

**RE-FOUNDING THE EUROPEAN AGENDA:
ATTRACTIVENESS – REFORM – PROJECTION***

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Abstract. The accumulation of strategic-operational perspectives, dedicated to the *actional* objectives of the European space insists on a set of general nuances which do not omit any connection in their analysis, while at the same time allowing European policies to relate to the detente (*rhythmia*) differently-impregnated by [economic] structures, [political] institutions and particular [cultural] traditions. The targeted updat(ing) approach calls for a recourse to the EU Agenda, validating through it the dynamics of a degree of integration established between the various policies, individualizing sequent(ial) processes/procedures that comprise and arrange in/on their levels two pillars of the construct – one located at the base of the level of cooperation and coordination, that of foreign and defence policies and social policy; and the second, centred on economic and environmental policies, with a set of issues ranging from *environmental issues* to *immigration and asylum*, *social welfare* and/or *monetary policy*, etc. All these will be organised around the three combined perspectives targeting attractiveness – reform – projection (the future) but also examining the recourse to a set of *recommendations* – which emphasise the key strategic milestones of our approach.

Keywords: *European Agenda; Attractiveness – Reform – Projection; Recommendations; Directions*

Notes on Re-founding the European Agenda

The normative function of the European Agenda is assigned to a conjugated construct found in a series of critical interventions which target either its neoliberal biased ownership of emphasising dominantly economic interests over socio-political ones, or at the debate that re-launches the very nature of integration, while focusing on an “evolutionary-integration scheme” and/or on “the policy-making and

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decision-making process taking place within the EU institutions”,¹ both playing a relevant role in the construction and organisational dynamics of the Agenda.

In Sebastiaan Princen’s view, what prevails is the strategic (em)placement/geography, as a point/node which prioritises one issue/interest over another/different one, this factor being added to geographical/institutional spaces with different, relatively abstracted agendas: “(...) Establishing the Agenda is a prerequisite for decision-making: only by talking about the issues can they be subjected to decision-making. This reality also works in the opposite direction, in the sense that if an issue does not appear on the daily order of the agenda, it will not be subject to a decision. The Agenda is therefore of prime importance for all political actors. Over time, the EU has been showing clear shifts in the contents of the Agenda, both in terms of long-term developments and in short-term *waves* of interest in some issues at the expense of others.”²

The issue acknowledges a three-phase level of analysis, illustrating the EU policy-making processes, their relation to the specific modalities of integration and the correct understanding of European integration, as well as the existing functional-normative debates. Hence, the difference in meaning and action in/between the *governmental agenda* (containing any issues discussed by decision-makers in a given period) and the *decisional agenda* (which concerns issues subject to active decision-making), suggesting, as a way forward, a dynamic found in/through the transnational development of European debates; the involvement of decision-makers at EU level and the integration of the issues/problems into the agenda only if resistance/blockages from opponents, specific institutions or Member States are overcome.³

It is not by accident that S. Princen draws from this an accumulation of lessons recognised in: certifying the evidence that EU policy-making processes can be properly understood only by analysing them in the context of processes taking place both at the internal level and in other international organisations, the national – European – global levels being simultaneously conjugated; confirming that a multi-level dynamic makes it difficult to register existing developments, determining a general and generalizable trend; diagnosing a clear political dividing line, not at the institutional level, but in the existing supporters – opponents ratio regarding a certain type of approach.⁴

Three Conjugated Perspectives: Attractiveness – Reform – Projection

The Strategic Agenda (although not an explicit document/point formulated in the Union’s normative acts or formalised in a fixed-dedicated procedure or methodology) constitutes the general role of the European Council in formulating guidelines enshrined in and by the Treaty on European Union, and subsumes the

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 2-3.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

