GLOBAL EUROPE – GLOBAL EXPECTATIONS

Assessing the EU's role in the world
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### CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A GEOPOLITICAL EU IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS
The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine poses an unprecedented threat to Europe and the international rules-based order. The liberal model of democracy – based on a set of values of open societies, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a market economy – is being openly challenged by actors who wish to destroy our way of life. The European Union, as a beacon of these values and a globally unique area of peace, prosperity and shared rules, has a special responsibility to promote the liberal model of democracy and defend it against its enemies. This ambition is also expressed in the European Commission’s self-understanding as a ‘geopolitical commission’ that can be the shaper of a better global order.

What we are witnessing today, however, is that the EU’s model of democratic societies is losing its appeal around the world. The growing global influence of actors with values, political systems and worldviews that are diametrically opposed to those of the EU, as well as the renaissance of geopolitical bloc formations (as evidenced by the abstention of some states in the UN from condemning Russia’s war of aggression) are accentuating this development. In the new era of geopolitics, which is characterized by strategic rivalry between authoritarian states on the one hand and liberal democracies on the other, these are alarming signs. In order to prevail against authoritarian regimes, the EU’s liberal model of democratic societies must regain its appeal in the world.

To this end, the EU needs to convincingly demonstrate that free and democratic societies are best equipped to master major challenges. It must deliver tangible results that are seen and felt by people around the globe, thereby boosting confidence in the European model of society beyond its borders. We must therefore engage in an open dialogue with other world regions. What are the expectations placed on the EU by other continents? How can the EU deliver on them? What are the opportunities and the challenges for a fruitful cooperation between the EU and each world region, and how can these collaborations be strengthened?

This publication is a first attempt to help us find answers to these questions. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Professor Dr Karl-Heinz Paqué
Chairman of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
FOREIGN POLICY INTRODUCTION

**Introduction**

By Dr Antonios Nestoras

Foreign policy is not only a function of government, but also a constitutive element of statehood and national identity. This is part of the reason why the EU’s external relations have always been a major source of controversy, debate and negotiation in Brussels and national capitals. A common foreign policy for the EU not only affects the EU’s position in the world, but it also plays a major role in how its citizens see the EU and whether the European project will acquire more competences of a federal state.

It is not surprising that the quest for a common foreign policy in Europe has been a rather complicated endeavour. These complications are practical in nature; a matter of negotiating the appropriate institutional structure and achieving effective collaboration between multiple levels of governance. However, there have also been more substantial matters to agree on: matters that depend on a common vision of the EU’s future as a global and autonomous actor.

For 50 years, the vision of an EU that would be able to project its values and interests across the world has been crafted in increments through EU strategy documents, articles in the treaties and the creation of new institutions. Yet it has only been in the past decade that the dynamics and rapid transformation of the international system have provided an unprecedented political need for a global and geopolitical EU.

Recent events and developments, such as the election of Donald Trump and the consequent stress test for the transatlantic alliance, the coronavirus pandemic and the short-lived global ‘vaccine wars’, an ever more assertive and influential China and the newly exposed strategic dependence of Europe on the United States in the Russian war against Ukraine, have made it clear that Europe must play a greater role on the global stage. In this context, European Strategic Autonomy – or European Sovereignty⁴ as some advocate – became a geopolitical imperative; or as the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, said, the ‘goal of our generation’.

In this regard, President Michel has pinpointed three aspirations linked to a global and sovereign EU: stability, safeguarding our standards and managing migration policies in an orderly and lawful way. Safeguarding our standards entails maintaining the capacity to ensure and set high standards on a variety of topics, such as data privacy, climate action, hate speech and consumer protection. Lastly, achieving strategic autonomy or sovereignty will also lead to the increased ability to promote the fundamental European values that form the bedrock of the Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. To achieve all this, a consensus among all member states is first needed as to what Strategic Autonomy comprises, as well as how to reach it.

The most contentious issue concerns the varying degrees of autonomy. Even in the area of defence, Strategic Autonomy can take various forms: from simply developing military capabilities, to the almost full-scale emancipation of European security from the US and NATO, as the French propose. The same range of possible outcomes can also be applied to other policy sectors. Beyond the political contestation of the concept, Strategic Autonomy means having the ability to make and implement decisions without depending on outside influence.

The growing interest in the concept and the debate about the correct framing – Strategic Autonomy vs. Strategic Sovereignty – reveals that many EU capitals have realized the changing geopolitical fundamentals in the world. However, to achieve Strategic Autonomy or Strategic Sovereignty, political will is needed. This requires all actors, member states and EU institutions to pursue common foreign policy objectives and strategies. From an economic and industrial point of view, Strategic Sovereignty means that (among other things) the EU needs to diversify its range of suppliers by forging new partnerships, foster the development of more strategic industries and companies, and ensure the resilience of supply chains, especially for strategic goods.

Every policy field and sector needs a different set of policies that will develop the capacities to act autonomously. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that Strategic Autonomy does not equal either protectionism or isolation – in defence or any other field.

There are two components of the term Strategic Autonomy, and so far the discussion seems to be focusing too much on the latter word. Having the capacity to act autonomously is important. However, being strategic means to know when the EU should act autonomously, as well as when it is necessary to cooperate with others: with traditional allies and friends, like-minded countries and sometimes even systemic rivals. This means that Strategic Autonomy not only requires inspection on the part of the EU, but also a redefinition of Europe’s relations with other parts of the world. In the context of the challenges that the liberal international order is facing, most recently through the Russian violation of international

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¹ The term ‘European Strategic Autonomy’ first began to circulate in 2013 and developed into a strategic policy objective of the European Union when it became part of the 2016 EU Global Strategy. The overall objective is to strengthen European defence capabilities; however, the definition of scope and the implications for the transatlantic relationship in particular vary quite substantially. For example, the French government (the initiator of the concept) leans towards a more rigorous de-coupling from the US in terms of security provision. Germany on the other hand strongly relies on the transatlantic security partnership and favours the interpretation of the concept as a strengthening of the European pillar within the wider Alliance. To provide room for this interpretation, Germany coined the term ‘European Strategic Sovereignty’ in its own policy documents.
law and the evolving Sino-American confrontation, the EU needs to live up to its geopolitical aspirations and be the beacon of freedom and democracy in the world that it wants to be. This requires the EU to engage more in regions it has to date neglected, to the advantage of other global actors.

Taking stock of the expectations of Europe’s partners around the world is the added value of this edited volume. This series of policy papers examines the expectations each world region has of the EU and makes proposals about how cooperation between the EU and other parts of the world can be strengthened. The findings of this paper serve as a starting point for the discussion about how the EU can regain its appeal as a model of liberal democratic societies outside its own borders.

In the first chapter, Tamar Kekenadze examines the EU’s immediate neighbourhood, and more specifically its relations with the Eastern Partnership countries and the Western Balkans. Here, of course, the framework of relations is dominated by two issues: Russia’s war on Ukraine and the EU membership prospects of the countries in the region. Beyond the war in Ukraine, the author identifies a key set of challenges to cooperation and outlines recommendations to overcome them.

In the second chapter, Brian Katulis, Vanessa Igras and Leena Khan examine the expectations that the MENA region places on the EU. The region has been tormented by conflict, but also holds great potential as a strategic bridge to the Asian East and the African South. The authors identify multilevel policy options for EU-MENA relations that can seize emerging opportunities, as well as tackle existing threats.

Welshman Ncube describes an EU-Africa partnership based on three levels: the continental level, the level of individual countries and the level of civil societies. He goes on to examine these three levels separately and to draw a vision of relations and a set of expectations that goes beyond the West’s competition with China in Africa.

In the fourth chapter, James Gomez and Robin Ramcharan recognize that trade is dominating the relations between the EU and the ASEAN countries. The authors emphasize the tensions that the different standards and values create in the EU-ASEAN relations and offer recommendations as to how to mitigate them.

The fifth chapter presents an overview of the dimensions of cooperation between the EU and South Asia, providing a brief analysis on how it could be sustainably strengthened. The author identifies the region as a strategic trade route, and owing to South Asia’s proximity to China, makes the case that the countries in this region expect a more structured approach to collaboration with the EU.

In the sixth chapter, Dr Edmundo Molina and Niome Hünke-Brown examine the EU’s relations with Latin American countries in the context of the populist backlash that both regions have experienced in the recent past. The Chinese model for development and governance again features as an alternative that is rapidly gaining ground on the continent. The authors identify several policy options that create an opportunity for meaningful EU engagement in the region.

Following a period of recalibration after the presidency of Donald Trump, Jacob Heilbrunn identifies four areas of cooperation in a new era of transatlantic relations: economy, technology, energy and the fight against authoritarian regimes. These four areas are suggested as the main pillars to carry Europe’s most important partnership forward.

The policy papers in this volume provide insights into the EU’s relations with other regions of the world and contribute to the formulation of their expectations of an EU that aspires to be a global and autonomous actor in world affairs. The papers address the question of how the EU and the respective regions can deepen their cooperation in order to meet the global challenges of our time together.
1. Southeast and East Europe

By Tamar Kekenadze

1.1. Introduction

As a continental neighbour, the EU’s eastern neighbourhood plays a crucial role in the Union’s security. Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU has been reminded of this fact once again, and as a result is taking a greater initiative to act in the region. In particular, Ukraine is receiving financial aid in the form of the support package for Ukraine. At the same time, relations with the EU and the expectations of its eastern neighbours differ from each other due to their own respective partnerships with the EU. While several countries have been given candidate status and are still in the long process of accession negotiations (notably the countries of the Western Balkans), others have only recently received candidate status (Ukraine and Moldova), a perspective for receiving candidate status (Georgia) or are working bilaterally with the EU (Armenia). Here, the EU can act as a magnet for democracy and economic prosperity in its eastern neighbourhood by offering realistic prospects for EU membership. This also includes pointing out democratic deficits, such as corruption or independent rule of law vis-à-vis the neighbouring countries, and offering support in overcoming them. In doing so, the EU must also respond to the geopolitical and hybrid threats posed by Russia and demonstrate the importance of the Eastern neighbourhood through intensified action in the region.

1.2. The role of the EU in the region

Nearly three decades have passed since the European Union launched its cooperation with the countries of Southeast and Eastern Europe. Over the years, the EU has developed numerous bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms to better accommodate the aspirations of individual countries, while also promoting regional cooperation. While all six Western Balkan countries are part of the Stabilization and Association Process—a framework that defines EU financial assistance, political dialogue, trade relations and cooperation with the region—each country has a bilateral track and is at a different stage of the EU accession process. Thus, Albania7, North Macedonia8, Montenegro9 and Serbia10 have membership candidate status, while Bosnia and Herzegovina7 and Kosovo9 remain potential candidates for membership.

The EU’s relations with Turkey, one of the earliest bidders for EU membership, long ago reached a stalemate and this is unlikely to change in the near future. The EU has made it clear that no further progress will be made until the country agrees to apply the Additional Protocol of the Ankara Association Agreement to Cyprus.

