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The following recommendations are the outcome of the “1st Vienna Peace & Security Talks” held on September 9th, 2019 in Vienna. Around 30 experts from Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, USA, Lebanon and Cyprus discussed the future of a common EU Foreign & Security Policy. The talks have been organized by the International Institute for Peace (IIP), the Karl-Renner Institut, the FES Regional Office for Cooperation and Peace in Europe and the University of Vienna.

1st Vienna Peace & Security Talks

The European security order that was established after the end of the Cold War is under threat. The rivalry between NATO and Russia has reached an unprecedented level. Not least as a consequence of the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing military conflict in Donbass, Russia is perceived as an aggressor, in particular by Central and Eastern European states. The EU and the Russian Federation have imposed sanctions on each other. In addition, the termination of the INF treaty is likely to enhance a new weapons technology race by nuclear powers.

In the eyes of many Europeans, the USA under Donald Trump have become a factor of insecurity. His criticism of NATO, EU, and multilateralism in general led to increased calls for more European independency, also in security policy matters.

Even more worrying is the situation in Europe’s southern and south-eastern neighbourhood. The challenges and conflicts are almost countless, such as the collapse of Libya, the civil war in Syria, the war in Yemen, the permanent threat of escalation between Israel and the Hamas, and the danger of war in the Persian Gulf.

All these developments clearly illustrate that the EU sorely needs a real common foreign and security policy. Until now, however, the EU has often not been able to speak with one voice in many foreign policy matters, due to the conflicting interests of the member states and due to a lack of strategic conceptions. The result is that, e.g. in the Middle East, European interests are not sufficiently preserved.

The EU must formulate a clear and concise strategy for its relationship with its neighbors which goes beyond resilience and which includes what the EU can offer best, a vision which builds upon democracy, freedom, peace, (economic) cooperation and common principles.

Such a policy must be neither only value-oriented nor only led by interests. The EU must not refrain from expressing openly and vocally concerns about violations of human rights. Yet, these concerns must not prevent the EU from enhancing political, economic and environmental interests and needs.

General Recommendations:

- **Vision:** The EU must formulate a clear and concise strategy for its relationship with the countries in its neighborhood, which goes beyond resilience and which includes what the EU can offer best, namely a vision which builds upon democracy, freedom, peace, (economic) cooperation and common principles. Rivalries can be transformed into cooperation and defense of common interests – this can be made visible by demonstrating its own evolutionary history.
- **Comprehensive Approach:** The EU must combine all its external competences and capacities including trade, development and sustainability policies towards a more streamlined and efficient strategy towards its neighbors.
- **Efficiency:** The EU does not need more defense spending but more efficiency through closer cooperation between member countries and between the EU and NATO. Importantly, the EU always has to give priority to the civil and preventive side of its external policies. Exactly for this reason, the EU must also speak to adversaries and invite them to accompany the European peace project.
- **Inclusiveness:** The EU must overcome internal differences and clear the way for a forward-looking peace policy in Europe, inviting all European countries to contribute to security and stability.
- **Goal oriented:** Maintaining and – in case of conflict – restoring peace is the supreme aim of the EU project. Military and police engagement always have to serve that purpose. Therefore, the EU needs a clear peace-oriented security doctrine.
- **Contextualization:** It is vital not to promote universal solutions for different contexts, but to understand the complexities of various historical, political and societal experiences of the specific countries. Differentiations which are well-founded in different conditions and situations are necessary to achieve the targets set by the EU.

Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Russia

The EU has a clear security interest – internally and externally – in bringing its Eastern neighbors closer to the EU. The EU but also its neighboring partners profit from stronger economic relations which also strengthen the acceptance of EU norms. Long term effects of close cooperation can be steps towards democratization, more transparency, security and prosperity.

However, the EU needs to respect and understand the different geo-political orientations of some of the Eastern Partnership countries. This is especially the case with Armenia and Belarus but also with Moldova who have unique historical, economic and societal relations e.g. with Russia.

Steps of integration into EU areas of competence should be envisaged for the willing EaP partners without insisting on exclusiveness of these relations. Advantages of additional steps of cooperation and even integration have to be supported by evidence. Convincing skeptical governments and, very importantly, citizens by winning the arguments through deep and comprehensive explanations of the benefits which come with cooperation is key.

Concerning Russia, the sanctions on the one hand and the five Mogherini principles for a possible dialogue on the other hand, constitute EU's Russia policy, which has still a remarkable unanimous backing. However, the EU cannot accept the aggressive actions in Eastern Ukraine as well as the unlawful annexation of Crimea. Thus, it is important to keep up channels of (diplomatic) dialogue in order to make progressive steps towards a relaxation of the poisonous relations between the two states. The recent exchange of prisoners and the withdrawal of forces at Stanitsia Luhanska are important steps which should in the long run lead to a full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Recommendations:

- Convincing governments and citizens by comprehensive explanations and public diplomacy of the benefits which come with a closer cooperation with the EU, while simultaneously not insisting on exclusiveness of relations.
- The EU needs to understand the specific contexts manifested through historic experiences, composition of population, economic and societal ties and experiences with the West and the East.
- The EU should initiate a discussion on European Cooperative Security, including states of the EU, the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia - irrespective of wide differences in the design of European security.
- The EU should use its diplomatic tools in the region to keep up channels for dialogue between the conflicting parties (Ukraine and Russia) in order to introduce a policy of détente.

Transatlantic relations

European governments should in general find a way to resist extraterritorial – secondary – sanctions that harm European interests. Altogether, the Iran nuclear deal is a litmus test of multilateralism; of whether the EU can act independently in defending its political and economic interests.

