

## DISPATCH FROM WARSAW: A VIEW INTO THE EMERGING EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER

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Since Donald Trump's second term as President of the United States began on January 20, 2025, it has become exceedingly clear that Europe is in desperate need of a new security order. Though signs that Europe would soon need to redefine its post-Cold War security order have been emerging since 2014—when NATO allies agreed to increase defense spending to 2% of GDP at the Wales Summit following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea—Trump's renewed threats to cut off American support for European defense have woken up Washington's slumbering transatlantic allies. However, while a new consensus has emerged across Europe that it should be preparing for a more independent defense strategy, discussions of how to achieve this end and what actions to take to get there are still very much in their infancy nine months into Trump's second term.

These debates were on full display at this year's Warsaw Security Forum, one of Europe's leading security conferences. On the agenda of this high-level gathering of civilian and military leaders, defense industry actors, and security experts were numerous panels and discussions on Europe's changing security order and how to prepare for future conflicts through strengthening the conti-

nent's defense and deterrence—or, as per the title of the conference report, "Winning the War Before the War." While many of the panels focused on supporting the war in Ukraine and building up Europe's defense capabilities, the panels also focused on Europe's adaptability and resilience as it confronts new threats amid an evolving security order.

Mirroring NATO's agenda set at this year's Hague Summit, the focus of the panels was largely on improving Europe's much-needed hard power capabilities to defend the continent and move toward spending 5% of GDP on defense. While topics such as democracy, European enlargement, and energy security were also discussed over multiple panels on the larger stages at the forum, topics such as climate security and the role of women in international security were much less visible, with these discussions taking place on much smaller stages, some by invitation only. While the geographic focus of the summit was on European security, there were few discussions on other regions outside the Indo-Pacific amid the proverbial U.S. pivot to Asia and focus on defending Taiwan. Therefore, the shift in how the Trump administration has affected discussions of transatlantic security was clear.



Two key themes emerged from among the discussions. First, while several panels examined Europe's air, land, sea, and space capabilities, the need to develop Europe's drone and counter-drone technologies amid recent Russian drone attacks across Europe, including on Poland, was widely discussed across the board. As European allies have been scrambling to shoot down cheaply manufactured Russian drones with costly advanced NATO hardware over the last month, the current predicament has become the most recent case in which Europe needs to develop its capacity to counter threats more symmetrically. As Russian drones have continued to disrupt both European infrastructure and the daily lives of citizens across the continent, this capability has proven exceedingly important to today's evolving threat landscape.

Second, unity undoubtedly emerged as the main theme of the forum. During his opening remarks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proclaimed that unity "is our strong weapon," which was echoed (sometimes almost in unison) throughout the forum. While the phrase #DividedWeFall was used as one of the forum's slogans, no slogan was in fact needed to get this point across to audiences as it was naturally a main theme on the agenda.

However, while talks of unity abounded, definitions of unity were less clear. On the one hand, unity seemed to reflect the increasing need for cohesion and cooperation among the European pillar of NATO without the United States. On the other hand, this sense of unity sometimes reflected greater defense cooperation with the United States, which will likely continue to be the leading supplier of European defense capabilities for years to come. Although many voiced the need to increase Europe's own industrial capabilities, the desire to urgently acquire top-of-the-line equipment and technology from the United States was pointed out as a matter of grave concern for European deterrence as Europe's advanced capabilities lag.

Lastly, looking at the forum as a whole, there was one gaping hole in the discussions in Warsaw: Eu-

rope's defense cooperation with NATO ally Turkey. Although non-European NATO member Canada was also not visible during the forum, Turkey's position as NATO's second largest army, a key nation on its Southern Flank and in the Black Sea, its membership in the European Coalition of the Willing, and its burgeoning indigenous defense sector, with particular expertise in cost-effective UAV technology, make Turkey's absence from the debate more notable. In the forum's report, Turkey was not mentioned aside from one note on its aerial refueling capabilities and possible sanctions related to its significant purchase of Russian oil. While such sanctions on Turkey would indeed complicate its role in improving European defense, it is hard to see true transatlantic unity with Ankara absent from the table.

Overall, while unity seems to be *le mot du jour* in talks on building the new European security order, European allies ought to first consider what and how they are unifying as they prepare for not only future threats but also a future order.