The EU’s relations with the East European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia) have their own multidimensional aspects and challenges. In order to deepen its cooperation with the East European states, the EU launched the Eastern Partnership initiative10 in 2009. Throughout the following years, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, with their clear membership aspirations, developed parallel bilateral cooperation tracks. This meant stronger economic, but also political cooperation in support of reform projects. For example, the EU, together with other European states, provided financial support for the Ukrainian decentralization reform and advisory services to the Ukrainian government. In 2022, following the war in Ukraine and subsequent strategic decisions made by the EU, they resulted in the decision by the European Council11 to grant Ukraine and Moldova EU membership candidacy status. Georgia will be given a similar status once the country fulfills set criteria. The EU’s bilateral cooperation with Armenia is based on the ‘Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement’12. With regard to the EU’s relations with Azerbaijan, its bilateral cooperation agenda is set by the partnership priorities13 agreed in 2018. However, relations are complicated, especially because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia is dependent on Russian security guarantees and disappointed by the lack of support from the EU. Azerbaijan is considered as an economically reliable partner by the EU, while political cooperation leaves little room for democratic change or concessions in the military conflict with Armenia.

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Before 2020, the EU’s relations with Belarus were ambivalent and characterized by a mixture of sanctions and attempts to cooperate. As a reaction to the serious violations of human rights, rule of law and overall democratic situation in the country, relations with Belarus\textsuperscript{14} deteriorated significantly after the presidential elections in 2020. This process resulted in the ‘European Council Conclusions\textsuperscript{15} on Belarus’, launching an in-depth review of the cooperation and financial assistance. Belarus eventually suspended its participation in the Eastern Partnership process in June 2021. After Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified\textsuperscript{16} war against Ukraine, the EU also adopted sanctions against Belarus, in response to its involvement in the invasion of Ukraine.

The EU’s relations with Russia, that is not part of the Eastern Partnership and traditionally suspicious about further enlargement, have always been rocky. After Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU was forced to take unprecedented measures that affected not only the bilateral EU-Russia relations, but also the entire region. Following Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU increased the sanctions that had been imposed in 2014, after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. These now include individual and economic sanctions, as well as diplomatic measures.

The people of East and Southeast Europe, regardless of their country’s membership aspirations, largely perceive the European Union as their main ally in pursuing a democratic dream. While these countries heavily rely on the EU’s support in fighting for the rule of law, human rights, security and economic prosperity, the lack of clarity about their membership prospects undermines the EU’s credibility and hence plays into the hands of undemocratic and illiberal forces.

1.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

Apart from being pivotal actor in the democratic transformation of the countries of Southeast and East Europe, the EU plays a major role in the economic development of the region. The EU is the largest trading partner for most of the Western Balkan countries\textsuperscript{17}. Through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)\textsuperscript{18}, the EU allocated 11.5 billion euros for the period 2007–2013, and 12.8 billion for the period 2014–2020 to beneficiaries including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

In the new multiannual financial framework period 2021–2027, the IPA III amounts to 14.162 billion euros. The IPA has helped to support reforms in the enlargement region and presents a huge opportunity for progressive, positive development in the region.

Similarly, the EU’s new Eastern Partnership Agenda envisions a 2.3 billion euros spend on its economic and investment plan, in grants, blending and guarantees, with the potential to mobilize up to 17 billion euros for public and private investments\textsuperscript{19}. The new agenda is aimed at supporting the socio-economic recovery of the region after the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthening economic relations and building trade routes between the EU and partner countries. While it is too early to assess the impact of the new agenda, the economic and investment plan has the potential to unlock positive, concrete results in the cooperation with the EU.

Through its Support Group for Ukraine\textsuperscript{20}, since 2014 the EU has continued to provide substantial financial assistance to the country. This was significantly expanded after Russia launched its full-scale war in February 2022. In order to support Ukraine in fighting against Russia’s military aggression, the EU provides the country with financial assistance under the European Peace Facility mechanism, aimed to boost the capacity building and resilience of the Ukrainian armed forces, including supplying them with military equipment for defence purposes\textsuperscript{21}. The financial assistance is crucial to support Ukraine’s economy, society, armed forces and its future reconstruction, and helps to pave the way for a future within the EU.

Through its visa facilitation and liberalization mechanisms\textsuperscript{22}, the EU has played a crucial role in promoting people-to-people connections, creating educational opportunities for youngsters and facilitating economic development and employment opportunities in its neighbouring countries. These programmes not only provide concrete material opportunities for the local level in these countries, but they also help to improve intercultural understanding and make these societies more resilient against anti-EU propaganda.

Historically, countries of Southeast and East Europe have faced complex security challenges, ranging from border disputes to frozen and active conflicts. Although having limited capacity to address these challenges, with its mandate, the EU plays an important role in contributing to peace and stability in the region.


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.


**Visa facilitation & liberalisation in the European neighbourhood**

- **Countries benefiting from visa facilitation**
  - 20XX
  - Year of entry into force

- **Countries benefiting from visa liberalisation**
  - 20XX
  - Year of entry into force

- **States issuing Schengen visas**
  - Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania may consider Schengen visas as equivalent to their national visas
  - *still applicable to holders of non-biometric passports*

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**Visa facilitation**

Facilitated procedures to issue visas for a short stay:
- Simplification of the supporting documents
- Reduced or no fee for certain categories of applicants
- Faster processing of visa applications
- Provisions on issuing multiple-entry visas with long validity

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**Visa liberalisation**

- Mutual visa-free travel for short stays between third countries and countries indicated in blue on the map
- Third countries had to meet a series of criteria to be eligible for the visa waiver
- Visa waiver is limited to holders of a biometric passport

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**Suspension mechanism**

- Reintroduction of visa requirement for a non-EU country if it no longer fulfils visa liberalisation conditions
- For example, in case of a sudden increase in the number of irregular migrants, unfounded asylum applications or rejected readmissions requests
- Can be triggered by a member state or by the European Commission

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Under its common security and defence policy framework, for example, the EU contributes to building up countries’ defence resiliency and it provides concrete peacebuilding and stability assistance through its international operations and missions23. For instance, in 2004, the EU launched the military operation ALTHEA24 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to contribute to a safe and secure environment of the area. Since the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 – which resulted in the occupation of 20 per cent of the Georgian territory by Russia – the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) remains the only international mechanism that monitors illegal actions by the Russian Federation.25 In 2008, the EU also launched its largest civilian rule of raw (EULEX) mission in Kosovo26, aimed at supporting the country to build effective rule of law institutions. Since October 2022, the EU has deployed monitoring experts along the Armenian side of its international border with Azerbaijan to support confidence building between the two countries and to allow the EU to better support the work of the border commissions. These operations need to continue for the EU to be perceived as a force for peace and freedom in the region. At the same time, one must mention that the EU was not able to ultimately prevent further aggressive actions by Russia especially against in Ukraine since 2014.

The future relations of the EU with the countries of Southeas-t and East Europe also have to face certain challenges. For most of the societies that strive to become fully-fledged members of the European Union, or develop at least close ties without formal membership objectives, such a choice often comes at the cost of serious inner divisions and conflicts or – as the example of Ukraine demonstrates – even war. For the people of Southeast and East Europe, choosing the EU integration path is not a mere guarantee of better living conditions, but instead an existential necessity and the only existing path to ensure their country’s independence and guarantee the rule of law, democracy and a dignified livelihood.

Authoritarian regimes such as Putin’s Russia or Lukashenko’s Belarus (which have become totalitarian ones) already consider democratic values and societies as major threats to their rule. This is why they exploit every possibility to obstruct the relations of the European Union and its partners in the region. Using disinformation as a tool of hybrid warfare remains one of the most effective mechanisms in their arsenal. The Russian anti-EU propaganda machine targets the countries of East and Southeast Europe. Although public opinion polls conducted in the Western Balkans27, Turkey28, Georgia and other EU aspirant East European countries continuously show overwhelming support of the people for the EU integration process, one can also see cases such as Serbia, where the majority of the population shows reservations concerning EU integration29. The Kremlin’s propaganda penetrates all layers of societies, political parties, media, academia, think tanks, etc. Although the EU acknowledges the existing threat and tries to develop counter-strategies, such as the new code on disinformation30, the countries remain vulnerable to Russian interference in their domestic matters.

In addition to disinformation campaigns, a degree of EU integration fatigue and lack of strategic clarity on actual membership prospects further weakens pro-Western political forces in the respective countries of Southeast and East Europe. At the same time, the lack of (or insufficient) progress in advancing the Copenhagen Criteria in the countries of the region puts further strain on the relationships with the EU. The ‘EU Enlargement Package Report 2021’31 and 202232 for the six Western Balkan countries and Turkey, as well as the Eastern Partnership Index33, clearly highlight more or less similar shortcomings in judiciary reforms, rule of law, human rights protection, fighting corruption, ensuring a fair and free electoral environment, and the need for other important reforms in order to fulfil the Copenhagen Criteria34. Defending minority groups remains another important challenge for most of the countries of Southeast and East Europe.

Pro-Russian, anti-EU and populist forces effectively employ pro-nationalistic narratives and tactics to deepen the confrontation between different groups of society35, amplifying their polarization. Political polarization that exists in most of the countries of Southeast and East Europe also plays a negative role in consolidating societies around the strategic objectives of EU membership. The EU tries to play a consolidating role – not always successfully, but nevertheless worthwhile continuing – to defuse the tension and promote democratic political process, as has been demonstrated by Charles Michel’s efforts to end the political dispute between Georgian parties36.


29 Dartford, Katy. (2022). “For first time, a majority of Serbs are against joining the EU – poll”. 22 April 2022. AP. https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/22/for-first-time-a-majority-of-serbs-are-against-joining-the-eu-poll


1.4. Policy recommendations

→ The ongoing efforts of the Kremlin to undermine the democratization of the states in the EU’s neighbourhood and the Russian invasion in Ukraine should be a wake-up call for the EU. A strategic rethinking and the development of a new EU-Russia strategy is required to push back against and contain Russia’s aggressive foreign policy. This includes the reduction of dependencies on Russia as well as other illiberal states. The recent EU-Azerbaijan New Energy Deal is an example of how not to do it.

→ Support Ukraine financially, militarily and with humanitarian aid. Given Russia’s imperialist foreign policy, it is in the EU’s security interests that Ukraine does not lose this war.

→ As the societies of Southeast and East Europe need to remain hopeful about the benefits of EU integration and eventual membership, it is crucial for the EU to maintain the credibility of the enlargement process by setting clear expectations, and improved and agile methodology for the aspiring countries. The overly vaguely formulated twelve priorities, which the EU asked Georgia to address before it can be granted EU candidate status, are an example of how not to do it, because conflict over different interpretations has deepened political polarization in Georgia.

→ Develop clear strategies concerning how to support countering the anti-democratic forces inside and outside the countries of Southeast and East Europe that endanger the democratization of these countries. This also includes fighting disinformation campaigns levelled against the EU.

→ Make visa liberalization for Kosovo a reality. The citizens of the six states of the Western Balkans (WB6) must not be continuously disappointed, but must feel European in order to continue to support the European cause in their respective countries. Kosovo, with the youngest population in Europe and the most pro-European outlook of the entire WB6, can develop a position that could lead the way for the region. This includes being allowed to move freely within the EU on an equal footing with neighbouring states.

