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EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2019: STRUCTURING THE DEBATE

Edited by Thomas GOMART and Marc HECKER

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
Thomas Gomart	
EUROPE AND THE CHALLENGE OF TRADE WARS	9
Sébastien Jean	
ARE WE IMMUNE FROM A NEW EUROZONE CRISIS?	11
Julien Marcilly	
LESSONS FROM BREXIT.....	15
Vivien Pertusot	
TOWARD A MORE SOCIAL EUROPE?	19
Sofia Fernandes	
ASYLUM POLICIES AND IMMIGRATION: THE EUROPEAN STALEMATE.....	23
Christophe Bertossi and Matthieu Tardis	
EUROPE AND THE CHALLENGE OF TERRORISM.....	27
Marc Hecker	
THE STATUS OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE.....	31
Barbara Kunz	
THE ENERGY SECURITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: BETWEEN OLD DEMONS AND NEW RISKS.....	35
Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega	

EUROPE AND CLIMATE CHANGE: TIME FOR STRATEGIC CHOICES ..	39
Carole Mathieu	
WILL EUROPE REMAIN A “DIGITAL COLONY”?.....	41
Julien Nocetti	
HAS THE FRANCO-GERMAN ENGINE BROKEN DOWN?	45
Hans Stark	
TOWARD A “CULTURAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION” IN CENTRAL EUROPE?	49
Éric-André Martin	
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS IN THE TRUMP ERA.....	53
Laurence Nardon	
EUROPE AND THE RUSSIA CHALLENGE	57
Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean	
EUROPE AND THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA.....	61
Alice Ekman, Françoise Nicolas and John Seaman	
THE EUROPEAN UNION AND TURKEY: A CHANGE OF TONE	65
Dorothee Schmid	
THE EUROPEAN UNION AND AFRICA: THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF MIGRATION	69
Alain Antil	

Introduction

Thomas Gomart

From May 23 to 29, over 300 million Europeans are set to elect a new Parliament for a five-year term. These elections come in a context of dwindling confidence in the legitimacy and certainty of “European democracy” and a surge of political forces openly hostile to the continuation of the European project. They will take place in the aftermath of Brexit, scheduled for March 29, following two years of negotiations that leave us with no clear idea of the future relations between the EU and the United Kingdom.¹ In 2009, when the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the EU appeared to be among the world’s most stable regions, fully up to speed with globalization. Ten years on, this is no longer the case. Europe has fallen prey to a series of profound doubts, which threaten its cohesion and raise questions about its future.

France’s European Commitment

These doubts are particularly visible in France. Let us recall that in 2005, France, like the Netherlands, rejected via referendum the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.² From that point on, the gap between the European institutions and public opinion has been growing ever wider. The Lisbon Treaty only served to aggravate this trend, as a large portion of French public opinion experienced it as a dispossession of their 2005 vote. In May 2017, Emmanuel Macron was elected, making a point of his commitment to Europe and his desire to revitalize the Franco-German relationship, unlike his main domestic rivals. His foreign policy has given priority to the EU against a backdrop of rapid deterioration of its strategic environment.³ It arouses an expectation of European recovery.

In front of the Heads of State and Government, gathered at the foot of the Arc de Triomphe on November 11, 2018, Emmanuel Macron presented the EU as “a freely agreed union never seen in history, delivering us from our civil wars,” in order to issue a call: “Let’s combine our hopes instead of pitting our fears against each other!”⁴ Twenty days later, on December 1, the Arc de

1. See the report “Brexit: Getting in a State” and the counter analysis “European Democracy after the Elections”, *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 83, No. 4, Winter 2018-2019, available at: www.ifri.org.

2. The ‘No’ option won with 54.67% of the vote.

3. T. Gomart and M. Hecker (eds.), “Macron, Diplomat: A New French Foreign Policy?”, *Études de l’Ifri*, Ifri, April 2018, available at: www.ifri.org.

4. Speech by Emmanuel Macron, *Le Monde*, November 13, 2018, available at: www.lemonde.fr.

Triomphe was vandalized during a *Gilets Jaunes* protest. On December 10, in a solemn televised speech, he decreed a “state of economic and social emergency.” The link between foreign and domestic policy has rarely been so sensitive.

The EU: Getting in a State

In actual fact, three of the major European democracies—France, the United Kingdom and Italy—are undergoing an acute political crisis. The *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) has made its entry into Parliament, as has *Vox* in Spain. Article 7 of the Union treaties, an exceptional procedure, has been triggered against Poland and Hungary, who espouse the principle of illiberal democracy. In Northern Europe, the much vaunted Scandinavian model is facing challenges. Relations with Donald Trump’s United States have deteriorated, while those with Vladimir Putin’s Russia remain strained. The EU does not seem capable of responding in a coordinated way to either Xi Jinping’s *Belt and Road Initiative*, or the migration crisis triggered in 2015. Such is the condition of the EU on the eve of the election.

Consisting of seventeen short texts, this new Ifri analysis does not present an overview of the political forces in Europe on the eve of the elections, but rather seeks to succinctly identify the key issues facing the EU in the short, medium, and long term, at a time when it appears more fragile than ever. Clearly, its oft-proclaimed disintegration would transform European countries into third-rate actors, set against the logics of power currently at work and the weakening of multilateralism.

The EU’s path depends on its own will, its internal balance, its adherence to its own values, the strength of the eurozone and that of Franco-German relations. It is also dependent on the distortion of the strategic triangle between China, the United States, and Russia, but equally on changes taking place in the Mediterranean region and Africa. The EU must come up with common responses to the pressures of migration, the threat of terrorism, the challenges of digital governance and the energy transition, and the fight against climate change. Crucially, all of the above must occur against a trend that marks the onset of demographic decline among a number of its members. What are the possible modes of coexistence between an aging Europe, an ambitious China, a resurgent Russia, a unilateral United States, Mediterranean countries unable to meet the aspirations of their citizens, and African countries with rapidly growing populations? Let us hope that the election campaign for European elections also serves to answer these questions, or at least to elaborate on them.

Europe and the Challenge of Trade Wars

Sébastien Jean

Negotiations on a transatlantic free trade agreement monopolized debates around trade during the 2014 European election campaign, with questions about how to shape globalization in line with European values and policy objectives. Five years on, those debates appear to have been left far behind. The landscape has been turned on its head and the issues have radically changed. The rules-based multilateral trading system, which many saw as an unchanging backdrop, is now under threat. The European Union (EU), multilateralist in both its principles and interests, is facing fundamental challenges on two different fronts.

The EU Vs. Washington and Beijing

The first challenge comes from the trade policy of the Trump administration, which is deliberately and openly flouting its international commitments within the World Trade Organization (WTO). The threat of widespread import tariffs is tangible, with potentially serious repercussions for the EU, especially if the automotive sector is affected. Contagion beyond the United States is also to be feared. This would result both from a rebound effect—the EU having itself already contributed by announcing safeguard measures in the iron and steel industry—and the fatal blow to the legitimacy of an institutional system designed and led by the United States. By blocking the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body, and by invoking national security as grounds for additional customs protection, the United States is undermining the very foundations of the multilateral trading system, to the point where it is now difficult to hope for any return to the former status quo.

Furthermore, this would not necessarily be in the EU's interest, since the second challenge relates to competition from China. Chinese state capitalism has resulted in close coordination of the economy by the state and the Party. These latter identify priority sectors that are favored by a set of measures and practices, which notably include massive direct and indirect subsidies, as well as putting strong pressure on foreign companies to force technology transfers. This problem is not new, but has changed in nature,

both because it has become clear that this system is not a temporary step in a process of convergence toward a Western-style economy, and because China is now the world's leading industrial power, including in some high-tech sectors. In the 2000s, the solar panel industry illustrated the damage that such subsidized competition could inflict on Western industries. The risk is that comparable damage may in future affect the heart of European industry, for example in the automotive, aerospace, and robotics sectors.

The Way Forward

Amid this turbulent if not hostile context, the common commercial policy must provide the means to foster growth and innovation, protect employment, and work toward sustainable development. To this end, safeguarding a rules-based multilateral trading system by ensuring that these rules allow for fair competition and are properly enforced is a priority. Nonetheless, a call to respect the established institutional framework is no longer sufficient; it must be equipped with the means for it to develop and ensure it is respected. This requires a high degree of coherence in the actions of the EU, which must abide by its international commitments, in order to avoid further weakening existing institutions. The EU must also firmly defend its interests, in order to both protect employees and businesses against unfair practices and show its partners that their non-cooperative policies will not go unanswered. Together, these imperatives require the highly astute use of retaliatory or even safeguard measures. In a context where reciprocity is no longer a given, a more demanding approach is also needed, particularly in the area of direct investment and public procurement, two areas in which discussions regarding reform, already well underway, must now be promptly concluded. Free trade agreements take on a new meaning in this conflict-prone environment. Provided that they are fully in keeping with European trade policy objectives as a whole, including sustainable development and support for multilateralism, they acquire renewed value as strategic partnerships and as an insurance policy.

