

EU as a global player one year on from the Rome Declaration

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The EU celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties a year ago by pledging to enhance the EU's role as a global player, in line with the 2016 Global Strategy. This was intended to develop the EU's role in security and defence matters, starting with increasing support for the European defence industry and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as a whole, as well as reinforcing existing or developing new partnerships and pushing for further global engagement in support of the UN system, NATO and rules-based multilateralism.

What progress has been made since 25 March 2017? What are the European Parliament's positions on these issues, and what are the prospects for the future? Answering these questions is crucial for ensuring the effectiveness of the EU's strategies, policies and actions and for the credibility of the EU project in future.

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1 The EU as a global player: progress since the Rome Declaration

In the **Rome Declaration**¹, adopted on 25 March 2017 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, 27 EU leaders set out a **joint vision** for the future of the EU integration process. They pledged to seek closer unity, improve security for EU citizens through internal and external action, bolster economic growth and job creation, fight social exclusion and inequalities, and enhance the EU's role as a **global player**.

Enhancing the EU's role as a global player means working towards '**a stronger Europe on the global scene**' by developing existing partnerships and building new ones, and by maintaining its commitment to strengthening the EU's common security and defence.

What **progress** has been made since March 2017 in achieving this goal? The declaration looked to:

— ***A Union further developing existing partnerships, building new ones and promoting stability and prosperity in its immediate neighbourhood to the east and south, but also in the Middle East and across Africa and globally;***

Since March 2017, the EU has pursued the development of tailor-made **partnerships** with its **neighbourhood**. Significant progress has been made with the signing and entry into force in September 2017 of the Association Agreement with **Ukraine**², and the signing in November 2017 of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) Union with **Armenia**³ — a new type of agreement taking into account the constraints imposed on the country by its entry into the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Another important 'strategic partnership' agreement is being negotiated with **Azerbaijan**. With regard to the **Western Balkans**, the Commission announced in February 2018 the development of a new EU accession strategy⁴ giving new perspectives for **Serbia and Montenegro**, an initiative (welcomed by the EP) that symbolises the EU's commitment to a region facing considerable and sometimes difficult internal and external challenges.

In its **southern neighbourhood**, the EU is pursuing efforts to stabilise the situation in **Libya**, while supporting the **Sahel countries**⁵ bilaterally and multilaterally (via the 'G5 Sahel' West African coordination framework in security and development) in their efforts to face the challenges of migration and terrorism. Regarding the **Syrian war**, EU High Representative / Vice President (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini and the European Commission adopted a Joint Communication in March 2017 proposing a '**forward-looking EU strategy**' for Syria⁶.

Further east, the EP ratified the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and **Kazakhstan**⁷ in December 2017. Significant agreements have been completed with **Japan**⁸: the Strategic

¹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/25/rome-declaration/pdf>;

² <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/07/11/ukraine-association-agreement/pdf>;

³ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/36141/new-agreement-signed-between-european-union-and-armenia-set-bring-tangible-benefits-citizens_en;

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/strategy-western-balkans-2018-feb-06_en;

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/conference-internationale-de-haut-niveau-sur-le-sahel-2018-feb-23_en;

⁶ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-561_en.htm;

⁷ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P8-TA-2017-0484+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>;

⁸ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/43526/EU%20and%20Japan%20conclude%20negotiations%20for%20Strategic%20Partnership%20Agreement

Partnership Agreement agreed in April 2018, and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)⁹, finalised in December 2017, entailing the establishment of a free trade area, and soon to come for approval to the EP (possibly before the 2018 summer recess). A general reflexion on **EU-Asia cooperation**, in particular from the security angle, led to the Council Conclusions of 28 May 2018 on 'Enhanced EU security cooperation in and with Asia'.

The European Parliament and the Council adopted a decision on EU participation in a partnership for research and innovation in the **Mediterranean** area (PRIMA), in July 2017¹⁰. On **development policy**, the EP played an active part in the negotiations that led to the signing of the new European Consensus on Development¹¹ (June 2017), whose main goal is poverty eradication, with a view to pursuing the EU's ambition of building resilience and addressing the root causes of migration. The EP and the Council established the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD)¹², to help deal with migration, in September 2017.