→ Strengthen the EU’s presence in South Caucasus and demonstrate clear support for processes of democratic reform. Considering that Georgia and Armenia are developing democracies in a very volatile region surrounded by authoritarian states with expansionist ambitions, and acknowledging the long-lasting strong support for EU accession among the Georgian population and the search for new Western partners and perspectives among the Armenian population, the EU needs to strengthen and encourage pro-European civil society initiatives.

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2. Africa

By Professor Welshman Ncube

2.1. Introduction

It must be underlined from the outset that in its relationship with Africa, the EU ought to remain constantly sensitive to the history of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. This matters a great deal to Africans, hence sensitivity to this is crucial in all interactions. In other words, understanding this history must inform all interactions with Africa, its leadership and its peoples. In turn, this entails allowing Africans to think for themselves, which is the underlying basis for the concept of ‘African solutions to African problems’. Africans ought to be allowed to think and act in their own best interests without coercion. This further involves respecting African sovereignty, African agency and African values.

When analysing the partnership between the EU and Africa, at least three levels need to be taken into account; that is, the continent to continent level (EU to AU), the level of the EU and individual African countries, and the level of the EU and the peoples of Africa, organized as civil societies or at the community level. Each of these levels is important and must be treated separately, given the historical legacies of the African continent; particularly the challenges around governance and human rights issues. Thus, the EU must work not just with the AU, but also with each African country individually within the framework agreed to at the continental level, and based on the values and principles agreed to at the EU-AU level.

2.2. The role of the EU in the region

The first African-EU summit took place in Cairo, Egypt, back in 2001. It sought to redefine the relationship between Africa and Europe in strategic partnership terms, founded on equality, mutual respect and co-operation for the benefit of the peoples of the two continents. That summit set up the Africa-EU Partnership as a formal political channel for the two continents to work together. Through successive summits culminating in the sixth summit in Brussels in February 2022, the EU and the African Union have sought to recast their relationship away from the historical donor-recipient relationship towards an enduring partnership based on respectful co-operation.

While this development in the relationship between the EU and Africa must be seen as a step forward, it is necessary to be aware that EU-African relations have been put to the test in the past due to unfulfilled promises, which erode the trust needed for building a strong partnership. Considering the shared history of the two continents, building trust and investing in it is a crucial pillar for future cooperation. The partnership between the EU and Africa ought to be nurtured and developed; not just for its own sake in order to advance economic, social and cultural development, as well as the good governance of peoples.

EU-Africa relations must also be viewed in a wider, geopolitical context. The EU must pay attention to the growing influence of Russia, the Middle East and in particular China on the African continent. These countries are not just global competitors of the EU, but advance different and often diametrically opposed values, political systems, cultures and world views. Therefore, the failure of the EU to deepen, expand and consolidate its partnership with Africa opens up opportunities for these countries, which in practice are inimical to the EU’s global political, diplomatic and economic interests. In order for the EU to (re)gain its appeal on the African continent, the EU-Africa partnership must deliver tangible results in advancing representative democracy, freedom and liberty in politics, economics and culture for the African people.

2.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

Opportunities and challenges concerning the future relations between the EU and the African continent lie particularly in the fields of energy, industrialization, trade, investment and infrastructure. A crucial aspect of EU-African relations is also the promotion of good governance.

In its anticipation of reforming an economic and financial new deal between Africa and Europe, the EU-Africa joint vision for 2030 speaks of a joint vision to consolidate a renewed partnership for ‘solidarity, sovereignty, peace and sustainable and sustained economic development and prosperity for our citizens and for our future generations bringing together our people, regions and organizations’. The development of energy sources is one of the crucial areas in the context of the Paris Climate Agreement. Africa is a continent where in excess of 600 million people are without access to modern energy.

Accordingly, one of Africa’s critical priorities is addressing energy poverty through universal access to electricity. In this, lies a great opportunity for cooperation between the EU and Africa. Access to energy is a prerequisite for human development, and an effective energy transition is vital for rapid industrialization. Africa requires a fair and equitable energy transition that takes into account the needs of the continent. Africa therefore has to have solidarity and support from the EU by maintaining its financial assistance for the gas and hydrocarbon industries.


39 Modern energy is defined as energy forms that have commercialized market channels or higher energy content value than traditional biomass.

Industrialization is another crucial policy area for economic development in Africa. Most countries are currently exporting primary products to the EU. It is important for Europe to support industrialization in Africa by buying from it value-added, processed and refined goods, rather than primary products. In order to achieve this economic transformation there is a need for technological progress to enhance productivity. Supporting digitalization and technological transformation for industrial development is thus another opportunity for greater collaboration between Africa and the EU, and is critically important in Africa-EU relations.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown in exemplary fashion, industrialization, and in particular manufacturing, is linked to establishing and enhancing Africa’s capacity to produce its own products, such as vaccines, and to develop mRNA manufacturing capacities across the African continent. This, in turn, raises questions concerning intellectual property rights and the protection of patents. Future European and African co-operation needs to find a path forward in terms of how to reconcile intellectual property rights with the promotion of African manufacture, especially in the field of medicines and vaccines.

Equally important is the sectoral transformation of African economies. As of 2020, 43.8 per cent of total employment in Africa was in the agricultural sector. It is therefore important to enable African workers to also move to other productive sectors, such as manufacturing and services. The facilitation of these transformations must be a priority objective of the Africa-EU partnership.

Trade is another crucial element of EU-African relations that has the potential to create vast opportunities for both sides, but also involves some challenges that still need to be overcome. The EU is Africa’s largest trading partner. Most African countries benefit from preferential market access, ‘duty free and quota free’ economic partnership agreements (EPAs), everything but arms (EBA) arrangements for Least Developed Countries (LDC) and through the generalized system of preference (GSP). Many African countries are nevertheless unable to make full use of market access because of the technical and regulatory barriers put in place by EU countries. These include sanitary and technical standards that many African countries are unable to meet. While this remains a challenge in the current trade relations, targeted support by the EU for African countries to fulfil technical and regulatory standards offers a way forward.

When discussing the opportunities and challenges regarding foreign direct investment, it is important to highlight the potential for the 1.3 billion Africans and the 2.5 trillion US dollars collective African GDP to benefit both Africa and Europe. A partnership based on equality and mutual respect must be based on the understanding that Africans want more investment and fair trade, and less aid. Most important is investment in infrastructure. The AU Chair, President Macky Sall of Senegal, has underlined the need for resources to fund the energy transition and the building of facilities and infrastructures to retain the African youth, as well as investment in school systems to deliver appropriate training and high-quality education. On the subject of investment, it is also necessary to remain mindful of the African plea for the realization of the IMF special drawing rights (SDR), which African countries can exchange for hard currencies, and thereby grant themselves greater liquidity.

EU support for this is something that Africans are looking for in the development of the continents’ partnership. This partnership also needs to focus on cooperation for peace and security in its broadest sense, including the promotion of good governance as an instrument for combating wars, instability, radicalism, extremism and terrorism, as well as the brain-drain due to push factors rooted in political instability.

The EU must work more closely with civil society and independent bodies and commissions designed to support and promote good governance, accountability and human rights. This is crucially important, given the pervasive continent-wide democratic governance deficit and the inability of weak and unstable states to deliver basic social needs, such as food, health and education at the community level. Support for good governance is most important in the partnership between the EU and Africa in order to assist communities to access basic health care, education and food, and to allow a robust civil society to develop. Targeted partnerships with vulnerable community groups are therefore vital. This is related to the need for greater co-operation on migration issues to find sustainable solutions for the root causes of migratory movements.

46 In 2021, the IMF created SDRs worth around 650 billion US dollars to help countries overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with IMF rules, SDRs are distributed somewhat proportionately to IMF capital quotas. The result is that wealthy countries (that may not need them as much) receive a lot, while poor countries (that in some cases desperately need them) get less. Recognizing this fact, many EU countries and other wealthy countries committed themselves to redirect some of those drawing rights to poor countries, many of them in Africa. However, those commitments did not realize in most cases.
2.4. Policy recommendations

- Display genuine sensitivity to the history of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism without bad governance in Africa. This includes respect for African sovereignty and African agency, including its own interests and views.

- When cooperating with Africa, it is important to engage at the AU level, at the level of individual countries and directly with its peoples through civil society actors. Any European-Africa partnership must be based on equality and mutual respect.

- Promote and emphasize investment and trade, rather than aid.

- Promote industrialization and value addition benefitting Africa, and consequently encouraging the import of value-added products from Africa.

- The EU should remain mindful of the growing influence of China, Russia and the Middle East in Africa. However, the relationship of the EU with the African continent should not be driven by competition with China alone, but should focus on the symbiotic connections and synergies of the two continents, for example, in the fields of energy, trade and investment.

- Continue aid interventions to address the social needs of vulnerable community groups and promote good governance.

2.5. References and bibliography


3. MENA

By Brian Katulis, Vanessa Igras and Leena Khan

3.1. Introduction

For several decades, the European Union has had close economic and security relations and cultural ties with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), particularly in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet EU-MENA relations have recently been affected by multiple issues, including a growing migration and refugee crisis, spillover from conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, and threats to the regional and global order posed by non-state actors such as the Islamic State, as well as state actors such as Iran. European countries have responded differently to these crises; in some cases creating greater barriers to the MENA region, with restrictive immigration and asylum policies. In 2022, rising inflation and the Russian invasion of Ukraine contributed to an increase of energy and food prices around the world, highlighting the important role that MENA countries play in helping advance human security in ways that directly impact the lives of millions living in Europe.

The MENA region represents an important bridge between the world’s leading economies in Europe, North America and Asia. A growing number of governments in the region are looking to update the models for their political economies and are seeking to diversify their energy sources to go beyond the heavy dependence on fossil fuels for economic growth. This effort opens up opportunities to foster stronger ties between the EU and the MENA region. However, there are overwhelming human security challenges within the MENA region that could complicate the relationship. New pressures on food and water security, as well as continued political conflict, could create difficulties between the EU and MENA countries in the coming years.

Leaders in government, civil society and the private sector should look for new avenues to discuss long-term approaches that could help both regions to seize emerging opportunities while responding to ongoing threats. The international system is in a period of tremendous change, and cooperation between these two regions to confront it could lead to a more prosperous world.

3.2. The role of the EU in the region

The EU is a vital player in the Middle East due to its large economic footprint and vested political stakes in the region. After the United States, the EU is the largest aid provider to the region. Between 2014 and 2017, the European Commission contributed an average of 8.2 billion US dollars in development assistance and humanitarian aid per year to the region, approximately 26 per cent of the EC’s total international aid. The EU is a substantial trade partner of its Southern Neighbourhood, participating in approximately 152 billion US dollars worth of trade with the Southern Neighbourhood in 2020. The EU also trades extensively with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. After China, the EU is the largest trade partner of the GCC, representing 12 per cent of the GCC total world trade in 2020.