Council with the role of providing the structure with the “necessary impetus for development” and “general political directions and priorities”. In the series of initiatives attributed to the mechanism identified above, the first Strategic Agenda, adopted in June 2014, is the product and the emanation of an individualis(ing) political context, following the refusal of the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, to appoint Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission, while asking the European Council to draft a document setting out the main directions of Juncker’s mandate, considered too “federalist” by the British. Compared to later formulations, the 2019 Strategic Agenda benefitted from a longer drafting process, proposing more overwhelming institutional elements than those characterising the 2014 document, complementing the post-Brexit reality with ambitious political priorities – yet received as being tributary to rather vague terms targeting the rule of law, security and defence, the creation of the Banking Union and Capital Market Union, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises, the European competition framework, climate neutrality, the energy market, etc.⁵

The strategic approach dedicated to the 2024-2029 interval shows the action product adopted on June 27, 2024, initially launched at the informal European Council meeting (Granada, Spain, October 6, 2023). President Michel’s letter on the next Strategic Agenda sets out,⁶ on the one hand, the construct composed of four priorities recognised in: protecting citizens and the freedoms they enjoy; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a green, fair and socially equitable climate-neutral Europe; and promoting European interests and values on the global stage. On the other hand, the endeavour reaffirms a set of structural requirements of the project. These can be found in the structure/formula and the position of the first continent to have defined its objective of climate neutrality by 2050, in the simultaneous acceleration of the green and digital transitions, in overcoming the Covid-19 crisis, in reaffirming ambitions for a social Europe (Porto, 2021), and in defining the pillars of European sovereignty (Versailles, 2022), in relation to the war in Ukraine.

The letter contains, [in the corpus of interest of the present article], an axially disposed plus-interest, which valorises the method of combination between the collective and the inclusive modes: the landmark of the construct – its *attractiveness* and its *future* commitment – are clearly affirmed (“Public support for the European Union is at a high level, along with its *attractiveness*” – we note⁷ and “Every five years, EU leaders agree on the EU’s political priorities *for the future*” – we note⁸), but it also updates the enlargement desideratum, subsumed to an explicitly designed geopolitical context – “The new geopolitical context has put enlargement

⁵ Kolpress, “Agenda strategică a UE 2024-2029: un document ce stabilește obiective foarte ambițioase, dar nu și priorități de acțiune”, 1 July 2024, <https://kol.news/2024/07/agenda-strategica-a-ue-2024-2029-un-document-ce-stabileste-obiective-foarte-ambitioase-dar-nu-si-prioritati-de-actiune/>, accessed at 13 June 2025.

⁶ Consiliul European, “Scrisoarea președintelui Michel privind următoarea agendă strategică”, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2023/06/24/letter-from-president-michel-on-the-next-strategic-agenda/>, accessed at 1 June 2025.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

back at the centre of our debates. We have to consider the enlargement process and our absorption capacity. At our meeting in June 2022, we reaffirmed the need to take into account the EU's capacity to absorb new members, as it was agreed in Copenhagen in 1993, when we were deciding on each future enlargement. This requires us to reflect on the implications of enlargement on different EU policies and their financing, as well as on the decision-making methods that need to be applied.”⁹

The Project is subject(ed) to a series of interconsultations with European leaders (following the Informal Reunion of Heads of States and Governments, Granada, 2023) in Berlin, Copenhagen, Zagreb, Paris, Vilnius, Bucharest, Warsaw and Vienna. The final form stipulates in a series of points that “The Strategic Agenda sets out the EU's priorities and its strategic orientations for the institutional cycle 2024-2029. As such, it guides the work of the EU institutions”,¹⁰ with the demand(ing) geopolitical context (Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the fight against climate change, the situation in the Middle East and mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic¹¹) calling for a “clear strategic plan and a solid framework for action.”¹² The structural pillars of the Agenda reaffirm the relevance of a free and democratic, strong and secure, prosperous and competitive Europe, with a set of seven priorities aiming at: launching a new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness; a new era of European defence and security; supporting citizens, strengthening societies and the European social model; maintaining the quality of life with regard to food security, water and nature; safeguarding democracy and defending European values; building strengths and partnerships at a global level; achieving the Union's goals and preparing for the future.¹³

The perspective calls for two distinct directions of reception.

