

EPFMA

Bulletin



90 · March 2025

European Parliament Former Members Association

www.formermembers.eu



FMA Activities

EP to Campus programme

Page 12



Focus

Security and Defence

Page 21

IN THIS ISSUE

03 Message from the President

04 EP at work

LATEST NEWS

06 Upcoming events

07 FMA at work

FMA ACTIVITIES

09 Former Members' Network

11 FMA Collaborations

12 EP to Campus programme

17 Schuman Traineeship programme

18 Book Review

IN MEMORIAM

19 In Memoriam

FOCUS

22 Security and defence, the new driving force behind European integration
(Josep Borrell Fontelles and Domenèc Ruiz Devesa)

24 EU's Defence architecture in action: future steps
(François Arbault)

26 Navigating stormy waters: The EU as a provider of maritime security and defence
(C. N. Abel Romero Junquera)

28 EU security policy from the perspective of a neutral EU member state
(Jürgen Meindl)

30 A much-needed wake-up call on the parliamentary dimension of defence policy
(Arnaud Danjean)

32 Be defence ready to maintain the peace
(Edit Herczog)

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editorial Board would like to thank all those members who took the time to contribute to this issue of the FMA Bulletin. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the decision to include an article lies with the FMA Editorial Board and, in principle, contributions from members who are not up-to-date with the payment of the membership fee will not be included. Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

The war in Ukraine has brought security and defence to the forefront of the EU's priorities. As the geopolitical landscape shifts, Europe must adapt to new realities, reinforcing its commitment to peace, stability and protecting its citizens. This moment calls for a united and strategic approach, ensuring that the EU remains a steadfast guardian of its values – freedom, justice, democracy, and humanity – both within its borders and on the world stage.

In this edition of the Bulletin, we will explore these pressing issues, providing in-depth analysis and reflections on the challenges and opportunities facing the EU in security and defence. Among our contributors, we have the eminent Josep Borrell, former Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and former President of the European Parliament, as well as all the speakers from our Former Members Association (FMA) annual seminar on 'EU security and defence: emerging threats and strategies for a resilient future'. The hybrid event took place on 4 December 2024 at the European Parliament in Brussels.

I would like to thank all FMA members for your active participation in the FMA annual events, as well as in the FMA visit to Poland that will take place from 26 to 28 March 2025. The delegation will engage in meaningful discussions with representatives of the Polish authorities, focusing on the priorities and challenges of Poland's ongoing Presidency of the Council of the EU.

A comprehensive report on the FMA visit to Poland and the annual meeting that will be held on 20 and 21 May 2025 in Brussels will be included in the June Bulletin, providing further insights.

This visit is of significant importance as we also commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz. Roberta Metsola, the President of the European Parliament, gave a touching speech during the extraordinary plenary session in Brussels on 29 January 2025 to remember the Holocaust. To an audience of Holocaust survivors and representatives of Jewish communities as well as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other dignitaries, she reiterated Europe's duty never to forget.

On 20 May 2025, the annual memorial service will be held at the European Parliament, where we will pay tribute to our esteemed colleagues who have passed away over the past year. First Vice-President of the European Parliament Sabine Verheyen will deliver a tribute to deceased former MEPs during the ceremony. The memorial service will be followed by a dinner debate. On 21 May 2025, the FMA will host the annual general assembly, a key moment for the association to reflect on past achievements, set future priorities and strengthen its network. We hope to welcome many new members.

Furthermore, I am pleased to highlight our ongoing cooperation with overseas FMAs. On 27 January 2025, we held a policy event entitled '2024: lessons learned from the year of elections' in collaboration with our counterparts from the United States Association of Former Members of Congress. The discussion provided valuable insights into how the 2024 elections reshaped global political landscapes, key changes in the new global order and the implications for transatlantic relations and global governance. Additionally, in April 2025, a delegation from the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians (CAFPs) will visit Italy to foster dialogue

and strengthen transatlantic parliamentary relations with a programme coordinated by our Vice-President Monica Baldi. Among others, a policy event organised with the support of the European Parliament Liaison Office will take place on 2 April at Europa Experience in Rome and a special hybrid event will be organised by the FMA in co-operation with the School of Transnational Governance on 7 April 2025 at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence. The June edition will include a report on the entire visit and events.

We deeply appreciate your continued enthusiasm and support for the European Parliament to Campus programme. In 2025, the programme will further extend its global reach, with events planned at Setsunan University in Japan, the University of Porto in Portugal and Lutzk National Technical University in Ukraine, among others. These initiatives aim to provide students with valuable insights into the EU's global influence and foster informed discussions. Our enduring partnerships with institutions such as the Jean Monnet House and the EUI continue to be instrumental in strengthening the programme and broadening its international impact.

I encourage all our members to remain actively involved in fostering the unity of the EU and strengthening parliamentary democracy through our various initiatives and engagements. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the Bulletin.

With my very best regards,

Dr. Klaus Hänsch
FMA President

Key facts

Parliament paves way for the use of EU funds to finance natural disaster recovery

(December session - P10_TA(2024)0059)

The Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction ("RESTORE") proposal allows EU countries to more easily channel European regional development funds (ERDF) and cohesion funds to disaster reconstruction. As a result, the EU's ERDF could fund recovery projects up to 95% of their total cost. To provide quick liquidity to those in need, additional pre-financing of up to 25% of the full amount would also be made available. The proposal would allow for more flexible use of European Social Fund Plus funds to finance short-term work schemes, support access to healthcare and provide basic necessities.

Specific measures under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for Member States affected by natural disasters

(December session - P10_TA(2024)0060)

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have adopted new measures to provide urgent financial support to farmers, forest holders, and SMEs impacted by recent natural disasters across Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe. The regulation amends the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to introduce exceptional and temporary aid, ensuring business continuity and restoring agricultural and forestry production.

Parliament sets up a Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the EU (HOUS)

(December session - P10_TA(2024)0066)

The European Parliament established a Special Committee on the Housing Crisis in the European Union on 18 December 2024. The committee's primary objective is to propose solutions for decent, sustainable, and affordable housing for all European citizens. The Special Committee comprises 33 Members and will operate with a 12-month mandate.

European Parliament Condemns 11 Years of Russian Occupation in Crimea and Calls for Immediate Release of Political Prisoners

(December session - P10_TA(2024)0072)

Parliament has adopted a resolution condemning the continued illegal occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the worsening human rights situation in the region. Marking 11 years since Russia's unlawful annexation, the resolution highlights systematic persecution of Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians, and civil society activists. The Parliament strongly condemns arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, forced conscription, and repression of fundamental freedoms

MEPs call on the EU to champion women's rights against global backlash

(December session - P10_TA(2024)0075)

MEPs finalised their recommendations for the EU's position on the upcoming UN global gathering on women's rights in New York in March 2025. Ahead of the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the European Parliament calls for EU leadership in achieving equal opportunities for women in every area of life, including by implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality. The recommendation was adopted by plenary with 322 votes in favour, 163 against, and 46 abstentions.

European Parliament Condemns Ongoing Repression and Sham Elections in Belarus

(January session - P10_TA(2025)0002)

The European Parliament has adopted a resolution strongly condemning the continued repression in Belarus and the illegitimate presidential elections set for 26 January 2025. MEPs reaffirm their non-recognition of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's regime and call for immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. The resolution highlights systematic human rights violations, the lack of democratic freedoms, and Belarus's complicity in Russia's war against Ukraine. The Parliament urges the EU to strengthen sanctions against those responsible for repression and to support Belarusian democratic forces and civil society.

MEPs condemn Russia's use of disinformation to justify its war in Ukraine

(January session - P10_TA(2025)0006)

The text adopted by Parliament rejects historical claims by the Russian regime to undermine Ukraine's history and national identity as futile attempts to justify its ongoing illegal war. It also condemns Russia's failure to establish accountability for Soviet crimes, and for cracking down on attempts to carry out historical research and holding public debates on these issues, saying that such practices have contributed to the Moscow regime's ability to revive imperialist policies and instrumentalise history for its criminal purposes.

Parliament approves new support plan for Moldova

(March session - P10_TA(2025)0022)

MEPs approved a provisional agreement reached by Parliament and Council negotiators on 19 February 2025 on the Reform and Growth Facility for Moldova. Through grants and low-interest loans, the Facility seeks to help Moldova deal with the major challenges it is facing, in particular the profound impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on the country's security, economy and people. The instrument should also strengthen Moldova's resilience against Russian hybrid attacks and interference targeting its democratic processes and institutions.

MEPs urge the EU to ensure its own security

(March session - P10_TA(2025)0034)

In a resolution adopted, Parliament calls on the EU to act urgently and ensure its own security. This will mean, MEPs say, strengthening relationships with like-minded partners, and strongly diminishing its reliance on non-EU countries. A so-called "White Paper" on the future of European defence, that the Commission and the High Representative are expected to present next week should put forward concrete proposals to the European Council to enable "truly ground-breaking efforts" and actions "close to those of wartime", say MEPs, also welcoming the recently tabled ReArm plan.

Other main dossiers discussed in the plenary sessions were:

23.01.25

The European Parliament adopted three resolutions about the **respect for human rights** in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran** and **Algeria**.

MEPs strongly condemn the **passing of death sentences** in the **DRC**, including that of Jean-Jacques Wondo, and the serious violations of the right to a fair trial.

MEPs expressed their strong opposition to the **death penalty in Iran**, requesting an immediate moratorium on its use and eventually its abolition.

Boualem Sansal must be immediately and unconditionally released, MEPs say, alongside journalist Abdelwakil Blamm, writer Tadjadit Mohamed, and all other activists, journalists, human rights defenders and people detained for exercising their **right to freedom of opinion and expression** in **Algeria**.