Much of this economic relationship is associated with energy. In 2020, MENA countries together accounted for 18 and 12 per cent of, respectively, the EU’s crude oil and natural gas imports. Specifically, Saudi Arabia accounts for 8 per cent of the EU’s crude oil imports, followed by Iraq at 7 per cent. Algeria accounts for 7 per cent of the EU’s natural gas imports, followed by Qatar at 4 per cent. These numbers are likely to increase as the EU pursues its plan to disentangle itself from Russian energy imports. EU companies have already inked deals with MENA countries in line with this initiative, such as the French TotalEnergies and the Italian Eni with Qatar’s LNG Northfield expansion.

The EU also plays important diplomatic roles in the Middle East. The EU is negotiating a new agreement to discourage Iranian nuclear activity. Additionally, the EU participates in various forums and dialogues across the region, such as the Union for the Mediterranean to manage trade relationships between the EU and its southern neighbours.

49 The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the EU’s southern neighbourhood includes ten partner countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.
51 The GCC countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
Nevertheless, compared with the United States and Russia, the EU does not have an assertive policy in the Middle East and North Africa. It has been unable to substantively weigh in on Israel and Palestine, and has been relatively inactive in Syria. However, the EU hopes to deepen its strategic engagement with the GCC. In May 2022, the EU introduced its plan for a ‘Strategic Partnership with the Gulf’. Central elements of this strategy include bolstering the EU’s diplomatic presence, enhancing its security partnerships and forging closer people-to-people ties.

### 3.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

A key opportunity for expanding cooperation between the two regions lies in the energy sector. The EU has set ambitious targets for its energy and climate policy, and the Middle East offers fruitful opportunities to meet these goals. In 2019, EU member states agreed to reduce the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels, and to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

A central element of this framework is the expansion of renewable energy, but the EU may not be able to meet the growing demand for green energy from within its borders. MENA’s enormous potential for solar and wind energy could solve this problem. Egypt aims to produce 42 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2035. Israel, Turkey and Cyprus are also expected to increase their renewable energy production. The EU is already pursuing cross-border interconnections to access these countries’ renewable energy resources through the EuroAsia Connector, but can do more to invest in this integration, such as by developing undersea power cables.

Moreover, the EU should go beyond just the Eastern Mediterranean and look further into the MENA region for investment opportunities. In the Levant, the EU could use its economic tools to support green energy connections between Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. In the Gulf, the EU could develop a joint preferential green investment area. The Middle East is eager to transition to green energy and the EU can facilitate this process through providing the necessary capital flows.

In addition to renewable energy, the MENA region can help the EU with its hydrogen strategy. There are ongoing pilot projects in the North Sea that indicate major growth potential for green hydrogen production, which is carried out at offshore wind farms. Greece, Turkey and Cyprus could have incredible off-shore wind power capacities; the Global Wind Energy Council noted in their ‘Global Wind Report 2022’ that Turkey is among the four countries with the highest global offshore wind energy potential. The EU should commission a study to investigate these capabilities and subsequently invest in the development of wind power facilities there.

The MENA region also provides opportunities for European engagement in research and innovation. The EU’s Research and Innovation Strategy includes Horizon Europe, the world’s largest multinational research and innovation programme. Over the next seven years, Horizon Europe will distribute 116 billion US dollars to cross-border research collaborations to be carried out by researchers around the world. Two key areas of research that this strategy focuses on are the environment and a digital future, both of which resonate deeply with Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia that have integrated these themes into their long-term national strategies.

Additionally, as MENA countries mitigate the supply chain shocks from the Russian war in Ukraine, there is a greater imperative for regional economic integration to boost resource access and trade. Specifically, regional integration could promote food security. Russia is the top global exporter of wheat, while Ukraine is the fifth largest. The MENA region heavily depends on them for regional food supply, for example, Egypt alone imports 80 per cent of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia. Although the European Commission has introduced a 228 billion US dollar support package to offset the food security issue in the region, there is room for the EU to better address this problem.

The EU has an opportunity to encourage and guide the economic integration of the MENA region as a model example of the process. The EU in turn would also benefit from a more economically resilient MENA. The likelihood of a successful integration, guided by the EU, appears promising due to the past experience of the EU. In this regard, the EU was a chief negotiator in the Agadir Agreement between Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon and Palestine, committing these signatory countries to remove all trade tariffs with one another. Now is a prime moment to expand the Agadir Agreement to more economically robust countries in the region, such as the GCC, or to craft a new and more inclusive free trade zone in the region.

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In contrast to these vast opportunities for cooperation, there are also three main challenges in the coming years that could hamper closer collaboration. These are the continued conflict and political turmoil in the region, migration and the MENA region becoming an arena for geopolitical tensions.

Political turmoil in many oil and gas-rich states make access to their natural resources difficult. Libya announced in June 2022 that it is pumping a million fewer barrels of oil than it did in 2021, despite the fact that Libya sits on 3 per cent of the world's total oil reserves. Libya has been engaged in political standoffs between General Haftar's Libyan National Army and the Government of National Accord for years, and this has left control of the country's oil fields in flux, leading to their shutdown several times. Iraq, another oil-rich country, also has a high-risk investment environment. Iraq is the world's sixth-largest oil producer, but control over its oil fields has seldom been in stable hands. Iraq lost its territorial integrity to the rise of ISIS between 2014 and 2017, and its current government is wrought with systemic corruption. These political conflicts and institutional troubles make many MENA countries unreliable energy partners for the EU.

In another light, trends of forced migration reflect the outlook for political turmoil in the Middle East and illustrate the looming threat of regional instability. Since 2012, there has been a steady increase in the number of people displaced in the MENA region. In only the past year, an additional 2 million people in the region were forced to migrate, bringing the total number to around 18 million. This continual rise in migration, especially after 2011, is a direct consequence of armed conflict in the region. Beyond the humanitarian ramifications of forced migration, population shifts place an enormous strain on transit and destination countries in the region, such as Jordan.

Forced migration and growing regional instability also go hand in hand with the presence of international organizations. These include the UN and other humanitarian institutions, as well as foreign state actors, thus creating a somewhat saturated playing field for the EU. In particular, both Russia and China have capitalized on the political instability in the region. China, for example, has demonstrated its crucial role in promoting economic and infrastructural development in over 15 MENA countries. China's regional economic ambitions potentially undermine European economic and political interests in the Middle East because unlike the West, China does not attach domestic standards and conditions to the viability of development projects. In other words, China has established itself as an alternative actor to the EU and risks reinforcing authoritarian regimes, making it difficult for future EU-MENA cooperation efforts on any front. Additionally, Russia’s military opportunism in Syria is an extension of its great power ambitions in addition to the invasion of Ukraine. As a result, EU countries will continue to be hesitant in seeking opportunities for a stable Syria as long as Russia remains an actor in the Middle East.

Another obstacle in pursuing deeper EU engagement with the Middle East is the profound lack of unity in EU member states' positions on the region's challenges. Divisions among member states undermine any attempts by the EU as a whole to diplomatically act on any political issues in the region, especially since the EU requires its member states to agree on any of its official foreign policies. For example, France and Italy supported opposing sides during General Khalifa Haftar's attempted coup in Libya, preventing the EU from effectively responding to a crisis that had direct implications for its energy interests. Furthermore, disunity diminishes EU credibility in the eyes of potential Middle Eastern partners. Saudi analysts have argued that most Saudi leaders do not take the EU seriously as a geopolitical actor because of its inability to agree on common foreign policies.

3.4. Policy recommendations

- The EU should invest in developing the MENA region's extraordinary renewable energy potential by spearheading projects such as underwater power cables for cross-border electricity interconnections and wind power facilities for green hydrogen production.

- The EU should collaborate with GCC countries on their research and innovation on environmental sustainability and digitization, pursuing the joint goals of Horizon Europe and the GCC countries' national strategies.

- The EU should spearhead MENA discussions on regional economic integration, capitalizing on its reputation as a neutral mediating body in negotiations and serving as a prime model for successful economic integration. Reducing trade barriers and encouraging production collaboration, especially in the agricultural sector, could significantly combat regional food insecurity.


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The role of the EU in the region

The European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are set to resume negotiations aiming at an inter-regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Prior efforts to formalize inter-regional trade have been paused since 2009 (Arunmas, 2021). The currently revived process is taking place against the backdrop of emerging geopolitical and geo-economic tensions in the Indo-Pacific. For the EU, aspiring to become a global geopolitical player, this trade partnership with ASEAN will grant access to the fifth largest economic bloc in the world with more than 3 trillion US dollars in GDP and 660 million potential customers (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). For ASEAN, a deeper trade engagement with the EU as its third largest trading partner and external source of Foreign Direct Investment (ASEAN Secretariat, 2022) would significantly boost its economy. The agreement would also strengthen the partnership between the two regions following their long history of engagement, which dates back to their dialogue partnership in 1977, the establishment of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996 and a 'Strategic Partnership' between the two in 2020.

Nevertheless, the pathway to greater cooperation between the two regions is constrained by numerous obstacles. These centre around standards and values, and involve matters of geopolitics, regionalism, technical trade issues and human rights considerations. In addition, limited political will and commitment on the part of some EU members that do not see the strategic importance of Southeast Asia, as well as the EU's limited military power projection in the region, pose further challenges to cooperation. Moreover, fixating on the war in Ukraine, EU leaders will inevitably divert their attention and resources to Europe. These could potentially impact on greater collaboration and stall further negotiations. Despite the slow progress on increased cooperation, there is a strong desire from partners in the region to work together with the European Union on security and economic development.

Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) stresses inclusive cooperation between stakeholders in the region, the need for continued ASEAN-led community building, fostering 'strategic trust' through reinforcing the principles of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and 'promoting their application in the conduct of relations between states in a wider Indo-Pacific region'. The EU acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2012. There are currently nevertheless opportunities for even greater cooperation between the EU and ASEAN. A more integrated relationship potentially offers tremendous opportunities for both regions, and is why an EU-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) should be back on the negotiating table. The FTA would reduce ASEAN and EU dependency, especially on one of the economic giants of the twenty-first century: China. It would also limit the risks arising from the potential economic decoupling between China and the United States — a risk that has been heightened by trade tensions and supply-chain disruptions following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the promises of prosperity and the strategic gains that could result from an EU-ASEAN FTA, there are still technical disagreements that have brought the FTA negotiations to a halt. A major point of contention in these negotiations has been the impact on climate change, and in particular the issue of deforestation and palm oil. Civil society groups in the EU were influential in steering the EU policy into discouraging importing palm oil. Malaysia and Indonesia, as the world’s first and second largest producers of palm oil, critized this stance and threatened to take the matter to the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the allegedly discriminatory action involving restrictions on palm oil based biofuels. The feud over the palm oil ban illustrates a bigger problem: the EU’s version
of the FTA includes matters that could be politically sensitive for ASEAN countries and therefore it can lose the support of some of them. Such disagreements have caused both the EU and ASEAN to miss out on the opportunity to maximize trade between the two regions.