The first overbids a series of positive assessments, with extrapolated stakes – “a Summit with high stakes, equivalent to the future direction of the European Union, (...) being one of the four major decisions adopted, alongside the roadmap for the internal reform of the Union in the perspective of enlargement, the package of appointments in key positions at the top of the EU and a joint EU-Ukraine security agreement (...). The agenda adopted by European leaders sets out the priorities that the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission will have to implement during the next institutional cycle”;¹⁴ and “The document begins with a *very sober* assessment”

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Consiliul European, “Agenda strategică 2024-2029”, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/european-council/strategic-agenda-2024-2029/>, accessed on 3 June 2025.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Uniunea Europeană, “Prioritățile Uniunii Europene”, https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/eu-priorities/european-union-priorities-2024-2029_ro, accessed on 13 June 2025.

¹⁴ Robert Lupișu, “Liderii UE au adoptat Agenda Strategică 2024-2029, axată pe valorile fondatoare, apărare complementară cu NATO, extinderea UE, motorul pieței unice și obiectivul întemeietor al păcii”, in *Calea europeană.ro*, <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/liderii-ue-au-adoptat-agenda-strategica-2024-2029-axata-pe-valorile-fondatoare-aparare-complementara-cu-nato-extinderea-ue-motorul-pieteii-unice-si-obiectivul-intemeietor-al-pacii/>, accessed on 13 June 2025.

– we note – “of the new geopolitical realities. In the adopted Strategic Agenda, leaders see the Single Market as the most important asset, the long-term engine of prosperity and convergence (...). Under the commitment of *Moving Forward Together*, the Strategic Agenda document, adopted by European leaders, comes to a prophetic conclusion.”¹⁵

The second is critically limited to the form of a typical “agreement package”, with no clear timetable for action, with a “rather ambiguous rhetoric”, with objectives stated and declaratively announced, without measurable priorities for action, the use of the strategic syntagma being considered as an invalidated attribute (in fact, unquantifiable even in the 2014 and 2019 *Strategic Agendas*) due to the very lack of a clear objective needing to be achieved, without a clear and coordinated action plan, deprived of the clearly defined political, institutional and financial means necessary for its implementation.¹⁶ Hence the discrepancy felt between the accumulation of systemic challenges and the lack of a committ(ed) response (*exaggerated strategic competition, increased global instability and attempts to undermine the rules-based international order*) and the way in which the strategy is implemented in practice, without indicating how the main objectives will be financed or how the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework will reflect and enable their implementation.¹⁷

(And) a Set of Analyses-Recommendations

The stated perspectives are balanced by median positions – *recommendations* – which emphasise precisely the key strategic milestones of the approach: *attractiveness – reform – projection*.

The American Chamber of Commerce for the European Union¹⁸ places the perspective of evaluative reporting on the European Agenda 2024-2029 within the disposition of an actionable and directly co-involved form/formula, through the approach of a precise synthesis found in a series of recommendations that can measure the current *rhythmia* of the European construct. The operable and identifiable working premise aims at blurring (threateningly) any European *attractiveness* for the investment environment, a risk mitigation found in “burdensome regulations, protectionist tendencies and slow growth”, with elements/*medium* being hindered but at the same time inseparable from the prevalence of a context of global uncertainty, of decisive changes subsumed under the sign of climate crisis or subordinated to geopolitical tensions, social unrest and the rise of authoritarianism. All these (con)verge toward/onto an interrelat(ioned) register, which, on the one hand, requires supporting the investment approach in Europe by creating a strong public-private partnership; and on the other hand, launches a strong imperative stating that “the EU political agenda needs to be reset”.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ Kolpress, *quoted art.*

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Attractiveness of Europe Agenda for Action 2024-2029*, AmCham EU, 2024.

