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FOREWORD

JIM CLOOS
TEPSA Secretary General

Following the March European Council we submitted a number of questions to our experts and received replies on Security and Defence, Energy, Economic Issues, Neighbourhood and sanctions against Russia. This is part of an ongoing dialogue and a pro-active reading of the conclusions.

The European Council endorsed the EU Strategic Compass. This document takes on a new significance in the light of the events surrounding Ukraine and the Russian aggression. What looked before like a long term reflection on a common strategic vision is now also a blueprint for more immediate action in the light of the new situation. This applies in particular to the new level of cooperation with NATO that goes with the joint response to Russia's actions. Our experts pay special attention to the cyber sphere and the use of the Hybrid toolbox announced in the Strategic Compass. In this respect attention is drawn to the fact that there are situations where attribution is difficult; the EU and its Member States must find ways of responding even in such cases. They must also reflect on the EU's own communication that must create trust and be reliable (see Anghelescu, Padureanu, Marcu and Schimmel).

Energy was already a big theme before the latest events. The decision to drastically diminish the EU's dependence on Russian gas and oil provides an additional challenge. This leads to a readjustment of priorities within the energy triangle (energy security, energy equity, environmental sustainability), with more emphasis on security. The various figures provided by the experts show that the EU will be confronted with very difficult choices and tough decisions. The impact on the climate change policy is not entirely clear at this moment. The EU is also struggling with the vastly increased energy prices that have economic and social consequences (see Slakaityte, Surwillo).

On a more general economic level, it is worth looking at the possibilities of a new and mutually beneficial relationship between the EU and the Western Balkan regions, in energy, but also for instance in the area of food supplies (Jacimovic).

The issue of enlargement has come to the fore in the context of the latest developments. Both at the Versailles meeting and the March European Council the leaders set out their response at this stage to the candidatures of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. This stance differs from the one the EU has adopted towards the Western Balkans. The EU will have to be imaginative if it wants to develop a coherent policy towards the various candidates, possibly with the recourse to a staged approach (Panchulidze, Sirbiladze).

Finally, on the sanctions against Russia, the question arises as to the possibilities of further strengthening them, including in the field of energy. The point is made that the EU should have a clearer view on what the main objectives are of the sanctions and on the conditions for lifting them at some stage (Tsulaia, Chkhenkeli).

In his conclusion, Wolfgang Wessels raises the question as to whether we are presently living a Zeitenwende. He provides fundamental insights into the latest developments ad draws a number of conclusions for our future joint work.

TOPICS

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ENERGY

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NEIGHBOURHOOD

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SECURITY & DEFENCE

The European Council endorsed the Strategic Compass. What are the most impactful measures included in it and are they adequate in the context of the new security situation in Europe? How will these measures complement NATO?

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The adoption of the strategic compass for the EU comes after a two-year period of consultations between the member states. It also comes at the time when Europe is facing the biggest security challenge since the end of World War II, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine that had occurred just a month before the final version of this document was presented on 21 March 2022. The main aim of the Strategic Compass is to define the EU's security framework in the next five years, and in this respect, it comes at a pivotal time which will define the security architecture of Europe in the years to come. In this regard, the Russian war in Ukraine has served as the catalyst for the EU to come up with this document sooner than previously planned. On this line, in its part on threat analysis the Strategic Compass has placed Russia as the biggest security threat to Europe, and to a larger extent, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has also shaped this document.

Ever since the old member states, led by France and Germany, and the new members states, disagreed on how to shape relations with the United States after the intervention in Iraq in 2003, the EU has been stepping up efforts to reach its strategic autonomy. For this reason, the EU has been implementing a number of initiatives to unify its voice in foreign and security (CFSP), as well as in security and defense policies (CSDP). In 2016 the EU has adopted its Global Strategy, replacing its 2003 Security Strategy, while in 2009 the EU has established its battlegroups, although these were never used in action.

Led primarily by France and followed by Germany, in the years prior to the Russian war in Ukraine, the EU sought to subsequently develop more and more independence from the US, both in trade and security policies. There, Franco-German efforts have however been continually opposed by the countries in Eastern Europe which perceived NATO as the bedrock of their security. This was also evident in energy security policy, with Germany and France perceiving Russia as their important partner, while Eastern European member states, primarily Poland and the Baltic states, which view Russia as a security challenger and sought to decouple their economies from Russia as much as possible.