23.01.25

The European Parliament has adopted a resolution **condemning Nicolás Maduro's illegitimate seizure of power** on 10 January 2025, reaffirming its recognition of Edmundo González Urrutia as the legitimate President of Venezuela.

11.02.25

The European Parliament has given its consent to the conclusion of an **agreement** between the **European Union** and the **People's Republic of Bangladesh** on certain aspects of air services.

The agreement aims to **enhance legal certainty in air transport relations** between the EU and Bangladesh by aligning bilateral air service agreements with EU law.

11.02.25

The European Parliament has given its consent to the **renewal of the Agreement on cooperation in science and technology** between the **European Community and Ukraine**.

This decision reaffirms the **EU's commitment to strengthening research collaboration with Ukraine**, fostering innovation, and supporting scientific development.

13.02.25

The European Parliament has **condemned** the recent **dismissals and arrests of elected mayors in Türkiye**, calling the actions a direct attack on democracy and the rule of law.

The Parliament expressed deep concern over the government's practice of replacing democratically elected mayors with government-appointed trustees, particularly in Kurdish-majority regions.

13.02.25

The European Parliament has strongly condemned the ongoing **human rights violations by the Ortega-Murillo regime in Nicaragua**, targeting human rights defenders, political opponents, and religious communities, particularly the Catholic Church.

The Parliament denounced the regime's widespread repression, including the arbitrary arrest and expulsion of political opponents and members of the clergy, and the dissolution of over 5,600 NGOs, including religious groups.

13.02.25

The European Parliament has condemned the continuing detention and risk of the **death penalty for Nigerian singer Yahaya Sharif-Aminu**, who was sentenced to death in 2020 for allegedly blasphemous song lyrics.

Sharif-Aminu's trial lacked legal representation, and his family has faced persecution since his arrest. Despite a retrial order and an ongoing appeal, his health has significantly deteriorated, and he remains at risk of a death sentence.

13.02.25

In an adopted resolution, **Parliament refuses to recognise the self-proclaimed authorities** of the ruling **Georgian Dream party** following the rigged parliamentary elections on 26 October 2024, including the newly appointed **President Mikheil Kavelashvili**, and calls for the international community to join the **boycott of Georgia's ruling elite**.

MEPs continue to **recognise Salome Zourabichvili** as **Georgia's legitimate president** and call on the President of the European Council António Costa to invite her to represent the country at upcoming meetings of the European Council and the European Political Community.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/plenary>



UPCOMING EVENTS



ACTIVITIES

26-28
MARCH 2025

FMA Visit to Poland

From 26 to 28 March 2025, the FMA will visit Warsaw on the occasion of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Delegation will be led by FMA President Klaus Hänsch. Registrations are now closed.

20
MAY 2025

Annual Memorial Service, Cocktail Reception and Dinner Debate

From 17.45 to 18.15, current and former MEPs will commemorate their colleagues who passed away in 2024-2025 in the European Parliament Hemicycle (Brussels). A Dinner Debate takes place from 19.30 to 21.30, preceded by a Cocktail Reception from 18.30 to 19.30.

21
MAY 2025

Annual General Assembly and Annual Lunch

From 10.00 to 13.00 the Annual General Assembly will take place in the European Parliament, Brussels. The Assembly will be followed by the Annual Lunch offered to FMA Members. More information is available via FMA website and social media accounts.

03
JULY 2025

Librorum (online)

On Thursday 3 July 2025 from 17.00 to 18.15, the book *"Migrationshintergrund: Erlebnisse eines Europäers"* by deceased FMA Member Jannis Sakellariou will be presented post-mortuum during the online Librorum event. Interpretation will be available in English, French and German. More information about this event and how to register will soon be available.

FMA ANNUAL EVENTS

TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025

17.45 - 18.15 Annual Memorial Service

The Annual Memorial Service organised by the FMA under patronage of the European Parliament will take place on 20 May 2025 from 17.45 to 18.15 in the Hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels.

18.30 - 21.30 Cocktail Reception & Dinner Debate

The Dinner Debate will take place on 20 May 2025 in the Member's Restaurant at 19.30, preceded by a Cocktail Reception from 18.30 to 19.30.

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2025

10.00 - 13.00 Annual General Assembly

The FMA Annual General Assembly will take place on 21 May 2025 in room SPAAK 7C50, European Parliament, Brussels and online from 10.00-13.00.

13.00 - 14.30 Annual Lunch

After the Annual General Assembly, all FMA Members are welcome to participate to the FMA Annual Lunch in the Members' Restaurant from 13.00 to 14.30.



FMA AT WORK

MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Klaus
HÄNSCH



Monica
BALDI



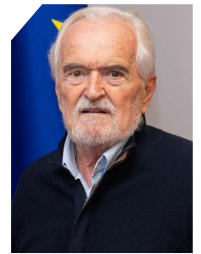
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*Quaestor
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responsible
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— FMA BUREAU

President: **Klaus HÄNSCH**

Vice-President: **Monica BALDI**

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LIST OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

FMA Bulletin Editorial Board:

Ms Baldi (Chair), Mr Audy, Mr McMillan-Scott, Ms Riera Madurell and Mr Rübig.

EP to Campus: Mr Hindley (Chair), Mr Porto and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

Relations with Budgets Committee, DG Finance: Mr Audy.

Dinner Debate: Ms Baldi.

Delegates to the Bureau of the European Association of Former Members (FP-AP):

Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Riera Madurell. If necessary they will be substituted by Mr Audy.

FMA Communication: Ms Baldi (Chair) and Mr Hindley.

Delegates to the Annual General Assembly, seminars and colloquies of the FP-AP:

Mr Audy, Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Riera Madurell. Besides the FMA delegates or their substitutes and in agreement with the European Association, other FMA Management Committee Members may participate in the annual seminars or colloquies at their own expense.

Relations with Former Members Associations outside Europe:

Mr Martínez Martínez (Chair), Mr Audy, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and Ms Isabella De Martini (FMA Member with advisory role).

Annual seminar and relations with think tanks, policy institutes and foundations: Ms Riera Madurell (Chair), Ms Baldi, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and Mr Rübig.

Archives: Ms Baldi.

Working Group on Democracy Support and Election Observation:

Mr McMillan-Scott (Chair), Mr Hindley, Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

Relations with the House of European History: Mr Martínez Martínez.

Relations with the European University Institute (EUI): Ms Baldi.

FMA ACTIVITIES



EPFMA
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FORMER MEMBERS' NETWORK

2024: LESSONS FROM THE ELECTION YEAR – ONLINE PANEL WITH FORMER MEMBERS OF THE EP AND CONGRESS

One week after President D. Trump's inauguration, four panelists – Kathy Mannings (Dem.), Dennis Ross (Rep.), Ana Gomez (EP/E), and G.Quisthoudt-Rowohl (EP/G) – under the moderation of Sudha David-Wilp (German Marschall Fund of the US) outlined a review of the turbulent election year 2024.

What were these elections? The European Parliament election was followed by, among many others, an unexpected election to the Assemblée Nationale in France, the announcement of an election in Germany (which then took place on 23 February 2025) and the election in the United States.

The panellists unanimously agreed that nothing had become any clearer than it had been before. The discussion centred, inter alia, on the following statements, some of which proved controversial:

- How did the alienation between citizens and politics come about and what can be done about it?
- Education, especially education for democracy, has been neglected.
- In this world of new forms of communication, the possibilities for influencing people – especially young people – have become more diverse, more anonymous and less controllable.

- A shift to the right, which at least in part calls into question democratic principles, can also be observed in the EU.
- The gap between 'rich and poor' and the feeling that the state no longer offers any security are leading to social unrest.
- The geopolitical balance on which we have relied for some 80 years is out of kilter and has not yet been replaced by a newer order.
- Democracy is really being tested and must now deliver.
- A vocal call for 'simple, understandable solutions' can be heard on both sides of the Atlantic.

This list is neither exhaustive nor in any order of priority. It provides an overview of the lively and open exchange of views, a notable feature of which was that all panellists adopted a balanced and cautious approach in their statements. The fact that this event took place so soon after the inauguration of the new President sends a very positive message and shows that there is still a great deal the EU and the US have in common.

In 2024, efforts were made at many levels to find ways to revive these commonalities in the wake of the Covid lockdowns and amid a changing geopolitical situation.

Think tanks, transatlantic organisations, active and former politicians and officials are reflecting, discussing and striving to find solutions. Maintaining and developing a functioning transatlantic relationship is, however, a never-ending story. In June 2021, for example, the EPRS published the study 'Harnessing the new momentum in transatlantic relations. Potential areas for common action during the Biden presidency'. Even in 2025, with a new President in office, it has not lost all of its relevance and contains many useful proposals.

We Europeans must accept some paradigm shifts: the USA is no longer necessarily an ally, but also a competitor vis-à-vis third powers, most notably China; the BRICS countries are gaining more influence and the model of 'globalisation and division of labour at world level' is becoming increasingly unstable. The call for greater self-sufficiency (for example in security and defence, food production, and the development of new technologies) is growing louder.

This task can only be solved if we find the energy and the courage to urgently reform our institutions in line with the times.

The strength of our ideas, our 'soft power', is in demand more than ever.

P.S. This article only provides a rough snapshot and does not address individual specific points. It lays no claim to completeness.