Finally, the Union has a strategic interest in encouraging reform of the multilateral trading system. This is a challenge in the face of a United States tempted by unilateralism and a China quite happy with the status quo. Europe, however, cannot rely on any other party to stimulate momentum behind discussions that might result in a positive outcome to ongoing trade disputes. The alternative would be to resign itself to confrontation or “managed trade” deals, for which the EU risks bearing the costs, and which would be a tragic sign of the inability of the major powers to work together in order to address common challenges.

Are We Immune from a New Eurozone Crisis?

Julien Marcilly

In July 2012, Spain was given help by the European Financial Stability Facility to shore up its troubled banks, at a time when the country's 10-year sovereign bond yields exceeded 7.5%. Expectations of a similar need for assistance for the Italian financial sector, whose yields were barely 100 base points lower, grew stronger. The eurozone economies were suffering ever more from budgetary streamlining measures. And to top it all, the question of whether Greece should be excluded from the eurozone dragged on, despite the restructuring of its public debt in March. It was not until Mario Draghi's famous speech in London on July 26, and the European Central Bank's launch of the sovereign bond purchase program (Outright Monetary Transactions, OMT) on September 6, 2012, that the sovereign yield spreads of the southern eurozone countries began to go down.

Economic Upturn and Social Discontent

Is a new eurozone crisis possible today? At first glance, the question appears misplaced, as the monetary union's recent economic trends greatly contrast with those of 2012. After five consecutive years of positive GDP growth, the eurozone's unemployment rate has dropped from 12% in 2013 to just over 8% in 2018. Wage growth is now at its highest in a decade, while government budgets have almost been rebalanced. Finally, significant progress has been made with regard to convergence: standard deviations for national growth and inflation rates are at their lowest level since the euro was launched.

Nonetheless, this economic upturn has not staved off social discontent and the rise of anti-European parties in many of the eurozone countries: *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) in Germany, the *Rassemblement national* in France, as well as the League and the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy, to mention but the key players among them. The extent to which these new political forces are, to varying degrees, opposed to the European project, could trigger a fresh eurozone crisis in the near future.

Risk Factors

The European elections to be held in May 2019 could produce a highly fragmented Parliament that includes a significant number of anti-European members. And the Parliament has powers whose importance must not be overlooked. Firstly, it approves the European Union (EU) budget. While it is unlikely that eurosceptic Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from Central and Eastern Europe will block the budget, of which their countries are the main beneficiaries (notably through structural funds), the risk of obstruction remains. The Parliament can also vote for a no-confidence motion against the European Commission, which is due to be renewed in October 2019. Here again, while such a motion has to command the support of two-thirds of members to pass, the risk of deadlock exists.

The political situation in Italy is certainly another risk to watch out for in 2019. The formation of a coalition government between M5S and the League, and the ensuing tensions with the European Commission over the prospects of running a public deficit, have begun to produce results that recall bad memories: higher sovereign bond yields, diminished confidence among companies, growing concerns about the strength of local banks, and a decline in GDP. The size of the Italian economy adds to concern: the Italian debt is almost seven times greater than that of Greece, and accounts for almost a quarter of the eurozone's total public debt.

Strengthening the Robustness of the Eurozone

Fortunately, several steps have already been taken to strengthen the robustness of the eurozone. While progress has been modest in the areas of fiscal union (increased supervision of national budgets, financial assistance to struggling member states through the European Stability Mechanism) and the merger of capital markets (new rules improving access to funding), efforts to strengthen the banking union (with a centralized banking supervisory mechanism and harmonized rules for deposit insurance) have been more significant. These should make it possible to limit the effects of contagion between sovereign risk and banking risk in the event of a crisis.

Another cause for satisfaction: according to the Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Commission in October 2018, the single currency has never been so popular, with 64% of respondents believing the euro is good for their country. This is the strongest level of support since the survey was launched in 2002, and 74% believe that it is

good for the Union (also at an all-time high). As it celebrates its twentieth birthday, the euro has therefore never enjoyed such a high level of support!

Lessons from Brexit

Vivien Pertusot

Could the Brexit saga be coming to an end? If we are to believe the official timetable, the United Kingdom will leave the European Union (EU) for good on March 29, 2019, more than two and a half years after the referendum. Yet, never has the outcome of Brexit seemed so uncertain. It is therefore hard to know whether Brexit will indeed go ahead at the end of March or be postponed. As things stand, what lessons can we draw from this episode, which has been as exhausting as it has been unpredictable?

Leaving the EU: A Tedious Undertaking

The first lesson is that leaving the EU is a tedious undertaking, for the Union, but even more so for the country opting to leave. Indeed, the British side largely underestimated the resources and decision-making mechanisms required, as well as the breadth of issues to be addressed, in order to finalize withdrawal from the EU. According to some reports, the United Kingdom has hired around 10,000 people to deal with Brexit.⁵ Political prevarication to arrive at a common position has moreover been a source of discord within the Conservative party, as well as the government, so much so that cacophony appeared to rule the roost in Westminster.

A major stumbling block came in the form of Brussels and London talking at cross purposes. On the one hand, the European Commission had been clear on the fact that the two-year period for negotiations solely concerned the terms of the withdrawal. On the other hand, the UK government was unable to imagine withdrawal negotiations without considering future relations. It was therefore necessary to wait until the end of 2017, and for several major issues to be addressed, such as the balance of all accounts to be settled by the UK and people's rights after Brexit, for the first negotiations on future relations to begin.

Rarely have political negotiations been so open to the public eye, which is understandable in light of the issues being addressed. However, this has compounded brash and counterproductive stances. Theresa May must deal with often conflicting positions within her government and her party, which makes the emergence of a clear and coherent roadmap extremely

5. J. Owen and L. Lloyd, 'Costing Brexit: what is Whitehall spending on exiting the EU?', *IfG Insight*, March 2018, available at: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/>.

complicated. This has proved all the more perilous as her working majority hangs by just thirteen votes after the failed gamble of the June 2017 snap election. The smallest of disagreements can have profound political consequences. For their part, Europeans have closed ranks as observers.

Brexit and the Future of the EU

However, the attitude of the twenty-seven member states has revealed a real paradox; this is the second lesson. Negotiations on the United Kingdom's EU withdrawal agreement have shown a united front behind Michel Barnier, the chief negotiator. And yet the risks of discord were high, as economic interests could well have dominated the concerns of some capitals. Moreover, in the end, Brexit has not monopolized politics since the referendum. Rather promptly, the member states even seemed determined to make progress as a twenty-seven-strong group, with a series of meetings and statements in that spirit.

Nevertheless, the solidarity shown around the case of Brexit was not to the benefit of debates on the future of the EU. National interests, the rise to power of eurosceptic parties, the inertia of European politics, and the lack of a group dynamic have taken over. There was an almost complete separation between both issues, i.e., Brexit and the future of the EU, whereas many bridges could have been built, such as how the UK's exit will affect the EU's weight in the world, its priorities, and even how it functions. The main topic addressed has been the impact on the budget, but it was handled in more of a technical than a political way.

Brexit as a Counter-Example

If nothing else, Brexit will have had a short-term virtue, namely that of quelling the vague desire to leave, which is shared by other political parties across Europe. This is the third lesson. Whether in France, the Netherlands or Italy, supporters of an exit have in many cases revised their positions. Let us recall the fears that the UK's referendum was going to become a siren call for other countries to follow suit. The risks were already low at the time, and they are even more so today. Indeed, leaving the EU requires going over every aspect of its political, economic, and social life. The Europeanization of member states indeed runs very deep. Furthermore, the uncertainty that such a process creates also represents a risk that few countries would be able to absorb. There remains some rhetoric in favor of an exit from the eurozone, but even this is becoming less prevalent.

At this stage, it would be daring to outline the shape that future relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union will take. They may be severely damaged if no exit agreement is signed by both parties by March 29. That would mean having to negotiate everything in an unfavorable context. In general, Europeans do not wish to see a brutal and chaotic distancing from the United Kingdom. In the hope of a less tortuous guiding principle on the UK's side, future relations could run quite deep, for instance on foreign affairs; or they could even remain all but unchanged on Erasmus or UK participation in European research programs. The bulk of negotiations will hinge on trade relations, with the possibility of a comprehensive free trade agreement on goods, but far weaker relations on the services front. Indeed, the eurozone will not agree to its financial heart being located in a country that is not even a member of the EU.

Toward a More Social Europe?

Sofia Fernandes

In 2014, when he assumed the Presidency of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker stated his intention to put social issues at the center of the European project, hoping the European Union (EU) would be provided with a social “triple A” rating. Since then, some important initiatives have been established, the main one being the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) in 2017.

