

Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) 7–9 September 2017, Tallinn

Presidency Summary

Session I: Why Europe matters? – Europe in the global context

There was an overwhelming consensus that the European Union has been and continues to be an important player in the global arena.

Numerous issues were raised concerning why Europe matters in the global context, but the following two points were mentioned by most speakers.

First, the common values of democracy, human rights, economic and political freedom, and the need to uphold and advance these traditional EU and Western values. Second, the importance of free global trade as an essential part of globalisation was pointed out and the EU's role in defending free trade.

Many speakers pointed out the need to direct more focus to and strengthen the EU defence policy. More precisely, the discussion centred on the form of the cooperation, whether it should be voluntary or mandatory. The possibility to set the highest standards speaks in favour of voluntary defence cooperation. In case of mandatory cooperation, the Member States have to seek a consensus and set standards that everybody accepts, which would lead to lower standards.

Although a global player, the ongoing internal challenge that the EU is facing is how to bring the EU closer to its citizens. The one thing that will not bring the EU closer is the blame game that Member States often play – Brussels is always at fault. It usually happens in times of crisis. Despite the fact that the EU always overcomes difficult times, blaming Brussels in the process hinders the citizens' trust in the EU in the long run.

It can be concluded that, considering today's reality i.e. Brexit, insecurity in global affairs and the wish of US administration to focus more on internal matters, it is important for the EU to stay united and to have one voice in the global arena.

Session II: Invigorating the unity of the West and transatlantic relations

The main focus of the discussion on transatlantic relations was on security and trade. Europe should analyse what direction to take in transatlantic relations and how to face common challenges of the Western world. Issues and prospects for transatlantic relations under the Trump presidency were also discussed. Although there have been setbacks, the EU is an important partner for the US in global affairs and a free, united Europe that is at peace has been a cornerstone of US foreign policy. The EU and the US have shown strong unity in sanctioning Russia for its non-compliance with international norms.

The relationship between the EU and the US is profound, and the economies are closely intertwined. EU-US trade makes up half of the GDP of the world, and it was argued that a possible transatlantic trade deal would benefit both sides even more, providing even greater economic potential.

It was emphasised that the development of the EU defence policy can only happen in close cooperation and coordination with NATO and while engaging with the US. The question of sharing the burden was raised many times. Europe needs to take a greater share of responsibility for its own security, and the development of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a step in the right direction. It was also discussed that there should be a debate on how to measure and assess contributions to security and defence policy. The 2% standard of defence spending does not encompass capabilities and non-military and non-defence related contributions to security, however, it has political symbolism. It was stressed that this money should also be spent wisely and efficiently. It is important for NATO allies to continue the

progress and meet the commitments taken, and there is growing awareness and progress in the matter in Europe.

The EU needs the full support of the US in dealing with global warming, the migration crisis and terrorism. The EU and the US need to act together to sustain a world order based on rules and shared values. The West played a key role in the construction of this order, which it now needs to protect. The EU and the US share the fundamental values of democracy, human rights, free trade and open markets, which constitute the cornerstone of the transatlantic alliance. The EU should take a leadership role in Western and transatlantic relations in fields where the current US administration is less active.

Other issues raised were climate change, military cooperation between the EU and the US on the fight against ISIS and North Korea, the social impact of globalisation and free trade, the construction of the European Army, and what can Europe do to improve transatlantic relations.

Session III: Exchange of views on the priorities of the EU in the area of CFSP and CSDP

First of all, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy gave a brief overview of the topics discussed at the informal meetings of the EU's Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers.

This was followed by a traditional exchange of views between the High Representative and parliamentary delegations. The questions raised were focused on topical foreign policy issues, more precisely, the situation in North Korea, Western Balkans, Venezuela, the Middle East peace process, developments in the Eastern Partnership, migration, terrorism, the Defence Union, EU-US relations, and future relations with the UK.

When discussing migration issues, it was emphasised that the EU has advanced enormously - from reacting to crises to having a comprehensive approach. An effective migration policy includes both internal and external actions that include legal, controlled and safe channels for refugees.

Several questions about the Eastern Partnership were raised. These questions will be discussed at the upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit. There was a consensus that the Summit should send a message that it is an inclusive, not an exclusive policy.

In the matter of countering terrorism, it was stressed that it requires coordination of the EU and its Member States and co-operation with international partners. Also, the importance of exchanging information was underlined.

Although a year ago there was initial skepticism towards the Defence Union Policy, it is now regarded as an important EU-level issue. The question is not whether and how much to spend on defence but how to spend it most efficiently. It was stressed that the Defence Union is not about the militarisation of the EU but spending more wisely.

