

Policy Paper
**Evaluating Transatlantic Relations – For
better or for worse?**

Transatlantic Policy Forum Background Paper

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Introduction

With a new US administration at the helm, 2021 was a year to rebuild and rekindle transatlantic relations. Despite US President Biden signaling early on that the US was back at the world table, heightened tensions around security, trade relations – amplified by competitors such as Russia and China – have challenged these relations. The honeymoon phase between the US and the EU seems to be ending.

Despite these strains, there has been some hope for reconciliation with the EU stepping up to tackle global issues such as China, as well as renewed relations around trade, tech, and security initiatives, especially under NATO. However, both sides of the Atlantic are facing the effects of rising populism and challenges towards the rule of law, internal cleavages and polarization.

This background paper will evaluate the new transatlantic agenda and goals of both EU and the US and assess how the two sides can work closer together to tackle geopolitical challengers, align on security, trade, climate, and digital policies. The paper will offer recommendations on how to strengthen the transatlantic relationship, with special emphasis placed on the Central and Eastern European region.

New Leadership, Old Challenges

If the Trump era taught the global community anything, is that leadership *does* matter. The damage done to the multilateral community and transatlantic relationship during the four years of a disengaged US seems insurmountable. However, the victory of Biden over the former US President Trump offered the chance of a return of multilateralism.

Short of a year in, Biden has sought to recommit the US to multilateral agreements such as the World Health Organization, Paris Agreement and

strengthening ties around NATO. Biden's first visit to Europe in the summer underscored these priorities where he met with the EU leaders at the G7 and participated at the EU-US and NATO Summit. However, Biden's decision to back the controversial Nord Stream 2 after talks with German Chancellor Merkel has led to some discontent among EU member states, most notably from Central and Eastern Europe, who view the decision as a potential Russian threat. In addition, the US's hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan has rekindled the debate on mutual reliability and has caused some tension between the transatlantic allies.

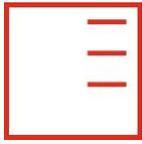
Europe has also seen a shift in leadership with Germany's longstanding Chancellor Merkel departing after 16 years of being in power, while during that time, the US has had four different presidents.¹ Merkel's departure will certainly change the landscape of the EU as Germany has held the mantle of European leadership during numerous challenges. While ongoing talks on a possible new government under the leadership of the center-left Social Democrats looks to be forming with Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz likely to take the lead, Germany remains committed to the pro-EU stance that Merkel cultivated, but how Scholz can galvanize the EU and Germany into this direction remains to be seen.

Germany's outlook can be seen as a departure from France's stance, who will be undergoing elections next year. The most notable wild card in the upcoming French elections is Éric Zemmour, who did not run in 2017 and is currently placed second in the polls.² Zemmour has taken a more extreme stance on various issues, including opposing immigration and Islam³ than Marine Le Pen, but also appears to be more successful in mobilizing and broadening his base. He still has not officially announced his running nor presented a concrete agenda. If Zemmour becomes the next French president, it can be expected that France's direction will divert sharply from the current status quo. This new approach would change the nature of the French

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/23/1039987413/as-germans-prepare-to-vote-for-a-new-leader-we-hear-some-of-their-views>

² <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/>

³ <https://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/french-election-2022/2021/10/french-election-2022-can-anyone-beat-president-emmanuel-macron>



– US relations, especially in regard to the new US administration.

Central and Eastern Europe have also just witnessed elections in the Czech Republic that are still being unpacked. Prime Minister Babiš lost the election. His ruling party was defeated by the centre-right alliance Spolu in the popular vote, and even though ANO party managed to win one more seat than the alliance, they do not seem to be able to gain a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. We can see two big milestones in the results. The first, and the positive one from a Czech perspective, is the defeat of the Communist party. Since 1921, when the party was founded, this is the first time they did not get enough support and the results set a break for the communists at least for the next four years.

