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# Policy Analysis

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Österreichisches Institut für Internationale Politik  
Austrian Institute for International Affairs

## The third EU-NATO joint declaration (10 January 2023): Was it worth the delay?

Loïc Simonet



## **Zusammenfassung**

Ausgelöst durch den Krieg in der Ukraine wurde nach monatelanger Verschiebung am 10. Januar 2023 die lang erwartete und langwierig ausgehandelte dritte gemeinsame EU-NATO-Erklärung unterzeichnet. Weder ein gemeinsames strategisches Konzept noch ein Aktionsplan, sendet das Dokument dennoch eine starke politische Botschaft der transatlantischen Einheit angesichts der größten Bedrohung der euro-atlantischen Sicherheit seit Jahrzehnten aus. Obwohl es den Wert einer stärkeren und leistungsfähigeren europäischen Verteidigung anerkennt, markiert es den Vorrang der NATO als europäischer Sicherheitsanbieter und wird daher als Niederlage für die strategische Autonomie der EU angesehen. Chinas allererste Erwähnung in einer gemeinsamen EU-NATO-Erklärung hat eine nervöse Reaktion Pekings ausgelöst.

## **Executive Summary**

Triggered by the war in Ukraine, the long-awaited third joint EU-NATO declaration was signed on 10 January 2023, after months of postponement. Neither a joint strategic concept nor a plan of actions, the document primarily sends a strong political message of transatlantic unity with regards to the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades. Although it recognises the value of a stronger and more capable European defence, it marks the primacy of NATO as European security provider, therefore being seen as a defeat for EU's strategic autonomy. China's first ever mention in a joint EU-NATO declaration sparked a nervous reaction in Beijing.

## **Keywords:**

China, EU, joint declaration, NATO, Strategic Compass, Strategic Concept, Russia, Ukraine

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), sharing similar membership, geographical scope and interests, have formed the cornerstone of European security over the last three decades. It is only recently, though, that the relationship between the two institutions, long affected by a “cooperation or competition” ambiguity and based until 2016 on technical arrangements<sup>1</sup> suffering from a “top-down strategic paralysis” (Duke & Vanhoonaeker, 2016), was brought to a new strategic level with a series of three joint EU-NATO declarations, the last one signed on 10 January 2023. The new joint declaration streamlines the parallel strategic reflection process concluded by both institutions in 2022. The endorsement of the EU’s Strategic Compass in March, as well as the adoption of the new NATO’s Strategic Concept in June (Simonet, 2023), indeed offered a unique opportunity to further enhance coherence and synergies between the two organizations.

Time was actually ripe for a third declaration already in 2021. President von der Leyen mentioned in her 2021 ‘State of the Union’ address, that the EU Commission was working with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on a joint declaration to be presented before the end of the year. Although the EU Strategic Compass endorsed in March 2022 did not directly refer to this perspective, the EU was then fully committed “to further enhancing

this key partnership also to foster the transatlantic bond” (EU Strategic Compass, 2022: 39). It is therefore difficult to assess the reason why the three partners had to wait until the beginning of 2023 – other than to “start the New Year”, as Secretary General Stoltenberg tweeted on the occasion -, at a date which does not even correspond to the first anniversary of the Russian “special operation”, which might also explain the declaration’s limited echo in the media. That the text, ready before the war in Ukraine, had to be redrafted after 24 February 2022 (AFP, 2023) only appears logical, but this also applies to the EU Strategic Compass which was nevertheless issued in due time. The NATO Madrid Summit in June 2022, in which Presidents Michel and von der Leyen participated and which hosted a Euro-Atlantic dinner attended by all EU and NATO leaders, would have offered the appropriate venue, as apparently expected by the European External Action Service (Agence Europe, 2022). It was the case for the 2016 and 2018 declarations, which were respectively issued in the margins of the Warsaw and Brussels NATO Summits. Has the process been held up over tensions between Turkey and Cyprus (Barigazzi, 2022; Monaghan *et al.*, 2023), whose “hostage taking” has made the EU-NATO partnership problematic from its very beginning (Smith & Gebhard, 2017: 305)?<sup>2</sup> Has the first mention of China in a joint declaration been a point of divergence between the United States and its Allies (Foy & Sevastopulo,