Dr Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl
EPP, Germany (1989-2019)
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From left to right: The Hon. Kathy Manning, The Hon. Dennis Ross, moderator Sudha David-Wilp, FMA Member Ana Gomes and FMA Board Member Prof. Dr. Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

FORMER MEMBERS' NETWORK

FP-AP COUNCIL MEETING AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Council and, subsequently, the Assembly of the Association of Former Parliamentarians of the Member States of the Council of Europe (FP-AP) met on 21 February in Brussels with Filippo Lombardi, former Speaker of the Swiss Senate, in the Chair. I attended these meetings together with my colleague Miguel Ángel Martínez, representing the FMA. After the approval, as required by the Statutes, of the accounts for the 2024 and the budget for 2025, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Council would be held in Cyprus from 22 to 24 May, and the Colloquium-2025, which the association organises every year, in Saint-Malo, Brittany (France) from 18 to 20 September and which would address the challenges facing our oceans and their important role as a source of life and regulators of the planet's climate. Andorra submitted a proposal the Assembly to host the next meeting of the Council.

The Assembly meeting also debated the application for membership of the PF-AP of the Association of Former Parliamentarians of Ukraine and the recent developments in the war in that country. It was a very interesting debate in which the former Ukrainian MPs who had been invited to the meeting provided first-hand information on the state of affairs in their country and the prospects for achieving a stable and lasting peace in the near future. The participants in the debate unanimously expressed their solidarity with Ukraine, although they regretted that not all European countries were capable of speaking and acting as one in a negotiation process that could lead to a ceasefire and subsequently to a lasting peace between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, an essential step towards guaranteeing long-term security throughout Europe.

In line with the views expressed by European leaders, we as representatives of the FMA stated that it was essential for both Ukraine and the EU to be present in the peace negotiations. Trump's interest in Ukraine's considerable deposits of rare earths and essential raw materials was discussed, since its competitor China is a currently world leader in both the extraction and processing of these precious elements and dominates the world supply thereof. The USA's dependence on China for these materials is a concern to the Trump administration in both economic and national security terms. It would therefore appear that the USA could be interested in negotiating an agreement ensuring its permanent support for Ukraine in its war against Russia in exchange for a part of its valuable natural wealth. But Trump was not currently offering Zelenskyy sufficient security guarantees.

It was also stated that Washington wanted to ensure that any agreement it reached with Ukraine took priority over any obligations the country may have with other allies, including the EU, which they were trying to exclude from negotiations on the agreement. It was made clear that Ukraine was well aware that EU accession was the best way of guaranteeing its security, and it was also recalled that the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, had given assurances that its accession could even take place before the year 2030. Ukraine had also reiterated its interest in joining NATO, as this would be the only way to significantly improve arrangements for protecting its territory.

As representatives of the FMA, we explained that rare earths and critical raw materials are also essential for

achieving the EU's objectives in sectors such as IT, space, defence and renewable energy. Of the list of 34 critical raw materials listed is an annex in the Critical Raw Materials Act adopted in March 2024 by the European Council, Ukraine possesses 21, accounting for some 5% of the world's reserves.

We argued that Ukraine's natural wealth cannot be either be the spoils of war or the price this country must pay for peace any such line of thinking would run counter to the EU's founding principles and values and proposed that if these materials are essential for the progress of humanity, perhaps the sustainable and shared use of all the planet's resources should be guaranteed by a broad international agreement. It was also made clear that for Europe helping Ukraine does not mean increasing the defence spending of each of its countries, but rather acting as one and in a coordinated manner as Europeans.

The debate concluded with the commitment from the FP-AP to continue to follow closely the state of affairs in Ukraine and the association promised that it could, through the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy, play a role in the search for peace. Our activities in Brussels ended with an interesting visit to the House of European History, located in the Parc Léopold near the European Parliament. It was our former FMA president Hans-Gert Pöttering, European Parliament President between 2007 and 2009, who proposed establishing a House of European History as a place where the memory of European history and the work for European unification would be curated together, and which would provide resources to help current and future citizens to continue shaping the identity of Europe. Miguel Ángel Martínez, erstwhile European Parliament Vice-President and currently a member of the Management Committee of the FMA, also collaborated intensively on the project. We express our congratulations to the organisers of the whole event.

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Members of FP-AP at the General Assembly on 21 February 2025 in Brussels

FMA COLLABORATIONS

ODIHR CONFERENCE IN GDAŃSK

I was pleased to represent the Former Members' Association (FMA) at the annual review of ODIHR's election observation activities. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is an international body with its roots in the period of "détente", the thawing of the Cold War. Operating under the aegis of OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), ODIHR monitors human rights developments and undertakes election observation missions throughout Europe.

Many MEPs and former MEPs have participated in such election observation missions, as I have, mainly in the former Soviet bloc, the most recent being in Georgia last year.

ODIHR reports provide useful and basic evidence to check the progress of democratisation, particularly in countries which may be fairly described as being in transition, as well as checking more stable democracies.

The annual review was held in Gdansk, Poland at the end of last year. There could be no more fitting venue than the European Solidarity Centre in the former shipyard of Gdansk, where in 1980, the strike by shipyard workers quickly spread throughout Poland and established the right, for the first time in the Soviet Bloc, to establish truly independent trade unions.

Incidentally, I was in Poland at time celebrating my marriage to my Polish wife. The air was full of both excitement and yet incredulity that people's demand for freedom was actually succeeding.

It was also appropriate that the keynote address was delivered by Lech Walesa, who rose from shipyard activist, to Polish President and Nobel Peace Prize winner. Walesa's message was a timely warning against the rise of nationalist populism, now regrettably witnessed in all European countries as well as the USA. However, Walesa's address also struck a positive note by stressing that democracy must be a continuous process and not confined to voting every couple of years.

This point was underlined the following day by our excellent guide in the Solidarity Centre who wistfully reminded us those subsequent generations since 1980 need to learn that the democratic breakthrough as the Soviet system collapsed was achieved by sacrifice and collective action.

The day-to-day business of the conference was discussions of ways of learning from the experiences of election observation missions and how to increase participation in the democracy.

Justified concern was expressed that reports were often based on "tick-box" questionnaires which took a mechanical view, that if the correct procedures were followed in the election, then the election was "fair". The presence of observers' safeguards against obvious abuse, but their very presence often meant that real corruption, bribery and intimidation of voters took place before and after the arrival of the observers.

Serving MEPs have access to participation as ODIHR election observers; many have done so and will continue to do so.



FMA Board Member Michael Hindley at the ODIHR Conference in Gdańsk, Poland.

What we have to give thought to is how to draw FMA members into these missions. ODIHR offers possibilities for long-term observers (LTOs), for several weeks either side of the elections, these are the positions for which MEPs can be recruited.

But ODIHR also offers the chance to be short-term observer (STOs) who usually operate the immediate week before the election and attend the actual counting of votes. The possibility of opening up such activity to FMA members is something to which the Management Committee will give consideration in the near future.

Michael Hindley

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EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

FORMER MEMBERS ATTEND VERSAILLES MODEL UNITED NATIONS (VEMUN) 2025

LYCÉE FRANCO-ALLEMAND BUC & NOTRE DAME GRANDCHAMP VERSAILLES, FRANCE | 14-15 MARCH 2025 | IN PERSON

On March 14–15, members of the Former Members Association participated in the Versailles Model United Nations (VEMUN), an esteemed simulation of UN diplomacy. The event was jointly organized by Notre Dame Grandchamp in Versailles and Lycée Franco-Allemand in Buc, bringing together bright and motivated students from various schools. This year's conference provided an immersive platform for young participants to engage in debates on pressing global issues, refine their diplomatic skills, and gain a deeper understanding of international relations. The presence of four distinguished former members enriched the discussions, allowing students to interact with experienced policymakers and receive insights into real-world diplomacy.

Day 1: Opening Ceremony and Student Engagement

The conference commenced with a formal opening ceremony in Buc, setting the tone for the two-day event. During the ceremony, the four former members each delivered a three-minute speech, addressing the gathered students on the significance of international cooperation and negotiation in resolving contemporary challenges.

Following the speeches, a Q&A session allowed students to directly engage with the former members, posing thoughtful questions about their experiences in politics, European affairs, and international diplomacy. The informal mingling session that followed provided a relaxed atmosphere where students and former members could exchange ideas, share perspectives, and discuss their aspirations.

"The presence of four distinguished former members enriched the discussions, allowing students to interact with experienced policymakers and receive insights into real-world diplomacy."

The evening concluded with a communal dinner, fostering a spirit of connection and mutual engagement between the students and their esteemed guests. This gathering provided an opportunity for deeper, more personal conversations beyond the formalities of the conference, further enriching the students' experience.

Day 2: Committee Sessions and Crisis Resolution Exercise

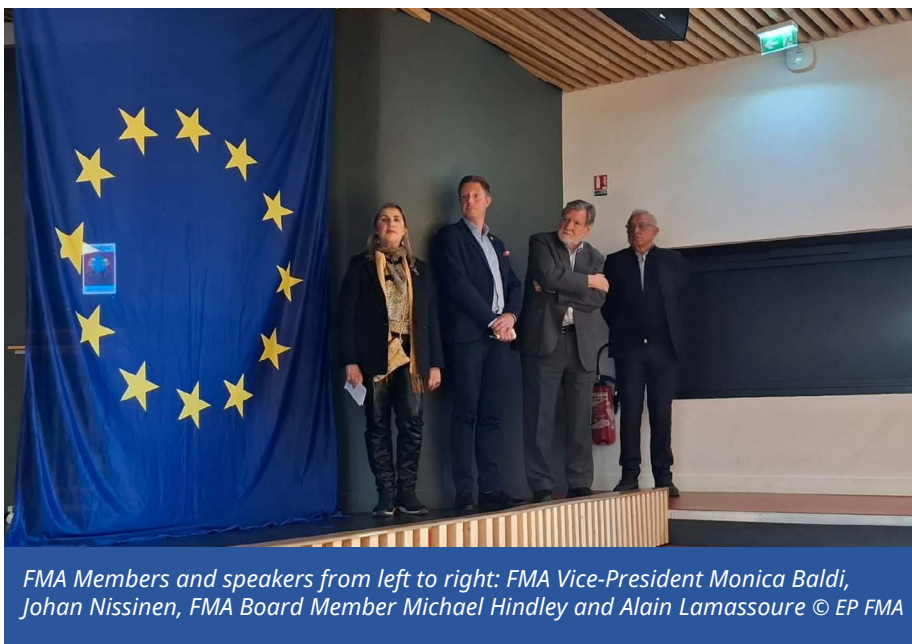
The second day saw the former members actively participating in committee sessions, engaging with student delegates as they debated various international issues. The committees tackled topics ranging from security and human rights to economic policy and disarmament.

