

## **‘What does the rest of the world expect from the EU?’**



## **‘WHAT DOES THE REST OF THE WORLD EXPECT FROM THE EU?’**

organized by the Council of Councils

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Notes to support the public session

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## **‘What does the rest of the world expect from the EU?’**

### **Introduction**

On October 29, 2024, the Council of Councils (1) will organize the fifteenth regional conference public session, this time with the theme:

### **‘What does the rest of the world expect from the EU?’**

An ambiguous and big question and the answer is vary depending on the position taken (2). After all, there are also forces that want the Union to disappear from the map. Nonetheless, several broad themes emerge regarding the EU’s international role and influence.

Questions that arise are:

- does the EU have sufficient credibility and trustworthiness to ensure that ‘the rest of the world’ is convinced to do something with EU's input under condition of reciprocity?
- and which model should Europe choose?:
  1. protection of the liberal world order, democracy and the system of multilateralism?
  2. dictatorial, autocratic, aggressive systems?
  3. or, by taking varying positions, the middle way?

In 2025 it will be eighty years ago World War II ended, and 75 years that the Schuman Plan marked the beginnings of European integration. These legacies continue to influence the politics, economies and societies of the wider Europe, as well as relations with those outside Europe.

But today, the world is entangled in a state of violent power struggle; rulers are fighting for territory and global hegemony and there are clashes between and within cultural, political philosophies and ideologies as well as between social and all sorts of other individual views.

Moreover, drastic transitions and transformations are taking place in almost all societal fields (3) as well institutional, of which one of the most important are the rules-based open international order and the declining interest in the multilateral system (with both its advantages and shortcomings) in favour of systems that adopt a dictatorial, autocratic and aggressive attitude.

Is the EU strong enough? Adequate equipped, especially on foreign and security policy (military, diplomacy, and with a vision)? And does the EU have sufficient authority and sovereignty to participate fully and to move developments in a desired direction?

This paper attempts to draft the main feasible and desirable expectations that Europe could meet and aspires to put in motion a kind of social contract between Europe, the world and its citizens, who should not be ignored. The good news is that Europe is the cradle of knowledge, science and philosophy, and of almost all other departments of learning. The bad sound is the political division over areas that count.

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### The following key findings emerge:

- **play a meaningful role by**
  - a) **formulating big ideas**
  - b) **agility in international relations** (but precisely it is the EEAS that struggles to be a comprehensive and fully fledged body and can therefore hardly meet expectations and act accordingly), and
  - c) **funds and willingness to provide financial support;**
- **act on a more equal footing** (the time of supremacy crumbles, as evidenced by the reactions of countries that already have left behind the acceptance of old dominant views);
- **prevent ending up in a state of war of all against all** (it has become a very dangerous world. Europe has experience in reconciliation and building on cooperation, but falls military short to defend values);
- **combat excessive polarization**, the contradictions along ethnic and religious lines, which is taking place along existing fault lines in society.

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### A role for Europe in the world?

The EU seems to be mainly reactive, has little sovereignty to act as an independent (hard) power and only functions effectively if the member states allow it to. Only in times of crises does the Union move quickly in the process of progress.

Such a strategy falls short in today's world, which is in a messy state. Given the enormous destructive forces, is it realistic to think that Europe could play a **meaningful role in the form of ideas, diplomacy, negotiations, peace missions, defense, trade and finance**? Or should that indeed happen to stabilize things again?

### Taking the lead to protect?

Thousands of years ago, Zeus showered Europa with 3 priceless gifts to protect her:

- Talos, a giant automaton made to protect Europa in Crete from pirates and invaders;
- a dog, Leolaps, which could hunt anything he wanted;
- and a javelin that had the power to hit its target, whatever it was.

Today, the EU's and NATO's (4) new leadership, UN's 'Pact for the Future' (5), [the European Political Community](#) and the implementation of [the EU strategic agenda 2024-2029](#) (5) with its political priorities, must provide protection against instability and insecurity and stand up to dictators, and authoritarian leaders and their ideas.

Europe must become alert and move to strengthen its presence on the world stage so that it can respond to expectations.

### More roles for Europe

#### More equal footing

Will the visions, goals and stories ensure that the challenges are overcome? And given the theme of the session and years of debate about Europe's role on the grand chessboard, is the world and the autocratic order really waiting for a stronger and larger Europe to play that role? And suppose so, should a more equal attitude with respect to grouped countries based on their defining characteristics with regard to socioeconomics and politics (Global South) then be considered to cooperate better?

Or is a more assertive and flexible approach needed in geopolitical context (the Global Gateway), such as the use of association and trade agreements, and methods of deterrence (the Strategic Compass, the European Defence Agency, European Peace Facility and Permanent Structured Cooperation) as a means of influencing in order to take its place in the world?