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<sup>1</sup> Starting with the so-called “Berlin Plus” arrangements which, as part of the framework for cooperation adopted on 17 March 2003, provide the basis for NATO-EU cooperation in crisis management by allowing the European Union (EU) to draw upon NATO’s assets and capabilities for operations in which the Alliance would not be militarily involved. So far, EU operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia & Herzegovina remains the only concrete implementation of the “Berlin Plus” mechanism.

<sup>2</sup> Turkey has not recognized the Republic of Cyprus since 1963, and has blocked its accession to the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a programme of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-

Atlantic partner countries and NATO. Cyprus, which joined the EU in 2004, is therefore the only non-NATO EU member State to remain outside of the PfP. In retaliation for this dispute in recognition, Cyprus has blocked administrative arrangements between the European Defense Agency and Turkey, as well as the signature of a security agreement with Turkey necessary for EU secret documents to be transmitted to NATO. This so-called “participation problem” has manifested itself in countless other ways, badly impairing the development of EU-NATO cooperation.

2022; Erlanger, 2023)? Is the complex and often confused multi-level cooperation between the two entities (Koop, 2017: 321 f.; Tardy & Lindstrom, 2019: 11-12) simply at fault? Has the declaration been delayed by intra-Brussels political catfights between its three authors, each one privately criticising the others for blocking parts of the text, as *the Financial Times* insinuated (Foy, 2023)? Repeated commitment expressed by the EU along 2022,<sup>3</sup> as well as growing frustration from the EU Parliament,<sup>4</sup> tend to accredit that delay originated on the NATO side. One thing is certain: that the third NATO-EU Joint Declaration was not adopted earlier further attests to the difficulties in operationalizing the NATO-EU partnership (Tardy, 2022: 14).

Taking stock of recent research on EU–NATO dyadic relationship, which has attracted quite sustained scholarly attention, this policy analysis empirically scrutinizes this long-awaited joint declaration, which it encompasses as an annex. It explains how the war in Ukraine triggered such signal of strong transatlantic unity. It focuses on the reaffirmation of NATO’s primacy as European security provider, which sparked concerns about EU’s strategic autonomy. It construes the document’s rather unambitious content and limited impact. It comments on China’s mention as a “challenge”. Finally, it ends up with a few key “take-aways”. In navigating through these successive items, this paper also contributes to the study and theorising of interorganisational relations in European and international security.

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<sup>3</sup> In a tweet posted after her meeting with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg on 26 Sept. 2022, U. von der Leyen wrote again: “we believe the time has come to agree a new Joint Declaration to take our partnership forward.”

## The Ukraine war as an “enabler”

In a remarkable study issued immediately before the eruption of the war in Ukraine, L. Giuglietti (2022) foresaw three possible scenarios for the EU-NATO relationship: continuity, stagnation, or expansion. For the scholar of the College of Europe, “‘expansion’ is only possible in case of major shocks – e.g. the worsening of the global power competition – that sharply require closing ranks and beneficially investing in a deeper EU-NATO partnership. However, this last scenario seems to be the least plausible because of the multiplicity of preconditions – a traumatic event and a singular political awareness – it demands”. Although his analysis was correct, his conclusion has been denied by the tragic events in 2022. The war in Ukraine is already listed as a turning point in history, one of those ‘critical junctures’, “relatively rare watershed moments marked by rapid change and upheaval” during which security architectures are “likely to be fundamentally reconfigured” (Hyde-Price, 2014: 105). Similar to the 2016 joint declaration, which found its origins in the “twin shocks” imparted on the EU and NATO by the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008, and subsequently the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the destabilisation of the Donbas region (Duke & Gebhard, 2017: 381), the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has rekindled discussions about NATO’s purpose and the way it relates to the EU, and deepened the impetus for closer links between the two institutions.