The analysis-recommendation is underpinned by a systemic framework for action – “attracting investment is not an end in itself. Economic success leads to prosperity and security. It creates the conditions for prosperous communities and the well-being of citizens” – with interest in the triphasic- conjugated register, which aims at a competitive, sustainable and digital Single Market; proposes a strong and resilient Europe active on the international stage and supports a fair and democratic Europe.¹⁹ For each level, the action perspective offers a specific set of recommendations.

Thus, as regards *the regulatory area*, the following are envisaged: achieving in-depth harmonisation, coherence and certainty in the legislation of the Member States; making the best use of resources, by refraining from additional frameworks and focusing on the application and effectiveness of existing legislation; reasonable implementation deadlines; the creation of new initiatives, provided that they are aimed at strengthening Europe’s competitiveness, as a direct result of transparent consultation processes and direct impact assessments, as well as the avoidance of unpredictable and retroactive measures.²⁰

Regarding *the area of innovation*, it is recommended that it should have a predictable and robust intellectual property protection framework, prioritising innovation funding, be accessible to all technologies, have a comprehensive and open Single Market, a set of well-functioning selection criteria on public procurement and protection of the civil justice system from abusive litigation practices.²¹ Cumulatively, these directions aim to develop a consistent and coherent policy in the field of chemicals, the reduction of energy demand and using low-carbon alternatives, the preservation of the value of products and resources through a new approach to waste disposal, recycling infrastructure and technology, increased collaboration between the public and private sectors, the increase of agricultural productivity in order to ensure the sustainability, security and accessibility of food systems, guaranteeing the preservation of biodiversity and increasing access to clean and safe water.²² The Digital Register leverages a continuum in artificial intelligence, quantum computing and 5G/6G through flexible and up-to-date regulations. Hence the need for a stable and established balance between emerging areas and a safe space for innovation, protecting trade secrets and promoting growth. The stimulation of the production capacity of European semiconductors, the resilience of the ecosystem and the supply chain can also be added to the already-identified aspects.²³

Externally, the Agenda’s nodal points relate, on the one hand, to a deepening and completion of bilateral free trade agreements and the effective implementation and application of existing ones, including the reform of the World Trade Organisation and expanding cooperation with other Members in order to resolve long-standing disputes; and, on the other hand, to the level of transatlantic

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 8.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

relations, strengthening the EU-US Council on Trade and Technology platform or, within the framework of the EU-US Cyber Dialogue, the Energy Council, the Health Task Force and the Security and Defence Dialogue. In a series of points, the sustained efforts to “support the reconstruction, recovery and economic prosperity of Ukraine”²⁴ are complemented by the creation of in-depth mechanisms, harnessed in: an *enhanced-resilient* framework necessary for Transatlantic Cooperation in the field of Defence Technology and Industry; the needed space for a more flexible approach to joint intra-EU procurement, facilitating governments’ capabilities to ensure territorial security; and the relevant construct needed for opening the participation of tertiary state entities in the European Defence Fund and the European defence industry, through joint procurement projects.

The essential milestones follow the value-concept of *democracy*, imperatively recontextualized through a grouping of specific emphases – “Continue to condemn Russia’s illegal invasion, cooperate with the international community and stand by the people of Ukraine; combat anti-democratic developments and the erosion of the rule of law that threaten the values, stability and security of the region; be a springboard for democracy and stability around the world; increase transparency in the EU decision-making processes”²⁵ – all geared towards the future, a projective horizon, recalculated in relation to the demands of the moment/present – “Work with Ukraine and the private sector in the recovery and reconstruction of the country by facilitating market access, supporting reforms and investments, and creating public-private partnership platforms; support Ukraine’s accession, as an EU member state, once all the accession criteria are met; propose models other than full EU membership for countries that cannot meet the EU accession criteria or have a strong relationship with it, for example, the United Kingdom; evaluate and adapt the current EU governance structure to ensure that it can be efficient and effective within an extended composition, including potentially distinct membership levels with different levels of integration.”²⁶

