

EU foreign policy

Mario Draghi calls for an end to EU unanimity on foreign policy decisions

Italy's PM says 'qualified majority' approach is required to accelerate decision-making in response to Russia



Mario Draghi: 'A Europe capable of making timely decisions is a Europe [that] is more credible vis-à-vis its citizens and vis-à-vis the world' © Jean-Francois Badias/AP

Amy Kazmin in Rome and **Andy Bounds** in Brussels 33 MINUTES AGO

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Italian prime minister Mario Draghi has called on the EU to abandon its requirement for unanimity on foreign policy decisions, as the bloc grapples with security and economic challenges in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In a speech to the European parliament on Tuesday, Draghi said the EU needed to improve its decision-making capacity to respond effectively to the threat posed by Russia, whose actions he said were a direct attack on the EU's greatest achievement: ensuring peace on the continent.

His call for the EU to abandon what has been one of the bloc's most cherished principles comes as member states [debate this week](#) whether to impose new sanctions on Russia, including an oil embargo.

Such a change would enable the EU to override lone holdouts, such as Hungary, which oppose tougher co-ordinated sanctions on Russia — something Italy was sometimes [accused of](#) in the past.

“We must overcome this principle of unanimity, which leads to a logic of crossed vetoes, and move towards decisions taken by a qualified majority,” said Draghi. “A Europe capable of making timely decisions is a Europe [that] is more credible *vis-à-vis* its citizens and *vis-à-vis* the world.”

Although the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon allows the EU to make majority decisions in many areas, sensitive subjects — such as tax, social protection, accession of new member states, the common foreign and security policy and police co-operation — require the unanimity of all member states.

While Italy has called for such reforms in the past, they are thought unlikely to gain traction — given that they would require unanimity to be adopted.

However, Draghi also said Europe could improve its defence co-ordination to help ensure the maximum protection for its security spending.

While the combined defence spending of EU member states is about three times that of Russia, he said the EU operated a total of 146 defence systems — compared with just 34 in the US.

Such fragmented defence spending, he said, was “a profoundly inefficient distribution of resources, which hinders the construction of a true European defence”.

To tackle this problem, he urged the EU to convene a conference on rationalising and optimising defence spending by member states.

Meanwhile, Draghi reiterated Rome’s strong support for Ukraine, and its accession to the EU, although he said that Italy hoped for a truce that would pave the way for negotiations.

“In a war of aggression there can be no equivalence between those who invade and those who resist,” he added. “Protecting Ukraine means protecting ourselves and the project of security and democracy that we have built together over 70 years.”

Draghi also affirmed Italy’s support for the EU to move swiftly on expanding to other members, with the immediate opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia, giving new impetus to talks with Serbia and Montenegro, and paying more attention to “the legitimate expectations” of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro.

“We are in favour of the entry of all these countries,” he said. “We must follow the entry path we have drawn but we must move as quickly as possible.”