When looking at trade agreements with the region, negotiations about an ASEAN-EU FTA involve more rigid criteria and stricter conditions than others. In contrast to this, the ASEAN-China FTA and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), for example, are understood as ‘pragmatic’ alternatives to the value-based trading arrangement epitomized by European standards. RCEP partners put aside differences concerning labour rights and environmental standards, as opposed to the EU, which sees such standards as pillars of an economic partnership. With regard to data privacy, the EU demands FTA partners acquire ‘adequacy decisions’ in order to ensure the free flow of data under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), meanwhile, has prioritized the freer use of data (Tamura, 2022). Because of the demands to meet such criteria and conditions, ASEAN members are hesitant to support the ASEAN-EU FTA negotiations and instead choose to focus more on maximizing less strict FTAs.

While the easier-to-deal-with agreements have contributed to prosperity in this region, they also come with risks. The more ASEAN relies on the ASEAN-China FTA and China’s economy in general, the more it provides economic leverage to China.

In order to avoid greater dependency on China and to harvest the great economic potential of an FTA between the EU and ASEAN, the negotiations need to be resumed. To move forward with this, the EU will have to accommodate ASEAN members in order to break down barriers and reach its standards over time rather than simply standing still in the negotiation process. The EU should comprehend each ASEAN country’s internal limitations in the negotiation process and extend the time period by which supplementary provisions on sensitive sectors have to be met.

Given the different national interests and sensitivities of each of the ASEAN member states, another way forward could be to refrain from overtly comprehensive Free Trade Agreements that cover every aspect in detail and instead pursue an FTA that is limited in scope, as this could kick start a deeper trade partnership. Social and ecological standards can be aligned over time when a solid trade relationship already exists, as this could put tangible economic pressure to meet social or environmental standards. Without trade as a lever, there is barely any tool possible to incentivize behaviour change.

For the near future, bilateral or plurilateral FTAs could also serve as a stepping stone for the EU and ASEAN as a bloc to reach agreement. Singapore and Vietnam, which have succeeded in reaching EU standards, have set an example for other ASEAN countries to follow. Their bilateral agreements actually include issues such as the protection of labour rights, sustainability and the environment that were contentious during the first rounds of EU-ASEAN FTA negotiations (EU, 2019a; EU, 2019b). Hence, these bilateral agreements serve as building blocks for inter-regional trade collaboration.

Greater cooperation between the EU and ASEAN could also help to promote intraregional cooperation. Leading by example, the EU could incentivize ASEAN as a bloc to pursue the EU’s successful economic model and build on earlier efforts toward regional integration: the ASEAN FTA that was established in 1993 and went on to become ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. This was inspired, at least in part, by the European economic integration model. In addition to serving as a role model for how ASEAN can evolve into an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the EU could support regional integration in this region by pursuing the aforementioned Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN. An ASEAN-EU FTA could potentially set aside internal differences among ASEAN countries, as both blocs would be working under the same standards on customs and dispute settlement, as well as environmental and labour regulations. This in turn also implies that every ASEAN member would share the same standards, and technical barriers within the region would be lifted. This would also remove the need for border restrictions and facilitate the movement of goods and people within the region. Concluding the FTA would thereby also boost intra-regional integration.

ASEAN countries could utilize the FTA as a stepping stone to promote the ASEAN Common Market to the next stage – the single market – in which the people of ASEAN could enjoy freedom of movement of goods, capital, services and workers. The idea of an ‘ASEAN citizenship’, inspired by the Union citizenship of the EU, could also be an opportunity to be explored in EU-ASEAN relations. This is, however, a goal that remains distant. Despite the (limited) progress in Southeast Asian regionalism, aspirations to go beyond a common market and reach the European level of economic and political integration in Southeast Asia have been constrained by the principles of non-interference and consensual decision-making.

An obstacle to increased cooperation between the EU and ASEAN has also been differences in values. The EU’s core values, rooted in human rights and liberal democracy, have shaped its identity and guided its foreign trade policies. ASEAN, meanwhile, is a project whose members have agreed to cooperate for the sake of common benefits.

These differences have caused misunderstandings and have slowed down the deepening of EU-ASEAN cooperation. The EU’s firm stance on its fundamental values is viewed by ASEAN members as ‘inflexible’, and due diligence processes concerning human rights have been accused of being a form of trade protectionism. For example, concerns over human trafficking across the region, such as in the case of the Thai fisheries sector, led to EU sanctions on Thailand (AP, 2016). Accordingly, negative perceptions of the EU among ASEAN countries grew (Seah et al., 2022; Portela, 2010). ASEAN members’ overprotectiveness of national sovereignty has thwarted any attempts to alter the existing decision-making process to increase ASEAN’s effectiveness in managing human rights issues.
Over the years, the EU has mainly used economic incentives as a means to convince ASEAN to embrace European values. This approach has proven to be insufficient, given that serious and massive human rights violations continue to be reported in ASEAN countries (see Asia Centre, 2020; Asia Centre and CALD, 2020). Moreover, the popularity of liberal democratic values has not resonated with a wider audience in ASEAN countries, despite the EU’s continued efforts to promote them. Instead, the EU should concentrate on facilitating opportunities for local actors to make changes in the value system from within. This could be achieved by a grassroots, human-centric approach with a focus on civil society. The change in values among people in the region would lead ASEAN to incorporate these values into its structure. Two current issues in Southeast Asia that the EU can engage on with local civil society organizations are migration (OHCHR, 2022) and post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery (EESC, 2021). Effective responses to these two issues will naturally involve cooperation on human rights dimensions that are important to the EU. The EU can act as a bridge that brings civil society organizations from different ASEAN countries together to help tackle these issues.

4.4. Policy recommendations

- Develop and articulate a clear and shared strategic vision for an EU-ASEAN FTA that is mindful of ASEAN’s ‘Outlook on the Indo-Pacific’.
- Craft a realistic negotiating strategy that accommodates ASEAN member states’ concerns over national sovereignty.
- In its negotiating strategy the EU should recognize the importance of the People’s Republic of China for members of ASEAN.
- Do not overcrowd the FTA with too many chapters.
- Frame the future FTA in light of the models provided by the existing bilateral FTAs with Vietnam and Singapore.
- Adopt a long-term and phased approach toward Southeast Asian countries achieving core European values dimensions.
4.5. References and bibliography


5. South Asia

By Dr Nadia Farooq

5.1. Introduction

South Asia is home to almost 2 billion people, or one quarter of the world’s population. Despite this, countries in this region together account for less than 5 per cent of the world’s GDP and trade. The region’s weak economic performance explains to a major extent the historical lack of focus from the European Union. This is slowly changing. The region is located along some of the busiest trade routes between Southeast Asia and Europe. Owing to South Asia’s proximity to China, there is a growing realization in the EU that a more structured strategic approach to countries in the region is required. The war in Ukraine has only added urgency to this endeavour, as have the regime collapse in Afghanistan and the growing economic instability and social unrest in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

5.2. The role of the EU in the region

South Asia is by far the largest beneficiary of the EU’s Generalized System of Preferences (GSP); that is, the EU’s policy that provides low and lower-middle income countries with low-tariff access to the EU market. The extended GSP+ scheme provides for no-tariff access for most goods exported to the EU. As of 1 January 2022, the rules of the GSP were applicable to imports from India, while Pakistan and Sri Lanka were subject to the rules of the GSP+. The most generous terms of the so-called ‘Everything But Arms’ (EBA) initiative were applicable to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

As countries become more prosperous, they will rise above the strata they currently occupy, such as least developed countries (LCDs), low income countries, and lower-middle income countries. It is at this point that their eligibility for market access under the rules of GSP will cease and a free-trade agreement (FTA) will typically replace the GSP regime. Nevertheless, navigating the FTA negotiations is a time-consuming process, with the EU having to reconcile the interests of 27 member countries. In addition, the process can be politically fraught, as the negotiations between the EU and Canada, a close partner, have shown. It should therefore not be surprising that FTA negotiations between the EU and India that started in 2007 have yet to reach a conclusion. With more South Asian countries certain to graduate in future, this experience does not augur well for EU-South Asian trade relations.

Of particular concern is the fact that the EU relies on its GSP+ regime to push its human rights agenda. Countries found lacking in these criteria during regular reviews and monitoring missions (such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka, currently) risk losing access to the EU market under the rules of GSP+.

Graph 1 | Total EU imports and imports under GSP from South Asia

Data Source: Author’s own work. Data collected from the website of the European Union: https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/158618.htm
In addition to the flow of goods, services and capital, the flow of people – especially of highly-skilled professionals – has become a defining feature of the relationship between the EU and countries in South Asia. While the UK remains by far the most popular destination for migrants from South Asia, accounting for a larger number of residents of South Asian heritage than all the EU member countries combined, there are now more than a million residents of South Asian heritage living in the EU. With high-quality, low-cost public universities open to international admissions in the EU, the number of South Asian students in the EU has grown particularly rapidly. Every year, about 50,000 students from India alone begin studying at a university in the EU.

Cognizant of this vast talent pool, in 2008 the EU introduced the Blue Card, a type of work permit aimed at easing skilled labour migration into the EU. Many details of the implementation, however, were left to individual member states, and this explains why uptake has been uneven across the Union, with Germany consistently issuing around half of all Blue Cards every year (and a record 84.5% in 2017). Though the scheme never lived up to expectations, uptake from skilled professionals from South Asia was formidable, with India consistently being the largest source of professionals granted a Blue Card. In 2019, there was a total of 36,806 Blue Card holders in the European Union. The most popular destination country was Germany, with a total of 28,858. The most important source country was India with 9,326 Blue Card holders. 723 Blue Card holders were Pakistani citizens, 208 were from Bangladesh and 152 were citizens of other South Asian countries.

Apart from the Blue Card, all long-term visa (visas for more than 90 days, which is the limit for a Schengen visa) and residence permits are still governed by the national legislation of EU member countries. There are numerous examples of countries streamlining recognition procedures, concluding bilateral recruitment agreements or easing visa procedures. However, these efforts, so far, lack a coordination at the level of EU institutions.

Apart from the stronger economic ties, the EU’s diplomatic efforts in the region are somewhat scattered. The EU has been an observer to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) since 2006. Nevertheless, there are no relations beyond this observer status, largely owing to the fact that SAARC is (near-)dormant because of conflicts in the region and a reorientation of foreign policy – in particular that of India – towards forums such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Initiative. The EU maintains an approximation of formalized ties with individual SAARC member countries.

Among the countries in South Asia, India’s diplomatic relationship with the EU is the most mature, covering areas including sustainable urbanization, renewable energy production, transparent and sustainable trade, and innovative techniques to support talent mobility in the region. In an effort to strategically build a security partnership, India and the EU have shown increasing cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, maritime and cyber security, and non-proliferation. A growing number of personnel exchanges underpin this effort.

In its cooperation with all South Asian countries, the EU focuses on promoting human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development. It is a significant donor to most countries and has delegations to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives. It is, furthermore, present in Afghanistan without having established formal ties with the current government.

A very recent challenge to the EU’s diplomatic efforts is Putin’s war in Ukraine. While small South Asian countries such as Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives steadfastly voted with the US and EU in the UN General Assembly in condemning the war, the large countries have attempted to ‘sit on the fence’. India is a case in point. Its view of the war is pragmatic and not guided by values. The Indian government is keenly aware of its dependence on Russia for arms and ammunition supplies – around two thirds of India’s defence imports are from Russia – making the country dependent on Russian expertise.