Despite recent progress, the debate on Social Europe still suffers from the lack of clear analysis, shared by all stakeholders, on the EU’s role in the social field. Although social and employment policies remain national prerogatives for the most part, various arguments call for the reinforcing of “Social Europe.” A practical argument relates to the need to balance economic liberalization and workers’ protection to ensure the smooth functioning of the single market. Against a background of rising eurosceptic parties, this social aspect also appears essential to reinforce the European project’s political legitimacy. In fact, citizens expect the European project to improve their living and working conditions; the EU must rise to that challenge. How can Europe, which is perceived as ‘liberal’, reinforce its social dimension?

Promoting a Double Convergence in Standards and Social Performance

The EPSR sets out 20 principles intended to allow convergence among EU countries. These principles have no binding legal force. They must be translated into concrete initiatives to have an impact on citizens’ lives. This involves new legislative proposals to complete the set of common minimum social standards. The Commission proposed a new Work-Life-Balance Directive and other proposals should be presented in the next few years. Although significant differences exist between the countries on some issues – including the idea of a common minimum wage or minimum income – it should be easier to move forward on other matters, including the right to vocational training.

The legislative instrument, however, is not the only European lever for promoting convergence. The EU has financial instruments that contribute to this and it must also take the EPSR principles into account in economic and fiscal policy recommendations submitted to member states.

Investing in Human Capital and Fighting against Inequality

The EU's financial instruments should not only be used to foster cohesion between member states, but also to fight against social inequalities within each country. Europeans increasingly feel that economic liberalization accentuates social inequalities. Fighting these inequalities must be a priority and social investment remains a powerful tool. The EU must invest directly in human capital – which it does mainly through the European Social Fund, the Erasmus+ Programme or the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund – but it must also guarantee that the budgetary constraints that many EU countries are facing, do not result in reduced investment in early childhood, primary, secondary or higher education or even lifelong learning.

Tackling the Ongoing Transitions in the Labor Market

Investing in human capital is also necessary to prepare for the ongoing transitions that have an impact on employment in Europe, particularly digitalization, robotization and the energy transition. These transitions lead to a reduction or redefinition of existing jobs, as well as the creation of new jobs. These challenges are common to all countries and they call for EU action, particularly to anticipate the skills needed for new jobs and to adopt measures aimed at supporting workers left by the wayside during these transitions.

The European labor market is also impacted by new working relationships, particularly related to the collaborative economy. The EU must ensure that the risk of job insecurity related to these changes is minimized. The EU's recommendation on access to social protection for all workers is a welcome initiative, but is only a first step.

Guaranteeing Fair Worker Mobility

Free movement is an important individual right for Europeans. However, intra-European mobility now fosters mistrust of the EU among many citizens.

Fears over a risk of social dumping or benefits tourism exist in host countries of mobile workers. In order to limit these risks, it is necessary to review European legislation, which was done in particular in 2018 with the revision of the Posted Workers' Directive. But if new rules are required, it is just as important to ensure that there is compliance. A European Labour Authority will be created in 2019 in order to better fight abuse and fraud and ensure better access to information for mobile citizens.

Intra-European mobility also raises challenges for the countries sending mobile workers, particularly a youth and brain drain, as well as a lack of workers in some sectors of the economy. Hence the importance of promoting real economic and social convergence within the EU, particularly through the cohesion policy.

In fact, the Juncker Commission has given a new impetus to Social Europe; it is vital that the next Commission continues this momentum. The differences between countries on social issues are known. However, the rise in populism and social protest calls for new compromises and consensus. Europe must value its social model which distinguishes it from the rest of the world.

Asylum Policies and Immigration: The European Stalemate

Christophe Bertossi and Matthieu Tardis

Since 2015, the crisis around the issue of migration in Europe has constituted an unprecedented shift in the history of European integration. Until that point, each new stimulus to integration had been born out of a phase of crisis—consider, for instance, the case of economic and monetary integration. However, nothing of the sort seems to be on the horizon today with regard to immigration and asylum policies. On the contrary, we are now witnessing a disintegration of the European framework in this area.

Naturally, the crisis concerns technical aspects of migration policies, such as what to do about Schengen? How should the Dublin Regulation be reformed? What partnerships should be entered into with third party countries? But these questions cannot be answered if we do not place them at the heart of the challenge that Europeans must face in the coming months: the implementation of the principle of solidarity between member states and the rapid transformation of political identities across Europe.

The Absence of European Solidarity

The shock sparked by the arrival of one million migrants and refugees on European shores in 2015 prompted member states to strengthen controls on external borders and attempt to distribute asylum seekers more evenly across the entire territory of the EU.

Despite the urgency, no political will emerged to overcome the many flaws that have marred the construction of the common asylum and immigration policy since 1999. The European Union (EU) has embarked on new resource (in particular via the Frontex agency) and skill transfers, putting forward a new legislative package on asylum with a view to further harmonizing the conditions for exercising the right to asylum.

European solidarity in relation to accepting migrants has reached a complete stalemate. The positions of member states now seem irreconcilable, with no way out of the crisis. The EU is deeply divided between the countries of the north-west, who accuse the countries in the

south of not fulfilling their duties in terms of border control, the countries of the south, who call for more solidarity from their partners in the north, and Central Europe, which refuses to receive any asylum seekers.

Can the Deadlock Be Broken?

Given the extent of the deadlock on changes to European asylum policies, three scenarios may be envisaged.

The first scenario would be to strike a compromise between all member states. Such a window dressing compromise would certainly help to keep up appearances, by showing that the national governments support the institutional and political legitimacy of the EU. However, for it to be possible, such a compromise would have to resemble a heterogeneous and complex whole, based on very general principles, while providing for many exemptions to deal with deeply contradictory national positions. The result would be impossible to decipher. Difficult to implement, it would be inefficient in practice.

The second scenario would be to seek a Franco-German agreement that could be imposed on other EU members. However, the political weakness of both French and German leaders and the difficulty of achieving a qualified majority on Franco-German positions make this a very uncertain prospect. Such a proposal would be seen as a “diktat” by Central and Eastern European governments. This would in turn fuel their anti-immigrant and anti-Brussels rhetoric without giving the EU the means to enforce its decisions.

An Existential Issue for the EU

There remains a third, and probably more likely, scenario, i.e. the failure of ongoing negotiations on the “asylum package”. Despite French and German concessions, the lack of political agreement on reform of the Dublin Regulation was observed by immigration ministers in June 2018. This strengthens the position of the Visegrad Group. The *Aquarius* dispute has also revealed the scale of disillusionment among Europeans in relation to seeking a common solution. Germany is now turning to bilateral co-operation outside the European framework, as it has done with Spain and Greece.

None of these scenarios are satisfactory. None will provide a way out of the current deadlock. But they all show how the failure of Europeans to deal with the issue of immigration and asylum is not just “technical” in nature. The deadlock is due to the inability of member states to agree on the reception of migrants. This reflects the sensitive nature of the subject and

changing political identities in Europe, which are increasingly hostile to “multiculturalism” and “Brussels”. The issue is an existential one for the EU, and it will be among the main issues at stake in the 2019 elections.

Europe and the Challenge of Terrorism

Marc Hecker

In the 1980s, the term “Euroterrorism” gained currency. During this period, the main terrorist threat came from far-left groups that shared a common ideology and launched attacks in multiple countries: Direct Action in France, the Red Army Faction in West Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, GRAPO in Spain, the Popular Forces in Portugal, and the Communist Combatant Cells in Belgium.

Subsequently, while terrorism continued to have an impact on Europe, it targeted certain countries more specifically, particularly those faced with separatist movements. In 2004-05, jihadi attacks took place in a number of European countries (Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom), and the Council of the European Union (EU) adopted a “strategy to fight terrorism”. However, the wave of attacks that began in May 2014 with the shooting at the Jewish Museum in Brussels has been on an altogether different scale and has affected many more member states.

It is undoubtedly provocative to speak of a “new Euroterrorism”, as both the ideology that fuels the threat of today—Salafi-Jihadism—and the way in which its attacks are carried out are so different from those of the past, although the prospect of a revival in ultra-left-wing or ultra-right-wing terrorism must not be discounted. Nonetheless, a common sense of danger has emerged, and the political will to “do more” at the European level to combat this threat has grown palpable. What can the EU do to counter transnational terrorism?

Toward a “Security Union”

The attacks in Paris in November 2015 and Brussels in March 2016 laid bare the EU’s flaws: the perpetrators of those attacks were able to return from Syria by blending in with refugees and moving around the European area undetected. Faced with the idea of “Europe as a sieve”, the European institutions have sought to promote a “security union”. In his State of the Union Address delivered on September 14, 2016, Jean-Claude Juncker remarked that the EU was undergoing an “existential crisis” and called for a

boost through the development of a “Europe that protects”. A few days later, Julian King was appointed Commissioner for the Security Union.

