

EU Today Podcast 14 Transcript

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[Intro music in theme of piano playing Ode to Joy]

Katie Lindner: Hello, and welcome to EU Today, a podcast from the Center for European studies, a Jean Monnet Center of Excellence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Thank you to the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission, the EU Delegation to the U.S., and the U.S. Department of Education for supporting our center and its programs. On this podcast, we sit down with scholars and policy leaders to discuss pressing issues facing the EU. We hope you enjoy it.

[Ode to Joy fades back in and plays for appx. 4 measures]

Ingo Peters 0:00

The first place and definitely if you have something on the agenda like the war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine. This is, you know, bringing us back to the very fundamentals of Alliance theory or the Basic Books on Alliance policymaking. You know, if you have an external threat as evident as now with Russian aggression against Ukraine, you can almost almost 100% Be sure that NATO partners or alliance partners will stick together that cohesion will be given, you know, at least at first sight, maybe if it goes on for a while, then some cracks might become visible. And I think we are now in this phase of the development of the wall and the development of the responses coming from NATO and NATO partners, that we will also have as part of our story of analysis, talk about some cracks in the frontlines here. However, overall you know, this is the case for having an alliance ideal typically, they first of all stand together.

Mackenzie Hansen 1:22

Okay. So let's let's jump off here. In the first section, we'll talk about the internal implications for NATO. So first and foremost, what new strategies are necessary for NATO to adopt in order to address threats posed by Russia?

IP 1:46

Well, I think the tricky word here is really the new terms. If you have been with security studies for a while if you're familiar with Cold War days, and then the twotone phases and then even the end of the Cold War. 9090 and the almost 30 years of the eternal peace and the way in which was not quite eternal, then you know that it's hard to think of something really new. It might just be new to say what we were used to the previous 10 or 20 years, but not new in the longer historical perspective. So if you deal with an outright aggressor, as we have it now with Russia, unfortunately was one must say, then you have to get your act together. And try to forge unity and coherent, cohesive alliances. And this is what we see you know, that people meeting in Brussels or even meeting it at other places in order to allow non NATO members also to join the Club. of allies beyond NATO, NATO plus allies from outside NATO to join the club, the fraud against Russia, as a response to show here, you should think twice, first of all to go further. down this road. And maybe we think your strategy in the first place, that it will be hard for you Russia, Russian government, we have to say Putin and his people to get a get something out of it, you know, to to win this whatever that might actually mean will be hard. This is what you try to do. And this is, I think, the major story behind her the first few weeks and month, and, very importantly, to come to this as well. We are talking about this groups of NATO plus friends of some 40 some 50 Plus states, so also states that you wouldn't expect to be part of the club. Not all of them. Criss Cross with clear democracies, but as long as they are standing against this outright violation of international law by going to one Ukraine, they are at least to that degree, part of our club, even if they are from from autocracies, as part of the Arab states involved and so forth. You know,

MH 4:37

does enlargement carry the risk of turning NATO into a hollow Alliance or what are the risks posed by

IP 4:43

Well, the internal challenges so hollow Alliance, I would say is an alliance that can't keep up to the expectations of you know, the principle of One for all and all for one and the way the Musketeers principle that is always at the foundation of all kinds of military alliances, getting together to join forces against outside potential or real aggressor. So, of course, the whole the enlargement process, which we see now is not the first one. The discussion of is it getting too big? Is it by getting bigger and bigger, losing credibility? Because the club is getting more and more diverse, and you might have challenges and different corners of this club in terms of the map that it includes, and therefore, you know, to make a credible commitment to come to the help if somebody is invading state, ABC is of course, you know, in the way additional challenge, but there are certain mechanisms and we might come to this level later, some mechanisms that run to render these commitments credible on the operational level of policymaking, you know, legally, I would like to add that based on the NATO Treaty, you know, nobody is is obliged to do anything, if anybody is attacked, even inside of the NATO members by an outside aggressor. All that they really legally have to do



