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Focus: Climate change impact on Defence and Security [EN](#)

The COP26 is currently gathering many of the world leaders in Glasgow to discuss and settle on new decisions to control global warming and climate change. In a post on his blog of the European External Action Service, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell detailed his vision of the interdependences of climate change with geopolitical issues and security.

The first aspect highlighted is that to fight global warming, a green energy transition has to be undertaken, that will have deep geopolitical consequences. Indeed, access to energy is today an issue as oil and gas producers are tempted to use their resources as a weapon, last example being Russia trying to link negotiations for gas supplies with its critics over the strengthening of Moldova's relations with the EU. Green energy can redistribute the card, giving countries more sovereign access to their energy production. However, Mr. Borrell also points out that it could create new dependencies on technology.

In addition, for Europe specifically, the current energy prices crisis shows the vulnerability of the continent regarding fossil fuels. Therefore, the green transition is also about "enhancing our strategic autonomy, preserving the purchasing power of our citizens and creating competitive advantages for Europe".

And last, in Borrell's point of view, this summit is an occasion for Europe to play its role in the concert of nations. "Geopolitical tensions" and "ideological disagreements" run high. However, cooperation is key to tackle to coming challenges, and Europe helps in this direction with its climate diplomacy. The European Green Deal and other decisions contributed to persuading several major emitters to step up their climate action, he believes. For example, J. Biden answered to Von Der Leyen call to increase their climate financial contribution; a week after a High Level Climate Dialog, Turkey proposed to ratify the Paris Agreement.

European Union military cooperation and external operations

The United Nations votes a resolution to extend EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina [EN](#) [FR](#)

The United Nations adopted on November 3rd the resolution 2604 (2021) to extend the mandate of the EU-led stabilisation force in the Balkan countries for an additional year.

The mission EUFOR Althea follows the 26-years old Dayton Peace agreement and implements its military aspects. Two dispositions were created to support this action: the Office of the High Representative implements the civilian aspects, and the Peace Implementation Council, which rallies international support and provides the High Representative political guidance. However, the countries debated on the budget shortfall this dispositions might face. They also expressed their "grave concern" about the escalated tensions between the Bosnian and Serb entities, after a party, Republika Srpska, announced it would withdraw from State institutions. Russia also accused the Western countries to support a "anti-Serb" High Representative.

The military mission aims to stabilise the area, but faces many challenges. On the other hand, the demining of the region to secure the population is still ongoing and should gain efficiency. On the other hand, the high amount of weapons and ammunitions still represents a high risk.

Strategic compass to be presented during a joint Foreign Affairs and Defence Council [EN](#) [EN](#)

On November 16th, a Strategic Compass draft, the first EU military strategy analysis of this scale, should be submitted during a joint Foreign Affairs and Defence Council. The final document is to be adopted during the French Presidency beginning of 2022. The following information have however leaked on its content.

On threat assessment, Russia and China represent the main challenges: the first on military or hybrid aspects, the latter as an economic competitor and systemic rival. Yet, constructive cooperation is underlined.

A EU rapid deployment capacity is mentioned, with the aim to integrate 5000 troops from air, maritime and land forces by 2025. Its use should be based on operational scenarios.

The need for more flexible decision-making arrangements is also identified, including for example a "constructive abstention" from Member States reluctant on an operation, instead of the current unanimity.

Concerning the relations with NATO, the upcoming EU-NATO joint declaration that will be presented at the end of 2021 is considered as the key orientation of the cooperation. A dedicated defence and security dialogue should also be implemented, to address the worries of Member States who rely mainly on the alliance for their defence. The EU also wishes to continue dialogue on defence with the United Kingdom.

And, last, tools and investments in specific sectors are targeted, such as space and cyberspace, but also on innovation and EU collaborative defence initiatives.

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Industry

Spain could buy 50 Lockheed Martin F-35, threatening the FCAS programme [FR EN](#)

According to the specialised defence magazine Jane's, Spain entered negotiations with the United States to purchase 50 F-35, 25 for the Navy (F-35B) with Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL), 25 for the Air Force (F-35A). This has not been confirmed by official sources, and Reuters has later quoted a Spanish defence ministry source stating that "The Spanish government has no budget to enter into any other jet project in addition to the one that is already in place".