As a radical shift to that trend, during the Russian war in Ukraine, the EU decided to solidify its Transatlantic alliance in its Strategic Compass. Considering this, the wording of the Strategic Compass can be regarded as a victory for the Eastern European member states, as the new strategy it is defined to be complementary to the NATO Alliance. In this document NATO is in fact described as the cornerstone of European security, hinting at an important change if compared to the wording of the past 14 years, since the failure of the Bucharest NATO summit in 2008, when Ukraine and Georgia were denied NATO MAP by France and Germany.

The new instruments introduced in the Strategic Compass' new security and military strategy include : the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops for different types of crises; readiness to deploy 200 fully equipped CSDP mission experts within 30 days; Hybrid Toolbox and Response Teams; and Cyber Diplomatic Toolbox. In reality this means the EU will confine itself to limited crisis operations, but it also means that the EU will have small or mid-size military contingents available for rapid reactions independently from the complex and sometimes inert NATO structures. This also signals the importance of enhancing efforts to curb cyber threats - which have in recent years also been coming primary from Russia.

Subsequently, the Strategic Compass gives a certain autonomy to the EU in its efforts to be able to react to security threats rapidly, but at the same time it realizes the importance, and even solidifies Transatlantic partnership, and underpins the indispensability of the North Atlantic Alliance for European security.

The European Council endorsed the Strategic Compass. What are the most impactful measures included in it and are they adequate in the context of the new security situation in Europe? How will these measures complement NATO?

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The most powerful message conveyed by the adoption of the Strategic Compass is the political will for assuming an enhanced EU security presence in the world. This sends a strong political message of unity and shows the member states' willingness to deepen the EU's defence capabilities. The possibility for mutual assistance, as described in article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), is taking a more concrete shape with this document and allows the member states to take a series of measures aimed at responding to the shared assessment of the strategic environment. The explicit reference to the TEU is a confirmation of the importance and durability of this initiative, especially in terms of institutional resources needed from both the member states and the EU institutions.

The second essential message is the widening space/context where the competition between state and non-state actors is taking place. The Strategic Compass recognises that not only land and sea, but also outer space and the cyber sphere are contested areas in today's world, thus more targeted actions are required in order to respond to these developments.

The EU is currently facing a multiplicity of threats relevant both for their geographic location, but also in terms of their nature: terrorism and violent extremism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, hybrid strategies, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, global health crises. In this context, the proposals concerning the development and use of different EU initiatives such as: the EU Hybrid Toolbox, the EU Cyber Defence Policy, and the EU Space Strategy for security and defence are crucial answers to this complex and dynamic security environment.
Considering these security evolutions, the Strategic Compass proposes measures to consolidate the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union, in order to better address crises, ensure the citizens' security, invest in capabilities and technologies, and consolidate international partnerships for common goals. All of these actions aim at strengthening the EU's role as a security provider, by enhancing its credibility, resilience, and capacity to act.

Among the most impactful measures, we should mention the ones concerning situational awareness and strategic foresight, with wide implications in terms of intelligence gathering, sharing and analysis, common responses to hybrid threats, cyber diplomacy, as well as capabilities in strategic domains (e.g. cyber defence, space, air, maritime). The analysis and planning phases are essential in ensuring smooth decision-making, especially in crisis situations, thus the Strategic Compass provides a pragmatic guideline for fostering a common strategic culture among the member states. Overall, the four pillars of the Strategic Compass consist of practical steps to achieve a common understanding of threats and challenges, better coordination and rapid operationalisation among the member states.