Since then, the Commission has regularly published a document entitled “Report on the progress made towards building an effective and genuine Security Union”, which lists measures to protect citizens, often of a technical nature. Skeptical readers will observe that while it may fail to provide security, the EU is at least prolific in producing acronyms (SIS, VIS, ETIAS, ECRIS, EPRIS, JIT, RAN, IRU, etc.). But it is true that behind these acronyms lie concrete measures aiming to strengthen control over the EU’s external borders, improve the interoperability of certain files, streamline judicial and police cooperation, and combat terrorist propaganda on the Internet. The approach being taken is pragmatic and incremental. It is not a question of launching huge unfeasible projects, such as the “European CIA” desired by Matteo Renzi and Charles Michel, which will not be seeing the light of day anytime soon, despite the imminent creation of a Joint European Union Intelligence School.

Insurmountable Obstacles?

While real progress has been made in recent years, the EU’s rise as an actor in the fight against terrorism faces a number of obstacles. The first of these is budget-related. In June 2018, the Commission put forward a proposal to significantly increase the budget devoted to security, which would thus rise from 3.5 billion euros for the period 2014-20 to 4.8 billion euros for the period 2021-2027. This sum includes the Internal Security Fund (increased from 1 billion to 2.5 billion euros), which is designed to support member states in security matters. By contrast, the budget allocated to internal security forces in France is expected to reach 13.1 billion euros in 2019. From a budgetary point of view, the EU is therefore a second-rank actor in security matters.

The second obstacle relates to divergent strategic priorities between member states—which do not all feel the same way about the terrorist threat—and a lack of trust when it comes to deep security cooperation. As an advisor to Julian King noted, “even today, not all member states enter data into the European databases in a systematic way” and bilateral co-operation is often preferred.⁶

The third and final obstacle is the most crucial of all. The EU does not have the “monopoly of legitimate physical violence”. It does not have its own police officers or soldiers. In other words, it is not a state and its security

6. S. Wernert, “L’Union européenne et la lutte contre le terrorisme”, *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 83, No. 2, Summer 2018, pp. 133-144.

prerogatives are necessarily limited. The Lisbon Treaty is clear in this regard: “national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State”.

In short, the EU allows for a relative homogenization of standards and practices, offers tools for co-operation, and provides support to those member states who wish to receive it. Its contribution to the fight against terrorism has increased since the recent wave of attacks, but it cannot be seen as the ultimate line of defense.

The Status of European Defense

Barbara Kunz

The defense component of the European Union (EU), namely the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), has made significant progress since 2016, including through the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the creation of the European Defence Fund. The EU is also moving toward establishing a permanent headquarters, a project long blocked by the British. Furthermore, the Global Strategy adopted in 2016 underlines “the ambition of strategic autonomy for the European Union”.⁷ However, while genuine steps forward have been made, many questions remain when it comes to ensuring Europe’s security. Europeans have at least four questions to resolve.

European Defense and the Defense of Europe

The first—and fundamental—question concerns the relationship between European defense (CSDP) and the defense of Europe (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO), at a time of increasing doubts over the transatlantic relationship. It should be recalled that the CSDP covers only a part of the continent’s defense. What will be the division of labor? And how can coherence be ensured insofar as the same national forces are called upon by both the EU and NATO? Behind these more technical questions clearly lies the issue of the future role of the United States in the defense of Europe. Since the collective security of Europeans is largely guaranteed by Washington, what would be the consequences of a partial withdrawal by the United States, both from NATO but also from its major bilateral commitments in Europe? With the international system undergoing structural change due to the rise of China, this question will arise even if Donald Trump is not re-elected president in 2020. Whatever the outcome of those elections, it seems unlikely that Washington will maintain its current

7. See “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe – A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”, European Union Global Strategy, 2016, p. 3, available at: <https://eeas.europa.eu>.

level of commitment. What will be Europe's response, and the implications for European defense?

Diverging Strategic Priorities within the EU

The second question is intrinsically related to the first: how to unite European countries around the same level of ambition for European defense, thus supporting the ambitions of the Global Strategy. The debate around the notion of strategic autonomy clearly shows that defense priorities differ within Europe itself. As such, countries that mainly look to the East tend to privilege territorial defense and hence NATO. For these countries, the strategic autonomy of the EU—whose activities do not, by definition, include collective defense—simply does not meet their key security needs. Aware of the fact that Europe will not be able to respond alone to a possible Russian threat, Warsaw, Bucharest, or even Stockholm are skeptical of anything that may weaken bonds with Washington. The question is obviously less relevant in France, where the term “defense” refers mainly to “external operations”, and where deterrence is provided by national nuclear weapons.

Uniting all Europeans around a shared vision of the CSDP's level of ambition is therefore one of the keys to success. To begin with, it is important to clarify the very purpose of European strategic autonomy. What tasks do Europeans want to, and have to, undertake alone, without the United States? And how can skeptics be convinced that the ability to act alone is not a provocation to Washington but rather contributes to sharing the transatlantic burden?

Strategic Autonomy Called into Question

Thirdly, and at a far more technical level, how will the various initiatives that have been recently launched—some within the EU or NATO framework, others outside them—fit together? What are the links, for instance, between PESCO, the European Intervention Initiative launched by Paris, the Framework Nations Concept promoted by the Germans, and the Joint Expeditionary Force developed in London? What will be the role of third countries within the EU context—primarily Britain, but equally Denmark or Norway?

And fourthly, how should national strategic autonomy and European strategic autonomy fit together? In France, this question first and foremost concerns nuclear deterrence and the industrial dimension. It remains far from being resolved.

In conclusion, the CSDP has made remarkable progress. However, it is clear that in order to ensure the security of the European continent, there is yet some way to go. Given the deteriorating strategic environment and a less than certain transatlantic relationship, the debate is only just beginning.

The Energy Security of the European Union: Between Old Demons and New Risks

Marc-Antoine Eyl-Mazzega

Ten years after the 2009 gas crisis, the integration of the European gas market has been strengthened, as has its resilience: numerous bi-directional interconnections have been developed and third-party access to networks has enhanced competition in most markets. A sign that the market is working is that, despite the cumbersome process involved, Ukraine is now integrated into the European gas market by importing all of its gas by reverse flows, primarily from Slovakia. A convergence in wholesale prices is emerging between markets. Gazprom has been forced to end its anti-competitive practices in Central Europe (though Warsaw has questioned the lack of fines). Poland and Lithuania have emerged from their isolation through liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals. Gas market dynamics, rather than oil, largely set gas prices at hubs, though the price of crude nevertheless remains influential. Despite the EU gas supply diversification strategy, Gazprom has increased its market share as part of a balancing act from which several players have emerged as winners over the past three years: Gazprom, first and foremost, which enjoys very high sales; Ukraine, whose role as a transit country has been maintained in spite of Nord Stream; and finally, European consumers, who have benefited from cheaper gas. Three-quarters of the European Union's (EU) capacity to import LNG remains unused, but it plays a key role: setting a price ceiling on gas supplied to Europe by Gazprom. If this price is too high, buyers can opt instead to order "spot cargoes" supplied by the global LNG market.

Short-term Risks

There remain a number of short-term risks that may have an impact on prices and volumes, beginning with technical incidents. Supply tensions may also arise from simultaneous cold snaps in Russia, Ukraine, and Europe. Then there are economic risks at play, since gas and electricity prices in the EU remain dependent on external factors: the price of oil, China's coal strategy, surges in Asian LNG demand, and the price of gas on the US market, which in part determines the viability of transatlantic exports. In

addition, there is the commercial strategy of Norwegian producer Equinor and that of Gazprom, which retain the ability to influence price rises. Finally, there are geopolitical risks: tensions in the Middle East, or restrictions on traffic through the Straits of Hormuz or Bab-el-Mandeb, would have dramatic consequences on the price of oil and LNG. The Russia-Saudi Arabia alliance now influences the price of crude oil, which has an impact on gas prices in Asia in particular.

Difficulties relating to the renewal of the gas transit contract between the Ukrainian carrier and Gazprom on 1 January 2020, may spark a fresh gas crisis in Europe. Tensions are being whipped up by a number of factors: arbitration decisions in favor of Naftogaz, the Ukrainian state gas company, totaling 2.6 billion dollars, which Gazprom continues to dispute; the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and the TurkStream pipeline, which will severely reduce Ukraine's role in terms of transit, and its associated revenue, which supports a state budget undermined by the war effort; growing Russian-Ukrainian tensions (Azov Sea, Donbass, elections); and the game played by the United States, which has decried Nord Stream 2 and is calling on Europeans to reduce their record purchases of Russian gas in favor of US gas. No one knows what the outcome of these negotiations will be, and while they have formally begun, there will be a very short window in which to reach an agreement in 2019. Regardless of the resulting arrangements, Gazprom will still need the Ukrainian corridor in 2020, and no doubt also in 2021. In this equation, Gazprom has much to lose in the long run since its gas will be discredited. Kiev may also lose in the short term because its role in transit will be greatly reduced. Meanwhile, Europeans will see a surge in prices.