<sup>4</sup> On 1 Dec. 2022, one member of the EU Parliament observed that “criticism is now being expressed in both the EU and the US about failure to move forward with the announced measures that are necessary to achieve EU-NATO collaboration at political level. This foot-dragging is particularly noticeable regarding the long-awaited third joint declaration by the political leaders of both organisations” (Parliamentary question, 2022).

The 2016 and 2018 joint declarations have been used by both sides, especially by Secretary General Stoltenberg, to achieve internal cohesiveness, mitigate national divergences and mutually reinforce each other (Schuette, 2022; Giuglietti, 2022). Here as well, the 2023 declaration usefully makes up for the lack of overall strategic coordination between the EU and the Atlantic Alliance with respect to their policies towards the Ukraine-Russia crisis (Duke & Gebhard, 2017; Howorth, 2017a). Rather than the announcement of actions to be taken promptly or of practical moves in the near future, the 2023 joint declaration, signed on the 330<sup>th</sup> day of the conflict, primarily sends a strong political message of transatlantic unity: “faced with the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades”, at “a key juncture for Euro-Atlantic security and stability”, the EU and NATO “condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia’s aggression”, express “full solidarity with Ukraine” and reaffirm their “mutually reinforcing strategic partnership”. It is a signal of a general unity of views to the whole world, especially with regards to Russia’s brutal war on Ukraine.

The third joint declaration also comes on point to lift the last remaining “red lines” regarding Western support to Ukraine. “I think that Ukraine should get all the necessary military equipment they need and they can handle to defend their homeland”, President von der Leyen said at her press conference with the two other signatories; “and this means of course, advanced air defence systems, but also other types of advanced military equipment, as long as it is necessary to defend Ukraine” (Joint press conference, 2023). After the first delivery of battle tanks to Kyiv (French *AMX 10 RC*,

American *Bradley* and German *Marder*), Chancellor Scholz, after weeks of reluctance, finally allowed the provision of German *Leopard*, which could make a difference on the field and pave the way to France’s supply of *Leclerc* main battle tanks (Bourdillon, 2023). In March, Poland and Slovakia became the two first NATO Allies, EU member States to pledge to send fighter jets to Ukraine. Also worth being reported: J. Stoltenberg participated in the last (eighth) meeting of the US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group in the so-called “Ramstein” format,<sup>5</sup> on 20 January 2023, ten days after the signature of the joint declaration. Ammunition supply, as well as replenishing stocks of weapons, were at the core of the discussion.

### **The primacy of NATO as European security provider**

The two first EU-NATO joint declarations were signed at a time of doubt and question over the *raison d’être* of the Alliance. NATO seemed to have lost its primary purpose. The Atlantic Alliance had been diagnosed “brain dead” by French President Macron (*The Economist*, 2019) and stigmatized as “obsolete” by US President Donald Trump right after his election in 2017 (Reuters, 2017; Howorth, 2018: 528). The 2018 Declaration was signed on the eve of a traumatizing NATO Summit in Brussels, where Trump accused US’s European partners of falling behind in terms of financial contribution and burden sharing, and even threatened to withdraw from the Alliance (Koenig, 2018a). At the same time, the European Commission’s role in defence and security matters has been growing considerably, from the 2016 Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Pol-

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<sup>5</sup> The Ramstein format, which unites more than 50 countries throughout the world and meets at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany, was founded with

the aim of collectively supporting Ukraine in meeting its defence needs in the face of the full-scale invasion by Russia. The first meeting was held on 26 April 2022.



icity, the EU's first real strategic update in thirteen years, to President von der Leyen's call for a "geopolitical Commission" (Von der Leyen, 2019) and the High Representative's reference to the need "to learn to use the language of power" (Borrell, 2019). In the space of two years, major tools constitutive of a "conceptual shift in European security" (Schuette, 2022: 11) have been adopted on the way towards a European Defence Union (Juncker, 2017; European Parliament, 2016), such as the European Defence Fund (EDF),<sup>6</sup> the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PESCO),<sup>7</sup> the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD),<sup>8</sup> and the European Peace Facility (EPF) which has considerably expanded the EU's capacity to provide security.<sup>9</sup>