Reform becomes again a fundamental provision on the European Agenda, a dynamic of change in the way the EU works, a *detente* mainly maintained by Germany and France as a driving force aimed at strengthening the democratic credibility of the EU, preventing institutional erosion in times of crisis, increasing robustness in the face of manifest bottlenecks and solidifying the accession of new Member States. On May 9, 2022, the *Conference on the Future of Europe* – an ad hoc body set up to discuss the political priorities of the EU – adopted the Final Report, which contains/holds explicit and varied reform recommendations, some of which also involve changes to the Treaty framework, an approach accepted both with interest (the European Parliament formally requested the launch of a convention amending the Treaties; Ursula von der Leyen expressed her support for the objective mentioned in the State of the Union speech of September 2022;

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

six governments stated, in a joint informal document in May 2022, that they were, in principle, open to the approach; Germany and France were setting up a joint working group of non-governmental experts to develop concrete reform recommendations, etc.), but also with clearly mentioned precautions or reservations (the joint document of May 2022, signed by 13 governments, especially from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe, which rejected the initiative as premature).²⁷

The debate remains relevant, in the sense that the European Agenda recognises the effect of the crises that have arisen, the field of quantification being simultaneously disputed by the existence of two distinctly conceptualised realities: on the one hand, the “polycrisis”²⁸ – an extremely complicated phase, marked by a sum of demands (the Euro *crisis*, the migration *crisis*, the rule of law *crisis*, the Brexit *crisis*, the Covid-19 pandemic *crisis*, the Ukraine *crisis*, etc.), which, after their moment of manifestation, were to be finalised with prevailing long-term solutions; on the other hand, the “permacrisis”²⁹ mentioning bottlenecks that did not indicate signs of closure in a foreseeable future interval, with strong erod(ing) effects. The war in Ukraine and the subsequent applications for EU membership submitted by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have put the issue of EU enlargement decisively back on the political agenda. Member States broadly agree on the evidence that it would be in the EU’s geopolitical interest to facilitate the accession of the “associated trio” as well as the Western Balkan states, which would increase the Union’s heterogeneity – but could also exponentially increase its inefficiencies. It is no coincidence that Germany, France and Spain consider internal institutional reform to be a prerequisite for ensuring that the EU can continue to operate with 30, 35 or more states – just as the EU’s Eastward enlargements from 2004-2013 were preceded by major treaty reforms culminating in the Lisbon Treaty.³⁰

The link between/among enlargement and internal reform becomes the argumentation node of institutional change, partly subsumed to geopolitical urgency (after a decade of stagnation of the enlargement policy in the Western Balkans, the EU has eroded its credibility among candidate states, and its favourable positioning in *attracting* new members is imperative): “(...) the link between enlargement and reform has become politically significant in the sense that it lends itself to a global agreement among EU Member States. Many of the governments that have so far been reluctant to embrace institutional reform are in favour of enlargement and vice versa. This increases the chances of a *broad bargain* that would allow progress to be made in parallel with several key EU dossiers.”³¹

²⁷ Manuel Müller, *EU Reform is back on the Agenda. The many drivers of the new debate on treaty change*, FIIA Briefing Paper, 363, May 2023.

²⁸ Jonathan Zeitlin, Francesco Nicoli and Brigid Lafan, “Introduction: The European Union beyond the polycrisis? Integration and politicization in an age of shifting cleavages”, in *Journal of European Public Policy* 26 (7), 2019, pp. 963-976.

²⁹ Fabian Zuleeg, Janis A. Emmanouilidis and Ricardo Borges de Castro, “Europe in the age of permacrisis”, in *European Policy Centre*, 11 March 2021, <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/Europe-in-the-age-of-permacrisis~3c8a0c>, accessed at 13 June 2025.

