last six months, for the benefit of EU security and defence. Now let’s continue to push forward our common goals and let’s be 2024 a year of shaping and planting new seed”.



Graphic: www.spanish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu

FAREWELL OF 1ST CHIEF EDITOR EU MILITARY FORUM

After successfully publishing four editions of the EU Military Forum, it is now time to say goodbye to our Chief Editor, Captain (IT Navy) Giovanni Galoforo.

Giovanni was head of the core team who created and designed the EU Military Forum, as we know it today. His experience, along with his dedication to the magazine, ensured the quality and gravitas of the publication.

We are convinced, his successors, the current editorial team will be able to live up to his high standards and will keep on providing interesting food for thought to the readers.

On a personal note, the whole cabinet of the CEUMC wishes Captain (IT Navy) Galoforo all the best for his future endeavours and would like to say thank you for his excellent work and camaraderie. – Bravo Zulu!

“Fair winds and following seas!”

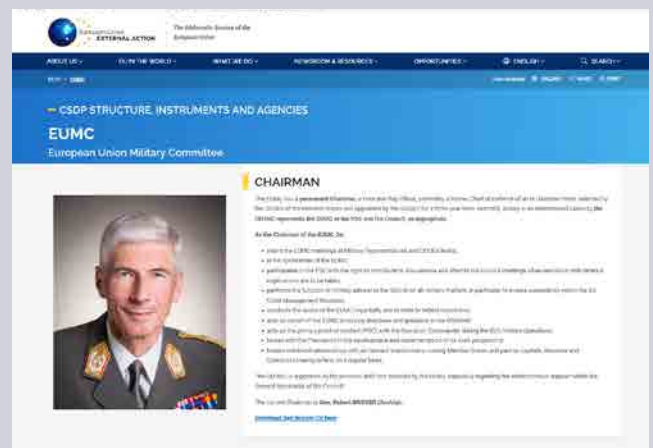


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