

Daniel S. Hamilton: Russia's war has brought the EU and the US together

Russia's invasion of Ukraine marks a new era of turbulence and violence - which has forced the EU into new collaborations.

- Differences in politics between the US and the EU remain, but they are now playing out in a context of transatlantic unity rather than division, says Daniel S. Hamilton at the Brookings think tank.

Today, Wednesday, it is six months since Russia, in violation of international law, invaded the EU's neighboring country Ukraine. Due to this, Europaportalen has asked various experts to analyze how the EU and its member states have been affected by the war.

Today's expert is Daniel S. Hamilton at the Washington-based think tank Brookings.

A new era

When Russia invaded Ukraine six months ago, it marked the end of the post-Cold War era, according to Daniel S. Hamilton.

- A new era has begun - more turbulent and violent. The hopeful vision of a Europe "whole and free" is challenged by a continent that has become divided and troubled, he tells Europaportalen.

It's not just about great power competition, according to Daniel S. Hamilton. With new technologies, the very nature of rivalry and conflict, and the very basis of economic competitiveness, diplomacy, and defense, is changing. Pandemics, climate change and energy transitions are likely to wreak further havoc in unprepared societies, he believes.

According to Daniel S. Hamilton, the upheavals of the new era have collided head-on with the EU's confidence in its capacity to continue to generate prosperity and to safeguard democracy.

- The "Europe of institutions" has failed to tackle covid, supply chain disruptions, refugee flows and Putin's aggression. And Putin's war has not strengthened the EU's "strategic autonomy", it has deepened Europe's strategic dependence on the US, says Daniel S. Hamilton.

New level of Russian violence – unexpectedly strong EU unity

Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is something new from the Russian side - something that Daniel S. Hamilton sees as clear evidence that Putin is determined to use military force, coercion and subversive activities to change the map of Europe and control his neighbors.

- Putin not only fears the challenge that a successful Ukrainian democracy would pose to authoritarianism in Russia; he is focused on disrupting democratic societies across the

continent - not because of what they do, but because of who they are, Hamilton says, recalling that Putin's pretext for his invasion of Ukraine in 2014 was a trade agreement between the EU and Ukraine, not that NATO's door was open to new members.

Daniel S. Hamilton believes that the EU's unity in the face of Putin's aggression has so far been impressive – and unexpected.

- Although the sanctions are uneven, they have largely been robust. Support for Ukraine has generally been strong, with some exceptions.

However, maintaining this in the long term can be challenging, Hamilton believes, especially if the conflict continues.

- The EU must face the fact that its neighborhood policy has failed to transform its periphery into a "ring of friends". Instead, the EU faces a ring of fire. Russian troops are present in all six of the EU's Eastern Partnership countries. Regardless of how Putin's war in Ukraine plays out, Europe's vast eastern swathes will remain turbulent and sporadically violent for the foreseeable future, believes Daniel S. Hamilton.

Multidimensional attack

Daniel S. Hamilton points out that Russia's attacks on Ukraine and other neighboring countries go beyond the use of conventional military forces – they also attack flows of things like food, energy, money, raw materials, refugees and information.

Essential chains of European economies, daily communication and many other important functions of European societies are thus increasingly exposed to disruptions, interruptions and shutdowns.

- This means that governments used to protecting their territories must now protect the networks that connect their citizens to the rest of the world.

In this context, it will be particularly challenging to ensure the EU's energy security, believes Daniel S. Hamilton.

- The determination of most EU countries to reduce dependence on Russian energy has been impressive, but it is a tough task and winter is soon here.

In addition, the EU's green deal and other efforts to push the development of clean technologies will further exacerbate the EU's dependence on critical materials that come from dubious or unreliable sources, according to Hamilton.

- What is happening is that the EU is exchanging old dependencies on Russia in favor of new dependencies on China, which accounts for 98 percent of the EU's imports of rare earth metals, he says.

Finland's and Sweden's decision astonishing

A clear consequence of Russia's war is that it has broken long-standing taboos against new forms of European integration and cooperation.

- Most surprising is Finland's and Sweden's decision to break their long traditions of military non-alignment and join NATO. Together with Denmark's decision to join the EU's security structures, it will strengthen deterrence and defense across the Arctic, Nordic and Baltic regions, says Daniel S. Hamilton.

Even the EU's decision to grant Ukraine and Moldova the status of candidate countries, and also possibly Georgia in the long run, Hamilton sees as a sign of this change - as well as the EU's new strategic compass that gives member states new flexibility in how they can participate in the EU's security and defense activities and favors EU and NATO joint exercises.

French President Emmanuel Macron's proposal for a European political community, he says, is another example, although it is unclear what it will lead to.

- After nothing has happened for several years, we are now beginning to see a refreshing openness to new forms of collaboration, says Daniel S. Hamilton.

Strengthened transatlantic link

A further consequence of the war is, according to Daniel S. Hamilton, that Putin has succeeded in strengthening transatlantic cooperation in a way not seen since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 against the United States.

Hamilton notes that North American and European countries have provided arms, economic aid, cyber and intelligence support to Ukraine, unleashed a barrage of economic sanctions against Russia while isolating the country diplomatically, taken steps to reduce their own dependence on Russia and warned China to help the Russians avoid sanctions.

In Madrid in June, NATO leaders committed to strengthening their collective defense so that NATO can "defend every inch" of alliance territory.

Putin's war has also highlighted the strength and resilience of the transatlantic economy, believes Daniel S. Hamilton, and mentions, among other things, that the US has become the EU's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas.

The deeply intertwined \$6 trillion transatlantic economy has proven to be the geo-economic base from which the US and Europe can isolate and punish Putin, address competitive challenges from China and tackle broader challenges of global disruption, Hamilton notes.

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