With regard to **Africa**, the EU made a fresh appeal for a 'new start' at the African Union-European Union summit in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2017. The focus of the meeting on youth investment and the Joint Declaration¹³ both reflected the efforts on the part of the EU to tackle the root causes of migration and terrorism, by fostering stability and prosperity on the continent. High Representative Mogherini announced the EU's 'External Investment Plan' for Africa¹⁴ on 23 November 2017, which will mobilise up to EUR 44 billion in private investment for sustainable development and job creation. It is supported by Member States including Germany, whose Chancellor had earlier proposed a Marshall plan for Africa.

For **Latin America**, a network of bilateral and sub-regional agreements complements the EU-Community of Latin American and Central American States (CELAC) engagement. No major developments have taken place since the Rome declaration.

— A Union ready to take more responsibilities and to assist in creating a more competitive and integrated defence industry;

Major progress was made in 2017. A military planning and conduct capability¹⁵ (MPCC) was established in June as a new structure to improve the EU's capacity to react in a faster, more effective and more seamless manner for the planning and conduct of non-executive **military missions**.

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), an inclusive, modular system allowing Member States to collaborate further in the area of security and defence on a voluntary basis, was established in 2017, under a decision¹⁶ adopted by the Council in December, together with a list of the 25 final participants. Twenty-three Member States had signed a joint notification in November 2017. The Council adopted a Decision on the list of 17 collaborative projects¹⁷ to be developed under PESCO on 6 March 2018. The EU also agreed on the arrangements for a Member States-driven coordinated annual review on defence (**CARD**), to

⁹<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-balanced-and-progressive-trade-policy-to-harness-globalisation/file-eu-japan-epa>;

¹⁰ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593511/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)593511_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/593511/EPRS_BRI(2016)593511_EN.pdf);

¹¹<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-europe-as-a-stronger-global-actor/file-revision-of-the-european-consensus-on-development>;

¹² [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595837/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)595837_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595837/EPRS_BRI(2016)595837_EN.pdf);

¹³ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31991/33454-pr-final_declaration_au_eu_summit.pdf;

¹⁴ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-4884_en.htm;

¹⁵ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/08/military-mpcc-planning-conduct-capability/>;

¹⁶<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/12/11/defence-cooperation-pesco-25-member-states-participating/>;

¹⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32079/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf>;

establish a process for obtaining a better overview at EU level of issues such as defence spending and national investment, as well as defence research efforts, with a view to better identifying and addressing shortfalls¹⁸.

Work was also boosted in other areas, such as strengthening the **EU's rapid response toolbox**, including the **EU Battlegroups** (particularly their financing¹⁹) and civilian capabilities, capacity-building in support of security and development (**CBSD**²⁰), situational awareness, and defence capability development.

The Commission published a communication on 7 June 2017 entitled 'Launching the **European Defence Fund**' (**EDF**)²¹, which sets out its proposals to stimulate and structure investment in defence in the EU. It proposes direct support for research, the co-financing of development, and support for the acquisition of defence products by EU Member States. A proposal for a **European Defence Industrial Development Plan** (**EDIDP**), welcomed by the EP²², provides for support to the industry.

— A Union committed to strengthening its common security and defence, also in cooperation and complementarity with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, taking into account national circumstances and legal commitments;

The **EU and NATO** signed a Joint Declaration in July 2016 aimed at strengthening cooperation in seven key areas. In December 2016, the Council adopted conclusions endorsing a list of 42 proposals put forward by HR/VP Mogherini to implement the declaration. Reporting for the second time in December 2017 on progress to date with the 42 actions, the HR/VP pointed to: the fight against hybrid threats; human trafficking; defence capabilities; defence industry and research; and partnerships with neighbours to reinforce their capacities and resilience. The top priorities are the mutual trust and open dialogue established at the highest level between the two organisations and the resulting sustained and continuous coordination, while continuing the search for complementarity²³.

— A Union engaged in the United Nations and standing for a rules-based multilateral system, proud of its values and protective of its people, promoting free and fair trade and a positive global climate policy.