Concerning the EU-NATO cooperation and the future of the transatlantic partnership, the Strategic Compass aims to further develop and strengthen these essential relations. In this sense, the Compass proposes measures such as increased political dialogue between the EU and NATO, joint and inclusive exercises, or situational awareness between the two partners. Given the recent security evolutions in Europe, which were taken into consideration by the Compass, the EU's ambition to enhance its geopolitical presence, in its vicinity and on the global stage, is complementary to NATO. It also calls for a strong transatlantic partnership, and builds on already existing frameworks of multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

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The Hybrid Toolbox announced in the Strategic Compass can be a powerful instrument to position the EU in the light of modern modes of war and peace. Although Putin's further invasion of Ukraine has put traditional military means front and center, hybrid warfare remains an attractive way for both state and non-state actors to impose high costs on democratic societies of member states with a relatively low-price tag. We need not agree on whether we face a battle of systems to recognize the targeted attacks on democratic institutions and the people's trust in them.

The Hybrid Toolbox can only be an effective countermeasure if it avoids shortcomings such as preparing only for clear-cut cases and outsourcing responsibility to societal resilience. The EU's Anti-Coercion instrument that also deals with interference with sovereignty is primarily intended to deter malicious acts. However, beneath the threshold of war, deterrence is often not a very promising prospect, especially so in a context of ambiguity. This cannot be mitigated solely by ways of increasing detection and identification capabilities, though that remains important. Member states must find a way to take decisions in circumstances of indeterminate attribution. Furthermore, they should prepare for cases in which they fail to adequately respond to hybrid attacks, for example in a situation where the perpetrator is completely unknown, and understand how to exert damage control.

Notions of boosting societal resilience should not be used as a pretext to delegate democratic education measures to national and regional levels and thereby pass the sole responsibility for being resilient onto the people. Instead, the EU herself must also step up. The EU needs to evolve into a more trusted and reliable communicator. This means no sugarcoating inconvenient truths, providing complete transparency in every act of communication, inviting external fact-checking plus issuing corrections immediately when and where necessary. Mainstreaming credibility over political aesthetics is an uphill battle, but one the EU needs to take on if she wants to withstand the competition of narratives.

As the Hybrid Toolbox will be filled throughout the remaining year, it remains to be seen, whether it becomes the powerful instrument it has the potential to be. The Compass intends for cooperation with NATO, which is very sensible. However, the EU has the capacity to include more policy areas in a comprehensive approach and should not limit itself when sounding out potential synergies and implementing lessons learnt.

ENERGY

EU leaders pledged to meet the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 while phasing out dependency on Russian gas, oil, and coal, and strengthening the EU's economic base. Are these objectives achievable together, and what could be a successful strategy? What to expect from the Commission's upcoming RePower EU plan to reduce energy dependence?

What could the EU do to phase out its energy dependency on Russia in the short term?

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The objective of achieving climate neutrality within just three decades - by 2050, had been previously met with certain resistance and scepticism. Today, the ambitious climate protection targets are additionally coupled with an accelerated deadline for diminishing the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. Since natural gas was meant to be a bridge fuel cushioning the European low carbon energy transition, the outbreak of war in Ukraine has left the EU in an energy conundrum. Unsurprisingly, this crisis generates intricate policy trade-offs.

The classic energy trilemma, as defined by the World Energy Council, has it that in order to prosper and stay competitive countries need to balance the three core dimensions of energy security, energy equity (accessibility and affordability), and environmental sustainability. In other words, the security of the energy supply has to be weighed against carbon emissions targets and acceptable energy costs. Balancing these dimensions is challenging and involves trade-offs. For instance, in countries of the CEE region, such as Poland and Lithuania, where the issue of energy supply has been securitized for years, investments into costly liquified natural gas (LNG) infrastructure ran against purely economic rationale (as buying piped gas is cheaper) and were justified on security grounds instead. In the EU as a whole, however, energy policy was largely seen through the economic prism, and while sustainability aspect took over center stage, potential security implications of overdependence on Russian fossil fuels were largely overlooked. The current re-adjusting of priorities within this energy triangle and putting more emphasis on the security of energy supply inevitably puts a high strain on the other two dimensions.

First, ensuring adequate supply of non-Russian fossil fuels will come with a hefty price tag. This applies particularly to natural gas, which is not fungible, thereby is harder to diversify than oil or coal are. While the ambitious REPowerEU plan aims at the complete elimination of the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels by 2030, two-thirds of Russian gas volumes are set to be replaced by the end of 2022. The task will be challenging due to the high level of EU's energy import dependency. Although the overall consumption of natural gas in the Union has decreased over the course of the past three decades, the import dependency rose from 52% in 1990 to 84% in 2020. Russian gas amounts to 40% of EU's current gas imports, which translates into EUR 99 billion worth of yearly transactions. While several strategic gas infrastructure projects that are currently being finalized (e.g., GIPL, Baltic Pipe) will enable access to and distribution of auxiliary gas volumes from Norway, additional investments into gas interconnectors adjoining the more remote regions of the EU and LNG infrastructure are needed.

