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Congress Centre, Granada. | © EFE/Juanjo Martín

EU's Future Priorities: Strategic Agenda 2024-2029

By Sarah Cernikova

An informal meeting of heads of governments of the EU took place in Granada last week. In addition to migration and enlargement, the heads of EU governments also discussed defence in connection with the upcoming Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, which should be adopted in June 2024. EU leaders agreed to strengthen the EU's defence readiness and focus on further developing new technologies. These commitments were summarized into four points: military mobility, resilience in space, countering cyber and hybrid threats, countering foreign information manipulation, and The Strategic Compass for security and defence.

The EU defence strategy and actions that should take place in upcoming years will be built on The Strategic Compass for security and defence. The Strategic agenda considers the Compass as a key to the future of EU defence.

Discussion about European security and its military readiness was opened after Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, EU leaders pointed out. Since then, European defence firms have used EU funds to boost ammunition production. The question remains: what role common EU defence will have in upcoming years?



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Photo by Cpl. Kyle Jia

NATO's exercise Northern Challenge 23 and Northern Spirit 23 in Iceland

By Sarah Cernikova

The annual exercises Northern Challenge 23 and Northern Spirit 23 took place in Irish Keflavik from September 21 to October 4, with the primary objective of providing advanced training in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and improvised explosive device disposal (IEDD). Over 400 participants from 16 allied countries and partner nations participated in the exercise.

The U.S. Marine Corps participated in the exercise, contributing their expertise in modern explosive threat neutralization. All participating nations actively addressed simulated explosive threats, leveraging their unique national experiences, protocols, and strategies. This comprehensive exercise aims to facilitate the exchange of these distinct national approaches and mutual inspiration. Furthermore, these exercises significantly enhance integration within the NATO alliance and its partner nations.

USA Highlights

By Ondrej Pragr

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Contemplates Independent Run in 2024 U.S. Election

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a prominent figure in the Kennedy family, is considering an independent run in the 2024 U.S. Presidential election. His potential candidacy has piqued interest in American politics, raising questions about the potential impact on the race. This development adds a new dimension to the evolving landscape of the upcoming election.

Biden's Diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and Mohammed bin Salman

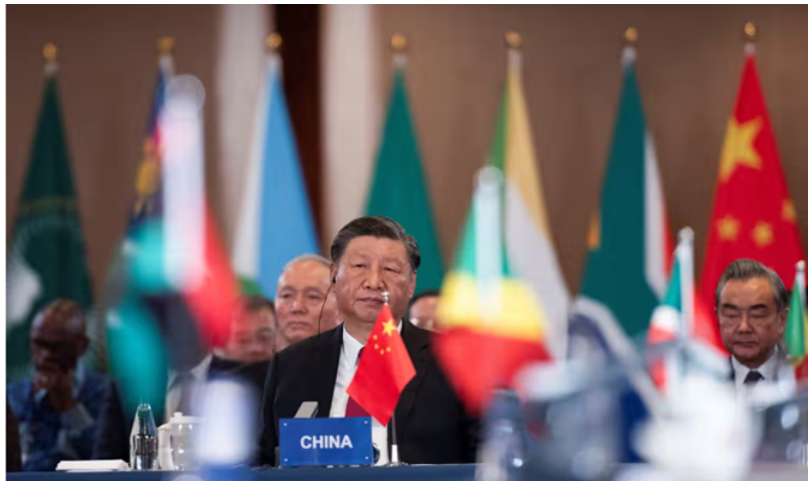
President Biden's administration is facing scrutiny over its approach to Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, particularly in the wake of the Jamal Khashoggi murder. The delicate balance of maintaining relations with a key Middle Eastern ally while addressing human rights concerns remains a challenge for the U.S., prompting debates on foreign policy. The international community closely watches the developments in U.S.-Saudi relations, as they carry implications for regional stability and human rights advocacy.

China affairs

By Ondrej Pragr

Xi Jinping's Vision for a Multipolar World

Chinese President Xi Jinping is steering China away from Western influences, advocating for a multipolar world. This shift signifies China's aspiration to match the United States as a global leader, fostering partnerships across Asia and beyond, beyond traditional Western alliances. This strategic repositioning carries far-reaching geopolitical implications, challenging the existing balance of power and prompting nations worldwide to reassess their allegiances.



📷 Xi Jinping attends the China-Africa Leaders' Roundtable on the last day of the Brics summit.
Photograph: Alet Pretorius/Reuters

AUKUS Alliance and China's Deterrence Strategy

Recent discussions on the AUKUS alliance (comprising Australia, the UK, and the US) highlight concerns over its impact on China's deterrence strategy. The controversial submarine deal is seen as an effort to undermine China's regional influence, with implications for the Indo-Pacific security landscape. This development has drawn both support and criticism, intensifying the ongoing debate about how alliances in the region will reshape security dynamics.