Challenges Associated with the Low-Carbon Energy Transition

The risks and challenges associated with low-carbon energy transition are broader. With 30% of electricity produced from renewable energy sources (RES) in the EU, increased targets for the use of solar and wind power, the planned shutdown of German nuclear reactors in 2022, the expected gradual decline of coal, the transformation of energy systems alongside the “3 Ds”—decentralization, decarbonization, and digitization—and uptake of electric vehicles, new challenges are emerging. How can the costs of rolling out renewable energy be reduced while guaranteeing affordable electricity supply? How can network stability be ensured and the intermittent nature of solar and wind production be overcome? How can these interconnected and digitized infrastructures be protected from cyber threats? What approach should be taken to rivalries in the control of value chains and low-

carbon technologies (critical metals, automotive batteries, stationary storage, wind turbines, etc.)?

Four principles are emerging. Firstly, the overall costs of climate change are growing, and by far outweigh the current price of a ton of CO₂ on the European carbon market. Secondly, in order to reduce the costs of transition and increase its efficiency, close co-operation between actors is required at all levels, and the EU cannot succeed without a Franco-German union on this issue, which is currently lacking. Thirdly, protection is necessary against those who do not intend to make the same efforts and seek to take advantage of the vulnerability of European systems, which notably requires a robust industrial policy. Finally, this transition must not result in new social, economic, or territorial divides within the EU, and calls for an unprecedented redistribution strategy as a precondition for European cohesion, stability, and prosperity.

Europe and Climate Change: Time for Strategic Choices

Carole Mathieu

In Europe more than anywhere else, and in 2019 more than at any time in the past, climate change is at the heart of citizens' concerns. And, in facing this global threat, there is absolutely no doubt of the value of coordinated action at the level of the European Union (EU). While the United States, and more recently Brazil, are threatening to shatter the momentum of universal cooperation, as formalized by the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU is able to boast of a long-term commitment and an honorable, if not exemplary, record. In 2017, European greenhouse gas emissions were almost 22% below their 1990 levels, putting the EU in a strong position to exceed its -20% target by 2020. This trend is partly linked to the decline of industrial activities, and the European economy's shift to services, but also to the introduction of carbon pricing tools, investments in energy efficiency, and increased renewable energy use. However, the efforts being made still fall short of the challenges: the world is on a long-term warming trajectory of +3°C, and emissions were again on the rise in 2017 and 2018, including from within Europe.

Toward a Carbon-Neutral Europe?

The EU currently lacks a clear mandate to put climate change at the heart of its actions over the coming decade. Before concluding its work, the European Commission chaired by Jean-Claude Juncker presented a "strategic vision" for a carbon-neutral European economy by 2050, calling for a radical and systemic drive for change in response to the urgency of climate change. This vision is not shared by all member states, particularly because it involves increasing the European emissions reduction target for 2030, which is currently set at -40% compared to 1990 levels. Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw, but also Berlin, believe that European ambitions already call for difficult transformations, such as decreasing the share of electricity produced from coal. It must be hoped that this issue will be debated during the forthcoming European parliamentary campaign, and that the results will provide a clear signal which can then serve to overcome divisions between member states. The EU would thus be able to announce an enhanced target for 2030 at the next United Nations (UN) climate summit in September

2019. This is a prerequisite for the EU to be able to legitimately demand that its partners further approach the levels of ambition dictated by scientific knowledge.

Building a Genuine Climate Union

Imagining a carbon-neutral Europe also means preparing for profound socio-economic changes. The EU needs to close the chapter on marginal improvements, in order to accelerate the uptake of proven low-carbon solutions, but also focus on the most difficult sectors to decarbonize – such as transport, industry, and agriculture – as well as encourage innovation in disruptive technologies – such as green hydrogen production and CO₂ capture, storage, and reuse. The challenges are many, and possible pathways remain uncertain. Only by ensuring EU-wide sharing of experience and debate can we hope to drive the low-carbon transition forward in a rapid, economically efficient, and socially acceptable way. European funds will also have to be reassigned to drive these structural changes, support the development of new industrial sectors that can provide jobs, and ensure support for regions and citizens. These actions are necessary to avoid social and political backlash at all costs. As part of negotiations over the EU budget for the 2021-27 period, member states could choose to divert a significant share of expenditure to address climate change and the environment in order to build a genuine union around the issue of climate change.

A Competitive and Tarnished International Context

The EU is finally realizing that it needs to think about its climate strategy without assurances that other global regions will follow suit. While there is no alternative to strong action on the domestic front, the EU is entitled to consider the measures to be taken so as not to undermine the competitiveness of its industries. It may choose the offensive route, by conditioning free trade agreements on compliance with the Paris Agreement and an obligation to progressively increase commitments, or favor a defensive approach by introducing a carbon tax on its borders. As a pioneer of the low-carbon transition, the EU is now showing signs of hesitation, as it must make strategic choices in an unfavorable international context. However, the challenge of climate change must also be seen as an opportunity to rally citizens, and to revitalize the economy and the European political project.

Will Europe Remain a “Digital Colony”?

Julien Nocetti

Europe’s ability to assert itself as a “digital power” is subject to mixed responses. The view of Europe as a “digital colony” is fundamentally opposed to a more nuanced approach that emphasizes the European Commission’s current voluntarism in terms of data protection, digital taxation, and artificial intelligence (AI).

A Europe Left Out of History?

In March 2013, a few months before the revelations from Edward Snowden, a report from the French Senate warned of the risk of Europe becoming a “digital colony” due to a dependence on foreign powers and chronic “underdevelopment” on the digital front. Six years on, the concerns raised in this report remain valid. Europe is being chipped away on two fronts: American technological hegemony and Chinese assertiveness are both weakening the continent, which is struggling to establish itself as a leading industrial power. Whereas the United States commanded 42% of global technology capital in 2017, Europe struggled to reach 3%.

All too well understood, Europe’s weaknesses combine internal factors (an insufficiently integrated digital market, the problem of financing start-ups, differences in policies between member states, etc.) and exposure to proven strategies of power, which include: the financial, technological, and ‘pulling’ power of major Californian players, the extraterritoriality of US law, and the speed of centralized decision-making in China, coupled with a lack of ethical considerations.

In a context in which a country’s power is reflected in its ability to impose its technological decisions on the rest of the world, Europe thus risks being “left out of history” through a thorough carve-up of its capacity for political and economic autonomy.

A Full-Scale Digital Agenda

Beyond this gloomy forecast, European institutions and circles for innovation are growing increasingly active in the majority of digital fields. The most prominent case—the introduction of the General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018—demonstrates the original nature of the European Union’s (EU) position on personal data. By regulating and protecting the exchange of data between European citizens and major digital platforms, the EU is becoming one of the world’s strictest personal data protection regimes. Brussels hopes that the GDPR will contribute to new alignments in international competition with regard to the use and control of data, thanks to EU regulatory influence.

The issue of GAFA (Google-Apple-Facebook-Amazon) taxation is also indicative of the ambitions of some member states, but faces the complexity of achieving a common European digital tax regime. Thus, the “GAFA tax” so ardently defended by Paris in 2017-18, designed to instigate Europe-wide tax harmonization in order to counter the widescale tax evasion practices of the US digital giants, has come up against differences in approach between European capitals.

Ambitious projects are being developed in relation to funding, such as the Joint European Disruptive Initiative (JEDI), a Franco-German agency dedicated to ground-breaking innovation, modeled on the US *Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency* (DARPA).

Finally, the global artificial intelligence (AI) race is pushing the EU to “carve its own path”. In spring 2018, the European Commission presented its approach to AI, which is based on three pillars: increasing public and private investment, adapting to socioeconomic changes, and establishing an ethical and legal framework. It also put together a governance structure for AI, which included the appointment of a high-level group of experts to serve as a steering committee for the work of the European AI Alliance.

Europe on a Tightrope

Despite progress on many fronts, the European position remains precarious. While the GDPR signaled the desire to sketch out a “third way” between the Californian and Chinese models, the fact remains that Brussels is acting—defensively—as a “guardian of values” against competitors who collect and process billions of items of data. Can Europe base its digital strategy merely on law and ethics?

European assertiveness with regard to data protection should not lead us to overlook the emergence of counter-reactions: in this vein, the CLOUD Act, passed shortly before the adoption of the GDPR, allows US authorities to require American digital operators to hand over their users’ personal information, without informing them or having to go through the courts, even if such data is not stored in the United States. As for China, it has made little secret of its ambition to master digital infrastructure (clouds, data

centers, submarine cables, 5G networks) that reaches into Europe, through its Belt and Road Initiative.

Ultimately, the issue of funding innovation is inseparable from creating human capital. Similarly, only by averting a brain drain and training its own experts *en masse* will Europe succeed in breaking free from its digital servitude.

Has the Franco-German Engine Broken Down?