The second one and probably less optimistic was the setback for social democrats, even though the ČSSD party was getting further and further from the principals the social democrats usually stand for in the last few years. This might deepen the erosion of left/right spectrum and the traditional welfare models. Even after the small setback for Pirates party, Petr Fiala, leader of the winning alliance, stated his willingness to create a coalition with the Pirates – Stan alliance. There are some concerns circulating about the potential clashes in the coalition, mostly because of the different agendas and political aspirations. Looking to the future, if there is a leading coalition of Spolu and Pirates-Stan, the new leadership will be most probably leaning towards NATO, the EU, and the Western allies more than to the East.⁴ For the transatlantic relations, there will be more Czech willingness towards even closer cooperation, effective communication, and long term economic, social, and political partnership.

As outlined, the EU's election season can shape and determine not only what kind of leadership will they see in the future, but also how the leadership can shape the transatlantic relationship moving forward. Other elections on the horizon in the EU including the Western Balkans and other key countries like Hungary have the potential to have a regional impact and potentially shift an already teetering US and EU

relationship but also cause further division within the EU.

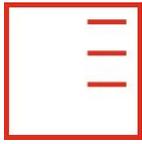
Transatlantic Security - State of Play

After the new US administration took seat, transatlantic security seemed to stabilize. Echoed with the previously mentioned meetings by Biden and Secretary of State Blinken over the last few months, verbal commitments to US-EU security, especially under the auspices of NATO, showed positive signs. However, these relations were put under the test in the days leading up to the withdrawal of US troops in Afghanistan, which saw a rapid takeover from the Taliban causing internal and external criticism on how it was executed. While the withdrawal and negotiations occurred during the previous administration, the lack of coordination between international allies, including the EU and NATO seemed to question the resolve of the relationship when under stress.

The recent trilateral agreement between the US, UK and Australia centered around a defense pact aimed at countering China in the Indo-Pacific region. It meant that the US and UK will send strategic and technical teams to Australia to help the country procure nuclear-powered submarines. This had led to Australia cancelling a multi-billion contract for non-nuclear submarines with a French manufacturer. European allies, most notably France, have been quite vocal on their disappointment and have fueled discussions around Europe's own security future.

In the wake of the deteriorating transatlantic relationship under Trump, the EU leaders started to look for other options to secure their interests, policies, and the multilateral world order that Trump has effectively challenged. This debate, however, was not developed overnight but was rather an evolution born from the 2016 EU Global Strategy or Council Conclusions. It gained further momentum after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and was reinforced by Washington's isolationist and

⁴ <https://www.euronews.com/2021/10/10/six-takeaways-from-the-czech-republic-s-historic-election>



unilateralist foreign policy over the past years. Trump's vacillating approach towards NATO motivated the EU Member States to start pooling their resources and work on developing their defense capabilities. This can be seen through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and other internal security structure such as the European Defense Fund (EDF) and Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD), which have added to the region's security arsenal by pooling European finances, capacity, and military capabilities in pursuit of European strategic autonomy, forming a stronger pillar of NATO.⁵

In her recent State of the Union address, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen gave an impassioned plea to Member States, imploring them to empower the EU to become a stronger global player, especially in times of great power competition and hyper-competitiveness in the "era of regional rivalries and major powers refocusing their attention towards each other".⁶ She touched upon the ongoing debate around building a European Defence Union, calling for political will in building the foundation for collective decision-making, improving interoperability, and building up our cyber defences that will be developed in the EU's Strategic Compass next year.

While this reengagement will be key for the EU in further positioning itself as a global leader, the lack of EU-wide consensus regarding the exact objectives of strategic autonomy, coupled with tensions within the EU, may hinder this progression. Over the last decade, the region has been displaying troubling authoritarian tendencies, which have placed them in the hot seat with their EU partners. While this may have gone unchecked under the Trump administration, this will likely have political and security consequences under Biden's presidency.

As the EU works to develop its Strategic Compass, which is set to be finished by next year, NATO's strategic concept also seeks to identify current and future global and emerging disruptive threats. An

evolution of the NATO 2030 agenda as mandated by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, emphasizes the need to increase cooperation with partners who share NATO's values. There not only needs to be a focus on returning to a values-based system that aims to counter geopolitical internal and external threats but a mechanism to do so that can create incentives for strong NATO partners and security consumers like those in the Central and Eastern Europe or Turkey to course correct on democratic backsliding.