Campaign to Reduce China's UN Human Rights Council Support

Activists are mobilizing to diminish China's presence on the UN Human Rights Council. Ongoing worries regarding China's human rights practices, especially concerning Hong Kong and Xinjiang, drive this campaign. It seeks international backing for reforms and accountability, emphasizing the importance of upholding human rights principles. This movement underscores the growing global concern over China's human rights record and highlights the potential for diplomatic tensions on the international stage.

Diplomatic Fallout Between France and Sahel Countries

By Petra Nemcova

Due to instabilities between Sahel countries and France, thousands of students who were supposed to leave for France to study can now not. France has suspended the issuing of visas for Sahel countries. The main reason is worsened security and instabilities surrounding the Sahel region. Students such as Ophélie Ouédraogo have to resort to online classes.

Ophélie and other students mention that it has a psychological effect on them, not only due to the inability to leave but also the occurring jihadist attacks terrorizing the whole region. The visa situation does not affect only students but researchers and artists, for instance, as well.



Togolese troops are among the West African security forces facing increased threats from Sahel jihadists.. Photo: PIUS UTOMI EKPEI / AFP
Source: AFP

France continues to decrease its mutual relationship with countries in the Sahel, from Mali to Niger. French troops are now withdrawing from Niger. Niger's junta has demanded the departure of around 1500 soldiers via road to Chad. A joint France-Niger withdrawal plan says it will provide security backup to the French convoys withdrawing by land.

On the other hand, Russia is building bilateral relations with Sahel countries, namely with Mali. President Putin has discussed trade and security with Mali's leader over the phone, which counts as their third phone call in less than eight weeks. This seems to be Putin's strategy to increase Russia's influence over the Sahel at the expense of decreasing relations between the Sahel, France, and the US.

Ukraine Braces for Surge in Drone Attacks Ahead of Winter

By Karolina Badrianova

Ukraine is grappling with an alarming surge in drone attacks by Russian forces, with even more expected this winter. In September alone, there were over 500 drone attacks, which amounts to half of the 1,000 incidents recorded in the previous six months. These attacks, utilizing Iranian-made Shahed drones, have targeted civilian areas and crucial infrastructure in several regions, including Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson. Kyiv has warned of a renewed Russian campaign targeting Ukrainian energy facilities, especially before winter, echoing last year's attacks that left millions of Ukrainians without electricity, heating, and water services.

As Ukraine confronts this growing threat, there's a pressing need to localize drone component production. This move seeks to reduce reliance on international supply chains, particularly those linked to China, which has recently imposed export controls on drones and their components. As most commercially available drone components come from China and Ukraine, raising concerns about the Chinese export ban, it aims to bolster its resilience by ramping domestic manufacturing capabilities. This shift toward self-sufficiency in drone component production is crucial in safeguarding the nation against the evolving Russian threat.

CBAM's Initial Phase Launched last Sunday

By Karolina Badrianova

On October 1st, 2023, the EU launched the first phase of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) – a pioneering initiative to combat climate change globally. Within the EU, the EU Emission Trading System (EU ETS) has played a key role in monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions for over a decade. EU ETS operates on a cap-and-trade scheme, where it sets limits on greenhouse gas emissions and allows companies to buy and sell emission allowances, effectively incorporating the cost of carbon pollution into market prices.

CBAM was introduced as part of the Fit for 55 Package in 2021. It aims to expand the EU ETS framework beyond EU borders by imposing additional carbon prices on imported carbon-intensive goods, including steel, cement, iron, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity, and hydrogen. The initial phase, launched last week and set to run until 2025, aims to gather essential data. Only after 2026 will importers pay for CO₂ emissions embedded in their production. This unilateral approach has already sparked concerns globally as added import costs may affect the competitiveness of third-country importers. Geopolitical tensions may further elevate if CBAM is perceived as a trade barrier rather than a tool to combat climate change designed to prevent carbon leakage.



Source OECD *Development matters*

The Increasing Demand for AI – What Are the Costs?

By Petra Nemcova

The overall demand for Artificial Intelligence has increased substantially. AI is slowly substituting our efforts at school, work, and other situations. However, the question is just how much and what are the costs? According to the newest reports, the energy demands for AI are equal to those for a small country to keep running. For instance, Hugging Face, a US company, allegedly uses over 400 MWh just to run its multilingual AI text generator, which is the amount that could power around 40 US houses at the same time. 2023 is showing a growing trend in the usage of AI, and in the following years, the power demand might exceed a small country.

The necessary power to have this possibility is growing to keep up with the unprecedented pace of AI, which could contribute to climate change, among other consequences.