Donald Trump's and his administration's attitude towards the EU is characterized by a sense of superiority and prejudice. While the EU should express clearly its discontent with such attitude, this must not prevent cooperation wherever it is possible.

EU's military expenditure does not necessarily have to rise so that the Union plays a more pronounced military role in defense matters. The EU via its member states is already a military heavyweight of its own, with their total military expenditures being the size of Russia, Brazil, India and China combined.

Recommendations:

- The EU must stick to its multilateral track in international agreements and to its commitments (JCPOA) in order to stay credible, while it must still cooperate with the US wherever it serves the common interests.
- Considering that the EU, via its member states, already is a big military power, the EU does not have to raise its military expenditure in order to secure its defense. Focus must be set on the civil and preventive options and military as well as police engagement must serve the purpose of maintaining and – if necessary – restoring peace.
- The EU needs to be united in its policies towards China and accept it as a partner, ally and rival at the same time. This must not prevent criticism when it comes to abuses of principal human rights. As the US are not seeking a common China policy, the EU must act by defending its own interests.
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Middle East

It would be fatal to abandon this neighborhood of the EU, leaving it to the often-disastrous interventions by others. It would be equally wrong to look for unconditional allies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) in the region without taking into account their behavior and policies towards their neighbors. The EU must recognize the threats of instability and even state collapse in the region as well as increasing poverty and sectarian tensions that can fuel the re-emergence of ISIS as a territorial entity. Even though the EU must defend the JCPOA, it has also to express its grave concerns about the expansionist policies of Iran in the Middle East region. In this respect, the EU has to understand the anxieties in

Israel about attacks from Iranian and Hezbollah forces. However, the EU has to affirm that the neglect of the justified Palestinian interests is not acceptable, and neither is further annexation of the Palestinian land.

The EU must prevent further unilateral Turkish incursion in Northern Syria in fighting against the Kurdish population. Nonetheless, the Kurdish groups must be ready to help to restore peace in finding a modus vivendi with Turkey. The EU must argue for peace in Yemen and request the Houthis, Saudis and Emirates to enter into serious peace talks. The EU must also express its clear support for democratic movements in the Horn of Africa.

Concerning Turkey, the EU should express its deep regret that Turkey is more and more leaving the track of accession to the EU and is distancing itself from NATO.

However, the EU must understand Turkey's interest in reducing the burden of refugees from Syria and its intention to build safe zones close to its borders. The EU should have put clear conditions to its support for safe zones, as any military intervention bears the danger of creating additional insecurity if it is not well organized and monitored. That, naturally, needs stronger EU engagement in preserving the fragile peace and not leaving it to the uncertain US policies.

The EU has to recognize that Russia became an important actor in the Middle East after its intervention in Syria which led to direct Russian influence within the Assad regime and the Syrian army. The EU should enter into a serious dialogue with Russia about possible cooperation in reconstructing Syria, recognizing that few investors would venture into Syria anytime soon, since the economy is dominated by warlords and large parts of the infrastructure are shattered.

The EU has to recognize that non-engagement is not cost-free and conclude that it cannot afford to be passive. It should transfer its knowledge and experience of building up an organization for dealing with different approaches in a peaceful way and constructing a union of states and citizens.

EU needs to understand that non-engagement will backfire at European security and prosperity through rise of extremism and international terrorism, huge migration influx and lack of energy security.

Recommendations:

- The EU should offer talks with Russia about fields of cooperation in the reconstruction of Syria, recognizing the fact that Russia already is a main actor in the region which managed to come to terms with Turkey, Iran and Syria.
- With many diplomatic representatives, the EU 28 (27) needs to use these resources to support stability and to clear the ground for future investments of European companies which are desperately needed for the reconstruction of Syria.
- Parallel to upholding the Iran nuclear deal, a broader, comprehensive arms-control agreement is necessary that would address other tracks, like conventional weapons, and include more states.
- EU and Military: the EU's priority should be given to political solutions, but the EU should be aware and prepared to specific military interventions like securing of borders and safe zones. Additional activities like training of military and police, as well as demining, are helping to safeguard security. In this respect, close cooperation with NATO and UN is necessary.
- In case of creation of safe zones for the return of refugees to countries with ongoing conflicts, the EU must insist on a multilateral organized approach. Unilateral actions always bear the danger of new insecurities, as it is the case with the current Turkish intervention in Northern Syria.
- In the area of humanitarian assistance, the EU can foster unknown concepts in the region, like SOS Children's Village for children in need.

Western Balkans

It is crucial for the credibility of the EU as a normative power that it sticks to its promises from 2003 concerning a future membership of the Western Balkan Six countries (Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo). While their full accession is unrealistic any time soon, a step-by-step integration through new benchmarks, e.g. participation as observers in decision making processes in the EU Council and Parliament, should be established. This could serve as incentives for necessary reforms and better regional cooperation.

Close monitoring and implementation of democratic principles, rule of law and human rights, as well as the fight against corruption, must play a much more decisive role than before in the new European Commission's assessment of the Western Balkans' integration progress, considering that this region will form a part of the EU. These principles are at the core of the European project and lack of their implementation will backfire to the EU taking into account the geographical proximity, emigration and close cooperation that already exists.

Recommendations:

- It is of high importance that the EU maintains its credibility by sticking to the EU integration of the Western Balkans Six through focusing on benchmarks rather than on timetables as well as by step-by-step integration, like participation as observers in decision making processes in the EU Council and Parliament.
- The EU needs to tackle internal issues like democratic principles, rule of law, media freedom and international human rights equally with other regional and/or external concerns (status of Kosovo, relation between Serbia and Croatia, etc.).
- The EU needs to present better its successes and should put more effort in enhancing visibility of the work already done in the region.