As the strategic compass and NATO's strategic concept develop, there is an opportunity to align with the US's national security strategy and strengthen not only the transatlantic security and industrial base, but also to emphasize the need to establish a values-based partnership that aims to uphold the democratic values that bind the transatlantic partners.

New Challenges, Old Problems

Dealing with China

An area that the new Biden administration has further developed from the Trump legacy has been the continued hard stance towards China. Departing from Obama's Asia-pivot that aimed to open relations, Biden has continued the hard policy on trade, tech and on human rights while managing climate goals and post-pandemic recovery. European countries as well as the EU have also taken China more seriously as a growing economic and military threat. Their domination over the tech and digital space have made China a formidable challenger and global player.

Through its global infrastructure development strategy known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and 17+1, which is an initiative to promote business and investment relations between China and Central and Eastern Europe (while Lithuania has recently stated that they are backing out) has created tensions

⁵ <https://www.europeum.org/data/articles/the-v4-towards-a-new-nato-strategic-concept.pdf>

⁶ European Commission, 2021 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen, 16 September 2021.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701.



within Europe as China seeks to undermine Europe's cohesion. China's amplified tensions in the South China Sea, imposed party rule on Hong Kong, continued threatening Taiwan's democracy, and border tensions with India are just a short list of the growing list of strategic challenges China poses towards the transatlantic partners.

In the EU's 2019 Strategic Outlook, the Union deemed China as a systemic rival, noting the need to balance cooperation on global issues but maintain vigilance on the growing strategic threat that China poses towards EU cohesion. The US is also balancing relations with China, noting the need to collaborate on global challenges like climate change, non-proliferation, and certain regional issues. However, Biden has simultaneously sought to remain strong on countering China's growing ascendancy, especially when it comes to human rights violations. This has led the US and its allies to apply sanctions against China over the treatment of its Muslim Uyghur minority and pro-democracy activities in Hong Kong, which triggered counter sanctions from China.⁷

Biden's "China doctrine"⁸ is rooted in pessimism, noting that China is "less interested in coexistence and more interested in dominance"⁹. It outlined that the task of American policy is to blunt Chinese ambitions. America will work with China in areas of common interest, like climate change, but counter its ambitions elsewhere. That emphasizes the importance of building up the strength domestically in the economic, tech and digital space while working abroad with allies to create a more coordinated approach.

In order to counter China, Biden has called for establishing and strengthening multilateral partnerships with democratic allies including the EU, Indo-Pacific partners, and under the NATO framework.¹⁰ The Indo-Pacific has grown in its strategic importance over the last few years and even more so in recent months. In the past, we witnessed

a certain shift from the Asia – Pacific to Indo- Pacific mostly because of the growing influence and economic prosperity of China, but Japan and others as well. In terms of military actions, China still does play the major role in the Indo-Pacific region, albeit amongst other economic actors – the region itself is incredibly economically connected and constitutes one of the biggest trade markets worldwide. Over the past few years, the US administration has become increasingly focused on the region, mostly on China. The previous US administration under President Trump built a concrete strategy towards the region, which included the national security challenges, such as maintaining the US strategic primacy, promoting economic liberal order while holding back China's growing influence. In regard to US interests in the region, the goal is to remain present, visible, economically profitable, as well as strengthening the effectiveness and partnership, acting as a security guarantor. Losing control of the Pacific region by hostile powers such as China, remains a direct threat to both the US and EU security and interests.

Dealing with Russia

Last June, President Biden met with President Putin to discuss arms control and Russia's cyber-attacks. The meeting went as expected - lines were presented, not necessarily drawn. While some regarded this meeting as a potential reset for relations, Biden has departed from Trump's approach towards dealing with Russia and taken a much harder stance. Russia's behavior over the last years – especially around human rights violations, nuclear deterrence, cyber hacking, energy security and ongoing conflict along the border with Ukraine – has and will continue to dominate how the US and EU approach towards Russia's especially in political and security terms.

