

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

17-18 November  
2022 ESPAS Annual Conference

# GEOPOLITICS IS BACK

CHARTING A COURSE FOR THE EU  
IN A WORLD OF SHIFTS AND SHOCKS

EUROPEAN FORESIGHT DAYS

# DAY ONE

Thursday, 17 November 2022

11.10 -12.00: *In conversation: The EU and NATO – working together for Europe's security*

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## **Summary of the session**

Both speakers underlined that Russia's war against Ukraine is a game changer: The awakening to a more brutal reality in Europe is reshuffling the way in which NATO, the EU, and individual nations – notably in Western Europe – are looking at security. As a result, a broadened concept of security has emerged, comprising of not only traditional issues concerning hard security but also of other components such as cyber, disinformation, and the instrumentalisation of policies (energy, migration, trade, economic coercion etc.). Against the current geopolitical background, Europe will need to spend more and better to address its vulnerabilities, given that strengthening EU defence capabilities or diversifying supply chains has a steep cost. In terms of hard security, it is clear that the transatlantic alliance and NATO are essential to ensure Europe's security. Yet, the emerging security theatre no longer only includes the Atlantic, but stretches to other like-minded partners in the Pacific including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea or Singapore.

## **Europe's strategic awakening**

Russia's war against Ukraine triggered a significant reassessment of European security priorities and resources – a process that is still ongoing. Yet, what is at stake is not only Ukraine's victory in the war, but also the rise of China, cyber resilience, hybrid warfare, space, disinformation, climate change etc. – all elements that form part of a broader conceptualisation of security. These emerging security areas need to be added to traditional areas of EU-NATO cooperation, which have thus far mainly focused on hard security. While both speakers stress the solid foundation of the EU-NATO partnership, they see the need for a renewed commitment to the partnership (e.g., through a third joint declaration) by extending cooperation to other dimensions, including disruptive technologies, resilience, disinformation or managing great power competition.

## **The industrial side of Europe's security**

While the EU engages in joint efforts concerning military hardware (see e.g. EEAS defence gaps analysis), a longstanding issue has been the absence of a consolidated industrial base when it comes to European security. DSG Mircea Geoană points to the

support that NATO can provide in helping European nations in fighting fragmentation and lack of scale. From a practical point of view, NATO offers clarity to the defence industry about the future need of all allies through e.g., the defence planning process, the investment and defence pledge, and regular meetings with top national procurement officials. The alliance also works towards the standardisation of military equipment by establishing a “NATO” standard. A strong and consolidated European industrial base is especially important as stocks are increasingly depleted due to the current war and national differences in military hardware prevent the interoperability of different European equipment in Ukraine.

### **Transatlantic partnership and China**

China has adopted a much more assertive course and will be the main competing system for decades to come. The EU and Chinese model will compete in the future on three main dimensions: 1) economic competition, 2) political competition, and 3) technological competition. The EU should certainly not decouple from China as our economic interests are reciprocal. Instead, the EU needs to learn how to manage the complexity of our relations (e.g., EU anti-coercion measure or FDI screening for economic competition; Global Gateway strategy for political competition with China’s cooperation model). The EU-US Dialogue on China is useful to keep abreast of each other’s position and develop a common understanding of new developments. However, the emerging security theatre stretches from the Atlantic to also include like-minded partners in the Pacific (e.g., Japan, New Zealand, Australia, South Korea and Singapore), no longer making a distinction between the two spheres.