Each student delegate represented a specific European country, demonstrating a commendable understanding of their nation's stance on the issues at hand. The level of preparation was exceptionally high, with students articulating well-researched arguments, defending their positions with confidence, and negotiating diplomatically.

A particularly challenging and dynamic part of the day was the crisis simulation exercise, where the former members introduced an unexpected international scenario that required students to quickly adapt, negotiate, and formulate a resolution under time pressure. The exercise tested their ability to think critically, compromise, and collaborate with representatives holding opposing views.



FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi with participating students © EP FMA



These discussions reflected real-world policy challenges, providing students with a nuanced understanding of international negotiations, legal frameworks, and ethical dilemmas.

The committee resolutions showcased the students' ability to balance idealism with pragmatic diplomacy, an essential skill for any future policymaker.

As the Former Members Association, we are honoured to have been a part of this incredible initiative and look forward to continuing to support the development of young leaders in international affairs.

FMA Members and speakers from left to right: FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi, Johan Nissinen, FMA Board Member Michael Hindley and Alain Lamassoure © EP FMA

The debates that followed were engaging and intellectually rigorous. Students demonstrated quick thinking, persuasive rhetoric, and even a touch of humour, keeping the discussions lively yet respectful.

Their ability to engage in constructive debate, navigate complex geopolitical tensions, and ultimately reach a consensus was truly impressive.

"The students' ability to engage in constructive debate, navigate complex geopolitical tensions, and ultimately reach a consensus was truly impressive."

Johan Nissinen
 ECR, Sweden (2022-2024)
 johan.nissinen@gmail.com

Committee Assignments and Topics
 Each former member participated in specific committees, offering guidance and insights on some of today's most pressing global issues:

- **Monica Baldi** (UNHRC):
The question of outsourcing immigration management
- **Michael Hindley** (Political Committee):
Negotiating a settlement in the Russian-Ukrainian War
- **Alain Lamassoure** (Disarmament and Security Committee):
The question of nuclear weapon disarmament
- **Johan Nissinen** (ECOSOC - CND):
Decriminalizing the possession of cannabis



FMA Members and Professors at the VEMUN Conference in Versailles © EP FMA

EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

EUROPEAN FISCAL POLICY: WELFARE, SOLIDARITY, AND COMPETITIVENESS

UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA, ITALY | 25 OCTOBER 2024 | IN PERSON

"Aula Volta", in the Central Palace of the University of Pavia. This is where the round table "European Fiscal Policy: Welfare, Solidarity, and Competitiveness" took place on 25 October. The beautiful Aula Volta (Alessandro Volta) today retains the configuration given to it by Leopoldo Pollack in the 18th century. It was built following a visit from Emperor Joseph II, who had complained a year earlier that the teaching of physics was not sufficiently dignified. Before that, there was still time to visit the University Library. It, too, was founded in the 18th century.

The topic of the debate meant that experts from different backgrounds and approaches were able to contribute. On the side of those who debated and contributed to the definition of the new economic governance framework, a regulation that came into force on 30 April this year. The European Parliament played a key role in making the previous framework more flexible; more democratic, with greater ownership by the member states. Giving member states more capacity for investment in key areas such as the climate and digital transitions, the European Pillar of Social Rights and Defence, and more time to adjust to the European debt and deficit rules determined by the EU Treaties.

At the same time, the new framework emphasises the social dimension in economic governance, with the creation of a "social convergence framework", which requires the identification of the risks of (non-) social convergence. These changes - we also proposed others, but the Member States in the Council did not accept them - are fundamental to promoting investment, economic growth and job creation, giving the EU greater competitiveness in the global context. Economic governance rules are necessary to detect early any economic imbalances that could weaken national economies or affect other EU countries and correct them if necessary. They are an important pillar of Economic and Monetary Union, which is still far from complete. On the side of the researchers or the recipients.

"Economic governance rules are necessary to detect early any economic imbalances that could weaken national economies or affect other EU countries and correct them if necessary."

The programme included an analysis of the role of solidarity in Economic and Monetary Union. There can be no sound public finances when the policies that led to them did not go hand in hand with the valorisation of solidarity and social rights. That's why we have strengthened the social dimension in the new framework, as I mentioned, with the creation of the social convergence framework. This presentation was given by Professor Giulio Peroni, professor at the Università degli Studi di Milano Statale, Jean Monnet Chair "FutmoFin". The debate on regional implications, introduced by Professor Fabio Zucca (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria), emphasised the role of the Structural Funds in this context. It should be remembered that in the assessment of the progress of the Member States, the co-financing of the Structural Funds (the national contribution) is not counted in the calculation of expenditure. This was also demanded by the European Parliament. And the role of think tanks, with Professor Raffaella Cinquanta, from the Università degli Studi di Pavia. The debate was organised and moderated by Professor Francesco Velo, from the Università Studi di Pavia.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of the Jean Monnet Chairs. These teachers are responsible for the Jean Monnet Chair programmes, where the European dimension is the common point. But I would also like to testify to the importance of the Association's European Parliament to Campus programme, an opportunity to debate the European Union from a Go Local perspective, while also listening to citizens' perceptions and feelings about the EU and European policies. In this case, young people.

Margarida Marques
S&D, Portugal (2019-2024)
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FMA Member Margarida Marques during her lecture at Pavia University in Italy
© Pavia University, Italy

REFLECTIONS ON AI AND EU LEGISLATION: MY EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO

UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO, SPAIN | 15 OCTOBER 2024 | ONLINE

After the honour of being an MEP comes a responsibility to continue contributing to the European project wherever we find ourselves in our lives. This tenth parliamentary term, I got to wear my former Member's 'badge' for the first time, and I'd like to thank the association for welcoming me and the assistance they provide with the transition into our new role.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate everyone on the work they do every day keeping us connected to the public, explaining the European project and addressing everyone's concerns – especially those of young people.

As part of the 'Artificial intelligence: key questions and challenges' project, I was able to take part in a conference organised by the University of Oviedo on 15 October to talk with students there about an undeniably topical issue: AI. There are many contexts in which we can talk about laws, but university classrooms are a place where passion for knowledge and curiosity about technology in the future connect with the need to understand the regulatory framework that is taking shape in Europe and the curiosity of younger generations who will live in the future we are shaping today.

AI has become a central feature of the EU's political agenda, not only because of its potential to transform industries, but also because of the ethical and social implications it entails. The AI Act put forward by the European Commission is designed to establish a regulatory framework that ensures these technologies are developed safely and ethically. I was lucky enough to have played a part in its approval in Parliament.

I began the conference by presenting the basic concepts of AI, explaining how it is being used in various applications, from virtual assistants to facial recognition systems. As technology progresses, so do the challenges posed by its use. Concerns about privacy, discrimination and a lack of transparency must not be ignored, and must instead be addressed in any legislation to be brought in. One of the central points in my presentation was the importance of regulation in AI. The EU's AI Act is intended to focus on risks by classifying AI applications into categories in line with their potential for harm. That strategy means stricter requirements can be set for higher-risk uses such as automated surveillance and decision-making in critical areas like health and justice.

It is fundamental, then, for students to understand that regulation is not an obstacle to innovation, but a framework that can drive more responsible and sustainable development. Interaction with the students was undoubtedly one of the most rewarding moments of the conference. The questions that arose were deep and thought-provoking. One group of students was particularly interested in the ethics of AI, asking about how to avoid biases in algorithms and how to ensure AI works fairly and equitably. Those young people, who will be future leaders in technology and politics, demonstrated a deep understanding of the complexity of the topic. During the discussion, we also touched on how important it was to have cooperation between sectors. The AI Act cannot be effective if it does not involve all relevant stakeholders, from technology developers to policymakers and civil society. Only through open and constructive dialogue can we strike the right balance between innovation and regulation.

I concluded with a reflection on Europe's role in worldwide AI regulation. The EU has the chance to set standards that could influence legislation in other regions, promoting an ethical and responsible approach to AI all over the world. It is a responsibility that must be taken seriously, as the decisions we make today will affect future generations. The AI Act is only the beginning of a journey that will require active participation by all sectors of society. That first experience with the 'Artificial intelligence: key questions and challenges' project was also the first step in my journey as a former Member.

Ana Collado Jiménez
EPP, Spain (2023-2024)
anacolladojimenez@icloud.com



Ana Collado Jiménez during her online lecture at Oviedo University, Spain

EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

THE EUROPEAN PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM: KEYS AND CONSEQUENCES

UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO, SPAIN | 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 | IN PERSON

Last July saw the end of my mandate as a Member of the European Parliament representing the Kingdom of Spain, and to my delight – thanks to the Association of Former Members – I learnt of the great opportunities that parliamentarians have to continue the work of educating citizens on the sensitive issues that are discussed and voted on in Parliament. Educating by publicising the basic facts of the issues and the different positions of the various political groups but, fundamentally, by providing as much information as possible in a way that is accessible to citizens, in order to build understanding of the what, the why and the wherefore of the European Union and its instruments of governance. In other words, educating our citizens, and particularly our young people, through truthful and transparent information.