The EU's policy has echoed Biden's; establishing a stronger policy towards Russia, its biggest strategic competitor, remains vital for Europe's security,

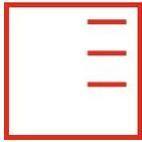
⁷ „China rushes through law to counter US and EU sanctions”, *The Guardian*, June 2021.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/11/china-rushes-through-law-to-counter-us-and-eu-sanctions>

⁸ <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/07/17/bidens-new-china-doctrine>

⁹ <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/07/17/bidens-new-china-doctrine>

¹⁰ „China rushes through law to counter US and EU sanctions”, *The Guardian*, June 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/11/china-rushes-through-law-to-counter-us-and-eu-sanctions>



especially Central and Eastern Europe. As mounting human rights violations in Russia continue, it needs to “play a central role in the design and implementation of an updated EU-Russia Strategic Policy.”¹¹ The European Commission developed an initial [framework](#) for strengthening the EU’s Russia policy, which reiterated the EU’s commitment to [five core principles](#), and highlighted the desire to simultaneously “push back, constrain, and engage Russia.”¹² However, with mounting democratic backsliding from Central and Eastern European countries, most notably Poland and Hungary have heightened tensions within the EU, often playing into the hands of Moscow.

One mounting area for concern has been with the ongoing Nord Stream 2 debate between Germany and Russia, which continues to cause tensions within Europe and the US. Nord Stream 2 will double the natural gas carrying capacity from Russia to Germany and remains a controversial and geopolitical issue as it would make Europe even more dependent on Russian gas (43% of the EU’s natural-gas imports came from Russia in 2020¹³) and would isolate Ukraine. After a bilateral meeting between Biden and Merkel, which was aimed at easing a diplomatic row between the two countries over Europe’s energy supply. From these discussions, Berlin will set up a billion-dollar fund to promote Ukraine’s transition to clean energy, beginning with an initial \$175m, while the US would help to promote and support investments.¹⁴ Berlin would make another \$70m available to improve Ukraine’s energy infrastructure security, including building its cyber capacity.¹⁵

The pipeline, like its predecessor Nord Stream which was used to cut off gas to Ukraine in the past, could

pose an “intelligence threat to the West”¹⁶ leading to an increased Russian presence in the Baltic Sea, as well as potentially intensifying military activity in Ukraine. With natural gas prices hitting new highs in Europe this month, warnings over Europe becoming a ‘hostage’ to Russia over energy has intensified.¹⁷

More and more countries has raised red flags and “consensus that Nord Stream 2 is a threat to national security.”¹⁸ This debate will remain at the forefront of transatlantic security concerns, particularly in the countries on NATO’s Eastern Flank.¹⁹

Mitigating Climate and Energy Related Security Risks

With ambitious policies like the European Commission’s proposed Fit for 55 package and the US’s climate action and infrastructure initiatives – there is hope that these proposals can turn into substantive policies, despite internal pushback and mounting political tensions. The last month has given some hope on this front with the recently passed bipartisan infrastructure deal by the US Congress aimed at strengthening the US’s resilience to climate change while reducing greenhouse emissions²⁰. This, coupled with the targets established at Glasgow’s COP26, highlights the US’s eagerness to take the lead in fighting climate change, but stressed the need for allies, like especially the EU continue to lead in this field.

The EU’s climate policies have been constant and ambitious, focusing on renewable energy and energy efficiency since 2009. The proposals presented by

¹¹ <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/europes-new-russia-policy-must-focus-on-human-rights/>

¹² [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/614698/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)614698_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/614698/EPRS_BRI(2018)614698_EN.pdf)

¹³ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/18/nord-stream-2-the-russian-pipeline-that-everybodys-talking-about.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/49210a4e-17ed-4a2e-a986-4efcad7f342>

¹⁵ <https://www.ft.com/content/49210a4e-17ed-4a2e-a986-4efcad7f342>

¹⁶ Stanisław Żaryn, “Putin’s pipeline of aggression: How the Nord Stream 2 threatens the West”, Defense News, March 31, 2021.

¹⁷ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/07/europe-is-now-a-hostage-to-russia-over-energy.html>

¹⁸ „China rushes through law to counter US and EU sanctions”, *The Guardian*, June 2021.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/11/china-rushes-through-law-to-counter-us-and-eu-sanctions>

¹⁹ „China rushes through law to counter US and EU sanctions”, *The Guardian*, June 2021.