The political context which frames the third joint declaration is completely different. In 2023, NATO is back. The Atlantic Alliance has undertaken the largest reinforcement of its deterrence and defense since the end of the Cold War (Simonet, 2023), and indeed emerged as the most important agent of collective military action in Europe. The "spectre of marginalisation" that, only one year ago, was still looming over NATO (Schuette, 2022: 15), has been erased. "Our declaration makes clear that NATO remains the foundation of our collective defence", Secretary General Stoltenberg hammered (Joint press conference, 2023). Stoltenberg also alluded to Finland's and Sweden's forthcoming full membership, which will put 96% of the citizens of the EU

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<sup>6</sup> Complementing and amplifying Member States' efforts, the EDF was launched in 2017 to finance joint research and development of defence capabilities.

<sup>7</sup> Under PESCO (2017), EU member States whose military commitments fulfil higher criteria and who wish to make binding commitments to one another are enabled to intensify their cooperation in the area of security and defence. Currently 60 PESCO projects are being developed.

<sup>8</sup> CARD was launched in 2017 to promote transparency and coordination in national defence spending

under the Alliance's umbrella and expand NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) land area of operations by over 866,000 square kilometres.

### ***"So long European strategic autonomy, we hardly knew ye"***

That is, according to the *Financial Times*, the main takeaway from the new EU-NATO joint declaration (Foy, 2023, who tweeted the same day: "EU Strategic autonomy, RIP"). Yet, the 2023 joint declaration "recognise(s) the value of a stronger and more capable European defence that contributes positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to, and interoperable with NATO", something that the French Foreign Services immediately emphasized (France Diplomacy, 2023), also recalling the joint statement between Emmanuel Macron and Joe Biden in Rome on 29 October 2021, when the US President seemingly acknowledged a "stronger and more capable European defense" (US-France Joint Statement, 2021). Still, observers only saw France's calls for more European military independence being played down (Erlanger, 2023). "Is true strategic autonomy dead or has it just been put on the shelf for a few more years?", the representative of the *Financial Times* provocatively asked Charles Michel during the joint press conference following the signature on 10 January? "EU's strategic autonomy is more necessary than ever", the EU Council President could

plans to facilitate joint capability developments and procurement.

<sup>9</sup> The EPF is a fund worth € 5 billion financed outside the EU budget for a seven-year period (2021-2027), with a single mechanism to support all CFSP actions in military and defense areas. Largely depleted over months of war in Ukraine, the EPF has recently been replenished, following a call by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on member states to refill the pot by the end of last year.

not but reply, but he might have failed to convince his audience... In short, despite the war and general efforts to improve U.S.-EU cooperation, this declaration seems to indicate that the Biden administration has maintained the skepticism of EU defense efforts held by previous U.S. administrations (Monaghan *et al.*, 2023).

The Cato Institute gave the fatal blow. Following H. Foy's opinion in the *Financial Times*, for whom the document is "pretty painful reading for those who want less America in European defence" because it declares that "NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its allies and essential for Euro Atlantic security" (Foy, 2023), the libertarian think tank commented: "The declaration is a triumph for countries like Poland, who do not trust their European neighbors and instead want the United States to remain at the center of European security forever. It is a defeat for the American people. Washington should be handing European security off to the Europeans, not asking another generation of American taxpayers to foot the bill themselves" (Logan, 2023).

As it was already the case with the 2016 joint declaration (Duke & Gebhard, 2017: 392), the 2023 declaration reinforced Russia's argument against the EU and NATO as the cause of its security dilemma. Interestingly, this "EU defence on US terms" (Fiott, 2019) has been Moscow's main angle of attack. With the new joint declaration, the EU has ensured its "complete subordination" to NATO, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria

Zakharova said on 10 January. The 2023 document only proves that the US wants to make the EU a "vassal" to be used in its "aggressive and confrontational approach", she thumped (Teslova, 2023; Reuters, 2023a).