During the term of office I had the honour of serving, I always considered it part of my duties to establish the closest possible links with citizens. For this reason, I greatly appreciated and valued the ‘Meet your MEP’ programme, the invitations to talks, conferences, debates and invitations from various media outlets. I was never disappointed by any of these experiences because, despite the diversity of the audiences, I always came away with the conviction that I had contributed in some way to

strengthening the idea and ideals of a Europe united in diversity, resolute and committed to the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

“Last July saw the end of my mandate as a Member of the European Parliament representing the Kingdom of Spain, and to my delight – thank to the Association of Former Members – I learnt of the great opportunities that parliamentarians have to continue the work of educating citizens on the sensitive issues that are discussed and voted on in Parliament.”

Looking back, I believe that such activities should be a compulsory part of the mandate of every Member of Parliament, as the distance between citizens and their representatives has grown significantly, with the dangerous result that citizens will lose faith in the system, becoming disillusioned and even seeking to

destroy that wonderful creation that is the European Union.

For all the above reasons, I am very happy to have received the request from our Association to accept the invitation from the University of Oviedo to give the inaugural master class to several hundred young people, as well as teaching staff and dignitaries, at the Gijón Campus. It was an opportunity to talk about the role of Parliament and the Commission in solving, or at least contributing to the solution of, the serious and delicate problem of immigration in Europe in recent years. I was asked to talk about the recently adopted Pact on Migration, which, as far as I could see, is very little understood by our citizens. I believe I was able to clarify some points of information about the need to establish complex agreements between different nations and the tolerance that is essential in order to deal with a flow of people that, far from decreasing, will increase, encouraged by the social instability prevailing in neighbouring countries. I do not wish to burden these lines with the content of the presentation or the questions that arose. I would just like to express my gratitude to our Association for having given me this opportunity to show that the end of a term of office does not mean the end of opportunities or of obligations as a politician committed to the task of promoting, consolidating and strengthening a Europe that is more integrated, more consolidated and a source of hope for its young people. I would also like to thank the authorities at the University of Oviedo for this initiative and their constant endeavour to instil a European outlook and a consequent commitment to this in their students.

Leopoldo López Gil

EPP, Spain (2019-2024)

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SCHUMAN TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMME

MOON LANDING IN BRUSSELS

I often compare my internship at the European Parliament to a moon landing. All the hard work I did during my studies, relentlessly striving to succeed to get one step further, and finally landing on the moon, being hired as a Schuman Trainee. I had heard tales of the European Parliament all my life, a planet that was present in our daily life, but that seemed so out of reach, a dream destination, a place where formidable achievements take place, the miniature stage where all the dramas of the world collide and transform into hopeful catharsis.

As I landed on the moon, I was feeling a little unsteady, as if I was learning to walk like a child all over again. At work, I was given new tasks, writing for the website, also for what we call "social" media, writing profiles of speakers for events, or writing minutes from meetings. Turns out, writing minutes does not mean writing down the time, but writing down what has been said during a meeting. The more you know.

The most formidable part of my journey at the European Parliament was to become aware of the



Former FMA Trainee Eleonore Raynal-Peceny in Strasbourg during the Schuman Traineeship programme.

universe around me. Meeting former MEPs every day. Attending the Management Committee meetings. Working with intelligent and kind colleagues. All sorts of stars, some close, some far away, surrounded me, some shining a light so bright that it would give me hope for the future, making me feel like the earth is a great place to live in after all. I was lucky enough to have seen my heroes, to know them close, to feel their warmth.

It also made me realize the extraordinary in the mundane. I attended the Sakharov Prize in Strasbourg. I was able to see Ms Metsola and the winners of the prize: María Corina Machado and Edmundo González Urrutia, as well as many MEPs. I felt incredibly admiring of their courage and saw that from close, they are human like the rest of us, but who faced the turmoil of the world with lucid and pragmatic hope, who acted on their values: democracy, human rights, and peace.

I not only admire politicians but also every single person who works at the Parliament, without whom the voice of the actors could never resonate through space. They are the people, those working in the administration, the cooks, and even the sports coaches, who make it a formidable place to live in. Would the European Union still be a beacon of peace if there was no respect between colleagues?

During my visit to Strasbourg, it became clear to me that the European project was born from humility. Humility after extraordinary violence. Imperialism, colonialism, and two world wars have ripped the European continent apart. It could not, then, be more symbolically powerful to have Simone Veil, a woman, a survivor of Auschwitz, as the first President of the European Parliament.

"During my visit to Strasbourg, it became clear to me that the European project was born from humility. Humility after extraordinary violence. Imperialism, colonialism, and two world wars have ripped the European continent apart. It could not, then, be more symbolically powerful to have Simone Veil, a woman, a survivor of Auschwitz, as the first President of the European Parliament."

It is that fragile bridge of peace above the Rhine River that we all strive to keep intact. We must not forget.

Now that I landed on the moon, I see that my destiny, and the destiny of all Europeans has still to be written, just like the building of the European Union is unfinished, open to expansion. The European project is not to be taken for granted and would fall apart if people stopped believing in democracy.

Wherever I will go, I will always take these values with me, like a roadmap. I am not afraid anymore, because I know I am not alone.

Eleonore Raynal-Peceny

FMA Schuman Trainee

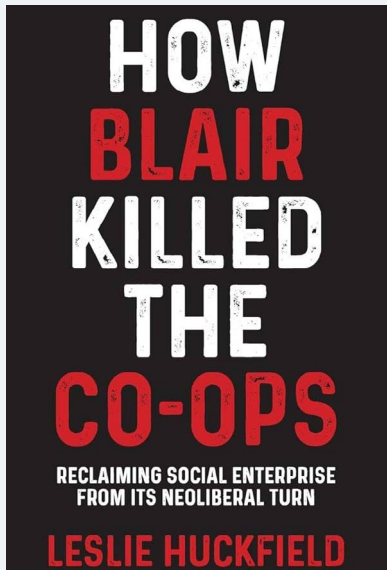
September 2024 - February 2025



HOW BLAIR KILLED THE CO-OPS

RECLAIMING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FROM ITS NEOLIBERAL TURN

by **Leslie Huckfield**, published by Manchester University Press



The PhD research of our former colleague Leslie Huckfield (Labour Party; European Parliament 1984-1989), now published by Manchester University Press in book form, is a remarkable work and should have received more attention earlier. Perhaps it did not attract our attention since it mainly addresses a wider development in the UK. Huckfield describes how the New Labour government of 1997 and 2001 under Tony Blair consciously created a political rupture with the wider traditional co-operative movement and its social enterprises, which were defined as 'trading organisations' that were 'set up, owned and controlled by the local community' and that aimed 'to create ultimately self-supporting jobs for local people'. The end of the last century witnessed the emergence of New Labour and the 'third way' for social democrats. Many of us will recall this terminology.

I remember our social democrat leader Wim Kok in the Netherlands who abandoned the basic principles of social democracy in favour of market liberalisation. Thatcher's aftershocks? Social democrats, including Labour in the UK, were trying to position themselves in a rapidly globalising world in which market liberalisation was key. The new concept of social enterprise neatly fitted the New Labour policy discourses of 'reform'. Labour used regulation to shift from democratically controlled and managed co-operatives with mutual structures, of which there were thousands in the UK, 'towards individually controlled and more malleable "social enterprises"' in order to create 'flexible, low-cost public service delivery' – a new legal structure with less accountability.

In 1976, the UK still had 123 000 original social enterprises (co-operatives), of which only 3 % had an annual revenue of more than GBP 10 000. Existing funding was not provided directly to local communities but was mainly subject to negotiation between the state and the market via trade unions and representative democratic institutions. The regulators must have been blind to what thousands of people did locally, for free, for society. Under the new labour approach, the value of what people did for their communities was marketized and became a product for what were still called 'social enterprises'. How cynical. Huckfield argues that in fact they became private

enterprises with profit making as their main goal. Huckfield, who studied the period of change, notes that the original co-operatives or their representative organisations were ignored in the creation of these new social policies.

Huckfield briefly discusses differences between policy changes in mainland Europe and the United States that make it hard to draw comparisons with developments in the UK: 'North American approaches make no mention of social causes or needs and instead focus on "actors" and "key attributes of social entrepreneurs" as if there are no other participants in social welfare'. Huckfield heavily criticises existing, mainly UK-based, studies: 'For nearly 20 years UK contributions on social enterprise and third sector development have been dominated by the market'. Huckfield argues there was (and is) 'a much wider definition of the social economy and solidarity approaches in mainland Europe'. I hope he is right. However I wonder if he is too optimistic about Europe, despite its differences from the UK. Yet there is hope. The co-operative movement is growing worldwide. In the EU, most co-operatives exist in Italy, Spain and France. Huckfield should write a shorter version of his book for non-academic readers. I will place his book on my bookshelf alongside Thomas Piketty's famous *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

Dr Maartje van Putten
PES, Netherlands (1989-1999)
globalaccountability.mvp@xs4all.nl

IN MEMORIAM



Marie-Christine AULAS

☞ 29 June 2024
Greens/EFA, France (1989-1991)

She served as a French Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Ms Aulas represented *Les Verts-Europe-Ecologie*.



Alain POMPIDOU

☞ 12 December 2024
UFE (1989-1999), France

He served as a French Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Pompidou represented *Rassemblement pour la République*.



Mircea DIACONU

☞ 14 December 2024
ALDE, Romania (2014-2019)

He served as a Romanian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Diaconu represented *Independent*.



Federico MAYOR ZARAGOZA

☞ 19 December 2024
NA (1987), Spain

He served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Mayor Zaragoza represented *Centro Democrático y Social*.



Miet SMET

☞ 19 December 2024
EPP-ED, Belgium (1999-2004)

She served as a Belgian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Ms Smet represented *Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams*.



Jean-Marie LE PEN

☞ 7 January 2025
NA (1984-2019), France

He served as a French Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Le Pen represented *Front national*.