³⁰ Manuel Müller, *quot. work*, p. 7.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

The projective construction is focused on the urgently-necessary imperative for updating the European Commission's policy agenda, a move subsumed to the "need for change"³², a trend validated by the very accumulation of assessments certifying that, in itself, the contribution of economic growth to well-being is declining and the benefits are not distributed fairly. These are caused by climate disruptions, populational ageing, poverty and social exclusion, etc., through targeted interventions correcting vested party interests, fear of/about change, resistance to reforms, by articulating a "holistic and transversal (...) agenda".³³ The relationship that needs to be deepened is that between European *leadership* (through horizontal policy coordination) and the sum of policies, legislation and governance processes already in place, by strengthening the policy toolkit, rethinking *patterns* capable of assessing compromises and synergistic *détentes* (through collaboration with the UN, OECD, World Bank and IMF) and deepening the link between/among policy foresight/prediction and evaluation measures applied to the impact of well-being, inclusion and sustainability.

Recommendations emphasise a systemic model of metrics needed to create viable international benchmarks, by reforming the socio-economic governance framework of the EU through a coherent orientation towards objectives and a goal-focused governance, with effective monitoring and an established/stable and thorough link with existing governance frameworks.

Thematically, 13 points are being proposed, focusing in particular on benchmarks such as: inclusive wellbeing; equal opportunities; quality workforce employment; social protection and inclusion with a role in sustainable wellbeing; equitable ecological transition and circular economy; strategic self-reliance; demographic peace and stability, coupled with a favourable transformative framework and an explicitly mapped out mission in the economic and financial areas; resilient industrial policy and sustainable competitiveness; transformative finance; forward-looking infrastructure, services, research and perspectives in/of innovation; streamlined public communication; cross-sectorial, public-private collaboration and multi-level governance; participatory democracy and global collaboration.³⁴

With explicit reference to the draft of the Strategic Agenda of April 2024, there are engag(ing) perspectives³⁵ that refer to it as a "missed opportunity, which has raised serious concerns about the lack of clarity and determination for capitalising on the EU's achievements, in particular, the European green offer and accelerated action in light of the multiple interlinked crises facing the continent

³² R. Hoekstra, J. Barth, F. Bartolini, Biggeri S., Burger M., M., A. Ferrannini, L. Häikiö, T. Hirvilammi, R. Kaufmann, L. Rayner, K. Reuter, Sarracino, *A European Agenda to Navigate Uncertain Times. How to Steer the EU Towards Wellbeing for All, Now and in the Future*. A joint report by the coordinators and policy leads of Horizon Europe "Beyond-GDP" consortia SPES/ ToBe/WISEHorizons/WISER/MERGE, 2024.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

³⁵ See, for example, *Input to the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029*, 14 June 2024, CAN Climate Action Network, <https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2024/06/CAN-Europe-Input-Strategic-Agenda-14-June.pdf>, accessed at 13 June 2025.

and the world at large.”³⁶ The provided input does not deny the successes of the draft version of June 12, 2024, considering that it would have/contain some improved aspects, but insufficient for tracing “a clear direction for a rapid transition to a fossil-free, socially equitable and climate-neutral Europe.”³⁷ This critical approach is also highlighted in and through the Joint Letter to the Council of the European Union and the Member States, signed by twenty European organisations, with the explicit request to ensure that the Agenda “maintains social and health ambitions at a high level, as a prerequisite for achieving a strong, dynamic, competitive and cohesive Europe.”³⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic is seen as the barometer point for combining strong and resilient health and social protection systems while reaffirming the need for the projective element, in the sense that the Agenda would propose “a European Union *prepared for the future* (we note), with resilient and sustainable social security and health systems that serve economic prosperity”,³⁹ in extension of the consolidation of a draft agenda (a climate-neutral, ecological, fair and social Europe) affirmed by the EU, under the previous Strategic Agenda (2019-2024). The letter clearly states that “(...) the social and health dimensions are of the utmost importance and should be given the necessary attention at EU level, as well as on the level of EU citizens (...). We therefore call for these priorities to be included in the 2024-2029 Strategic Agenda and for future decision-makers to provide adequate responses for a truly citizen-centred social Europe based on solidarity.”⁴⁰