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is to consult if we read the treaty carefully. But of course, the political message of Article Five is if somebody is attacked, we are attacked as NATO Yeah, but this does not mean that you automatically take a decision to respond in kind. So we were used to say already in the 1960s 70s when we're discussing the issues of credibility of NATO, of NATO defense, you know, basically all the NATO members if they have this, these weapons at their disposal can decide, do they go out immediately to use nuclear weapons, or they are just sending a letter of regret? We are so sorry that he was hacked, but we can't help it. You know, legally they can do everything. In this kind of span. However, politically, you know, and then we have some mechanism, as I said, which helped to substantiate the commitment and render things more credible by involving states more or less immediately. So if we take the example of enlargement Sweden and Finland and say that immediate neighbors, still in the east to the Baltic states, you know that we have a new example, but an old recipe of forward deployed forces brigades or whatever the unit sizes of German of polish of other troops look, stationed in these countries. To make sure that, you know, say if the Russians attack the Baltic countries, they look just at top attack Espeland. Estonia, sorry, Latvia or Lithuania, but they attack NATO, because NATO forces are attacked. So this is one of the old kind of recipes. We have this already in the Cold War days when we had this layer cakes of troops stationed along the German border or the dividing line the iron curtain or whatever people remember. We were referring to that we have this layer cake of troops, some Dutch, some Belgian, some German, some us some British, some French, some us you know and so forth. And so whenever an attacker is, is transgressing the borders, they are not just attacking Germany or Denmark or Estonia, but they are taking NATO and this is one of those political mechanisms. Political decisions, which makes them the the legally not so binding commitment to come to each other's help actually de facto credible. Yeah, so this would be my account, at least of this. So this is an old recipe, reinvented now. However, now as I say, this has been well underway since 2016. So with the annexation of Crimea, not yet with the war on Georgia, but with Crimea. I think people woke up and said, we have to do something about this. And, for example, with the spearhead forces in the Baltic countries, even the otherwise reluctant country, Germany, to face up to Russia was ready to take the leadership in that group. For example, yeah, which was, however, only a mounting rotating the rotating principle of the troops up to two to 6000 soldiers. But you know, this is nothing that would really mean a threat to Russia, although the Russians say of course, this is major threat, but how to invade Russia with fixed health troops.

MH 10:34

Alright, so maybe now we can discuss some external implications, particularly as it relates to the future. So in discussing what the post war relationship with Russia could look like, what does need to win largeman mean for that for for future engagement with Russia in a diplomatic capacity?

IP 10:59

Well, I think those people who sometimes love that will say this, ultimately, there will be no security in Europe without Russia. Light, you know, that was also the premise of the old days

when we were getting together. First of all Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe later on the Organization for Security and Cooperation Osae with the Secretariat and main institutions in Vienna, that we were up to, you know, to have an inclusive club, not NATO, not the European Union, but all European states from the for not from the Euros to the Atlantic, but from Vladivostok to Vancouver. Yeah. This is the range of states involved in in the largest definition of what I know about terms of Europe, European security, and the Russians were part of part of it as a successor state to the Soviet Union, which claimed the original documents you know, and this although this these documents are documents aside from very tiny data, extra documents are not legally binding but politically binding, you know, but as a political scientist, I always argue, politics comes first. So, and therefore, as long as we have the political commitment to the basic rules of the game that were defined by the OSC or in the USC documents, as long as people stick to those, we have some kind of European security order in quotes, you know, so in order meaning, a system which defines appropriate behavior in the in the exchanges between states. Of course, there are many rules you could say but to pay principles are standing out the first of all, is the renunciation of force. So don't use force and interstate relations for spinning really military force. Of course, you can also say that some political instruments, economic sanctions can be can be quite forceful, political tools, but this is not meant to renunciation of forces really about military force. And then the second closely related rule of the game is of course, the inviolability of borders. So borders if they are going to be changed, only peacefully by mutual agreement, as we fought, for example, in the 1990s, the partying of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, you know, that was a kind of peaceful change a kind of arrangement where you draw a new border, but there was mutual agreement, or they say the renewed vindication of Germany. This was built on the promise, and on the promise, yes, and then the premise of renunciation of force and inviolability of borders, but borders may be changed politically peacefully. So this is you know, there are more rules in terms of human rights, etc, etc. But these I think are the core points that has to be mentioned,

MH 14:43

in today's context, has the transatlantic security relationship proven capable of adapting to an evolving world order?