Spain could indeed be interested by VTOL aircrafts to replace their aging Harrier which had the same capacity. However, instead of an equal fleet, with 12 aircrafts, this would be a more structuring deal for the Spanish military aviation, with 50 aircrafts for both armies. This would mean they would operate alongside the NGF, the FCAS programme's fighter, after 2040, lowering the country's needs. This would also reduce the budget Spain could allocate to the FCAS programme, as it is committed to a third of the €50 to €100 billion overall.

Germany was also at a time seduced by the F-35 option, but disregarded it to join France in the FCAS.

Greece purchases second-hand ships to the Netherlands and considers options for additional aircrafts [GR GR](#)

The Greek Ministry of Defence has announced that its Defence Investments General Directory signed a letter of intent with its Dutch counterpart to purchase two second-hand Karel Doorman type frigates and six second-hand Alkmar type mine hunter ships.

Whereas this raises questions for the Dutch side, as this will lower their capabilities in anti-submarine warfare and mine hunting, the prices are low for such equipment and could therefore be an efficient deal for the Hellenic Navy.

The Greek Minister of Defence Nikos Panagiotopoulos also stated last October 7th that Greece still needs 48 additional new generation combat aircrafts for the country's air defence. As the British Royal Air Force is planning to withdraw 30 Eurofighter Typhoon by 2025, with still 50% of their lifetime potential, this is an option he did not disregard after being interrogated by the Greek Parliament. However, information on the ongoing prospects is classified and such a deal would not cover completely the country's needs, as these are air-to-air aircrafts. A request for information has also been filed to the American authorities for a F-35 option, but no progress has been communicated at this point.

International relations

Migration crisis at the Polish border with Belarus [EN EN EN EN EN](#)

Answering to the EU economical sanctions taken in reaction to the suspected electoral fraud during the last presidential elections, Belarus is allegedly gathering 20.000 to 30.000 migrants to the Polish border. Many sources have reported that the country was delivering visas and national air company was opening new lines with countries like Lebanon or Syria.

Poland has gathered thousands of troops to try to control the situation and prevent the migrants from crossing, despite their number. The UK also deployed a "small team" on non-military tasks like repairing the border barriers. On the other side, Belarus accused Poland of an unprecedented military build-up at the border, not proportional to the situation. Russia, while denying all responsibility in the crisis, plays the intermediary between Europe and Belarus, a regime it has always supported.

The EU described the situation as a "hybrid attack" from Belarus, and considers it a European issue, as the Polish border merges with the Schengen area border. During November 15th Foreign Affairs Council, new sanctions were taken against some officials, and travel companies such as airlines, all contributing to the facilitation of illegal border crossing. In the meantime, the Belarussian president, Alexander Lukashenko, had a phone call with Angela Merkel, his first contact with a western leader since August 2020 and the contested presidential elections. They spoke about the need for humanitarian aid for the migrants and agreed to continue the exchanges on these issues.

Migration remains an issue the EU Member States have been struggling to tackle united so far.

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International relations

German Ministry of Defence reacts to NATO nuclear deterrence strategy with Russia, provoking strong reactions [GEFR](#)

During the October NATO Defence Ministers meeting, the Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, pled for a new director plan to counter the threats in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. This included an "efficient nuclear deterrence". However, to avoid imitating the destabilising behaviour of Russia, he affirmed NATO has no intent to deploy new terrestrial nuclear missiles in Europe.

However, in the meantime, the German Ministry of Defence, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, had stronger words in that matter. Asked about the use of nuclear weapons by NATO to secure the Eastern Europe region, she replied that it should be said to Russia "very clearly" that the alliance is ready to use such weapons, in order for them to be efficient as a deterrence tool. This has led to strong reactions in Germany, still part of NATO nuclear plans. Annalena Baerbock, Head of the Greens in Germany, called for a disarmament that includes "the American weapons in Germany and all Europe". The new coalition wishes to withdraw their contribution to NATO nuclear plan.

Russia also strongly reacted, in many occasions, to Annagret Kramp-Karrenbauer's words. First, the Russian Minister of Defence, Sergueï Choïgou, pointing at the gathering of NATO forces at the Russian border, made a reference to how such operations ended for Germany and Europe after the Second World War, with the soviet occupation. The Kremlin Spokesman Dmitri Peskov also stated that in these conditions, dialog was not possible anymore and that Russia had been right to break official dialog with NATO a few days earlier. And last, the German military attaché was summoned at the Russian Ministry of Defence to receive a note related to this affair.