Hans Stark

The Franco-German engine was never intended to run continuously nor at full speed. If it had been, it would not be referred to as an engine, but as a steamroller. Its role is not of course to dictate decisions, but to stimulate fresh momentum at times of crisis, thereby breaking a deadlock. The leadership that is expected of the Franco-German duo must always be in a position to act (and not impose itself) in a context of complex decision-making at the level of twenty-seven member states (or nineteen in the case of the eurozone). It must have genuine resources at its disposal, including financial and political resources, in order to make itself heard and accepted as legitimate. The new Franco-German treaty on cooperation and integration, signed on 22 January 2019 takes into account this necessity. Finally, it must represent a fairly wide range of proposals to enable coalitions to be formed among a sufficiently large number of countries. Moreover, while it may seem paradoxical, the greater the initial divergence in Franco-German positions on key European issues, the greater their potential to rally others beyond the limitations of the Franco-German framework.

Paris-Berlin: Overcoming Differences

Taking into account this peculiarity, and the well-known *structural* differences between France and Germany, the progress report for the “engine” since Emmanuel Macron came to power could not be described as disappointing. Admittedly, the mismatch in styles between the young president and a chancellor who has reached the end of her political career can be disconcerting. The former is continually sketching out his vision of Europe and the reforms to be carried out through a series of speeches delivered in symbolic places. While Macron paints vast pictures of European sovereignty or the strategic autonomy of the Old Continent, Merkel prefers to move cautiously, barely venturing to give an interview on the EU to a German newspaper, or explain herself tacitly to the European Parliament—in a speech that was, moreover, solely delivered as part of the centenary commemorations for the end of the First World War. But the elements that give the impression of a chronic misalignment between the two countries—perhaps due to the overflowing ambitions of a clear-headed France, and the

lack of ambition of a Germany content with the status quo—has in fact translated into a constant search for compromises. Indeed, these compromises are needed to win over the approval and support of partners, since France and Germany are not alone in Europe.

Compromises are certainly expected on the major issues at the beginning of this century, but they are inevitably slow to achieve and frustrating in their results: on immigration, climate change, the challenge presented by the populist and authoritarian drift in some EU countries, the future of the eurozone, and matters of defense. The issue of climate protection both rallies and divides. No one denies the urgency or the goals set by the Paris Agreement. But France, which is less industrialized than its neighbor to the east, benefits from a nuclear option that is less immediately polluting, while Germany, having abandoned nuclear energy, remains dependent on coal. Populism primarily remains a national challenge, and does not lend itself well to ambitious diplomacy in a European context. Immigration, the ultimate sensitive issue, is not perceived in the same terms in France and Germany, where different unemployment and birth rates determine their contrasting realities.

Progress and Uncertainties

At present, the most remarkable progress is being seen where it was perhaps least expected, i.e. at the eurozone level, especially since the Franco-German declaration of Meseberg of June 2018. The strengthening of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is underway, as are discussions on a stabilization instrument to counter economic shocks, a project supported by the European Central Bank. The German finance minister also appears open to a European system of unemployment insurance. Last but not least, in mid-November 2018, Olaf Scholz and Bruno Le Maire presented a draft European budget for the eurozone in 2021, focused on investment, convergence, and stabilization. Admittedly, just as with the Franco-German agreement of 3 December 2018 on a “digital tax”, such steps forward may appear modest, and the result of laborious compromise.

These compromises must, moreover, clear the hurdle of seventeen (or twenty-five) other member states, and must also pass the test of “internal” acceptance, be it among the conservative circles of the CDU-CSU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany and Christian Social Union in Bavaria) in the case of Germany, or public opinion—rather than the “people”—in France. Yet the prospect of the post-Merkel era on one side of the Rhine, and the “Gilets Jaunes” movement on the other, clearly cast doubt on the ability of the German chancellor and the French president to achieve domestic acceptance

for their European projects—particularly if they are perceived as being completely out of step with the expectations and needs of citizens. But what complicates matters, above all else, is that both countries are currently led by two weakened leaders. Neither Paris nor Berlin really know with whom they will be running the Franco-German engine in the long run.

Toward a “Cultural Counter-revolution” in Central Europe?

Éric-André Martin

Since 2015, the European migration crisis has served as a catalyst for growing or strengthening the power base of populist movements in the Visegrad Group of countries (V4). These countries have developed an anti-European discourse, denouncing the challenges to sovereignty represented by decisions made in Brussels. Their revolt against the decisions of the European Council relating to the relocation of asylum seekers, and even more so the refusal by Poland and Hungary to accept the slightest resettlement on their territory, have resulted in a crisis of governance within the European Union (EU).

Poland and Hungary have gone a step further in their radical critique of the EU system by invoking the concept of an illiberal order. Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Viktor Orban went as far as calling for a “cultural counter-revolution” in Europe at the Krynica summit in 2016. The leaders of both countries see the European Parliament elections in 2019 as an opportunity to change the course of the European project.

Symptoms of a Malaise Specific to this Region

There has been a reversal in the discourse of V4 leaders on the EU since the transition, as reflected in Viktor Orban’s journey from promoter of democratic transition to facilitator for the emergence of an illiberal order. The return of this “kidnapped West” to the European family, as praised by Milan Kundera, in fact took place as part of a process of transition guaranteeing the restoration of a liberal order and the move to a market economy, which culminated in the accession of these states to the EU in 2004.

The transition to a market economy and the economic catch-up achieved by these countries is a real success story, to which European solidarity has contributed in the form of transfers provided by the Structural Funds. Yet there is clear opposition in relation to the question of values and the societal model. The onslaught in Poland and Hungary against a number of independent institutions of power, such as the judiciary, the media, and

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), poses a threat to the rule of law that is incompatible with the principles and values of the EU. This is why the Article 7 procedure has been initiated against Poland and Hungary, and certain aspects of judicial reform in Poland have been brought to the attention of the European Court of Justice.

In order to better assert their independence, the V4 countries are seeking support from outside the EU. President Trump has broken the embargo on high-level contact with the Orbán government introduced by his predecessor and marked his first trip to Europe with a visit to Poland, thereby supporting the Three Seas Initiative.⁸ Russia sees its support for Viktor Orbán as a way to counter EU influence. China is also extending its influence through its “16+1” initiative and has called the V4 “the most dynamic force in Europe”.

Crisis, Breakup, or Divorce?

Aside from the issue of immigration, the Visegrad countries are not a group with converging interests. Slovakia and the Czech Republic have not adopted the escalation approach espoused by Poland and Hungary and have somewhat distanced themselves from their anti-European rhetoric.

As for the proceedings against Poland and Hungary, the EU was built on the principles of solidarity, dialogue, and cooperation. What will be the outcome of the Article 7 procedure, especially if the EU finds itself unable to effectively sanction these two countries? Is this East-West division within Europe ultimately another crisis of the kind the EU has encountered on many occasions throughout its history, or is it the beginning of a fundamental divergence?

The integration of the Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEEC) offers Europe a unique opportunity to overcome its historical division through a project based on openness and exchange. This allows it to engage in a dialogue with its fringes, from the Balkans, through the Eastern Partnership countries, to Russia. Failure in this area would pave the way to a falling back on identity politics and a return to power games, which would spell the end of the historic European project.

The EU must overcome the gap between the contractual and liberal conception of the nation in the West and its ethnocultural conception in the

8. The Three Seas Initiative is a platform for cooperation between twelve Central European countries, launched in 2016. See D. Richard, “Europe centrale : l’Initiative des Trois mers”, *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 83, No. 2, Summer 2018, pp. 103-115.

East.⁹ The CEEC must contribute to key European debates and understand not only that the deepening of the European Union is not to their detriment, but also that they have much to lose by placing themselves on its margins. Civil societies, which are largely in favor of the EU, must be called upon to engage with these issues if we are to find solutions capable of meeting these challenges.

9. C. Delsol, "Pourquoi les peuples d'Europe centrale refusent nos leçons de morale", *Le Figaro*, February 22, 2018.

Transatlantic Relations in the Trump Era

Laurence Nardon

Will the United States and Europe maintain their special relationship based on shared values? Will globalization and demographic change lead instead to an inexorable distancing between the two shores of the Atlantic? On the European side, this age-old debate gives rise to anxious questions, as the nations of the Old Continent fear a distancing from the United States that would weaken their influence and their security.

Troubled Relations at the Highest Level

The current sequence of events reveals a high level of tension between the United States and European countries. President Trump's aggressive tweets, diametrically opposed to the ways of diplomacy, are the most visible demonstration of serious points of contention. As someone who is openly nationalist, and who upholds a transactional view of international relations, President Trump does not bestow any sanctity upon the Atlantic Alliance. On the contrary, he believes that the European member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are handsomely taking advantage of the "American umbrella." He is therefore demanding that all members of the alliance spend 2% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on their defense. This 2006 commitment is yet to be observed by many allies, including Germany. Will the ongoing frictions prompt Europeans to better define a shared vision of their possible strategic autonomy?