### **Stepping up cooperation – or just a new “laundry list”?**

The 2016 joint declaration focused on seven areas in which EU-NATO relations should be improved: (1) hybrid threat, (2) operational cooperation, (3) cyber security and defence, (4) defence capabilities, (5) defence industry and research, (6) exercises, and (7) defence and security capacity building. In December 2016, 42 specific action points across those seven areas were agreed, to be later translated into 74 concrete actions. For the first time, "political difficulties (could) no longer be used as an excuse for immobility on EU-NATO cooperation." (Himmrich & Raynova, 2017: 16). The 2018 joint declaration called for rapid progress in four key areas: 1) military mobility; 2) counter-terrorism; 3) strengthening resilience to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-related risks (CBRN); and 4) Women, Peace and Security (WPS). In parallel, progress reports have been published regularly to maintain the momentum of cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

The 2023 declaration assesses "unprecedented progress across all areas of cooperation" (para. 10). In particular, the three signatories welcome "tangible results in countering hybrid and cyber threats,<sup>11</sup> operational coop-

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<sup>10</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017 was issued on 20 June 2022 (see bibliography).

<sup>11</sup> Countering hybrid threats makes up for approximately one third of the total of 74 projects on the EU-NATO list, thereby underlining the importance

of the topic as an area of cooperation between the two organisations (Zandee, Van der Meer & Stoetman, 2021, 40). However, the new declaration does not go as far as suggested by the Clingendael Institute ("Insert in this Declaration, to be released in December 2021, a more strategic approach by the two organisations in countering hybrid threats, such as a delineation of responsibilities and listing



eration including maritime issues, military mobility, defence capabilities, defence industry and research, exercises, counter terrorism, and capacity-building of partners” (para. 11). Along the line of its predecessors, and while further strengthening the cooperation in existing areas, the document sets out a shared vision of how the EU and NATO will act together against common security threats. The two institutions will expand and deepen their cooperation in the following new areas, which featured prominently in their respective Strategic Compass/Strategic Concept:

- the growing geostrategic competition;
- resilience issues;
- protection of critical infrastructure, a topic which gained immediate traction with the launching of a task force to boost protection of critical infrastructure in response to last year's attack on the Nord Stream gas pipelines and Russia's "weaponising of energy" (Reuters, 2023b);
- emerging and disruptive technologies;
- space;
- the security implications of climate change; and
- foreign information manipulation and interference.

Further intensified EU-NATO cooperation on these new topics is certainly to be welcomed. However, the new declaration might not be moving beyond a new “laundry-list” of topics which are self-evident cases for cooperation. As J. Howorth already noted about the 2016

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additional areas of counter-hybrid cooperation” (*idem*, 44).

<sup>12</sup> In the 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, China comes as the first challenge, even before the threat posed by Russia: “The 2022 NDS advances a strategy focused on the PRC and on collaboration with our growing network of Allies and partners on common objectives. It seeks to prevent the PRC’s dominance of key re-

joint declaration, it would be astonishing – indeed incomprehensible – if NATO and the EU were not cooperating closely on them (Howorth, 2018: 525). For instance, the “security implications of climate change” are the perfect example of consensual topic requiring a unanimous and worldwide involvement of all actors: should engraving it black on white in a new declaration be celebrated as such a huge achievement?

### Scratch the dragon where it hurts

“We live in an era of growing strategic competition. China’s growing assertiveness and policies create challenges that we need to address” (para. 5). It is the first time that China is mentioned in a joint EU-NATO declaration, and moreover portrayed as a challenge, but this is not really a surprise. NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept already coined China’s stated ambitions and coercive policies as a challenge for the Allies’ “interests, security and values” in a “systemic” way (Strategic Concept, 2022: 13-14).