Jean J.M. PENDERS

☞ 19 January 2025
EPP, Netherlands (1979-1994)

He served as a Dutch Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Penders represented *Christen Democratisch Appèl*.

IN MEMORIAM



Mateo SIERRA BARDAJÍ

☞ 1 February 2025

PES (1986-1994), Spain

He served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Sierra Bardají represented *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*.



Mauro NOBILIA

☞ 9 February 2025

UEN, Italy (1999-2004)

He served as an Italian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Nobilia represented *Alleanza nazionale*.

In Memoriam - Alain Pompidou

I was a contemporary of Alain Pompidou as a Member of the European Parliament and was sorry to learn of his death. In the 1990's we were not then in the same political group. I sat with the British Conservatives who had only recently joined the EPP Group whilst Alain was a leading member of the European Democratic Alliance dominated by the French Gaullists or RPR. I think for reasons of where our surnames were in the alphabet we found ourselves sitting relatively closely in the Parliament chamber and would regularly exchange pleasantries.

I worked well with French colleagues and used to reflect the political parties of the right, had a harder task coming together than those of the left. Put very simply "Workers of the world unite" has an international resonance, whilst parties of the right will have a deep feeling for their national tradition and identity. The Christian democracy of Germany and the Benelux has little resonance in either France or Britain where we traditionally keep religion out of politics.

It says much for the pragmatism and vision of Alain Pompidou as well as for his father that just as President Pompidou recognised the pesky British merited a place in Europe, despite General De Gaulle's former understandable reservations, so Alain in his time worked to bring the Gaullists into the centre right grouping of the EPP.

I accept it is wrong and dangerous to generalise but as a Francophile I always found we British and our French neighbours to be exact opposites and the same at the same time - We are both proud nations with a long history of nationhood and former empires, of much the same size population and similar economies. The average Frenchman (and woman) however will think carefully, analyse and conclude the great fortune in life was to be born French. The average Brit without a moment's thought or analysis will know being born British is best.

1998 marked the 25th Anniversary of Britain having joined the European Community in 1973, when one of my political heroes, Edward Heath, had signed the accession treaty. As far I was aware, nothing was being done in 1998 either in the Parliament or indeed anywhere in the UK to mark that 25th Anniversary.

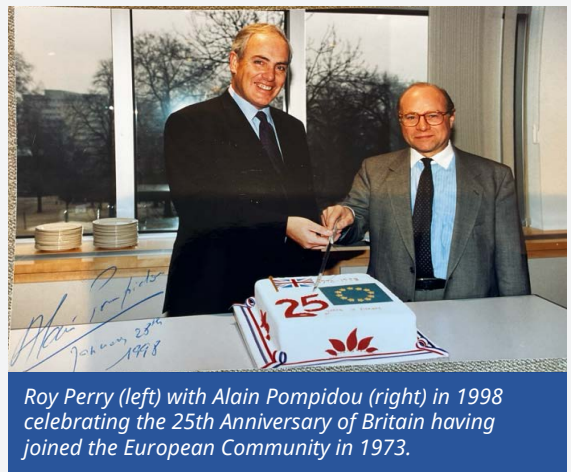
So, I commissioned an anniversary cake, baked and decorated by students of the city college in Southampton where I was MEP and had formerly lectured in Politics. I asked Alain, if he as the son of President Georges Pompidou, would cut the cake to mark those 25 years of peace and growing prosperity. We held a very small and typically British "tea party" as opposed to a "vin d'honneur" to mark 25 years. What a pity we did not make it to 50.

Thank you Alain. Vive La Différence. Vive l'Entente Cordiale.

Roy Perry

PES, United Kingdom (1994-2004)

roy.perry123@btinternet.com



Roy Perry (left) with Alain Pompidou (right) in 1998 celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Britain having joined the European Community in 1973.

SECURITY AND DEFENCE



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SECURITY AND DEFENCE: THE NEW DRIVER OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

During the European Commission's 2019-2024 mandate, the European Union made a qualitative leap in terms of what security and defence means. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has certainly been a powerful incentive, but the Strategic Compass and the Rapid Deployment Capacity were already in motion before Putin's war started. The Compass has helped us identify threats, set some targets (strategic autonomy, resilience) and determine how to achieve those targets, including by improving CSDP missions and by forming the Rapid Deployment Capacity with its 5 000 troops (which should be operational in 2025). Meanwhile, the 2023 Capability Development Plan defines capabilities and establishes 22 priorities categorised as land, maritime, air, space, cyber or strategic enablers. In addition, 2024 saw the completion of the strategic revision of the projects under the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence.

"In total, European aid (from both the EU and Member States), including budgetary and financial support, has reached EUR 140 billion."

In any case, in light of this new geopolitical state of affairs, it is undeniable that the EU has grown in its role as a security provider, including in its ability to react to situations. It has taken unprecedented steps such as mobilising the European Peace Facility to provide aid to the tune of EUR 11 billion to a war-torn third country. As a result, it has been able to fund the supply of arms to Ukraine and the latter has been better positioned to stand up to the aggression.



European Defence Agency © Adobe Stock

Furthermore, the European Defence Agency played a key role in the joint procurement of 155 mm artillery rounds, which were both supplied to Ukraine and used to replenish Member States' stockpiles. In total, European aid (from both the EU and Member States), including budgetary and financial support, has reached EUR 140 billion (more than that of the United States).

We have also established a military training mission, which has trained 60 000 Ukrainian soldiers over a two-year period. Over the course of the war, the Council of the EU has approved up to fifteen packages of sanctions (diplomatic, trade, individual, etc.) to squeeze the Russian economy – and therefore Putin's military machinery – to the utmost. Accordingly, we have considerably reduced European consumption of oil and Russian gas, at least by gas pipeline.

The sixteenth package of sanctions, currently being hammered out, will, among other things, clamp down on Russia's shadow fleet of tankers.

The EU has also been at the forefront of confiscating revenues generated from frozen Russian assets and loaning these funds to Ukraine for its defence and reconstruction. At the time of writing, negotiations instigated by the EU and the Council of Europe to create an international tribunal to judge the crime of aggression against Ukraine are in their final stages. With Trump's return to the White House, there is a significant question mark over whether the US will continue to support a beleaguered Ukraine.

However, no matter what happens, Europe must continue and increase its military support to Ukraine (including by lifting the restriction preventing EU arms from being used on Russian territory), the reason being that Putin's aggression also threatens the security of all Europeans.

We must learn from this conflict and use our conclusions to inform CSDP medium-term planning. It is clear that we must relaunch the EU defence industry, in terms of its production capacity as well as in the development and joint procurement of capabilities.

Military spending is rising to levels not seen since the Cold War – but we need to invest better, together and in Europe. EU Member States invest in defence one third of what the United States does, but our capacities amount to only around 10 % of those of the US.

According to the European Defence Agency, this lack of cooperation leads to a loss of at least EUR 25 billion a year. As a result, we need a shared focus that includes research into, as well as development and joint acquisition of, weapons systems in all areas.

The EU budget and the European Investment Bank, along with the creation of a Defence Bank and a shared borrowing (Eurobonds), could act as a catalyst for this coordinated investment.

Josep Borrell Fontelles

*Former President of the European Parliament and former High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
PES, Spain (2004-2009)*

Domènec Ruiz Devesa

*S&D, Spain (2019-2024)
domenec.devesa@gmail.com*

“Military spending is rising to levels not seen since the Cold War – but we need to invest better, together and in Europe. EU Member States invest in defence one third of what the United States does, but our capacities amount to only around 10% of those of the US.”

The planning and production of defence products is still very fragmented along national lines, which results in gaps in some areas, duplication in others, interoperability problems (the EU has twelve types of tanks to the US’ one), dependency on foreign imports, and inefficient spending.



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EU'S DEFENSE ARCHITECTURE IN ACTION – FUTURE STEPS

At the FMA Annual Seminar in the European Parliament on the 4th of December 2024, speakers presented views on the topic “EU Security and Defence: Emerging Threats and Strategies for a Resilient Future”. The constellation of the current European defence and security architecture was described along with the agreement that Europe is at a critical juncture for defence. The stakes in an increasingly complex defence environment are high, and Europe risks being militarily vulnerable. Additionally, the EU's defence has weakened despite an overall increase in defence expenditures.

The speeches underscored the fragmentation and duplication of similar defence products. The panellists stressed that the European Commission must cooperate with the European Defence Agency and Member States in not only identifying threats, but also the countermeasures, in complementary fashion.

In addition, the discussion highlighted the importance of the “White Paper on the Future of European Defence”. that President von der Leyen jointly entrusted to the new European Commission Defence and Space Commissioner, Andrius Kubilius, and the HR/VP Kaja Kallas.

“The panellists stressed that the European Commission must cooperate with the European Defence Agency and Member States in not only identifying threats, but also the countermeasures, in complementary fashion. In addition, the discussion highlighted the importance of the “White Paper on the Future of European Defence.”



*François Arbault as speaker at the FMA 2024 Annual Seminar
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The Paper will provide suggestions on how to prepare, deter, and defend Europe against the most extreme military contingencies. Recent threat assessments have demonstrated that Russia may test the resolve of the EU or NATO by the end of the decade.

In a rather sobering assessment, it was outlined that Russia's current six-month industrial capacity for military products exceeds any Member State's entire hardware inventory. Despite the current focus on the immediate threat of war in Ukraine, the panellists stressed that European defence encompasses a multitude of dimensions, from maritime security and links to trade policy as well as the European Single Market.

Furthermore, DG Defence Industry and Space Director François Arbault in his intervention laid out Commissioner Kubilius's three main building blocks for military preparedness.