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82 European Commission. (2021). “Residence permits – statistics on authorisations to reside and work#EU Blue Cards issued to highly qualified non-EU citizens
for the maintenance of equipment as well as the supply of spare parts and ammunition. At the same time, the sanctions of the EU and other Western countries have created space for a hugely beneficial oil supply agreement with Russia (India buys each barrel of oil at a 35 US dollar discount from the global price). It would be an illusion to believe that the EU or its Western partners could break this Indo-Russian bond. In fact, as one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement, India managed to sit on the fence throughout the cold war.

5.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

The relationship between the EU and most countries in South Asia is pragmatic, yet often reluctant. Neither side considers the strengthening of ties to be a priority, and the priorities often change only on occasions such as the regime collapse in Afghanistan or the war in Ukraine. However, with a growing economy, an increasing shortage of skilled labour in the EU and the rise of China as a hegemon economy in the region, there is an opportunity to systematically improve these ties.

The EU has benefitted South Asian countries in almost all aspects of socio-economic and sustainable development through free trade and assistance for their educational, professional, health and security endeavours, as well as humanitarian, environmental and food security aid. The EU should build on these successful cooperation endeavours when developing a more strategic approach to the region. This also includes the assessment of failed or less successful approaches to foster cooperation, as the lengthy negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement with India demonstrate.

Despite being one of the major donors to and trade partners of South Asia, the EU fails to be a strong and effective political and security actor in the region, lacking visibility in the political discourse and public perception. The foreign policies of the EU towards regional challenges are inconsistent in their application. Moreover, its political, strategic and commercial interests often take priority over its objectives to strengthen democracy and protect human rights in South Asian countries, as outlined in official agreements or cooperation. The broad-based downward slide of South Asian countries in international rankings on democracy, the rule of law and media freedom casts doubts – to say the least – on the effectiveness of the EU’s policies in the region. The EU should therefore concentrate on strengthening good governance in the region. Engaging with and bringing together civil society actors across the region represents an opportunity for the EU to reach its goals through a bottom-up and therefore more sustainable approach.


5.4. Policy recommendations

→ Over the next decade, almost all South Asian countries will become eligible for preferential access to the EU market under the GSP and EBA schemes. This transition needs to be properly managed. The EU-India FTA negotiations are an example of how not to do it.

→ It is paramount to build strong and enhanced partnerships with countries in South Asia that reflect the geopolitical relevance of the region; all the more so now that the region is being paid increased attention by strategic rivals such as China and Russia. This requires the establishment of regular exchange formats, as well as efforts to set up permanent liaisons. While this takes shape, there is room for enhanced security cooperation with other countries in the region, especially with India.

→ The EU should continue on the path of promoting civil society actors in South Asia with the specific aim of promoting regional civil society cooperation to boost regional integration beyond the political sphere, with the ultimate goal of reducing the potential for conflict in the region. Civil society cooperation should be aimed specifically at areas where state actors are weak or absent.

→ South Asia’s talent pool has the potential to foster the EU’s economic development and spur productivity growth. In order to foster skilled labour migration, legislation across the EU should streamline and harmonize rules and expand schemes such as the Blue Card.
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6. Latin America

By Dr Edmundo Molina and Niome Hüneke-Brown

6.1. Introduction

Latin America is at a crossroads. The balance of global power that has emerged in recent decades has left the region as a battleground of ideologies and development models. The absence of leadership by the EU in Latin American affairs has contrasted markedly with the increased strength of China in the region. Regardless of the weakened ties between the EU and Latin America in the recent past, two essential elements make these regions natural partners.

The first is a historical one. Latin America and Europe have a shared past, which is manifest in their social values base. Latin America is a region with democratic values, governed by the rule of law and defending a market economy based on a set of values that focuses on the dignity, rights and freedoms of the individual. Its cultural heritage is strongly influenced by Europe. After Western Europe and North America, Latin America is the world region with the largest proportion of democratically constituted countries. Nevertheless, the EU should rely on more than solid historical ties.

 Democracies are vulnerable to regional authoritarianism and a lack of cooperation between liberal governments. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the anti-democratic and illiberal trend that has exacerbated a crisis for liberalism worldwide. China has become a development model that different countries are beginning to follow, including in Latin America, which is in a phase of consolidation of many of its democracies. These challenges should give impetus to renewing cooperation between Latin America and the European Union in order to help the liberal democratic model regain its appeal in the region.

The second element is a geopolitical one. The US-China-EU triad is marked by increased tension between Washington and Beijing, making the EU a more neutral partner for a region that is seeking to maintain ties with the other two poles. Stronger future cooperation should allow an exchange of experience, know-how and efforts to strengthen democracy, liberalism and the rule of law.

The main pillars for cooperation between Latin America and the European Union are democracy, sustainable economic development, renewable energy policies and broad-based economic opportunity. The exchange of knowledge, the support of civil society, practices in favour of resilient and sustainable globalization, government innovation, migratory trends and the fight against organized crime should be the principles of the interregional dialogue between Latin America and the European Union. These areas for cooperation would allow for diminishing the influence of authoritarianism, facing economic and migratory crises and strengthening government with respect to the rule of law and civil rights.

6.2. The role of the EU in the region

The European Union and Latin America have a long-standing relationship. A comprehensive political dialogue between the European Community and Latin America was first initiated in the mid-1980s and has developed ever since. In addition, more intensive political relations have developed between the EU and the regional groupings in Central and South America: Mercosur, the Andean Community and the South American Community of States. In 1999, it was decided to establish the so-called EU-LAC summits in order to intensify cooperation. These summits are held at the level of heads of state and governments from the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean that meet every two years. Despite various summits and meetings, it was not until 2016 that the EU published its Global Strategy, stating the need for ‘stronger partnerships’ with Latin American and Caribbean countries. The EU’s Global Strategy publication was followed by a Joint Communication that called for an ‘ambitious and innovative approach beyond the donor-recipient logic and in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’.

Nevertheless, a practical and realistic strategy for the EU regarding relations with Latin America still needs to be included. Political dialogue and economic cooperation are not in harmony with each other, as a genuine expansion and deepening of economic and political relations have not yet taken place. To date, the EU has not been able to ratify its 2019 trade agreement with Mercosur, representing a combined market of 284 million people. Furthermore, there is actually a decrease of 14 per cent in the EU’s budget for the years 2021–2027 for Latin America and the Caribbean. This is of particular concern, considering that Beijing had increased its investments in Latin America in 2020 by 26 times the amount in 2000.

Against the backdrop of an increasingly influential China and an imperialist Russia, the EU needs to push for increased engagement in Latin America in order to forge closer partners-

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hips with democracies across the globe. The recent meeting between European foreign ministers and their Latin America counterparts in October 2022 is a positive sign that after years of relative absence, relations with Latin America and the Caribbean are to return to the EU’s agenda.

6.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

As in other world regions, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only presented major challenges for the dynamism of emerging economies in Latin America, but has also often been used as an excuse to limit civil liberties in different areas. This has encouraged opacity, reduced the checks and balances of government systems, violated justice systems and facilitated disinformation in the region. The pandemic-generated crises have been manifested in political polarization, volatility of oil prices, unplanned public spending and growing public debt. In turn, these have triggered complex and heterogeneous political and economic conditions across the region.

The recovery from the pandemic is occurring at a divergent pace: the asymmetric patterns in the recovery across regions and sectors have intensified due to differences in institutional capacity and the disparate political decisions made by countries in Latin America. The rapid growing demand for commodities has put pressure on global value chains already affected by sanitary policies. Additionally, energy prices have further increased as a result of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The fertilizer industry, already affected by the coal shortage in China, has been hit by higher energy prices and disruptions in trade. All of these factors have contributed to the current food and energy crisis. Central banks in developing economies began the normalization of monetary policy in 2021, months before developed economies’ central banks started hiking their interest rates as inflation broke multi-decade records in 2022. On the fiscal side, the main measures to combat the inflation crises have been based on tax exemptions, further raising international food and energy prices. The impact of these policies on international prices has increased the political pressure and intensified social erosion, adding to the costs resulting from the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.\(^93\) (The Price of War, OECD Economic Outlook, June 2022).

Economic stagnation has coincided with an anti-globalization sentiment, which has exacerbated institutional instability. For example, the fiscal space for decision-making in countries continues to be reduced, and the threat of untimely and poorly communicated tax reforms has caused concern about the future of economic liberalism. Efforts towards tax transparency should be increased, as tax systems remain afflicted by high rates of evasion. In 2020, tax evasion rates on corporate income tax in the region ranged from 20 per cent in Mexico to 80 per cent in Guatemala.\(^94\) In addition, tax haven blacklisting remains inconsistent across the Latin American region\(^95\) and the high level of labour informality (close to 60 per cent) limits the capacity of governments to implement comprehensive tax reforms.\(^96\)

The current economic situation has accentuated the need for greater economic cooperation between Latin America and the EU. Because of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU is looking for ways to reduce its dependencies on Russia and to diversify its economy. The ongoing trade talks for an EU-Mercosur free trade agreement can provide an opportunity for both regions to address and master their respective economic challenges. The agreement represents a win-win situation for both the EU and Mercosur, creating opportunities for growth, countering the economic stagnation in Latin America and offering Europe an alternative trading partner in its attempt to diversify its supply chains.

Cooperation on climate change is another policy field that represents both opportunities and challenges for the relationship between the EU and Latin America. Compliance with the global climate agenda is taking place in a weak institutional framework in Latin America. Despite generating net benefits for the population, green energy policies are not being implemented at a speed that allows Latin American economies to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new electricity generation and mobility technologies. Additionally, the impact on the price of raw materials has strengthened populist authoritarian regimes that base their support on the primary export sectors and their nationalization to undertake anti-democratic actions. Natural resource nationalism in countries with weak institutions is worrying because of its significant illiberal effects and the delay it causes in the possibility of accelerating the response to the global climate crisis.

The EU, on the other hand, likes to see itself as a champion for value-based trade, including its adherence to environmental standards. Differences in environmental standards between Latin America and the EU have been one of the main reasons why the ratification process of the EU-Mercosur agreement came to a halt. They have also contributed to the free trade agreement becoming controversial in advanced and emerging economies alike, despite offering mechanisms to generate prosperity and achieve global climate goals. These differences need to be worked through in order to move cooperation forward. In order to do so, further efforts must be made to clarify for the public the actual costs and benefits of climate change mitigation actions in a context of rapid technological change. The discussions in Europe reflected in political campaigns (such as in France) are, for example, taking into consideration the impact that fiscal instruments for climate change mitigation have on family incomes, mainly among the most vulnerable. In this regard, the EU and Latin America need to cooperate more closely and step up their communication campaigns. Regular meetings that become

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an opportunity for political cooperation, exchange of best practices and knowledge could offer a way forward to reach an agreement that is acceptable to the public in both blocs.