Source The Hindu Businessline

Another consequence might be the manipulation of important events, such as elections. A video has been created between Monika Todova and Michael Simecka (Progressive Slovakia party) regarding the upcoming parliamentary elections in Slovakia - they were discussing how to manipulate the elections in Simecka's favour. However, this video never occurred and was created by AI; it is a so-called "deepfake". Both sides have confirmed the inaccuracy of the video, but some believe it did, in fact, influence the elections in one way or another.

BONUS: Gaza-Israel War

Various points of view



Mina Aldroubi and Nada AlTaher report:

Israeli-Palestinian conflict experiencing a massive escalation

By Petra Nemcova

This Saturday, October 7th, a surprise attack on Israel has been launched from Hamas. Barrage of 2000 rockets and sent gunmen entered Israeli territory. This occurrence was not new since Palestinian Territory and Israel have been in conflict since 1948. However, this attack resulted in a major escalation. In addition, Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

Palestinian militants have entered Israel by land, sea, and air and allegedly captured Israeli soldiers near the borders. As a response, Israel Defense Forces launched strikes against Hamas targets in Gaza. IDF was fighting in many locations.

As a direct result, Israelis said that 40 people were killed and over 900 wounded and taken to the hospital. In contrast, Palestinians said that 200 people died in a counterattack and 1600 people were wounded.

Furthermore, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced that Israel imposed a total blockage on the Gaza Strip - no food, electricity, or fuel. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu declared war on Palestine and aimed at revenge and destroying Hamas' capabilities.

USA reaction to Israel-Gaza war

By Ondrej Pragr

As the Israel-Hamas conflict unfolds, the United States has taken a proactive stance, demonstrating its support for Israel while working to de-escalate the situation. The U.S. has sent significant military assistance to bolster Israel's defences against Hamas attacks. One notable move is deploying an aircraft carrier to the region, a powerful symbol of U.S. commitment and deterrence. This deployment enhances Israel's defensive capabilities and sends a clear message that the U.S. is ready to safeguard its ally's security.

In addition to military support, the U.S. has consistently emphasized the importance of de-escalation, protecting civilians, and resuming diplomatic efforts. While the U.S. stands firmly by Israel's right to self-defence, it also calls for restraint on both sides and encourages a peaceful resolution. The U.S. government's involvement in this crisis underscores its role as a key mediator and ally in the region. While military assets are being deployed to enhance Israel's security, the overarching objective remains the restoration of peace through diplomatic means.

Gaza: Humanitarian crisis and no more development aid from the EU?

By Sarah Cernikova

High Representative of the EU Josep Borrell condemned the attacks by Hamas, which have killed and injured thousands of people in Israel, clearly defining the position of the European Union. Josep Borrell later stated on social media that the EU stands in solidarity with Israel. On October 10th, after the Israeli government decided to impose a total blockade of Gaza in response to the attack of Hamas on Israel, Josep Borrell accused Israel of breaking international law by cutting off more than two million people in the Gaza Strip from basic commodities, such as electricity, fuel or food. The consequence of such a blockade could lead to a large-scale humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

This accusation arose just a day after EU Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement Oliver Varhelyi announced the suspension of development aid to Palestinians and his intention to review payments to ensure they are not misused. However, the EU backtracked on Monday afternoon when the European Commission confirmed that there would be no suspension of payment. This later supported Josep Borrell when he said most EU foreign ministers wanted to continue aid payments for the Palestinians.



Source Democracy now

Russian and Iranian Involvement in the Hamas Attack?

By Karolina Badrianova

The unprecedented attack by Hamas militants has triggered international debates about potential foreign involvement in planning and inciting Hamas' actions. Iran's long history of supplying weapons, military training, and funding to Hamas and other regional militia groups, such as Hezbollah, has led U.S. officials to investigate Iran's direct role in the conflict. Iran has rejected these allegations. However, given Iran's non-recognition of Israel and its vocal support for the Palestinian cause, it remains a prime suspect, given the fact that this attack was, according to U.S. officials, far more sophisticated than the past operations.



Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) shakes hands with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, July 14, 2018. - Pool/Yuri Kadobnov via REUTERS

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev made an unsubstantiated claim on Monday, accusing Ukraine of supplying weapons to Hamas. In response to this attempt to discredit Ukraine internationally, Ukrainian military intelligence informed about having evidence that Russia is the one transferring Western military equipment to Hamas. Considering Russia's earlier announcement of potentially freezing the war in Ukraine until 2028, experts now speculate whether Russia aims to divert international attention by inciting conflicts elsewhere. Recent claims that the Russian Wagner group provided military training to Hamas, along with Russian hacker groups launching attacks on Israeli government and media websites, further raise suspicions of possible Russian involvement.