*Panellist at the FMA 2024 Annual Seminar. From left to right: C. N. Abel Romero Junquera, Jürgen Meindl, François Arbault, Klaus Hänsch, FMA Secretary-General Elisabetta Fonck and FMA Member Edit Herczog.
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Firstly, conjoint Union and Member State' unprecedented financial and military support to Ukraine may need to rise out of potentially decreased US support to Ukraine due to political shifts. The best investment in European security is investing in the security of Ukraine.

Secondly, meeting the capability requirement targets set by NATO would require significant industrial, financial and technical efforts from Member States.

Commissioner Kubilius advocates an ambitious approach, which could be translated to an industry output plan to close common capability gaps through an increase of the EU defence industry's production capacities, defining clear targets and timelines. Therefore, an agreement to jointly and immediately procure the necessary defence equipment is necessary. For the industry, this would result in a clearer picture of the aggregated demand for potential future contracts, facilitating investment decisions.

Thirdly and crucially, the previous two building blocks must be underpinned by sound financing. A lack of industrial production output is ascribed to financing deficits. The Draghi Report alone estimated that an additional 500 billion USD EUR will be needed over the next decade to plug defence capability shortfalls.

Innovative financing options must be unlocked already in 2025 and a key to instigate an income of investments will be to convince the European Investment Bank and private banks to review their policies and invest in European defence companies.



"Commissioner Kubilius advocates an ambitious approach, which could be translated to an industry output plan to close common capability gaps through an increase of the EU defence industry's production capacities, defining clear targets and timelines."

The panel included Klaus Hänsch, the President of the FMA, Riho Terras, MEP and Vice-Chair of European Parliament's Subcommittee on Security and Defence, Captain Abel Romero Junquera, analyst at the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Jürgen Meindl, the Austrian Ambassador to NATO, François Arbault, Defence Coordinator in DG DEFIS. The concluding remarks were provided by Edit Herczog, former MEP.

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NAVIGATING STORMY WATERS – THE EU AS A PROVIDER OF MARITIME SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Currently, the European security and defence landscape is monopolised both by the fears arising from the war in Ukraine and by the uncertainty in relation to the new American administration and its consequences for the defence of European territory.

Without detracting from this reality, we must emphasise that Europe depends on the sea for its economy and progress, and that it is therefore very directly affected by maritime geopolitics. With 90% of the EU's external trade being done by sea, the security of maritime routes and spaces is vital for Europe's prosperity and security. The freedom of navigation, which we sometimes take for granted, is crucial for the EU.

"With 90% of the EU's external trade being done by sea, the security of maritime routes and spaces is vital for Europe's prosperity and security."



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C. N. Abel Romero Junquera during his intervention at the 2024 FMA Annual Seminar © European Union 2024 - Source : EP

Mahan, the father of maritime geopolitics, linked the progress and power of a nation to its ability to trade. He argued that it was necessary to have an entrepreneurial population (producing goods), a merchant fleet to trade, and a navy tasked with protecting it and ensuring freedom of navigation. Over the last 100 years, the United States, a global maritime hegemonic power, has adhered to this doctrine faithfully.

The current geopolitical scenario presents us with a multipolar world where American hegemony is in decline and multilateralism – part of the EU's DNA – is losing prominence. We are witnessing a return to the competition between major powers, and both China and Russia seek to change the current order to align it with their interests.

They seek to amend legal norms such as the UNCLOS Convention on the Law of the Sea, so that maritime regions where geopolitical tension is growing

– such as the South China Sea (SCS) or the Arctic – are becoming priority arenas for the EU.

China aims to control the SCS, citing historical reasons, wishing both to exploit its huge resources and to control navigation through these waters, through which 40 % of the EU's external trade passes. Its undeniable entrepreneurial capacity is being complemented with a major merchant fleet (its shipbuilding accounts for more than half of the tonnage worldwide), and a navy, which is already the second largest in the world after the US Navy. This is the Mahan doctrine at its purest.

The melting of Arctic ice is allowing access to energy and mineral resources, and the use of hitherto impassable sea routes. Russia aims to 'control' the freedom of navigation on the northeast route, including by 'reviewing' the rules currently in force (UNCLOS).

"The current geopolitical scenario presents us with a multipolar world where American hegemony is in decline and multilateralism – part of the EU's DNA – is losing prominence."

In this scenario, the EU, an entrepreneurial power and home to the biggest shipping companies globally, lacks the capacity to protect maritime routes, a fact which has not really been a matter of particular concern to either Brussels or other European capitals in recent decades.

The European Security Strategies and the Strategic Compass, which highlight the EU's role as a global actor, barely address maritime challenges.

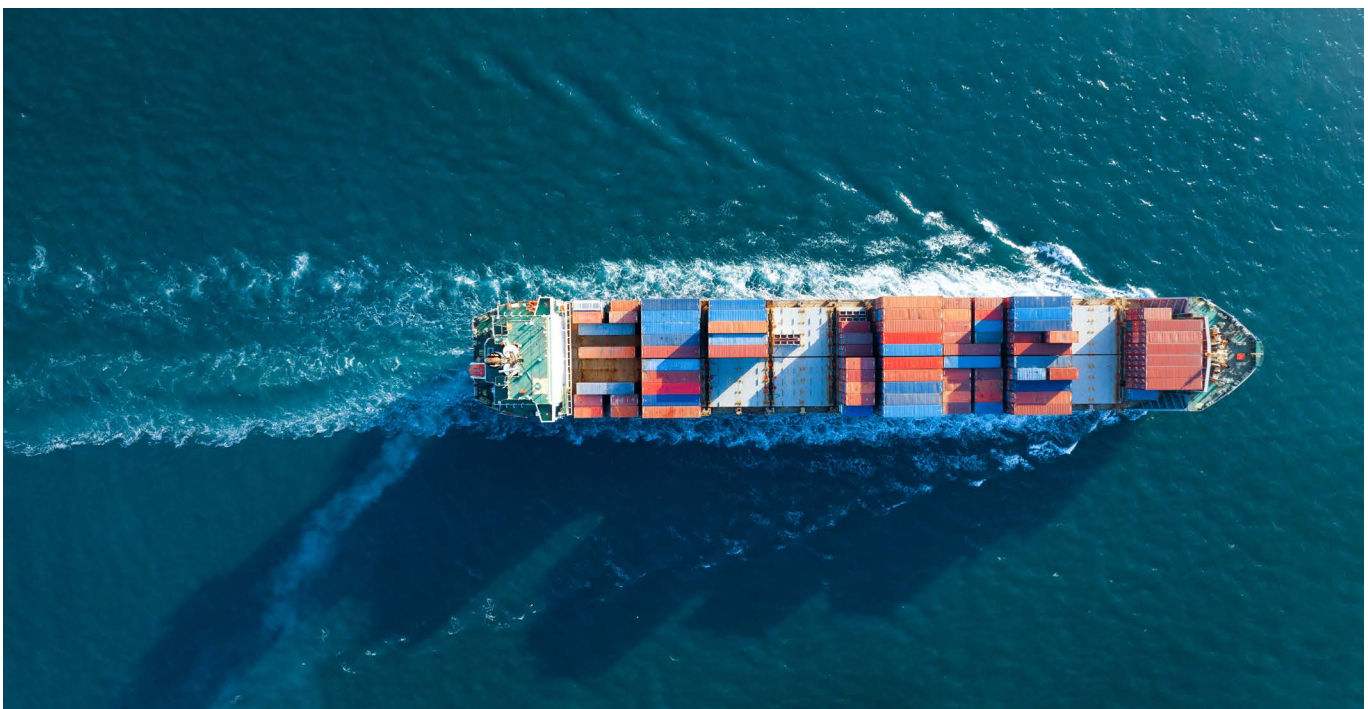
Moreover, the EU Maritime Security Strategy, in which the EU defines itself as a global maritime security

provider, focuses essentially on policing missions and non-state threats (piracy, illicit trafficking, terrorism), but not on the new geopolitical reality including state-based threats.

The recently adopted strategies for the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic also fail to address current geopolitical challenges, possibly due to a lack of both political will (consensus among capitals) and capability (insufficient naval resources).

In the debate that is currently unfolding in Europe on security and defence, maritime challenges and threats – in particular state-based threats to freedom of navigation – should be a priority. Europe must contribute to the security of maritime routes and prevent a scenario in which unilateral actions by revisionist powers catch the EU – currently lacking the capacity to respond – off guard.

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EU SECURITY POLICY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A NEUTRAL EU MEMBER STATE

On 1 January 2025, Austria celebrated 30 years of EU membership and 30 years of partnership with NATO. I would like to take this opportunity to share some views with you.

Neutrality played a central role in many European countries in the past and continues to do so – not only in Austria.

Austria's defence policy and security policy are pieces in the jigsaw puzzle that is the hotchpotch made up of a host of European defence strategies. I have deliberately used the plural there, given that there are still many military traditions alongside NATO and the process of establishing a SINGLE European security policy.

NATO is back in demand. But for how long? That is, of course, uncertain. Just as it is uncertain in what form NATO or the EU will help determine the new global security architecture.

But one thing is certain. There is little place for dogmas in strategies. They prevent more flexible approaches from being taken and leave failure and disappointment in their wake.

Just as the military neutrality of Austria is part of its constitution, 'muddling through' political crises has also been part of our political reality since the 19th century. Austria is an amalgamation of options that should not really exist. And if I now say that I fear the EU has become a little 'Austrianised' as a result of its enlargements, then I think that's a good thing. There is a charm to pure articles of faith that is also inherent in immutable doctrines.

It actually feels good, in the short term, to be one of the chosen ones. The failures that come from that do not feel good.

Some have paid for that with their lives! The West's centuries-long dominance has been considerably weakened over the last 25 years.

"Just as the military neutrality of Austria is part of its constitution, 'muddling through' political crises has also been part of our political reality since the 19th century. Austria is an amalgamation of opinions that should not really exist."