Or both, depending on location and development?

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### **Prevent ending up in a state of war of all against all**

What is crystal clear is that humanity must avoid entering a state of war of all against all. Rulers with lust for power, shortages of food, water, raw materials and energy, as well as the transition to reduce pollution, are causing misery and dissatisfaction and triggers human migration flows.

“Talos”, “Laelaps” and the javelin are needed to protect and enable Europe to continue building certainties to create a new way of life and help us move towards a better world.

Together with IO’s, there lies another task for Europe to play a role:

*“The NATO and the EU work side by side in crisis management, on capability development, in addressing hybrid threats and challenges posed by growing strategic competition, as well as in building the capacities of their common partners in the east and south.”*

In any case, regardless of which Presidential candidate is chosen, Europe will have to fend for itself, including security’ (6). Recently, the idea of creating a NATO bank was floated in case funds dry up.

As for the UN (7), it has sand in the machine and needs to be reformed from a discussion group to an action group, while in line the associated financial institutions also need reorganization. Although the Pact makes proposals, it is very doubtful whether these will lead to the desired results (8).

In this new era, the UN might consider dissolving the Security Council or the body itself and re-establishing *‘a new place where the world’s nations can gather together’* (with a flexible voting system), including the European, Asian and African Union (9) with full powers of attorney, to discuss common problems and find truly shared solutions.

### **Combat excessive polarization**

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) prohibits discrimination on grounds of nationality. It also enables the Council of the European Union to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 157 TFEU).

Nowadays, the idea and functioning of how to deal with each other no longer meets the wanted requirements because of **excessive polarization** and confrontations on the one hand and the increased philosophical position that the interests of the individual are more important than those of the group.

The Union itself and citizens have rights and duties to fulfil. These rights and obligations are not well known or are not complied with. To create a more secure Europe, the Commission should immediately draft and distribute all over Europe a social contract that meets the spirit of the times. That is not the case now. The purpose and content of it are not clear.

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Such a contract represents the view that persons’ moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live. The contract must also serve to teach newcomers what it means to live in Europe.

Here too lies a task for Europe to contribute. Measures that can lead to more solidarity and tolerance, creating a psychological sense of unity of groups or classes.

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### References

- (1) An international initiative to connect leading foreign policy institutes from around the world in a dialogue on issues of **global governance, multilateral cooperation, and geopolitics**.

The defining foreign policy challenges of the twenty-first century are global in nature. To help direct high-level international attention and effective policy responses to these threats and opportunities, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) has created a Council of Councils (CoC). The CoC is composed of twenty-seven major policy institutes from some of the world's most influential countries. It is designed to facilitate candid, not-for-attribution dialogue and consensus-building among influential opinion leaders from both established and emerging nations, with the ultimate purpose of injecting the conclusions of its deliberations into high-level foreign policy circles within members countries;

- (2) Russia and the European Union: 'What do We Want from Europe?' / '[Three Questions concerning New Principles in Bilateral Relations](#)' (Valdai Discussion club, report Moscow 2016);
- (3) In fields as energy, economy, agriculture, pollution, climate of the weather, human migrations, and changes of an entire culture or civilization;
- (4) [Could Trump Be Good for Europe?](#) (Stimson, Sept. 27, 2024), [More Pillars Needed: Ten Options for Europe to Improve NATO's Nuclear Deterrence](#) (Stimson, Oct. 2, 2024) and '[Why the U.S. Presidential Election Matters for Europe](#)' (Global Memo by SWP, CEPS, PISM, and Chatham House, Sep 03, 2024);
- (5) [EU strategic agenda - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#);
- (6) 'New Diplomacy Project': '[Assessing the 'Trump Risk' to European Security](#)'
- (7) Participating in the UN Agenda 2030. These shared goals and has included elements that aim to build peaceful societies, provide justice, help rebuild affected societies, and promote accountability and the general welfare of the world.
- (8) [Pegasus September 2024 \(cauxroundtable.org\)](#);
- (9) In addition to non-permanent membership for African countries, the US supports the addition of two new permanent seats for African countries on the powerful U.N. Security Council. However, Washington opposes giving veto power to the African countries that would hold the two permanent seats because the veto makes the Security Council's work "dysfunctional."

Feeling Europe Foundation is an agency that focuses on European values and affairs, aims to improve the human condition and living conditions, and promotes and supports the European way of life. The desk takes position as nexus between citizens and institutions, delivers resonance, builds, informs and connects, and is doing research. The foundation is an outgrowth from the conferences 'Europe: A Beautiful Idea?' (5th) and 'The Sound of Europe'.

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