

FIVE QUESTIONS

ABOUT EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY

FOR CAROLYN MOSER



Ms. Moser, cyber attacks, election manipulation, and military threats: which dangers are the member states of the EU currently exposed to, often without being aware of it?

74 CAROLYN MOSER: The EU's Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022, provides a fairly accurate description of the current security landscape. It identifies power politics as a threat, while territorial defense has regained relevance. Additionally, terrorism and extremism continue to pose acute challenges, as do hybrid attacks. As you can see, there is a wide range of threats that the member states are generally responsible for countering. In addition, the EU institutions take legal and political measures – sanctions are imposed at the EU level – or provide major stimuli, most recently for the defense industry.

The retiring commission is working on a “Defense of Democracy Package.” What kind of protection does this package provide for, and how do you assess it?

The goal of the package is to safeguard democratic institutions and processes within the EU from foreign influence. Lobbying and party financing are gateways for this type of influence. Therefore, the package proposes introducing a uniform regulation to enhance transparency regarding interest representatives from third countries, along with recommendations for transparent party financing. Generally speaking, we in the EU need to

improve our toolbox so that we are better armed against agents, including those from third countries, who are increasingly attacking our democratic foundations and our social order.

If Ursula von der Leyen gets a second term in office as Commission President, she wants to appoint a defense commissioner. What do you think about that?

This approach aligns with the need to prioritize defense issues in the EU. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine served as a wake-up call, prompting urgent efforts to enhance the EU and its member states' defense capabilities as quickly as possible. However, in the EU, defense remains a prerogative of member states, with the European Commission playing a passive role, except in matters related to the defense industry. If it were up to the Commission, armaments would, in future, primarily be procured jointly and in the EU, which would constitute a true paradigm shift. The new member of the Commission would thus have a long list of tasks.

How are we in Europe protected against attacks? Is there a European command and control structure?

In the event of an armed attack, the right to self-defense applies, which also includes a collective dimension. This means that other states can provide assistance and support to the state under attack; in fact, they must do so as part of bi- or multilateral mutual assis-

tance clauses. NATO's mutual defense clause is the most significant, as it includes the U.S. nuclear protection shield. The EU also has a mutual assistance clause, but its military structures are rudimentary. This can change, however, if the transatlantic security guarantees weaken.

If defense is needed, could France provide nuclear weapons and place them under EU authority?

In principle, a state that is providing support to an attacked state is free to decide what resources it will make available. These resources can range from humanitarian aid and logistical support to the supply of weapons, combat operations, and also nuclear defense. Yet, nuclear weapons cannot simply be shared, given existing obligations under international law – nor are most nuclear powers prepared to do so. In the wake of Brexit, France remains the only nuclear power in the EU, and the only one in Europe that could act independently of the US. As a result, there are now discussions about whether and under which conditions France would share its nuclear deterrent with other EU states. However, we are still a long way from a European atomic bomb...

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