IP 14:55

Well, this is of course, the world is bigger than Europe. Surprise, surprise. And yeah, we are already talking about global affairs now. And now we have to realize that after a time when the experts were talking about the Unipolar Moment, for example, that we have a world order totally, almost totally dominated by the US. Us. This has changed again, we are back to a multilateral a multipolar order. Where you have of course still the US as part of the game. We have whether we like it or not revisionist power with Russia now formally, status quo power changing with this thought of starting already with this George I would say and then 2008 and the annexation of Crimea but then the outright war, becoming a revisionist power. And of course, we have to always to refer to China as the second kind of big challenge on the block in the Far East and as we know they are lining up with Russia. And

however, we still hope that they have some vested interest in keeping up cooperation with the West, cooperation on all levels in the way and also including economic relations. And therefore we hope that they will sooner or later, not in open diplomacy, but maybe behind the scene. Try to do some good in our sense, good for, for changing Putin's mind to sooner or later stop the war in the way you know. And this is of course, also part of the game that you have to look at it from a broader perspective. And if you talk about the global order or global challenge for NATO, yes, of course, we say there's Russia, there's China, but there are also other states which are not clearly condemning the war against Ukraine, but clearly condemning the Russians for their conduct. Like, strangely enough, some of them I found rather strange, which are located to the west like Brazil or like South Africa. Or like India and some other states, Saudi Arabia and so forth. Important players, which are in the way trying to run their special kind of, kind of show and without citing, too clearly with one or the other, or if at all, rather, already condemning parts of the Western policymaking regarding sanction regimes and force because these regimes have negative implications for those countries as well. You know, as we have to learn the global implications say, only to give or to refer to one example, of course, with the with the with the delivery of grain and corn and whatsoever of, of, of goods that are important for the people in the so called Third World and the global south and Africa where else that they get the food from up from Russia. And if that is not given, we know, you know, those countries are in trouble. And this is also you know, showing it's not just to get it's not just a war against Ukraine, and its implications, you know, its repercussions are going far beyond this. And really ones around the globe in a way although, of course, to a different degree, depending on how well off the people that the states are different parts of the world. But this is the overall picture, where we also have to work on those undecided or you know, not clearly on our side forces in order to avoid strengthening Russia by you know, eliminating states which which still have some may be bounced to the west despite some critical distance. Maybe there are good reasons, because Western states are always doing good for the rest of the world, you know, only to have to point to the history of colonialism, which is alive around the world, especially in both worlds, which we call the global South, where they say, you know, let's try out whether China will be doing a better job than West did or the western countries did in our spheres and some of them have learned that China is not that different from a colonial power than we were in the past hopefully. But you know, hopefully, I say because not everywhere we are doing or playing the game according to the rules that we

MH 20:25

turn our focus back now more specifically to the relationship between NATO

and European Union. Is NATO an alternative to European strategic autonomy or what is the relationship?

IP 20:39

No, first of all, it's definitely not an alternative, at least not for me. So we have to say, first of all, NATO comes first historically, you know, founded in the 1940s, and the EU or the European Economic Community in the 1950s, where they help of our friends, the United



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States, you know, they were already present at the creation of the European integration process. And so the security kind of background and provision of security by the US for Western Europe was essential to allow the European Union's to get member states later on to get their act together and to integrate as far as they have gone till today, so you know, if historically, there's a kind of evolution from NATO to the EU and the EU will getting ever closer union as the saying goes in the document to tell us. Yes, fair enough. But the issue that you referred to with a strategic autonomy and the relationship of the EU NATO that has been with us since at least the 1970s When the United when the European Union, still EC they're still the European Communities or later on, renamed to European Union, that they that they concern themselves with security issues and said, you know, let's step wise, tried to develop the European Union into a full fledged political beast, including a military dimension but this was from the very beginning also inside the European Union, the contested ideas, not least, to diverging kind of positions of EU member states to the ideas about the role of the US in Europe. So, I mean, the constant kind of role of the Europe of the US has always been to, to, in a way be not the European power, but the power in Europe, and an external balancer. Also trying to help to the process of reconciliation of the former aggressive Germany and the reconfiguration of the Western European countries inside the European Union, you know, to have this umbrella of security provided by the external balance the United States was very conducive to achieve this in the first place. And now, of course, we have the debate of of, is it still adequate to rely on the Americans? Do they still want to be power in Europe? Or do they have second thoughts, as we learned during the Trump years, you know, when Trump said in the way NATO is obsolete? And we'll go take our boys and girls home, especially if the Western Europeans or the European Union and member states of NATO, at the same time, partly, at least to a large degree, overlapping memberships, if they are not willing to pay more for a common defense, then we might have second thoughts about our own military engagement. But you know, this has been with us this whole debate of how much is enough in terms of burden sharing contributions coming from Western European countries to NATO defense has been with us from the very beginning. Of the 1950s onwards. There was always discussion about in the 1970s, that was 3% of GNP should be go into defense. Yeah. And now it's a debate about 2%. Is it big enough to actually build up credible defense against an aggressor like Russia, and maybe somebody else? We don't talk about, you know, the, this is in the way old debate, which is, which has been with us since the 19. Late 1970s. And which is going to stay I think, with us for the upcoming years. Many ambiguities on the European side as much as on the US side, you know, how much is enough not in terms of only this IELTS or fighter planes or tanks, but also on money spent for the common defense. But you know, as exactly this political of these ambiguities may be allowing the political trick to nevertheless stick together, you know, since after all, yes, there are divergences there are people that are countries who have never lived up to the promises made and follow the documents contributing X percent of the GNP to defense you know, but this is quite normal business. It's always compare it or use the groundhog metaphor, you know, because it's, every morning you wake up you can have another burden sharing debated needle force planning and so forth. So you have it every two years and a cyclical kind of illusion evolutionary approach. And this will stay with

