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# Russian seizing of Crimea poses 'strategic' threat to EU and Nato

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News

Ioan Mircea Pașcu has presented a report to the European parliament arguing that in the long run cooperation with Russia is more preferable than confrontation.



Parliament's rapporteur on the strategic situation in the Black Sea and the annexation of Crimea by Russia Ioan Mircea Pașcu has delivered his report to parliament's security and defence subcommittee.

In his report, Pașcu has argued that the annexation of Crimea by Russia is, "completely changing the strategic situation in the Black Sea". He claimed that Russia's move into Ukraine was prompted by Nato's eastward expansion.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and encroachment into eastern Ukraine has been met with widespread condemnation across the world. Its actions in the region have breached several international agreements to which it is party to, including the Helsinki accords, the Paris charter and the Budapest memorandum - the first two of which guarantee national sovereignty, while the latter protects

Ukraine's independence and borders.

> "Russia now poses a strategic threat to central Europe and to the entire southern flank of Nato and the EU"

He went on to say, "Russia now poses a strategic threat to central Europe and to the entire southern flank of Nato and the EU". He highlighted the fact that Russia now shares a maritime border with an EU and Nato member in the Black Sea for the first time - Romania.

The rapporteur then raised several examples of actions that Russian forces had taken to destabilise the region and to increase their presence, including hybrid and cyber warfare, and the engagement of a naval arms race.

He suggested that a review of article five of Nato - which defines an attack on member one as an attack on all - was needed in order to deal with Russian aggression and the evolving nature of modern warfare so that new militaristic actions - such as hybrid and cyber warfare - would prompt defensive action from the organisation.

Pașcu also said, "the annexation of Crimea has transformed the sea of Azov into a Russian sea", arguing that this could have economic consequences for the EU. The rapporteur cited the exploration of oil and natural gas and the control of energy trade routes and pipelines as motivating factors behind Russian policy in the region.

The rapporteur also highlighted the naval situation in the Black Sea. Currently only two multinational naval initiatives are in place in the region; the Black Sea naval force and operation Black Sea harmony, both of which Russia is a member of.

The scope of these initiatives is limited to small scale actions including search and rescue and surveillance. Therefore, it is difficult to see how either of these instruments could challenge Russia's aggressive naval build-up. Furthermore, Turkey's cessation of its naval development programme could grant Russia a greater military presence in the region.

Pașcu concluded by drawing attention to the only instruments the EU has in place to challenge Russia; non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea, and sanctions, while comparing it to Russia's engagement in a naval arms race and exploration of oil and natural gas in the region. He said that, "in the long run, cooperation with Russia is more preferable than confrontation".

This is a view that would seem to be at odds with that of EU leaders, including British prime minister David Cameron and Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, who argue that sanctions must remain in force if Russian aggression is to be reined in. However, the rapporteur's comments suggest that he believes the EU's current combination of approaches will not be enough to reverse the situation in the region.

**About the author**

Jon Benton is a journalist and editorial assistant at the Parliament Magazine

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