

Europe can do better – The EU between institutional constraints and civil and military responsibilities

29 June 2021

12h00 – 13h30, via Zoom

Invitation

The European Union is facing fundamental challenges in the field of foreign, security and defence policy – internally and externally. Relations with Russia are standing at a new low point. China, characterised as a systemic rival, is gaining ground in the game of great powers, not at least due to the quick economic recovery after the pandemic. Transatlantic relations have suffered in the past years and are successively improving with Joe Biden as new US President. However, diverging strategic interests remain, not only with regard to the commitment on defence spending by NATO members. Moreover, many conflicts in Europe's periphery are far from being resolved. Internally, strategic cultures, priorities and perspectives vary, the Brexit aftermath is still impacting the EU, and the Council is far from reaching an agreement on unanimity in foreign policy.

In this context the debate about EU's strategic autonomy has gained a new impetus. The High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, continuously emphasises that "Strategic autonomy is not a magic wand but a process, a long-term one, intended to ensure that Europeans increasingly take charge of themselves. To defend our interests and values in an increasingly harsh world, a world that obliges us to rely on ourselves to guarantee our future." The "Strategic Compass for Security and Defence" expected to be finalised during the French Council Presidency in 2022, shall define common strategic objectives and ambitions of the EU for the next five to ten years and what means are needed to achieve them. In the light of the findings of the Peace Report 2021 we want to discuss the question in which way the EU can be strategically autonomous. What is needed for the Strategic Compass to convey a common direction in security and defence policy respecting the role of the EU as a soft power? Which cornerstones must be in place to reach more autonomous and strategic EU action? How to strike the balance between institutional constraints, civilian missions, and military operations to pursue a peace-oriented foreign and security policy?

Programme

12h00 Welcome remarks

Katrin Hatzinger, Director Brussels Office of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)

Renate Tenbusch, Head of the Brussels Office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Presentation of the Peace Report 2021

Ursula Schröder, Editor in chief of the Peace Report 2021, Director, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH) at the University of Hamburg

Reflection

Bernhard Felmberg, Protestant Bishop for the Bundeswehr

12h30 Panel Discussion

Matthias Dembinski, Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF)

Hannah Neumann, Member of the European Parliament (Greens/EFA), Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

Sonja Momberg, European External Action Service

Followed by discussion with the audience chaired by **Sidonie Wetzig**, FES Brussels

13h30 End of the programme

The conference will be held in English. There will be no interpretation.

Please register [here](#).

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