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²⁰ Berlin would make another \$70m available to improve Ukraine’s energy infrastructure security, including building its cyber capacity



the European Commission in July 2021 would result in emissions reductions of around 54% below 1990 levels, policies implemented to date would only result in emissions reductions between 36 and 47 %.²¹ Furthermore, both the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and the COVID-19 Recovery Plan contained clause reiterating the commitment to the 2030 climate objective towards climate neutrality (to be achieved in 2050). The European Council also demanded the dispatch of at least 30 percent of the Next Generation EU fund to support its environmental pledges.

On the US side, Biden underwent a two-pronged strategy: rolling back most of Trump’s regulations and fostering new policies. The executive order on “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad” reaffirms the goal to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, encourages a government-wide approach to tackle climate change, mandates the use of federal purchasing power, property and public lands and waters to support climate action, and establishes high-level interagency groups to facilitate coordination, planning and implementation of climate action at the federal level.²²

Despite these ambitious approaches, the EU and US still need to find collective and unified approaches to tackle growing climate and energy security related risks which pose both near and long-term security threats for the region. Issues around how the US and EU will decarbonize remains an acrimonious issue. The US has been calling for the usage of carbon-reducing technologies such as nuclear energy. The relaunched Partnership for Transatlantic Energy and Climate Cooperation (**P-TECC**), a US-funded program to deploy clean technologies in Central and Eastern Europe remains a contested initiative as many EU countries in the East remain hesitant to invest in nuclear energy.²³

Furthermore, the response to Europe’s unfolding energy crisis has ignited questions over the role of Russia in exploiting rising energy demand, creating low supply, and causing geopolitical

unpredictability through the use of the beforementioned Nord Stream 2. While this has undoubtedly increased Europe’s dependence on Russian gas exports, the US has pushed for the use of LNG to ease the reliance on Russia, but the use of fracking remains a divisive issue within the US among party lines.

The growing links between climate change and security threats remain insurmountable but the US and EU are beginning to identify and integrate these security-related issues into their climate and energy goals. However, there is still a considerable amount of work to be undertaken to tackle these challenges, but a stronger transatlantic approach is a must.

Countering Disinformation and Digital Disruptors

Both the US and the EU have called for more action to counter the mounting effects of both disinformation and digital disruptors, which have gained momentum and new dimensions during the pandemic and recent elections. From discrediting democratic values and societies to manipulating public discourse, actors such as Moscow and Beijing have continued to use their evolving toolkits for influencing democratic societies on an unprecedented level. As domestic interference mounts, questions on how governments and tech companies can prevent and protect themselves against these internal and external challenges remain a vital component to establishing a transatlantic approach to these shared issues.

In recent years, the EU made a significant progress to tackle the issue. The EU implemented a toolbox to coordinate forces and work together, also by creating the Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy for 2020-2024 and funding tools, which aims to promote “efforts to counter disinformation, hate speech, extremist and terrorist content, including online media literacy and digital skills; supporting independent fact-checking and research,

²³ <https://www.energy.gov/ia/partnership-transatlantic-energy-and-climate-cooperation-p-tecc>



investigative reporting and quality journalism, including at local level”.²⁴ Even if it remains significantly difficult to draw the exact lines between what is true and what can be considered as fake news, the rise of disinformation makes citizens lose their trust in democracy, its institutions and norms, and allows the political polarization to fester.

In October 2021, the US Department of State announced a creation of a new Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy, which aims to focus mainly on digital threats and cybersecurity. There will be also a new envoy assigned to the bureau to lead the agenda and keep an eye on the threats coming from countries such as China and Russia. In this issue, the transatlantic community should act together and adopt the common strategy to work even closer to fight disinformation.²⁵

Governments are recognizing that disinformation is something that must be actively fought by imposing regulations and punishing sites that publish fake news or promote disinformation.²⁶ However, the ongoing debate on how to both regulate and integrate tech and social media platforms remains a challenge for both sides of the Atlantic. The revelations from the leaked Facebook papers which exposed many issues from how the platform handles misinformation to the company’s usage of data and information. This was the most recent example of the challenges governments are facing when dealing with the big-data firms. The need to focus on the more effective, flexible tools and mechanisms including regulatory legal procedures are needed to counter these growing challenges.