The EU strongly supports **multilateralism**, and the **UN system** in particular. However, it also agrees that the UN system needs further reform, to enable it to 'uphold, strengthen and reform' itself and protect the rules-based global order. Ahead of the 72nd UN General Assembly (UNGA) session, the EU adopted priorities in July 2017 offering particular support for stronger global governance, peace and conflict prevention and an enduring agenda for transformation. The EU is also committed to mainstreaming gender equality and female empowerment as well as women's, peace and security issues across all priority areas²⁴.

As regards the **WTO**, the EU, as an organisation that supports 'free and fair trade', is concerned about the position of the US administration²⁵, which is using the appointment of judges to the WTO's dispute settlement body to weaken the system. For the EU, the challenge as a 'global player' is to find allies to maintain a united front vis-à-vis the US, and prevent contagion from spreading to other key actors unhappy

¹⁸ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/36453/coordinated-annual-review-defence-card_en;

¹⁹ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/22/euco-security-defence/pdf>;

²⁰ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5125_en.htm;

²¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/27953/launching-european-defence-fund-07-june-2017_en;

²² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180122IPR92223/meps-support-first-ever-eu-programme-on-defence-industry>;

²³ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/28286/eu-nato-cooperation-factsheet_bg;

²⁴ For more on the EU's priorities for the 72nd UNGA, see <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/07/17-eu-priorities-un/>

²⁵ <https://www.politico.eu/article/wto-donald-trump-protectionism-brussels-fears-trump-wants-the-wto-to-fail/>;

with some WTO decisions or practices. This also applies in many respects to the **Paris agreement on climate change**. While the EU and its Member States have been supportive of the process and are committed to implementing it 'swiftly and fully', a key challenge for the EU as a global player is to ensure that the EU and the Member States deliver on their commitments, and work with other major partners such as China or India, to achieve shared goals.

2 EP positions

The EP **adheres to** the objectives and means set out in the Rome Declaration in support of the EU's role as a global player.

As reiterated in the EP's 2017 resolution on the 'Annual Report on the implementation of the CFSP' (2017/2121 (INI)), and 'Annual Report on the implementation of the CSDP' (2017/2123(INI)), the EP **supports** a role as a **global player** for the **EU**, in order to tackle the many challenges it faces: *'The European Parliament (...) Takes the view that, in order for the EU to succeed in addressing and overcoming the challenges it faces, and in particular security threats, it needs to be an effective, credible and values-based global player, with a capacity for action and effective dialogue with other global players, which implies the EU speaking with one voice, acting together and focusing its resources on strategic priorities;*' The report on CSDP mentions the need for the EU to become *'a self-assured foreign policy actor'*.

Concerning **trade**, the EP supports an open, rules-based, fair system, and therefore backs the multilateral system established under the WTO, complemented by bilateral, regional and 'plurilateral' agreements (the latter providing a means to push for reform and evolution of the WTO)²⁶.

This **stabilising role** that the EU is seeking to play should be achieved in particular by *'working together with partners'*, and using a *'combination of effective multilateralism, joint soft power and credible hard power can be capable of confronting major security challenges ...'*

As far as **EU defence** is concerned, the EP has also stated the view that *'Europe should further strengthen cooperation on common defence, in order to defend its common values and principles and strategic autonomy'*, that *'the development of a strong defence industry is strengthening the technological independence of the EU'* and that the EU and its Member States *'must work together with NATO and other international partners, the UN, NGOs, human rights defenders, and others on issues of shared concern and in order to promote peace, prosperity and stability around the world'*. A partnership with NATO is considered *'fundamental to addressing the security challenges facing the Union and its neighbourhood'*.

3 Outlook

Clearly, the EU still has much to achieve, though it has already made significant progress with 'building partnerships' and implementing a 'common security and defence policy'. However, this is only the **beginning of a process**, and the EU needs to be able to **manage it effectively**. The EU has the necessary strategic guidelines in the 2016 Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy. But 'sub strategies' still need to be devised to implement the EU Global Strategy (for instance in connection with the Maghreb countries or Asia, and a proper strategy is needed with regard to the Black Sea).