Climate change mitigation nevertheless also offers vast opportunities for cooperation between the EU and Latin America. Latin America, which holds the majority of the world’s lithium deposits, as well as petroleum and natural gas, represents a critical partner for the EU to reach its green energy transition goals. Green hydrogen (that is produced from renewable energy) is another potential fuel for the future. While Europe is unlikely to develop the capacity to produce sufficient green hydrogen to cover its needs in the foreseeable future, Latin America is far ahead: eleven Latin American countries have already developed hydrogen roadmaps, while the entire region produces more than a quarter of its energy from renewables – the best precondition for the production of green hydrogen. This puts Latin America in a prime position to become a crucial future energy partner for the EU.

Another area that needs intensified cooperation between the EU and Latin America is the promotion of the rule of law and strong democratic institutions. Cooperation among democracies is even more important considering that alliances between illiberal actors have already been formed. The cooperation of authoritarian governments and organized crime is a reality that requires global attention, as the democratic retreat and governmental dismantling of key democratic and justice institutions has created favourable conditions for the infiltration of organized crime in public decision-making. The complexity of this phenomenon occurs in different areas: from the financing of political representatives and electoral violence, to the international establishment of a model of criminal cooperation that triggers corruption and dismantles the institutional framework required for the rule of law. Poor institutional quality is reflected in clear costs: both economic and in terms of freedom (Institutional Quality Index, RELIAL, 2021).

In its partnership with Latin America, the EU needs to support the consolidation of democracy in the region and help to counter the dismantling of democratic structures and institutions. The best way to achieve this is through a bottom-up approach. Civil society organizations remain the most important democratic resource for the rule of law and freedom, while organized citizens are a key resource for democracy. However, their presence within an authoritarian country is in grave danger. Institutional trust and free journalism are at risk because of the decline of freedom. The EU therefore needs to consistently strengthen Latin American civil societies in their fight against populism, authoritarian movements and dictatorships, as well as deepening cooperation with the region’s liberal democracies in a more structured way.

Another way to strengthen democracy in Latin America is to make its institutions work more effectively and efficiently for all citizens so that the benefits of the democratic system become more visible and tangible to the people. Digitalization and innovation in government services are crucial elements to help achieve this. Closer cooperation and best practice exchange between Latin American governments and the EU – in particular with the e-government champion, Estonia – could help with innovation in government services. Consolidating democratic structures and the rule of law will become even more important as the conditions of economic, political and social vulnerability intensify irregular migration in regions burdened by organized crime and violence. On the one hand, Latin America is a region with extensive migratory movements, typically tending towards the north of the continent. The Venezuelan diaspora alone is estimated at more than 6 million displaced persons. On the other hand, Europe is a destination for the migratory waves from Africa and the Middle East. In this regard, the IOM report (2022) shows that in 2022, Europe and Asia have received around 87 million and 86 million international migrants, respectively, amounting to 61 per cent of the total world population of international migrants. These conditions present differentiated priorities in both regions, but also offer an opportunity for dialogue between the EU and Latin America with regard to new action mechanisms in favour of diasporas. Comprehensive migratory policies can protect human rights and, if properly implemented, enhance productivity and expand economic opportunities across borders. Exchanging best practices between the EU and Latin America on how to deal with migratory flows offers opportunities for both regions to improve their handling of the matter.
6.4. Policy recommendations

→ Democratic cooperation and bi-regional integration in a Latin American-European forum.

Establish strategies for consolidation and democratic dialogue within a forum that becomes a network for political cooperation, the exchange of best practices and knowledge of the state of the rule of law in countries. This could act as a space for exchange in favour of liberal democracy. It will only be possible to confront authoritarian movements through unity, the strengthening of leadership and the exchange of liberal projects of regional scope with a proven track record of successful implementation.

→ Best-practice exchange to promote government innovation and public service capabilities as key elements of an efficient democratic system.

Integrating technological elements in public services to increase efficiency in the exercise of government, designing tools such as a unique register of beneficiaries, offering digital services for citizens and the interoperability of public information systems to strengthen government decisions. In this government renewal, key elements of cooperation and public transformation in Europe and Latin America are the professionalization of public services and the incorporation of cooperation between academia, civil society and the private sector in public transformation, through adaptive learning in the government sphere and providing comprehensive capabilities to public servants.

→ Recognize the rule of law as a framework for collaboration and cooperation between regions and countries.

Government institutional design and mechanisms for the division of powers, transparency and accountability are key features that distinguish democracies from authoritarian governments. Therefore, any collaboration between countries and regions must make these institutional priorities visible as a reference framework for cooperation. Trade agreements can be the foundation for the convergence of institutional capacities across regions.

→ Establish and promote a network of regional solidarity with Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and the free press by recognizing their role in confronting authoritarian regimes.

Continual support for Civil Society Organizations is vital for the democratic life of countries. Therefore, developing and consolidating a network of accompaniment, solidarity and collaboration across CSOs in Latin America and Europe is important. This network should enable more robust and efficient distribution of financial support for CSO activities, especially in cases in which CSOs are active in authoritarian regimes.

→ Promote resilient globalization through free trade agreements.

A more robust world with greater food and energy security does not mean that all products must be produced within national borders. Globalization remains key. Companies must identify new forms of resilient globalization to avoid falling into in-shoring and near-shoring patterns promoted by populist governments on both continents. This trend ultimately harms economic progress, as Brexit has made evident. Free trade agreements should be used to generate greater economic dynamism, accelerate the diffusion of sustainable technologies and processes with high-added value, and establish a point of regulatory convergence that helps mitigate the global climate crisis and reduce economic inequalities. Europe and Latin America need greater economic integration through trade agreements, including objectives of economic development, as well as technological and regulatory convergence in labour markets and in policies for combating climate change. Therefore, the ratification and implementation of the Mercosur-EU agreement would be a key step in establishing resilient economic cooperation mechanisms between Latin America and Europe.

→ Strengthen tax systems to finance productivity enhancing policies.

The European Union must continue its efforts to combat tax evasion and tax havens worldwide. The EU’s participation through the Global Forum is of prime importance in improving transparency and strengthening tax systems across the Latin American region. The Punta del Este declaration is an important landmark in the fight against tax evasion, which adversely affects the region and its capacity to improve the provision of public services and goods for the benefit of the populations and private sector companies.

→ Promote a space for economic dialogue and coordination to respond to inflationary crises in energy and food.

Policy coordination to tackle the short-term food and energy inflation crises is key. Government subsidies and the fiscal stimulus set by EU countries have generated price spillovers to the Latin American region by ‘exporting’ inflation. The uncoordinated response from developing countries has generated further price increases, as the shortage of energy had to be reflected in lower consumption somewhere in the world. Lastly, ECB monetary policy, which has started to tighten in recent months, should take into consideration the potential effects of higher interest rates in developing economies, particularly those with higher proportions of euros in their debt composition and those in a weak fiscal position.
Promote an energy partnership between the EU and Latin America

With regard to the long-term energy strategy, the EU is looking to diversify its energy suppliers in the light of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Therefore, Latin America – as a major resource for lithium, petroleum and natural gas as well as a producer of (green) hydrogen – has the potential to advance as a prime energy supplier for the EU and to be an important partner for the EU’s economic green transition. For this reason, EU support for Latin American green hydrogen production initiatives should be reinforced via investments in training, infrastructure and added-value initiatives.99

Integration of a regional migration policy in Latin America and an exchange of experience with the European Union.

Given the significant differences that exist between the migratory policies of the Central and South American countries (which do not pursue a common purpose and have notably different elaboration parameters), a common migratory policy is proposed for the Latin American countries that share geographical proximity, emphasizing the exchange of experience with the European Union. These efforts could be aimed at two particular issues: the protection and regulation of migration flow across nations, and the successful integration of people who have been expelled from their countries.

Foster economic, political and social development in Latin America.

What has historically been considered the best bet to curb migration in Latin America is the impetus for economic development in these countries and the hope that this will translate into better living conditions. For logical and well-known reasons, the projects implemented around this idea have to date been unable to stop migration, and their results have not been correctly and rigorously evaluated. However, it should not be ignored that this remains the most logical long-term solution to contain or stop migration in the region. Betting on the economic, political and social development of these historically vulnerable countries is the best way to ensure that sufficiently decent living conditions are created for the people who inhabit them.

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7. North America

By Jacob Heilbrunn

7.1. Introduction

In invading Ukraine in February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin has single-handedly created a great moment of peril for the European Union.

As Putin seeks to wield energy supplies as a political weapon and spread disinformation abroad, the Russian president remains intent on severing the ties between Europe and America, not to mention exploiting internal tensions in the EU itself. It is thus imperative that Europe and the United States seize the moment to continue to intensify their longstanding ties. The truth is that the dangers of failing to act could hardly be clearer. The transatlantic alliance is being given a second chance. Only two years ago, President Donald J. Trump was regularly inveighing against both the European Union and NATO, which he depicted as organizations that were inimical to American national interests.

Now that President Joe Biden has replaced Trump, it is ‘back to the future’. Like Biden’s predecessors after World War II – for whom the construction of a prosperous Europe constituted a self-evident foundation for American national security – Biden is championing the liberal-democratic order that Trump aspired to dismantle. ‘America is back. We are committed – we have never fully left – but we are reasserting the fact that it is overwhelmingly in the interest of the United States to have a great relationship with NATO in the EU,’ Biden declared in advance of the US-EU summit in Brussels in June 2021. The pertinent issues facing the US and EU include climate change, trade cooperation, the bolstering of democracy and the war over Ukraine. If the EU successfully cooperates with the United States, it can help ensure that Putin’s criminal war of aggression in Ukraine inadvertently serves as the midwife for a revitalized transatlantic partnership opposed to the revival of authoritarian regimes.

7.2. The role of the EU in the region

The US and the EU enjoy a long-standing partnership that is based on shared values and strong cultural, political, economic, social and scientific ties. Indispensable for the post-WWII international rules-based order and the reconstruction of Western European economies after 1945, the US remains Europe’s most important security ally to date. Similarly, the EU represents a strategic and like-minded partner for the US on the international stage. The US and the EU member states work closely together in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In the early 2000s, the EU and NATO formally established a cooperation that has led to the development of a broad range of tools to provide greater security in the world. Following the New Transatlantic Agenda of 1995 – which has emerged as a core element of the transatlantic relationship by promoting, inter alia, peace, and stability and a transatlantic response to global challenges – the EU and NATO signed a joint declaration in 2018 to act together against common security threats. In May 2021, the US and Canada were invited to join the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to improve military mobility and increase the EU’s capacity for fair burden sharing in security endeavours.

The US and Europe also enjoy the strongest and most integrated economic relationship in the world. Transatlantic trade reached an all-time high of 1.2 trillion euros in 2021. In 2020, 18.3 per cent of exports from the EU went to the US. Similarly, the EU represents a prime destination for US goods: 11.8 per cent of exported US goods were imported by the EU in 2020. Mutual investments are the largest in the world, surpassing that of the US or the EU in Asia by far. In 2021, foreign direct investments from Europe in the US were valued at approximately 3.19 trillion US dollars, whereas the total foreign direct investments in the US amounted to approximately 4.98 trillion US dollars. Furthermore, the transatlantic relationship is key for the global economy. Accounting for half of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP), roughly a third of global trade and 60 per cent of direct investment worldwide, Europe and the US have long been considered the drivers of global prosperity.