Although a new LNG 'game plan' for the imports from the US to the EU has been just agreed upon by both parties, it is only envisioned to replace an equivalent of 15 bcm of regasified LNG - the volume formerly covered by Russian LNG imports. In other words, this only covers 10.3% of the overall Russian gas imports in 2021. This means that the EU will need to secure additional volumes on the global LNG market, which is constrained by long-term contracts and where the suppliers are running at nearly full capacity. The EU is therefore restricted by the market, and its best option is accessing LNG cargoes intended for other destinations, which also means outbidding the already high market prices.

Second, ensuring the security of supply in the current geopolitical context might not always be easily combined with the climate agenda. Although the ambitious goals of accelerating sustainable energy transition with more widespread use of renewables are promising, infrastructural adjustments take time and, crucially, the renewables' potential to meet the EU's heating demand is currently limited. The European heating sector is heavily reliant upon natural gas (and to a lesser extent coal), thereby the drastic cuts in Russian gas imports not only pose technical challenges but also imply increased CO_2 emission rates. The reduction of dependency on Russian gas, has already triggered debates over restarting retired coal-fired thermal power plants (e.g., in Germany and Romania) and boosting utilization of the currently active ones (e.g., in Italy). This trade-off comes at a cost of environmental sustainability, at least in the short-term.

Whilst the reality appears to be rather gloomy with multiple challenges ahead, the success of attaining the REPowerEU objectives will be reliant upon policymakers and individual consumers alike. The policymakers will need to make fast investment decisions and provide adequate regulatory framework, as well as ensure that the consumers are able to keep up with their energy bills. The EU has come up with multiple policy responses to mitigate these effects. For instance, the EU Commission proposed a 'toolbox' which can be utilized to alleviate the immediate impact of price spikes and boost resilience against future shocks. Other measures such as optimization of electricity market design, Temporary Crisis Framework, EC's assistance in coordination of gas storage refilling operations are made available too. However, for this strategy to be successful, the dependency on fossil fuels shall be reduced at all levels, including individual, industry, and power systems. The attitude towards energy consumption must also change and the energy usage needs to be curbed as managing energy demand will be as important as diversifying energy supply in tackling this multidimensional issue.

EU leaders pledged to meet the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 while phasing out dependency on Russian gas, oil, and coal, and strengthening the EU's economic base. Are these objectives achievable together, and what could be a successful strategy? What to expect from the Commission's upcoming RePower EU plan to reduce energy dependence?

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In the short term, ensuring an accelerated phasing out of Russian fossil fuels depends primarily on finding the adequate replacement energy sources. This is only possible if the alternative solution is also based on fossil fuels. However, in the medium to long term many possibilities exist for a more environmentally friendly approach that would be in line with the objective of climate neutrality by 2050.

While RePowerEU rightly recognizes significant potential in areas of photovoltaic (PV) panels and heat pumps, more concrete actions to support faster penetration of sustainable energy sources is necessary. This is particularly relevant in the case of the installation of new photovoltaic panels and heat pumps for housing buildings, business premises, farms and other forms of suitable buildings. The example of Australia, which managed to drastically increase number of "green rooftops" in just a few years, shows that more can be done in case of EU. For illustration, in 2020 one in four homes in Australia have solar panels on their roof.

Therefore, member states should consider an introduction of new types of more effective incentives promoting the installation of rooftop PV and heat pumps. For example, tax deductions for owners of individual buildings with PV/heat pumps could be introduced or installing PV/heat pumps could become mandatory when constructing new buildings (both residential and commercial). Another option in the area of PV is the use of large-scale solar plant, which is well recognized by RePowerEU. Such investments have the advantage of economies of scale to reduce investment and operational costs and the electricity generated can be traded in wholesale markets.
However, such projects face complex procedures in terms of building and other permits required. Therefore, MS should consider possibilities to enhance the conditions for the rollout of such projects, for example by introducing specific fast-track procedure for obtaining building permits. Exchange of good practice in approval of large solar plants projects among MS should also be promoted.