Several questions were raised concerning the situation in Venezuela. High representative assured that Venezuela is important to EU and its importance safeguarding the stability of the region. EU fully respects the institutions of Venezuela and their autonomy and capacity to work together.

When answering about the future relationship with UK it was pointed out that before defining the new partnership the exit negotiations have to be finalised.

The questions how European Union should react in the light of the recent developments in North Korea was raised numerous times. Military intervention is not supported by EU. There is hope that the situation can be resolved by political, diplomatic and economic means. Coherent actions in full co-ordination with regional partners is vital.

Concerns were raised about the developments regarding the Middle East peace process. EU's commitment to two state solution was reaffirmed. The importance to keep working on most effective manners was stressed. Also the need of constant engagement with regional partners was emphasized.

EU's consistent approach to relations with Western-Balkan was confirmed. It was stated that the EU remains firmly committed to the European integration of the Western Balkans. It was agreed that preserving and advancing peace in that region is clearly in the interests of EU citizens. When commenting on EU-US relations, it was stated that the EU and the US will remain partners, although there are matters in which views differ.

Session IV: State of play beyond the EU borders

EU priorities in external relations are set out in the Global Strategy. In the age of globalisation, security is indivisible and no clear distinction between external and internal security and no geographical division can be made. Although core European values are under strain, the European Union has many common interests and values. Global order based on rules is a key priority of EU external policy, and the success of EU foreign policy can be measured by its success in its immediate neighbourhood.

Russian aggression in Ukraine is still ongoing and Crimea is illegally annexed. The policy of the EU has been consistent and united on this question. Obligations set out in the Minsk agreement must be fulfilled, and Europe must stick to its principles. The next Eastern Partnership Summit approaches and the EU should have a clear vision on how to move forward and convert political successes to real benefits to the people of these countries. In EU-Russia relations, the five guiding principles have proven to be a useful framework. The EU's communication should aim at bringing Russia back to internationally acceptable behaviour.

There are many challenges in the South. There are ongoing conflicts in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and instability in the Sahel region. Later this year, the EU-African Union Summit will take place, focusing on providing more opportunities for the young generation of Africans. The situation in Syria is very complex, and the EU could play a role in the post-conflict reconstruction. Libya needs to go through a national reconciliation process, and the EU is ready to support that process. Another important priority is the fight against terrorism and extremism.

Another point of discussion concerned the external and internal aspects of migration and the Middle East Peace Process. The EU's position is that the only sustainable option is a two-state solution. Emphasis was also put on the importance of transatlantic relations and the current status and future of these relations.

Walking along the borders of the European Union

1. Seminar: Western Balkans

The discussion focussed on the importance of the Western Balkans to Europe as a whole. The six countries are at the heart of the European continent and have an unequivocal European perspective. However, each of these countries has adopted a different path and has, therefore, reached a different level of accession standards. The fact of the matter is that the Western Balkans are the front yard of the European Union and have, in a way, emerged as a geographical fault line that the EU needs to acknowledge; migratory, ethnic and religious aspects all converge here.

After the State of the Union speech by Jean Claude Juncker in 2014, the outlook for the Western Balkans was rather grim, with enlargement having essentially been put on hold. According to some, this had a harmful effect and contributed to the current situation, where there has been a clear deterioration in some WB countries. It was pointed out that the onus was on the Western Balkans themselves to provide political ammunition for the enlargement policy to take off and succeed.

A number of participants observed the state of play in Bosnia Herzegovina as a crucial litmus test for the EU. Particular attention was drawn to the need to reform the electoral law and to implement constitutional changes. Economic reforms and infrastructure were cited as additional key areas in need of restructuring.

2. Seminar: North Korea

The discussion focused on the possible response of the European Union to the recent worrisome developments in North Korea and also on how the neighbouring countries in the region perceive the situation.

The current plan of North Korean leadership seems to be to develop nuclear deterrence capacity that would guarantee that the US would not attack the regime.

There are also internal considerations that explain the hostile behaviour of Kim Jong-un, as he was considered a weak leader when he came to power. Since there has been economic growth and the weapon programme has been successful, his legitimacy is rising. North Korea's ultimate aim seems to be a peace treaty with the US.

The active nuclear testing by North Korea has resulted in a more conservative attitude of South Korea towards its neighbour. South Korea's proposals for peace talks with the North have been unanswered. This has resulted in calls for additional sanctions from the United Nations on North Korea. China supports peaceful talks with North Korea and maintaining stability in the country. Japan still considers China to be a bigger threat than North Korea in the region; nevertheless, they have passed military legislation that allows Japanese forces to take part in international operations.