Beyond the close political and economic ties, cooperation in science and research as well as cultural linkages – such as several academic exchange programs show – form a strong bond between the democracies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Following the tense transatlantic relations of the Trump era, attempts to renew EU-US relations have led to a revitalization of EU-US summits. The summit on 15 June 2021 was the first to be held since 2014.

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101 ibid.
7.3. Opportunities for and challenges to cooperation

There are five key areas in which increased cooperation can take place. The first is economic cooperation. The United Kingdom may dream of a special economic relationship with the US, but it is Europe that is vastly more significant for Washington. In June 2021, the US and the EU agreed to suspend tariffs on Boeing and Airbus for five years, as well to abstain from special tax breaks for the aircraft industry. With regard to steel and aluminium tariffs, the United States and the EU agreed to reduce these in October 2021. Biden repealed the tariffs imposed by Trump that prompted the EU to issue 3.3 billion US dollars’ worth of ‘rebalancing’ tariffs. The new agreement is modest in scale but allows the EU to export 3.3 million tons of steel and 18,000 metric tons of unwrought aluminium tariff free. By contrast, European and American trade talks over agriculture are embroiled in disputes over a proposed European ban on genetic engineering technology and cuts in the use of pesticides.

The second area of potential cooperation lies in the technology sector. The European Parliament has approved sweeping legislation: specifically the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, which have direct implications for American technology companies. They are intended, respectively, to ensure the transparency of online content and to enhance competition. Apple, for example, will no longer be able to insist on proprietary services for browsers and needs to establish strict boundaries for tracking users’ web habits. These regulations could be a game-changer for Google, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft and Apple. In effect, the EU is supplanting the American Congress, which has discussed reining in Big Tech but has failed to pass any legislation targeting it. The new Brussels regulations are likely to become a global standard that is adhered to in America as well as in Europe.

A format to foster cooperation is taking shape in the new EU-US Trade and Technology Council, the establishment of which Biden has championed. The council’s mandate is to help ensure the creation of free and fair trade rules over the coming decades, and to promote trade and investment ties between Europe and America. It is focusing on the controversial issue of artificial intelligence, which may usher in revolutionary economic and societal changes in the next few years. Apprehensions are rife that AI will erode individual freedoms by inadvertently promoting racial and gender discrimination. The EU proposed a new Artificial Intelligence Act in April 2021 and regulatory efforts are also ramping up in America. A unified approach, notes Brookings Institution scholar Alex Engler, ‘could strengthen common oversight, guide research to shared challenges, and promote the sharing of best practices, code, and data’.

The third area of cooperation is energy security. As Putin seeks to pressurize Europe over Ukraine, he is slashing gas exports to Europe. As a result of this, a significant source of contention was removed from US-European relations, namely the suspension of Nord Stream II by Germany. Now, Germany and other European countries hope to emancipate themselves from Russian supplies entirely. Putin has already cut off electricity and natural gas to Finland and stopped gas exports to Poland and Bulgaria. More recently, Putin has also slashed gas supplies running through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to just 20 per cent of its capacity.

The US-EU Council, which was created in 2009, is central in the efforts to establish energy independence. It is working to help guarantee the security of energy supplies and to push for cooperation in promoting a European Green Deal to transition away from fossil fuels and towards energy efficiency, hydrogen and renewable energy. The Transatlantic Green Technology is ramping up the use of clean energy technologies, including improving energy storage and heat pumps. In June 2021, the United States and the EU declared that their joint aspiration was to ‘protect our planet and foster green growth’ to combat the peril of climate change. Given that authoritarian regimes tend to be the main sources of fossil fuels, the joint attempt by the EU and the US to reach a net zero world could have significant geopolitical implications. Russia’s attempt to blackmail Europe and the US, for example, by driving up gas and oil prices would come to an abrupt terminus.

Another opportunity for increased cooperation lies in the field of security policy. Washington has been insisting for decades that Europe engages in greater burden sharing regarding defense burden-sharing. While the EU is indeed relying heavily on the U.S. military capacities, the EU did indeed take some steps in remedying its tardiness in providing for the continent’s own defense, including sending over half a billion dollars in military aid to Ukraine and seeking to remedy procurement difficulties. In addition, in March 2022, it floated the creation of a 5,000-person rapid deployment force that would function separately from NATO. The European commitment to NATO has expanded greatly since Putin’s aggression in Ukraine, as the accession of Sweden and Finland illustrates, but the failure to create a potent EU force means that Europe remains overly reliant on America for its ultimate protection, which it is providing. Biden has pledged to create a permanent base in Poland and to beef up air defense capabilities in Germany and Italy. Cooperation between America and Europe is at an all-time high, but it would also prudent for Europeans to ramp up its own defense capacities in case a less Europhile president might once more occupy the Oval office, as was the case with Trump.

The fourth area where the EU and U.S. need to combine their efforts is in combating what amounts to the internal threat of illiberalism. As Hungary’s Viktor Orbán authoritarian-like rule over Hungary or the violent Capitol riots of January 6 demonstrate, neither the EU nor the U.S. are safe from illiberal actors and political parties that are threatening democracy by targeting judiciary, pluralistic and fair political systems, independent media, and open civil society. Therefore, policymakers and other actors in the EU and the United States need to work together to re-energize democratic institutions and norms in the trans-Atlantic space in order to counter and overcome the threats to the transatlantic liberal model of society.
7.4. Policy recommendations

**Economics**

→ The EU should continue to push the Biden administration to further lower and eliminate tariffs and promote free trade.

→ The EU should revive discussions about a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, potentially under a different name with less negative connotations. A massive trade deal would help to bolster economies in both Europe and America, and would deliver a decisive rebuff to the reactionary populist forces that are seeking to drive a wedge between them.

→ The EU and the US need to work together on mitigating climate change. Agreeing on basic elements or guidelines for carbon border adjustment measures (CBAMs) to level the playing field and reduce ‘carbon leakage’ would be a first but crucial step in this endeavour.

→ Both regions should promote efforts to cooperate in the area of agriculture by strengthening the new US-EU collaboration platform on agriculture for global challenges concerning sustainability and climate change.

**Technology**

→ The EU and the US should strengthen the new Trade and Technology Council.

→ The EU needs to coordinate with the Biden administration regarding technology regulation, including for AI.

**Military**

→ The EU should follow through on its pledge to create a 5,000-person rapid deployment force.

→ The EU should work to supplement NATO’s efforts to bolster the military alliance with the US.

**Democratic values**

→ The EU and US must move as swiftly as possible to fortify their ties with each other in order to oppose global authoritarian trends, particularly in the technology realm, rather than ceding ground to authoritarian powers such as China to determine the global ‘rules of the road’.

7.5. References and bibliography


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Conclusion: Towards a geopolitical EU in a multipolar world

By Dr Antonios Nestoras

Global aspirations create global expectations. If there is a conclusion from this series of policy papers examining the EU’s relations with the world, then it is this one. A more geopolitical European Commission has declared its global aspirations on several occasions and the EU member states seem determined to use the EU’s economic gravitas to deal with threats and challenges in the evolving multipolar world. These are all appropriate responses to the changes that have taken place in the past two decades, and it certainly seems as though the world is listening.

Twenty years ago, the world looked like a relatively simple object of study. The actors were mainly states and the international system was unipolar. The factors of power were mostly economic and military. War was fought on the battlefield. There was no way of knowing then that in the following years, the international system would become a fragmented network of actors and poles of power, or that power itself would become more broadly understood to include influence and positioning in an intricate network of state and non-state actors, and that technological advancements would cause a collapse of our understanding of space and time to blur the line between peace and war.

In all this uncertainty, there is an emergent narrative of a New Cold War between liberal democracies on one hand and authoritarian regimes on the other. The rise of China as an economic giant and an alternative security provider applies pressure to the US-led liberal order and risks a superpower showdown. It appears that there is a renaissance of bloc formation underway, in which countries need to take sides. Will a New Cold War ever take place? There are valid reasons to doubt that this scenario would ever materialize, but Europe has an important role to play either way.

Post-war Europe was introverted by necessity. The continent was devastated, both in economic and military terms. As the debates around ‘global Europe’, ‘strategic autonomy’ and the ‘geopolitical commission’ demonstrate, the EU is reconsidering its place in the world and slowly becoming more extrovert, as well as increasingly conscious of its own history, values and weight in international affairs.

Based on these European aspirations and the expectations from the rest of the world recorded in this volume of policy papers, here some concluding recommendations for a truly ‘Global Europe’.

1. Tailor-made partnerships instead of one-size-fits all. As a bloc of countries itself, it is in the EU’s DNA to work with regions or international organizations. An exception to this rule is the relations with large countries such as India, China and the US, in which relations are governed by regular summits and other formal structures in a more tailor-made approach that fits the context of each strategic partnership – or each systemic rivalry. However, this tailor-made approach should actually become the rule and not the exception. A global Europe in a multipolar world is expected to engage with individual countries and even directly with peoples or communities and civil society. A global strategy by the EU needs to take into consideration the special circumstances of large and small countries alike: from Canada to Taiwan, and from Russia to South Africa. With its recently unveiled Strategic Compass, the EU now has a strong set of guiding principles for global engagement. What is still to come is the elaboration of these principles into a concrete action plan.

2. Reinforce multilateralism. Multilateralism has attracted a great deal of criticism over the past 20 years. International organization in particular, which used to be the bedrock of the liberal world order, has been steadily losing influence and status. There are voices all over the world calling for significant reforms to the legacy institutions, such as the UN, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank. The EU should help to improve and reform these multilateral institutions to make them able to meet the realities and challenges of our time. This also includes upgrading the EU’s presence as a bloc in all major international organizations. In parallel to strengthening these multilateral institutions, the EU could also focus more on creating institutional structures to govern relations both with traditional partners and with systemic rivals. In this regard, the Trade and Technology Council – despite its many inefficiencies – could be a pilot project for the institutionalization of Transatlantic relations that could later include more partners and allies apart from the US. In a similar fashion, but looking inwards, the European Political Community could become a refreshing new institutional forum for managing security on the old continent. Lastly, continuing and completing the European project with enlargements in the Western Balkans and the Eastern neighbourhood should be a main objective of the EU.
3. **Defend liberalism at home and abroad.** The new ideological cleavage in international politics is between liberalism and authoritarianism. The populist backlash has been tormenting EU politics for more than a decade. Protectionism is creeping up all over the world, even in places it would least be expected, authoritarian regimes are becoming more assertive, and alternative narratives or socio-economic models pretend to offer more prosperity for less freedom. Globalization, free trade, individual rights and democracy are under attack everywhere. A geopolitical EU needs to be the bulwark in the defence of a liberal world order. Therefore, the EU must counter the growing influence of revisionist states such as China and Russia, while at the same time making sure that illiberalism is also opposed at home.
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