It is no mystery that European capitals had to resist Washington’s pressure for an even more aggressive wording (Foy & Sevastopulo, 2022), which would have reflected the United States’ recently released National Security Strategy.<sup>12</sup> “It does not require any great acumen to identify whose hand has shaped both NATO’s concept of security and the EU-NATO joint declaration”, *China Daily* nervously reacted (2023), suggesting to the EU to “be steering well clear of the confrontational clique-building of the

gions while protecting the U.S. homeland and reinforcing a stable and open international system” (p. 2); “The most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is the PRC’s coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences” (p. 3).

United States". Beijing's reaction has been vehement. "The declaration reveals the bias and arrogance of the EU and NATO toward the perception of China, which China strongly opposes", a spokesperson for the Chinese mission to the EU said right after the joint declaration was released (*Global Times*, 2023a). "Dangerous escalation in bloc confrontation thinking", "Cold War mentality", and "condescending arrogance of Western centrism" (*Global Times*, 2023 a & b): the EU-NATO document revived the best of China's official ideological vocabulary.

### **At the end of the day, not yet a joint Strategic Concept**

Of course, the issuance of this "painfully negotiated" (Erlanger, 2023) third EU-NATO joint declaration should not be underestimated. It is a step in the right direction. But it will certainly not, in and of itself, change anything fundamental in the *rationale* of the EU-NATO cooperation. Far from being a "cooperation agreement", as *Euractiv* strangely named it (Brzozowski, 2023), the document does not contain any announcement nor deliverables. Its significance is primarily symbolic, as S. Monaghan and his co-authors rightly evaluate (Monaghan *et al.*, 2023).

Beyond technicalities, NATO's and EU's adaptation to today's challenges will be shaped by their ability to divide labor and share the burden. Far from it, the "cooperation or competition" dilemma is not likely to be completely solved by the third joint declaration. The "matrushka" is still there: "the biggest doll is NATO as a whole. Inside it today is but one very small doll: the EU countries. So there is a lot of hollow space in between the little 'EU-doll' and the large 'NATO-doll'" (Biscop, 2018: 108). Unfortunately, the new declaration fails to indicate how to articulate the EU-doll without weakening the NATO-doll, neither how a larger

EU-doll could be taken out of the NATO-doll and perform on its own. Whether the reference, in the declaration, to NATO's recognition of "the value of a stronger and more capable European defence", is sufficient to lift the frictions between France and its Allies over the concept of European strategic autonomy, remains to be seen. Little has been done, on 10 January 2023, to reconcile cooperation and complementarity with the aspiration towards strategic autonomy, which J. Howorth considered as "squaring the circle" (Howorth, 2017 b). The third joint declaration only puts the lid on the pot and does certainly not preclude further debate to erupt on this issue.

All in all, we are left hungering for more. The new declaration will do little to remove the "glass ceilings" hanging over the EU-NATO partnership (Koenig, 2018b). We remain far from the idea of "a joint strategic concept to outline common purposes and goals as soon as possible" that experts advised the EU and NATO to draft (Petrov, Schütte & Vanhoonacker, 2020: 39). Without speaking of the "concordat" S. Biscop "spiritually" advocated, i.e. a practical division of responsibility which can be pragmatically revised over time, as the strategies and capabilities of both organisations' member states evolve (Biscop, 2021). The fact that the declaration comes after months of delays shows that there are limits to cooperation. The "EU-NATO imperative" (Tardy & Lindstrom, 2019: 9) needs to be further and more strongly affirmed. Their 'strategic partnership' which was already enunciated in the 2002 EU-NATO declaration on European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), based on "shared values, indivisibility of our security and our determination to tackle the challenges of the 21st century", still has a long way to go.