Instead of Conclusions: an Updated Context

Georg Riekeles and Paweł Świeboda⁴¹ paradigmatically placed the European Union in the third period of European economic history (with the first located from the beginning of the integration project until 1989, and the second positioned from 1989 until 2010, marked by both the greatest enlargement and globalisation), which were individualised by the multiple *waves of conflict* and *shock waves* they experienced, the approach toward defending European interests and extensive global cooperation being the relevant stimuli for strategic action conclusions and for the adoption of the envisaged model. Economic security becomes, in this context, the node of the explicit paradigm shift, a concept-reality validated through and by the “symbiotic relationship between competitiveness and the security agenda”, affirmed by the proposal on the European Economic Security Strategy signed in mid-2023 by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Georg Riekeles and Paweł Świeboda, “Europe’s Make-or-Break Moment Putting Economic Security at the Heart of the EU’s 2024-2029 Strategic Agenda”, in *European Policy Centre*, 7 February 2024, https://epc-web-s3.s3.amazonaws.com/content/PDF/2024/Economic_Security_Discussion_Paper.pdf, accessed at 1 July 2025.

The *detente* is considered as equivalent to a primordial approach which needs to be integrated into the EU policy cycle between 2024-2029 through a number of imperative elements. The first is the *geopolitical marker* of established confrontation, intensifying global geo-economic competition, increasing rivalry between the US and China, the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the war in the Middle East.⁴² The second aims to explicitly position itself in the direction of anticipating a new economic balance, by reconsidering relations with China, certifying a Europe devoid of any interest in actively contributing to any decoupling policy but, on the contrary, being actively positioned in the favour(able) context of opening policies. The *less-globalism* phrase would imply adaptation through "a significant correction, but not a complete breakdown of the global economic interaction", which is equivalent to reducing risks, by "increasing Europe from the inside out and, perhaps even more importantly, by transforming dependencies, from secure support points into global economic relations."⁴³ The third aspect valorises the triple *ecological – digital – [economical] security* transition, a conjugated reality that imperatively calls for "the use of autonomous defensive instruments, combined with the offensive application of subsidies and industrial policies and new forms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. A new paradigm of economic security policy, simultaneous use of economic instruments and foreign security policy is at stake."⁴⁴

Ralf Drachenberg⁴⁵ summarises the directions of the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 in a comparative approach with the provisions of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024, a connection that gives the current *detente* a more significant imprint. The relevant meaning is that of continuity, with the register of change highlighting the importance given to security, defence and enlargement, but also complemented by a set of recent objectives, aimed at EU competitiveness and the importance of democracy (both within the Union and in relations with tertiary states), in the 2024-2029 targeted timeframe – the mentioned chapter being invested, *for the first time*, with specifications of priority direction. The series of distinct aspects also includes a diminished attention paid to climate and environmental problems and issues. Evaluatively, Ralf Drachenberg considers that, in the same comparative register, "less than 20% of the policy issues are completely new, even though the length of the Strategic Agenda document has increased by 25%", a statement that (fore)shows, in a deductive-logical key, *in which way* and *which* of the previous EU priorities remain relevant, involving remodelling or readjustment rather than a rethinking of the whole project.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Ralf Drachenberg, "Strategic Agenda 2024-2029: Continuity or paradigm shift?", 29 July 2024, <https://epthinktank.eu/2024/07/29/strategic-agenda-2024-2029-continuity-or-paradigm-shift/>, accessed at 1 July 2025.

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