Another important aspect to consider is the capacity of solar panel manufacturers located in the EU in order to prevent potential supply shortages and consequential price increases. Investments into PV installation capacity and increase in solar panels manufacturing capacity should receive strong support by the various national and also EU financing mechanisms, both grants and financial instruments, depending on specific circumstances.

Furthermore, the European Commission and the member states should do more to create a more favorable environment for decentralized sustainable energy production and energy trade. The structure of the energy sector needs to be changed towards a multi-actor set-up in which large utilities interact with self-producing consumers and mini-utilities.

This is in particular important for rural/remote areas, for which decentralized systems based on renewable energy will be the most cost-effective solution. Public support for small scale investments into mini-grid and off-grid renewables should be enhanced, especially when it comes to the certainty and clarity within the legal framework of the member states.

Speeding up the existing nuclear energy projects and launching new ones is also an important option in achieving climate neutrality, increasing EU's energy self-reliance and securing stable energy source. Given that nuclear technology is under western countries control and that large reserves of uranium are in countries such as Australia and Canada, there should be no significant (political) risks affecting its supply for the EU's needs. However, RePowerEU is silent about nuclear technology and what can be done to accelerate new projects.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

How could the EU build on the Single Market to reduce strategic dependencies on sensitive areas (e.g. critical raw materials, semi-conductors)?

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The Western Balkan region could offer temping regional and national comparative advantages to the Single Market, most notably related to its proximity to that market, its skilled and affordable labour force, and its agricultural and natural (energy) resources.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine could be steppingstones for the region to finally address a new model of development that will seek to balance economic, social, political, geopolitical and green goals. The consequences and disruptions could result in a new positioning of the region's companies in the EU's new supply chains, that would be mutually beneficial for both the region and the EU. In the current context, the Western Balkan region might partly contribute by reducing the dependence of the EU in certain sensitive areas, notably food and energy supply.

This new development strategy should focus on specific sectors, like critical raw materials, semi-conductors, food and potential renewable energy (hydropower, solar and wind) sources, in order to strengthen the pre-existing national comparative advantages. All of this would increase the currently weak European business interest towards the region and encourage foreign direct investments.

One particularly interesting sector might be energy, where the region, alongside significant coal reserves, has remarkable potential for the development of renewable energy sources. Notably, the region is characterized by a great wealth of rivers, both larger and smaller, which provide significant hydro potential for energy use. Moreover, there is important potential for the expansion of wind energy, as well as great potential for the use of solar energy across the region.

In addition to all this, there is the pre-existing built infrastructure, and importantly "first energy bridge with the Balkans", a high-voltage electric interconnection (via an undersea cable), which has connected Montenegro with Italy, with the aim of exporting energy from renewable sources produced in the Balkans to Italy. The cable is part of a broader Italian strategy to make Italy the "energy hub of Europe" and meet EU requirements for producing a greater percentage of energy from renewable sources.

To sum up, when discussing new development opportunities in the region, in this unthinkable new environment, economic involvement and engagement in the Western Balkans could reduce the EU's dependence on other third country suppliers and provide a stable supply chain, that would reduce the damaging potential effects of any future crisis.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

The European Council has requested the Commission to examine the membership applications of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Is an Eastern enlargement a concrete possibility and what could be the geopolitical consequences? Could this be the beginning of a shift from the "everything-but-institutions" principle of the Eastern Partnership? How could this affect the relations with long-standing candidate members, e.g. in the Balkans?

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Four days after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy officially bid EU membership application and requested a fast-track approach for the accession process - an unprecedented appeal in the EU's enlargement history. While Ukraine's belonging to the European family was generally acknowledged by the EU, member states reluctantly expressed concerns about granting the candidate status to a country in a war and called on careful consideration of the geopolitical effects of the EU's eastward enlargement. Ukraine's request for a prosperous European future was joined by the same official EU membership applications from peer associated countries, Georgia and Moldova.