us, I guess, since we always will have states which are more inclined to say, let's stick to the US we have to rely on the USA the only credible force to guarantee your freedom and other say, maybe you know, on the other hand, they are they are tempted to do their own business a visa vie China and might be dragged into a conflict which is not our country. So all these kinds of ambiguities and dividing lines. You know, you you can read them in today's statements by Mark Hall or other politicians these days. And still, if you know about the history, our earlier statements like that, and that has always been part of the game, you know, that we, you know, this is the way the exciting and the parceling kind of kind of part of the story that you know on the one hand we I think he claimed that NATO has been the most successful military alliance in history. Also the most comprehensive Alliance not just in terms of military hard military, but beyond hard military security issues. And on the other hand, we have nothing but ambiguities, you know, but I rather say let's make a virtue out of necessity, these ambiguities won't get away, but the political arrangement of convergences and divergences inside NATO and inside the EU, this is exactly the trick that allows they do to survive. political bargaining, yeah, to use the term established by studies flowing from the Congressional Research, some decades ago, the political bargain is exactly that. We have a model model, that we have a mutual commitment to Alliance solidarity, beyond all existing differences. After all, we are living in democracies. You know, it's an alliance alliance of democracy is not 100% of 100% hierarchical order, where the boss of the US is giving orders and the others stopping Primarch No, we discuss it discuss it as divergent standpoint and this is what we have to deal with. political conflicts are normal. The issue is how do we deal with these conflicts? And how do we deal and where we are where we end up, allowing us to continue to continue our cooperation in this alliance?

MH 29:23

Perhaps now you can shed some light on the perspective on a large enlargement held by a couple of different member states. In particular, you've given the US perspective somewhat but as well as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and perhaps the Baltic states.

IP 29:44

Well, I think there's, aside from Turkey, everybody is happy that Finland and Sweden are about to join that they are willing and determined to join in or given the aggression, you know, so this just chose this famous Olaf Schultz. metaphor of a titan bend is not just true for Germany, but also for other countries, you know, for Sweden and Finland, that they give up their historic the bound neutrality is a major challenge and major change of policymaking and everybody welcomes it aside from Russia, and of Turkey, since they have that special game to play at least until the elections next month, it'll be over. Maybe you'll see a different standpoint from Turkey as well. Hopefully allowing Sweden also to join you know, since these two states are definitely an asset, an extra an added value to NATO, especially regarding the North Eastern Flank of NATO. And complementing the whole kind of if you have a look on the map, you know, there are no holes anymore in this in this patchwork family making up NATO. So, this is definitely welcomed by everybody. And convention one thing you know, regarding often underestimated also policy change taken by Denmark, for

example. Yeah, Denmark has always been committed NATO member, the true believer in keeping the US and inside Europe, but they have opted out of the European Union's defence component already with the mask pre 20 of 92. And they revised the policy for the previous summer and said no, no, we are also part of the club of the defense branch inside the European Union and tried to deal with defense metal security issues. Also inside the European Union, which is a way of harmonizing, you know, NATO and the EU and you know, the EU is not speaking up as one inside NATO, but NATO members and NATO members if they are meeting of NATO and EU members as they are meeting inside the EU, but there are there have been for years regular meetings and also extra summit meetings of NATO officials. and EU officials in order to harmonize both organizations policymaking, you know, these are so complex kind of institutions. It's such a complex agenda, and I would claim the EU agenda is even more complex and the NATO agendas and the EU is about much more than just military security.

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[Ode to Joy fades out]

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