For Donald Trump, the transatlantic imbalance on matters of defense is all the more patent when it comes to trade. Countries running a surplus in their trade with the United States, especially Germany, are particularly guilty in his eyes. This is what led him to describe the European Union (EU) as an "enemy" in an interview in July 2018. More significantly still, this nationalist president would like to see a weakening of the supranational project that the EU represents. The trade war triggered in early 2018 is currently limited to tariffs on European steel and aluminum imports, offset by equivalent customs duties by the European side. Will Germany continue

to stand together with the member states if the United States were to impose taxes on its cars?

Moreover, led by France, the EU is seeking to limit the power and monopoly status of the big US technology companies (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft—jointly referred to as GAFAM). It scored a victory with the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018. While France now plans to make them pay a fairer tax, it faces reluctance from some other member states.

Finally, the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate is frowned upon by Europe's main leaders. It is very unlikely that President Trump will reverse his decision. Europeans are left to cooperate with those American states that have committed to remain within the Paris Agreement.

The unpredictability of the US president makes further negotiations on these various topics very volatile. More broadly, the next European Parliament, the majority of which may be closer to the values espoused by Trump, will undoubtedly have a bearing on how transatlantic relations will evolve.

The Ambivalence of “Transatlantic Values”

The transatlantic bond is built on a historical ambiguity: on the one hand, history of European migration to the North American continent means that the United States is a majority white, Protestant country, at least for a few more decades; on the other hand, the importance of European Enlightenment ideas in the founding of the American republic has placed the principle of universalism at the forefront. These two elements are not contradictory. However, most post-war European and American leaders have emphasized the latter, while adding other values of openness to that of universalism, such as humanism, human rights, and individual freedom.

Today, however, the nationalist ideologues close to Trump, such as Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller, promote an ethnic and cultural vision of their country, based on its European population profile. Several European countries have switched to populism or illiberal democracy and are on par with the US. Steve Bannon, who was fired from the White House in January 2018, now spends half of his time in Europe. Relying on the Belgian organization “The Movement”, he claims he seeks to unite and finance European extreme-right forces in order to push for their victory in the May 2019 elections.

Who will stand up for the European project and Enlightenment values? On the side of the “progressives,” President Macron appears weakened, Germany is not going to be very active given the forthcoming replacement of its chancellor, while Britain looks out of the picture with Brexit in full swing. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau flaunts his progressive credentials, but he has had to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with his powerful neighbor...

Between openness and closure, the elections in May represent a test of our system of values, upon which the course of transatlantic relations is set to depend in the years to come.

Europe and the Russia Challenge

Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean

Despite talk of a “strategic partnership” between post-Soviet Russia and the European Union (EU), the relationship between these two “partners” has never been an easy one. Frequent summits (held twice a year) and an array of cooperation mechanisms (including the four common spaces and the Partnership for Modernization) have been unable to prevent the deterioration of relations following the annexation of Crimea. After the EU imposed sanctions on Russia, Moscow responded in turn by placing an embargo on imports of many European agricultural and food products. Since then, the litany of grievances has continued to grow on both sides. Disappointments run deep and trust has been broken. Neither party is prepared to acknowledge even part of their responsibility for the situation, believing that it is up to the other side to soften its position.

The Scattered European Approach to Moscow

The EU is not, however, aligned in its attitude towards Russia. Historical memory fuels an acute perception of the Russian threat among the Polish and Baltic peoples. Meanwhile, France and Germany, whose companies are very active in Russia, are concerned about its authoritarian turn and its forceful foreign policy, but are attempting to maintain dialogue, particularly in the context of the Minsk process. Developments in Hungary have brought it ideologically closer to the Kremlin, while Greece and Italy have sought to use relations with Moscow as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Brussels. Russia—which has never been comfortable with the Europeanization of bilateral relations—is trying to take advantage of this dissonance, as well as that within each European country. It is providing support, not least financially, to the political forces most favorable to it, particularly on the far-right. Brussels and national governments are concerned by Moscow’s role in influence campaigns and attempts to manipulate information designed to weaken EU cohesion.

Despite differences between European countries, sanctions against Russia have been regularly renewed since 2014, with arguments around European solidarity and security concerns seeming to prevail, even in the case of countries which, like Italy or Austria, otherwise show signs of openness towards Russia and have questioned the effectiveness of sanctions. With this in mind, it is unclear whether the European elections of May 2019, even if they change the balance of power within the European Parliament, will meet Russian expectations with regard to the lifting of sanctions.

Maintaining Relations with Russia

Economic relations strike some slightly more positive notes amid this gloomy picture: despite the sanctions, the EU remains Russia's largest trading partner and largest investor. Exports of Russian gas to the EU are breaking records. Led by France's Total and Russia's Novatek, the Yamal LNG project was launched at the end of 2017 with Chinese funding. Unlike those implemented by the United States, European sanctions remain strictly conditional on compliance with the Minsk Agreements, and have not been conflated with other issues so as to make their lifting virtually impossible.

The EU is now portrayed as a model to be avoided in Russia: "We don't want a situation like that in Paris", said President Putin in December 2018, referring to the "Gilets Jaunes" movement. However, it is hard to say for certain to what extent anti-European sentiment is really rooted in the population. Russians are among the main applicants for Schengen visas and investment by Russian elites in Europe is an open secret. The EU is still able to take action to develop links among civil society, including among young people. A visa-free regime would be a strong card to play.

In the short term, everything separates Russia and the EU: their stated values, their vision for European security, and their approach to the world order. The relationship is also hostage to the internal development of the EU, and that of the transatlantic relationship. In March 2016, five EU principles were announced with regard to Russia: implementation of the Minsk Agreements, the consolidation of relations with Eastern partners, strengthening EU resilience in energy security, hybrid threats or strategic communications, selective co-operation on issues of interest to the EU, and the need to develop relations with Russian civil society. These principles combine interdependence and opportunities for cooperation with the potential for deadlock and tensions. Within this structural crisis, there is no alternative but to engage in dialogue and find areas on which to move forward, despite the challenges. The process of negotiation is ultimately as important as the results. This can be seen at work with the Minsk

Agreements: even if they appear to be at an impasse, their merit lies in preventing a major escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, while maintaining a channel of dialogue in preparation for the future.

Europe and the Challenge of China

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As tensions between China and the United States increase, Beijing is seeking closer ties with Europe. A charm offensive has been underway for almost a year in many EU member states, including France. Official Chinese communications refer to the existence of a “United States-China-Europe strategic triangle”, highlighting points of divergence between the United States and Europe, and dwelling on points of convergence between China and Europe. While both Europe and China have been critical of decisions made by the Trump administration (withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate change agreement, undermining the World Trade Organization, and obstructing the Appellate Body within the latter’s Dispute Settlement Body), differences between Europe and China clearly remain stronger than those between Europe and the United States, and are becoming stronger not only on economic, political, and ideological issues,¹⁰ but also with regard to technological and urban management issues, in a context of increased Party control under the chairmanship of Xi Jinping.

Persistent Economic Differences

Toward the end of 2018, EU member states reached an agreement on establishing a mechanism to screen foreign direct investment. Remarkable as it is, especially given the speed with which it was concluded, the framework remains relatively non-binding. However, it reflects the concerns raised by the proliferation of foreign—primarily Chinese—investment on European soil in sectors considered strategic by member states, such as energy, telecommunications, new technologies, and robotics. These concerns have arisen in a broader context of persistent asymmetry in terms of market access—as the Chinese market remains less open to European companies than vice versa—and the prevailing role of the state, or that of the Communist Party of China, in the economy.

10. See “Political Values in Europe-China Relations”, joint report of the European Think Tank Network on China (ETNC), December 2018, available at: www.ifri.org.

Emerging Technological Differences

An emerging point of divergence relates to state use of new technologies and citizens' data. China's rise as a leader in big data and artificial intelligence, and the position held by Chinese digital companies in the fabric of the European economy (not least that of Huawei in the development of 5G infrastructure) is raising ever more questions. For instance, China today promotes its own concept of "smart cities", incorporating video surveillance and facial recognition systems, and potentially schemes for virtually tagging and rating citizens. The question of how European cities are to be managed, especially those that may turn to Chinese companies for assistance with modernization, is becoming an issue of acute concern.

Methodological Issues for 2019

The Europe-China relationship also remains a complex one given persistent disagreements between member states over the approach to be adopted towards China. Hence, some countries, such as Greece and Hungary, have officially and enthusiastically espoused President Xi Jinping's flagship "Belt and Road" project, while others, such as France or Germany, are more circumspect.