Transatlantic Trade - Stronger Together or Apart?

For decades, the US and EU have been each other’s ideal destination for foreign investments and trading partners, which have resulted in a triad of economic

interdependence, job growth, and expanding investment. However, while trade relations still recover from Trump’s “America first” policies that almost led to a trade war with China and tariff spat with the EU, the recent decline in the US and EU’s influence over global trade reflects the diverging policies on trade and tariffs between the allies, but also the growing economic power of China.

While the short-lived bilateral investment agreement between European Commission with Beijing was halted over sanctions for China’s alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang, trade relations between the US and EU received a recent boost with the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, or TTC which aims to launch a new era of transatlantic policy cooperation.

The recent meeting in Pittsburgh brought together senior US and EU officials to mend relations on trade. Both the Biden and President von der Leyen, hoped to “rebuild transatlantic cooperation in areas as varied as climate change, digital transformation, workers, technology, supply chain resilience, and human rights, all under the rubric of trade.”²⁷ While the US wanted to focus on China, semiconductor supply chains and security, investment screening - the EU’s lack of a common approach on tackling these issues remained a challenge²⁸. Despite these differences, the two sides committed to strengthen communication – an issue lacking during the previous US administration – to routine meetings for ministers and a framework for staff to tackle issues before they escalate into larger political problems.²⁹

A rise in China’s economic efforts in the US and EU’s neighborhood raises the question on reestablishing talks around a trade agreement or even the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in which the US withdrew back in 2017 under Trump. While political tensions around these economic trade partnerships may still be present, the US and EU need to continue to work with fellow democracies, including the Indo-

²⁴ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653635/EXPO_STU\(2021\)653635_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653635/EXPO_STU(2021)653635_EN.pdf)

²⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-state-department-creates-bureau-to-tackle-digital-threats/6288123.html>

²⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/10/27/state-department-gets-serious-about-global-technology-race/>

²⁷ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-10-07/chance-preserve-world-they-made>

²⁸ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-and-europeans-parley-in-pittsburgh-on-tech-trade-and-china-11632837600>

²⁹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-10-07/chance-preserve-world-they-made>



Pacific, to counter China's growing economic strategies.

For the Central and Eastern Europe region, the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), which is a politically inspired, commercially driven platform for improving connections among twelve EU Member States located between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas remains a vital component mechanism to strengthen trade and collaboration.³⁰ While there has been continued support for the initiative, especially to counter Chinese and Russian advances, the Biden Administration has primarily only given a strong rhetorical support to it, as indicated at the recent 3SI meeting taking place in July, by President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken.³¹ However, there hasn't been full commitment on the US capital infusion pledge beyond the original loans provided. There needs to be a capital contribution added to the so-far rhetorical one.³²

Looking Ahead

As we enter 2022, it will be vital for the US and the EU to look past the recent hurdles in their relationship. While the political fallout of the withdrawal of Afghanistan, dealings with AUKUS and other mishaps represent the frustration both sides of the Atlantic have been facing on tackling global issues. Instead, the transatlantic relationship must move on and continue to rebuild and repair relations of trust. As China and Russia continue to flex their military and economic muscles, it is imperative that democratic leaders do not falter. As President Biden launches his Summit for Democracy in December, it will be a time for democracies to reflect and galvanize efforts to fight back authoritarianism.

Central and Eastern Europe remains a geostrategic region for both the US and EU, but growing concerns around their political shifting may cause further tension within the transatlantic alliance and EU integration. The Summit for Democracy will force

democratically backsliding regions to consider where they stand on the global stage moving forward.

³⁰ <https://3seas.eu>

³¹ <https://3seas.eu/media/news/us-secretary-of-state-antony-blinken-expressed-us-support-for-the-three-seas-initiative>

³² <https://www.europeum.org/en/articles/detail/4114/the-transatlantic-to-do-list-biden-s-progress-report>



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