## Key take-aways

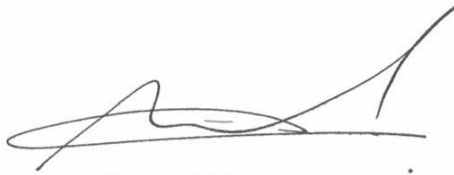
- The third NATO-EU Joint Declaration sends a **strong political message of transatlantic unity**, especially with regards to **Russia**.
- It might contribute paving the way to further crossing of “red lines” regarding **Western support to Ukraine** (provision of battle tanks and aircrafts).
- It reaffirms **NATO’s primacy as European security provider**, hence raising concerns and doubts about the **EU’s strategic autonomy** and only putting a lid on the two institutions’ **“competition-cooperation” dilemma**.
- Contentwise, the third joint declaration contains **nothing ground-breaking**, and is not moving beyond a **new “laundry-list” of topics which are self-evident cases for cooperation** (climate change), far from a long-expected and much needed joint strategic concept between the two organizations.
- The first ever mention of **China** in a joint NATO-EU declaration reflects **Washington’s pressure on its Allies**, and triggered **harsh reaction from Beijing**.

**JOINT DECLARATION ON EU-NATO COOPERATION  
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL,  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND  
THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

- 1) The NATO-EU strategic partnership is founded on our shared values, our determination to tackle common challenges and our unequivocal commitment to promote and safeguard peace, freedom and prosperity in the Euro-Atlantic area.
- 2) Today, we are faced with the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades. Russia's brutal war on Ukraine violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter. It undermines European and global security and stability. Russia's war has exacerbated a food and energy crisis affecting billions of people around the world.
- 3) We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's aggression. Russia must immediately stop this war and withdraw from Ukraine. We express our full solidarity with Ukraine and reiterate our unwavering and continued support for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We fully support Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence and to choose its own destiny.
- 4) Authoritarian actors challenge our interests, values and democratic principles using multiple means – political, economic, technological and military.
- 5) We live in an era of growing strategic competition. China's growing assertiveness and policies present challenges that we need to address.
- 6) Persistent conflict, fragility and instability in our European neighbourhood undermine our security and provide fertile ground for strategic competitors, as well as terrorist groups, to gain influence, destabilise societies and pose a threat to our security.
- 7) As underlined by both the NATO Strategic Concept and the EU Strategic Compass, this is a key juncture for Euro-Atlantic security and stability, more than ever demonstrating the importance of the transatlantic bond, calling for closer EU-NATO cooperation.
- 8) NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its Allies and essential for Euro Atlantic security. We recognise the value of a stronger and more capable European defence that contributes positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to, and interoperable with NATO.
- 9) Our mutually reinforcing strategic partnership contributes to strengthening security in Europe and beyond. NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. We will further mobilize the combined set of instruments at our disposal, be they political, economic or military, to pursue our common objectives to the benefit of our one billion citizens.
- 10) Building on the 2016 Warsaw Joint Declaration and the 2018 Brussels Joint Declaration, which significantly expanded the breadth and depth of our partnership established more than twenty years ago, we have achieved unprecedented progress across all areas of cooperation.

- 11) We have reached tangible results in countering hybrid and cyber threats, operational cooperation including maritime issues, military mobility, defence capabilities, defence industry and research, exercises, counter terrorism, and capacity-building of partners.
- 12) As the security threats and challenges we are confronted with are evolving in scope and magnitude, we will take our partnership to the next level on the basis of our long-standing cooperation. We will further strengthen our cooperation in existing areas, and expand and deepen our cooperation to address in particular the growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, as well as foreign information manipulation and interference.
- 13) In signing this declaration we will take the NATO-EU partnership forward in close consultation and cooperation with all NATO Allies and EU Member States, in the spirit of full mutual openness and in compliance with the decision-making autonomy of our respective organisations and without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of any of our members. In this context, we view transparency as crucial. We encourage the fullest possible involvement of the NATO Allies that are not members of the EU in its initiatives. We encourage the fullest possible involvement of the EU members that are not part of the Alliance in its initiatives.
- 14) We will assess progress on a regular basis.

Signed at Brussels on 10 January 2023 in triplicate.



Charles Michel  
President of the European Council



Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission



Jens Stoltenberg  
Secretary General of the  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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