The capacity of the EU to act as a significant and **effective global player** has to be demonstrated by **action rather than just words**. It is by showing its capacity to effectively stabilise and shape its close environment that the EU will be recognised as a global player and will keep the European project alive, by providing

²⁶ 2015 Resolution B8-1230/2015; 'The state of play of the Doha Development Agenda in advance of the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference'.

security for its citizens (with external and internal security being intimately linked, as has been demonstrated in recent years). **Ukraine, the Western Balkans, Libya and the Sahel**, not to mention **Syria and the Middle East**, are all major **challenges** in this context. The [negotiation and conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\) — the Iran nuclear deal](#) — can be seen as an EU success story to build on (and defend), inspiring greater **creativity and initiative** from the main EU CFSP actors (for instance in the **DPRK crisis** by actively supporting, when time will be ripe, intra-Korean dialogue and progress in negotiating what might be a landmark agreement).

This means **using the enhanced toolbox** now available for the EU's **integrated approach**, boosted by the recent development with the above-mentioned partnerships and by the expanding CSDP. This would allow the development of **resilience** within and around the EU, and give the EU the **credibility** it needs. While the EU develops some new CSFP tools, and sharpens others, some **elements are still missing**, such as an autonomous intelligence capacity allowing for independent analysis. Such analysis would be based on information collected by an increasingly professionalised EU Delegations network, or an EU diplomatic academy.

With regard to **Asia**, the EU should not miss the opportunity created by the US's withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). It should continue the process of **anchoring** major Asian countries to the deal and further reinforce its partnerships with them, rather than allowing China to take the lead without any counter-balance in terms of influence. With **China**, continued **engagement by the EU** is important, to prevent a 'divide and rule' strategy by the Chinese. However, this must be done on the basis of a coordinated and coherent approach, leading to a **unified EU stance**. The links between the economy and security may help shape a balanced relationship.

Despite calls for reinforced **unity**, the EU may however be moving towards a '**multi-speed Europe**', or functioning in 'concentric circles' ('We will act together, at different paces and intensity if necessary, while moving in the same direction', Rome Declaration). Is this **compatible** with the EU's ambitions as a **global player**? Would this entail a **reduction** in the means available to the EU or would it give it **more flexibility, responsiveness and effectiveness**?

It is **political will** that will ultimately make the difference between thinking as a global player and acting as one. The debate on the EU's next multi-annual **budget** — the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) — provides an important indication of the **EU's ambitions**, in terms of the tools proposed and financing put forward. For instance, the Commission's proposal of 1.11 % of the Gross National Income of the EU-27 as the contribution to the EU budget, even if it falls short of the EP proposal (1.3 %²⁷) goes in the right direction. The more streamlined structure, the creation of a new budget heading 5: 'Security and Defence' and decision to group different external action instruments together, in order to act more coherently and effectively, are also on the right lines for the EP²⁸. The **European Parliament** is a **key actor** in this decision-making process²⁹.

As **consultations** of European citizens increase, in different forms, in 27 of the EU's current 28 Member States ahead of the 2019 European elections, at the initiative of the European Commission³⁰ or of Member States³¹, the **European Parliament** must take every opportunity to make its voice **heard** on all these vital

²⁷ According to the EP resolution of 14 March 2018 (2017/2052 (INI));

²⁸ In plenary meeting in April 2018 the EP adopted the initiative report by MEP Marietje Schaake (A8-0112/2018) on the 'Implementation of the EU external financing instruments: mid-term review 2017 and the future post-2020 architecture' pleading for an improvement of the flexibility, coherence and reactivity of the EU's external relations instruments.

²⁹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-new-boost-for-jobs-growth-and-investment/file-post-2020-mff>;

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/future-europe-commission-launches-online-citizens-consultation-2018-may-09_en

³¹ 'Citizens' consultations for tomorrow's Europe'; debates and participatory democracy events to be organised between April and October 2018 in 27 EU Member States. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/european-union/citizens-consultations-for-tomorrow-s-europe/>

issues. Indeed, it should be the **beneficiary** of these consultations, ahead of the next European Parliament term.

As demonstrated almost daily by the transgressive, disruptive and ultimately chaotic approach adopted by some actors to solve global problems, the EU increasingly looks like the **only credible and effective defender** of a cooperative, rules-based approach backed by fundamental values. This is why its **capacity to act as a global player** is so essential.