In response to these requests, the European Council has inquired the Commission to formally examine the 'Association Trio' countries' plea for EU membership. Although the EU's answer to applications is rather bureaucratic, for EU's Eastern neigbhours it has a symbolic significance, sending a strong political signal to Russia that openly proclaims the region as its 'sphere of influence'. Since its inception, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) area became a normatively and geopolitically contested space between the EU and Russia, even if the EU largely understated the geopolitical character of the initiative. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and support for separatism in Eastern Ukraine was a response to Ukraine's choice to advance its partnership with the EU, which Russia saw as detrimental to its regional hegemony.

Although membership applications were triggered by Russia's unjust war in Ukraine which altered the European security architecture, calls for differentiation within the EaP, and granting the European perspective to Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova is not new for the EU. In 2021, while the Union lacked a clear vision over the future of the EaP, the 'Association Trio' registered their ambitions to deepen integration with the EU and secure the "recognition of the European perspective".

The EU has not been adamant to grant that recognition given the so-called 'enlargement fatigue' pervasive within the Union and due to geopolitical consequences of such a move. The recent statement of the heads of state or government, meeting in Versailles on the Russian military aggression against Ukraine held on 10 March 2022, stuck with the usual wording vis-à-vis Ukraine, that the EU acknowledges "European aspirations and the European choice of Ukraine, as stated in the Association Agreement". This is different from the EU's stark wording vis-à-vis the Western Balkans expressed already in the 2000s that "All the countries concerned are potential candidates for EU membership".

Looking to the future, one possible scenario for the EU is to adopt the Western Balkan toolkit vis-à-vis the three associated states and grant them the 'potential candidate' status. This would mean the acknowledgement of a clear European perspective, but also sending signal to the associated partners that the candidate status and an eventual membership are only real when the EU values are actually shared. To progress to the next stage, the EU fundamentals of rule of law, functioning democratic institutions, public administration and economic reforms must be upheld with the Association process remaining the common framework of relations. While there is no fast-track procedure defined in the treaties, the EU can show flexibility and also consider the model of staged accession in response to geopolitical developments and a growing number of states in a membership waiting room.

Amid concerns that the EU's Eastern enlargement might affect relations with long-standing candidate members, including the Balkans, the EU should reiterate that relations with partners are tailored to their needs, interests, and the geopolitical context. The Eastern enlargement can serve as a new incentive for reforms for the EU's partners to contest for their place in the European family. While the EU should envisage different geopolitical scenarios, it should show the readiness and political will as a 'values-based' union to extend its arm to partners paying an invaluable price for democracy, freedom, and European choice.

The EU "remains ready to close loopholes and target actual and possible circumvention as well as to move quickly with further coordinated robust sanctions on Russia and Belarus to effectively thwart Russian abilities to continue the aggression." – Which other sanctions could the EU envisage?

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The EU has imposed some very important sanctions of unprecedented scale, however, there remain some considerable loopholes in those sanctions, which substantially limit their impact. Notably absent are energy-related sanctions, and moreover, most of the loopholes in already present sanctions are also related to energy-related exemptions. While imposing full-scale energy sanctions and fully banning energy imports from Russia to the EU is debatable due to the EU's high dependency on Russian oil and gas, there is a possibility to strengthen already imposed sanctions by lifting energy-related exemptions:

- The SWIFT ban has been imposed only on 7 banks and it was not applied to Sberbank, which is Russia's largest bank, and Gazprombank, since those banks are the main channels for EU payments for Russian oil and gas. Firstly, the EU could expand the ban on other Russian banks, which also have large assets after Sberbank and Gazprombank. Moreover, broadening the scope of the ban to all the Russian banks is also sensible. Banning Sberbank and Gazbrombank does not imply that it will be impossible for the EU to pay for energy supplies, though it would make payments more costly and time-consuming. Nevertheless, it could be argued that extending the SWIFT ban could yield strong negative effects, at least in the short term.

- Germany has temporarily suspended the certification of the Nord Stream 2 gas project by withdrawing a key document needed for the certification-assessment of the security of energy supplies. It is important for the EU to apply a more concrete sanction that will guarantee that the pipeline will not be used for the purpose it was initially built for. That is, it should be ensured that the pipeline will not serve as an alternative way of selling Russian gas to Europe instead of land-based pipelines passing through Ukraine and Poland, which are accordingly receiving transit fees from Russia.