North Korea will probably continue with their nuclear programme, which they perceive as the only security guarantee and, thus, sanctions will be toughened. Although the EU has imposed sanctions, there are still some Member States who are not fully implementing them. Moreover, there is the question of North Korean foreign workers in Europe that feed the regime. It was emphasised that the EU should exert pressure on Russia and China to better implement the sanctions. It was also pointed out that unless there is a clear plan of action between China and the US, there is no will on the part of China to take action.

Other topics of discussion included the mutual defence agreement between China and North Korea, the effect of North Korea on the internal policies of China and Japan, the possibility of a military option from the US, the "double freeze" proposal made by China and Russia, humanitarian conditions in North Korea, and the effectiveness and purpose of EU sanctions.

3. Seminar: Russia

The discussion focused mainly on the aspects to take into account when dealing with Russia.

One aspect that was brought up is the common mistake made by Western countries – perceiving Russia simply as Putin's authoritarian regime. It should be remembered that Putin does not equal Russia. Despite what Kremlin has been doing, many people in Russia do not support the regime. For example, the Open Russia Movement wants to restore the rule of law and democracy.

The other thing that the discussion brought up is that many Western leaders have not reacted on the issue of Russia not respecting the rights of its own citizens. These leaders hope that if they do not react, they will not be influenced. But if a country does not respect the rights of its own citizens, how can we expect that it abides by the internationally approved rules? It was emphasised that these two things are very much interlinked.

Then the discussion moved on to internal and external threats that could possibly hinder Putin's regime. Mass protests are possibly the one thing that the regime has no control over and, therefore, it could be considered one of the few internal threats. When talking about external influence on Russia's behaviour, then targeted financial sanctions are probably the most effective means. But why is it difficult to implement the sanctions? A business way of thinking often overrules the long-term objectives that the sanctions target.

The discussion also included a reminder that Russia is on the same continent as the EU countries, although the Kremlin acts as if Russia does not belong in Europe. It is important to remain in contact with

Russia's civil society, as it is an investment into the future. It was emphasised that Western countries must be ready for the post-Putin era.

In the end, the upcoming presidential elections were discussed. It was perceived that the elections will follow the prepared scenario. It remains to be seen what will happen shortly after the elections and also during the 6-year term in office.

Session V: Ways to strengthen European defence

The central point of discussion was the rift between the political enthusiasm that had been displayed by European leaders and the actual European defence capabilities. The European Union operates as a political entity with great economic power, but its military component is still in a nascent stage. There was a wide consensus among participants that territorial defence could not be exercised by current EU defence capabilities, and that these capabilities were absent due to a lack of strategic and political will. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the creation of Permanent Structured Cooperation depended largely on Member States' interest and the reconciling of different approaches.

Unity among transatlantic actors was another central topic. The relationship between NATO and the EU was discussed at length, with the principles of complementarity and the avoidance of duplication being brought to the forefront. The importance of NATO and its core principle of collective defence was emphasised, especially with regard to the changing security environment in both Europe and in the world at large. In the same vein, the inability of the EU to conduct high end territorial defence was referenced more than once, thereby endorsing NATO's *raison d'être*. Sharing the burden and finding synergies was agreed upon as a vital part of the transatlantic bond, and calls were made for more cooperation, especially in the field of hybrid and cyber defence.

Defence spending came up on multiple occasions, with the question of the 2% defence expenditure looming large. It was questioned whether this requirement should also apply to non-NATO members, and whether investment in defence was a zero-sum game. Rather than only looking at the figures, it was agreed that what mattered was how the money would be spent. In this respect, investment in new capabilities was stressed, and the idea of a European capability and armament policy was floated.

Session VI: Practical aspects of the hybrid world, including the cyber sphere and strategic communication

The spread of disinformation in Europe has been considerable in the past couple of years. To counter this, the EEAS set up the East StratCom Task Force in 2015, with the aim of effectively responding to disinformation and improving EU's communications to the east. The task force has set up a webpage, where topic of disinformation is shared (<https://euvsdisinfo.eu>). The key for improving communication is to hone the message and try to communicate in a way that resonates with the locals. Another crucial aspect is to encourage quality journalism and strengthen the media environment. Emphasis is placed on the message and not the messenger, thereby fully respecting freedom of expression. In the long-term, however, the goal is not only to identify disinformation but also to engage with the media, and for that to happen, more investment in StratCom is needed.

When it comes to the cyber sphere, it is considered as the perfect domain for hybrid warfare, since all aspects of our daily lives depend on using IT solutions. Recent cyberattacks have demonstrated the ease with which it is possible to hack very different information systems and, thereby, shown how all of us depend on IT. One of the most salient examples of hacking is election hacking, due to the vulnerability of information systems involved in political processes. Since it is very difficult to attribute cyberattacks to concrete actors and since the rules and regulations in this field have not yet been formulated, it is vital to have an integrated approach, whereby not only governments are involved, but also social partners and the private sector.