Neutrality must not be confused with passivity. Neutrality does not mean not taking a stand either. More than 25 000 Austrian soldiers have taken part, or are taking part, in NATO missions – in Kosovo, in Afghanistan or, as at present, in Iraq.

Since 2006, over 40 000 Austrian soldiers have been involved in international operations.

Europe's share of the global economy is now much smaller than it used to be. As a result of these developments, security policy needs to be rethought.

Europe is under enormous pressure. We have to relearn how to think strategically in the longer term; we have to countenance existing strategies and ideas and put them into practice.



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Because without reforms – and they may well be painful – things will not work out.

In the EU, as well as in NATO, we should also relearn how to meet each other halfway, even if our positions differ – how to discuss matters with each other, how to listen to each other.

"In the EU, as well as in NATO, we should also relearn how to meet each other halfway, even if our positions differ – how to discuss matters with each other, how to listen to each other."

Self-criticism is definitely needed here; and that goes for the European Commission too. A bit more realism would not go amiss either.

Leadership is needed. More courage! We need to be more on the front foot instead of on the back foot.

And, above all, we need unity: if we do not make that concerted effort now – despite all our differences – then, regrettably, the critics and sceptics will be proven right. One example of successful crisis management by the EU and NATO has to do with our continent directly. A new security architecture has been established in the Balkans. It is fragile, to be sure, but the region is not as much of a killing field as it once was. The situation remains tense, but many Western Balkan countries are now members of NATO or the EU (or want to join).



*Jürgen Meindl during his intervention at the 2024 FMA Annual Seminar
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The European Union is still somewhere that those in the 'waiting room' yearn to be part of. Given, however, that accession for those states is being put back further and further, the balance is constantly shifting and historic opportunities might be missed. Unless we act quickly and courageously in the Western Balkans, while acknowledging the shortcomings there are in those countries, we risk losing another generation. Other powers are already at the door and will take our place.

We must succeed in linking the notion of tangible freedom to that of security. And we must not allow freedom and security to be viewed as mutually antagonistic in society. But we must also make it clear that freedom means more than being able to choose between a wide range of goods in supermarkets and lead a comfortable life.

We must make use of the present crises and wars to engage in investment, courageous and rapid reforms and interventions, and diplomacy.

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A MUCH-NEEDED WAKE-UP CALL ON THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF DEFENCE POLICY



AFET SEDE - Exchange of views with Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO on 13 January 2025 in the European Parliament © European Union 2025 - Source : EP

For years, decades even, defence matters have been afforded scant attention in the European Parliament. Initially absent from a European project focused on economic, industrial and trade matters, they were only tackled at the turn of the millennium, with great caution and a certain degree of reluctance, through the creation of a Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) within the Foreign Affairs Committee.

This parliamentary downgrading of defence was not entirely illegitimate, given the fundamentally intergovernmental nature of defence policies. The timid 'European Security and Defence Policy' (ESDP), which was launched in 1999 and which subsequently became the more ambitious 'Common Security and Defence Policy' in 2009, gave a prominent role to national governments in its formulation and implementation, despite the growing importance of coordination mechanisms under the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

However, the Member States' touchiness on such an eminently sovereign matter is not the only factor that has for too long drawn Parliament's attention elsewhere. As a political assembly reflecting the concerns of citizens and the priorities of political groups, the European Parliament has merely reflected the relative indifference of our public opinion and leaders towards all geopolitical issues during the years of peace on our continent. Foreign policy was essentially considered only through a moral lens and in terms of the defence of universal values, without any real desire to contemplate more brutal power relations, let alone high-intensity armed conflicts. European defence policy itself is also largely based on a concept of 'crisis management', which is far removed from the nature of the wars we are facing today.

Without any real powers and kept at a distance from the decision-making process, the Members of the European Parliament – with a few rare exceptions – have not been encouraged to develop any real expertise on defence issues. Participation in the subcommittee remained relatively low-key until very recently, and the texts presented there have been rather inconsistent, ranging from grand declarations of principle that were essentially unworkable to more sophisticated reports that nonetheless had no real impact on the decision-making circles of the Member States. The parliamentary dimension of European defence policy remained trapped in the vicious circle of lack of powers, disinterest of elected representatives, and contempt of national decision-makers.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, we have therefore been experiencing a real revolution in the literal sense of the word, as not a single plenary session of the European Parliament since that date has not had defence, either directly or indirectly, as its main topic.

From the transfer of military equipment to Ukraine to the financing of the European defence industry, including all aspects of the protection of our critical infrastructure, all Community instruments have been mobilised to respond to this new geopolitical landscape.

“European defence policy itself is also largely based on a concept of 'crisis management', which is far removed from the nature of the wars we are facing today.”

Parliament has had to keep up with this proliferation in the number of subjects on which it was hitherto unaccustomed to expressing an opinion.

This profound change, rooted in the continuing deterioration of our strategic environment, must impel the European Parliament to evolve. Indeed, the transformation from subcommittee to fully fledged Committee on Security and Defence is not merely symbolic. This fundamental change must be accompanied, in practical terms, by the handling of more legislative texts that were until now entrusted to other parliamentary committees.

“Lastly, the reports and opinions (of SEDE) will have to be realistic, workable and capable of demonstrating that they are not mere collections of lofty intentions with no impact on policies because they are too disconnected from the decision-makers.”

The elected representatives sitting on the new SEDE Committee must also make this commitment a priority, in terms of time dedicated to it and expertise acquired.

Lastly, the reports and opinions will have to be realistic, workable and capable of demonstrating that they are not mere collections of lofty intentions with no impact on policies because they are too disconnected from the decision-makers. This is a very important endeavour on which Parliament’s credibility in this new field of competence will depend.

If it is to become a real player in defence policies and make itself heard and respected, institutional power struggles and grandstanding will not be enough.

It is through the soundness of their recommendations and their votes, based on a clear awareness not only of the gravity of the situation,

but also of the necessary institutional balances, that European Parliamentarians will gain the trust of the citizens, the Member States and the Commission.

Several initiatives, particularly on defence industrial policy, will soon give Parliament the opportunity to show that it has a full grasp of these new challenges.

A new era is dawning, and it is up to our committed colleagues to rise to the challenge!

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BE DEFENCE READY TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE

The FMA Annual seminar held on the 4th of December was both comprehensive and timely, outlining the political and military challenges which lay ahead.

The Seminar was opened by Klaus Hänsch, President of the FMA and Former President of the European Parliament, who reminded the audience of the EU's purpose of securing peace and prosperity for its Member States and citizens. For a long time, this was secured through peace missions and peace-building instruments, leaving military and defence issues to NATO and the Member States themselves.

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis

Following the opening by the President, three distinguished speakers spoke to the changing times and how we also are changing with them. Yet, the speakers set the dawn of change at different dates. MEP Riho Terras, Vice-Chair of the SEDE from Estonia had a view that we live in a new reality as from 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia, while the other speakers placed the starting date to 2014 with the Annexation of Crimea, or even February 2022 the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In this context, the European Parliament has been a "canary in the coal mine" as MEPs, including Hans-Gert Pöttering, former President of the European Parliament called for action many years ago. This resulted in the establishment of the Security and Defence sub-committee in the European Parliament in 2014, elevated into a full-fledged Committee in January 2025.



Another FMA member, Robert Goebbels, argued for a new "Helsinki Conference" in the 69th FMA Bulletin already in 2019. As the starting date of the new dawn was up for debate, opinions over the timeliness, scope and scale of the EU's response also differed. MEP Riho Terras emphasised the importance of preparedness and explained the difference between political and military terms and attitudes.

Another distinguished speaker, Mr C. N. Abel Romero Junquera, Captain and Analyst of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE) of the Spanish Ministry of Defense, explained to the audience the need for significant investment to strengthen the EU as a global maritime security and defence provider in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions. He argued that we all have a false perception of proximity and distance.

"The European Parliament has been a 'canary in the coal mine' as MEPs, including Hans-Gert Pöttering, former President of the European Parliament called for action many years ago."

Politicians are about mitigating risks, while the military is obliged to prepare for the worst-case scenarios. Their perception of preparedness differs. As a rapporteur, he gave insights about a Resolution on Critical technologies for Security and Defence.

The South China Sea is in fact very near if we think about a potential rupture to trade between the EU and Asia. Meanwhile, we continuously witness incidents in the Baltic Sea to energy and digital undersea infrastructures.

Mr Jürgen Meindl, Austrian Ambassador to NATO, highlighted the strategic relevance of common EU action for all countries, but especially Austria, which is Member State but is not member of NATO. He explained the challenge of adjusting the societal discourse around neutrality and called for strengthening the EU's Strategic Autonomy while upholding NATO Unity.

Today, the EU has three commonly shared targets: support Ukraine; purchase ammunition (ASAP); and support European Defence Industry. Within the current mandate, the intention is to shape EU response within the Treaty limitations and budgetary constraints. The presentations were followed by an exchange of views with many questions and remarks from the audience.

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“Today, the EU has three commonly shared targets: support Ukraine; purchase ammunition (ASAP); and support European Defence Industry. Within the current mandate, the intention is to shape EU response within the Treaty limitations and budgetary constraints.”

Finally, François Arbault, Defense Coordinator at the European Commission's Directorate General for Defense Industry listed the Commission's actions since 2014, following President Juncker's Statement that the EU has to stand on its own. In preparation to the current MFF, the European Defence Fund was set up in 2017 and civilian security research included under Horizon Europe.

I had the privilege to make some closing remarks. I emphasized that the inclination for the EU to not hear; see; nor say is no longer possible. It is time to be defence ready to maintain the peace including by leveraging our Single Market.



Panelist of the 2024 FMA Annual Seminar © European Union 2025 - Source : EP



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