Besides that, from existing sanctions, trade restrictions also could be further expanded. The EU could enlarge the list of products that are banned to be exported from the EU to Russia, which currently includes a lot of exceptions to avoid the impact of the ban on the more regular needs of the population in Russia.

Following the ban on the overflight of the EU airspace and on access to EU airports by Russian carriers, Russian ships could also be banned from EU ports. Countries such as the UK, Canada and New Zealand have already banned Russian ships from their ports, so a ban from the EU could further hamper Russia's shipment industry.

Those are some of the main possibilities for expanding the sanctions, however, the decision of whether to expand or not and in which directions to do so, depends on the exact objective of those sanctions. Since the first sanctions have been triggered, they have considerably damaged Russia's economy and international reputation. Further effectiveness of the sanctions thus depends on the strategy behind them.

New sanctions should be imposed taking into consideration whether this strategy is to exhaust the Russian economy so much that it will no longer be able to support the war effort; and whether it will shift public opinion in Russia against its government, or just punish Russia and its citizens without any room for reversibility. Moreover, expansion of the sanctions should come with clearness about how long the sanctions will remain in place and on what conditions they can be lifted. It sould be clear whether the sanctions will endure beyond this conflict, targeting the whole regime or whether they will be lifted if Russia stops the war or if some peace agreement will be reached.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

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In the early spring of 2022, we are faced with a major challenge: do we need a political and theoretical turn of perspectives and narratives? Do the summits, including those of the NATO and the G7, signal a critical turn, a 'Zeitenwende', in the post WW II history of Europe and the globe? Will the actions of the European Council 'change the game' of European integration?

Analysing and assessing European reactions to the Ukraine War, we can draw some preliminary lessons for our debate on the EU and its future:

- A look at the EU's institutional architecture the past weeks has again confirmed a now established pattern: Confronted with a fundamental shock, national leaders and EU partners intensively search for ways to solve the crisis together.
-If seen as unavoidable – they take taboo breaking decisions for using EU procedures and instruments.
-The declarations, conclusions and actions of the members of the European Council document and frame a new dominant narrative: The EU leaders have widened and deepened the traditional view of the Union as a 'community of destiny'. The geopolitical notion of a common defence, has been put high on the agenda.
-Though in some way always present in the background of many national motivations and EU activities, this fundamental position signals a major change of paradigm, perhaps a 'Zeitenwende' (Chancellor Scholz) for the Union. We see a historical turn, a critical juncture, which will have a major impact on the road to take from the winter of 2022 for the future of Europe.
-Such a Zeitgeist of war times might turn out to become a master narrative reducing the relevance of other core aims and principles of the Internal Market, Economic and Monetary Union and the community of values.

The impressive list of contributions to this debrief signals that the European Council deals with major projects and issues to develop concrete actions for a new or at least reinforced geo-political vision and mission. They help us to continue with a deeper debate on major issues:

- The strategic compass envisages considerable options for common actions, but a historical analysis of former ambitious plans for some kind of common security and defense policy lets us raise the question, whether the shock caused by the Russian invasion will be strong enough to overcome long term national blockages.

- In the energy debate, the members of the European Council have to find difficult and costly ways to reduce dependencies.

- The construct of deeper relations with the EU's eastern neighbours in view of Russian threats and occupation is an unsolved issue.

- The list of policy areas in which the EU aims to get to some kind of 'strategic autonomy' gets longer with further global developments.

The conclusions of the European Council also indicate that other issues of major importance for the EU have not disappeared from the leaders' agenda.

With these insights we should take pursue further considerations:

-We need to carefully trace the actions of the EU institutions and the member states.
-We need to assess them in light of the traditional and new narratives and theory-led approaches.
-In a view of these challenges the perennial issue about the Union's finalité remains on our agenda. The report of the conference for the future of Europe will give us further incentives to discuss options for the European Council.

We should however not neglect in our assessment the resilience of the institutional architecture created in the Lisbon treaty and enabling the EU to react to several crises including the shocks of the Ukraine war.

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