A number of methodological issues arise for Europe in this context:

- First of all, faced with China's activism (in the economic but also institutional, or even conceptual spheres) shouldn't Europe seek to be less reactive and instead take on a proactive role? It was following this rationale that the European Commission proposed a "Europe-Asia connectivity platform" in September 2018, designed to strengthen European infrastructure (in transport and digital terms, etc.) and standards. Taking the rationale further, Europe could strengthen its offering in terms of smart cities, based on its own conception of urban management and personal data protection.
- More concretely, how can Europe better formulate and defend its interests in the face of China's diplomacy, which does not hesitate to approach member states bilaterally, or within the subgroups of European countries it has created (such as the "16+1", which brings together sixteen countries from Central and Eastern Europe, Greece also announcing its interest in joining the platform)? One method might be to strengthen exchanges with these countries on good methodological practices in relation to China. This was attempted during the first Belt and Road Forum in May 2017: countries that had already been asked by China to sign a memorandum of understanding shared their experience

with other member states, which were in turn approached by Beijing. As Beijing is expected to make further advances in the future, especially with a view to the 2019 Belt and Road Forum, such co-ordination is all the more necessary.

While the United States has opted for a policy of sanctions after earlier attempts at dialogue with China failed to produce convincing results, especially in terms of opening up the Chinese market, the EU has so far chosen dialogue. But under which conditions should this dialogue be maintained? One thing is however certain: in a context of increased tensions between Beijing and Washington, the European market is becoming all the more important for Chinese companies. Europe's power of negotiation in relation to China is significantly greater now than in the past. How will Europe make the most of its position? This remains an open question.

The European Union and Turkey: A Change of Tone

Dorothee Schmid

The negotiations on Turkey's accession to the European Union (EU) have been one of the most controversial campaign topics in European elections since 2004. The issue combines technical aspects, which make "cool-headed" discussion difficult, and political aspects, which for several years have sharply risen to the forefront of the debate every time an election is held—including in Turkey. This was reflected for example in the many tensions across Europe during the campaign for the Turkish constitutional referendum in the spring of 2017, but also in the crisis sparked a few months later by President Erdogan's voting instructions to Turkish-German voters in the German elections.

While the prospect of Turkish membership is ebbing away—with most EU member states now openly opposed to it, and Euroscepticism commanding a dominant position in Turkey—the Turkish-European relationship has grown in importance and is re-emerging as a major geopolitical conundrum. From the outset—the Ankara Agreement of 1963, which laid the foundations for cooperation to eventually allow Turkey entry into the European group—relations between Turkey and the EU have raised questions about the identity of the European project, that of the EU's physical borders, and following on from this, that of Europe's external alliances.

Democratic Values Vs. Autocratic Drift

For a Europe that is weakened by Brexit and threatened with "unraveling" by a number of political groups from within, the idea of enlargement no longer seems relevant. As regards Turkey, the integration of a large, populous, Muslim state has always been a concern for right-wing political forces, which have framed the debate in terms of the EU's economic and social "absorption capacity". It should be noted that the majority of European citizens have in fact always been hostile to Turkey's membership: annual Eurobarometer surveys show that over the ten years of negotiations (2005-15), this opposition has increased by 50% among those surveyed.

But since 2013, and the crackdown on the major anti-Erdogan Gezi protests, the issue of political values has overturned the position of European leaders themselves. It is now possible to openly question whether Turkey meets the Copenhagen criteria, which are an absolute prerequisite for opening accession negotiations. This issue has become more acute since the failed coup attempt that rocked the country in July 2016. The political requirements of the Copenhagen criteria include the existence of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for minorities and their protection. The way in which Turkish institutions have changed under the iron fist of Recep Tayyip Erdogan – the manifest instability of a system “held together” by forced adjustments to norms and the permanent mobilization of the security forces at the behest of power, the return of a quasi-civil war with part of the Kurdish population, whose political representation has been systematically criminalized, and the increasingly obvious lack of freedom of expression with a subservient media – are all telltale signs of an autocratic drift that is now hard for Europeans to overlook.

The Crisis of European Power and Affirmation of Turkish Power

The shared rationale of the accession process was in fact a path of reform for Turkey, which it was understood might be long, but whose virtue lay precisely in the opportunity for the country to develop at its own pace. The transformative drive of European soft power fueled the optimism of analysts during the great post-enlargement decade, and initially seduced the Turkish elites, who firmly believed in the “Europeanization” of their country. But pro-European Turks are now disappointed and point the finger of blame for the hardening of the regime squarely at Europeans themselves, claiming that it was their naivety that enabled the capture of all levers of power by an AKP that has always been driven by totalitarian tendencies.

The mood is now one of war. After foiling a military coup, Turkey immediately embarked on a first military operation in Syria that has resulted in the physical occupation of part of its neighbor’s territory. The Syrian emergency has brought about a crisis in relations with its Western allies: the Turks are at odds with the Americans, who armed the Syrian Kurds to fight Daesh, and are growing strategically closer to the Russians, who are now dictating the rules of the game in Syria. Throughout the Middle East, they dream of a political solution that will put new elites close to the Muslim Brotherhood in prominent positions.

This assertion of regional power is profoundly transforming Turkey's relationship with the EU. In recent years, the bilateral relationship has not weakened but rather become far more complex and politicized, perhaps even strengthened as a result. The agreement reached with Erdogan to keep Syrian refugees in Turkey has placed the partnership on an entirely new footing: a rebalancing of the partners and the implicit acknowledgement of European vulnerability, with a substantial grant (6 billion euros) exceeding all that had previously been provided through pre-accession funds. In the eyes of the Turkish leadership, the exit of the United Kingdom, which lays bare a crisis in European power, appears promising in legal terms. The upgrading of the Customs Union, which has been a recurring issue in the Turkish-European relationship, is not very attractive to Turkey in the context of a widespread trade war in which they would rather hope to reclaim their autonomy. In short, the Turks have been galvanized by successive diplomatic successes and remain steadfast in their criticism of the European project.

The European Union and Africa: The Central Importance of Migration

Alain Antil

Since the European Union (EU)-Africa Summit in Valletta in November 2015, migration issues have taken center stage in the relationship between the two continents. This summit resulted in an action plan providing for the joint management of migration flows. To this end, the partners pledged to combat irregular and forced migration and strengthen channels for legal migration and mobility, while protecting the human rights of migrants and tackling the “root causes of migration”.

In 2015, Europe saw a major peak in migration and an increase in asylum applications. The influx of migrants was mainly via the eastern Mediterranean route, and migrations from Africa represented only a small proportion of the flows recorded that year. Nevertheless, the impact of the “migration crisis” prompted the EU to implement new tools and partnerships with its close neighbors. The need for action was based on three main findings. Firstly, the political and security vacuum left behind in Libya, which has opened up new opportunities for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to reach the southern shores of the Mediterranean and attempt the crossing via the central Mediterranean route. Secondly, recurrent political crises south of the Sahara—in Eritrea, Somalia and Somaliland, Sudan and South Sudan, etc.—are contributing further to migration flows, and crises in the Sahel could eventually have a significant impact as well. Finally, given the expected demographic boom (the population south of the Sahara is set to double over the next thirty years), the issue of migration between the two continents can no longer be considered simply from the perspective of crisis.

The Migration Issue before 2015

Europeans were not of course first exposed to this issue in 2015. However, before this date, it was mainly those countries most affected by migration (Italy, France, Spain, etc.) who were putting pressure on the European institutions to take action on their southern border. Smaller migration crises have in fact taken place since 2000. In 2005, for instance, hundreds of migrants tried to forcefully enter the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. Since the

mid-2000s, *harragas* have regularly increased in numbers, in line with the crises affecting North African countries. During the Tunisian revolution, there was a swell in the flow of young Tunisians for several months. Crossings from the West African coast to the Canary Islands also increased, with canoes mainly leaving from the Mauritanian port of Nouadhibou and, to a far lesser extent, from the coast of Senegal.

Some European countries called upon EU institutions to strengthen the common external border (the Frontex scheme) and to make EU partnerships with North African countries conditional upon close co-operation in relation to migration. These issues were also discussed at smaller meetings, such as at the “5+5 Dialogue” summits. The EU, for instance, urged Mauritania to strengthen checks on West Africans present on its territory. The proliferation of border posts, the new visa requirements for nationals of many African countries, and the opening of a prison in Nouadhibou for migrants suspected of seeking passage to Europe, were the direct consequences of European pressure, often presented as part of the “fight against terrorism”.

New Migration Management Tools

Since 2015,¹¹ new tools have been introduced. These include legal instruments, such as Mobility Partnerships, and financial instruments, such as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF for Africa). This development fund aims to support projects with a direct bearing on migration or its underlying causes. However, these tools reflect a fairly glaring imbalance. On the one hand, they are products of a bilateral relationship between the EU and individual African countries. The room for maneuver of the Sahel countries, which are very poor, is practically zero. On the other hand, the EUTF for Africa is not subject to “dual-signature” approval. It is therefore the EU that develops the projects in the territories concerned, according to priorities clearly set in Europe, without the need for the agreement of recipient countries.

This policy, which is a response to pressing demand from European public opinion, exacerbates tensions in the populations of southern countries with regard to the European area from which they are increasingly shut out. African leaders, accused of complicity, are also blamed by the same populations. This does no favors for increased African stability.

11. This section draws from the presentation of Matthieu Tardis at the conference “Quelle relation entre l’Europe et l’Afrique ? Regards croisés Allemagne-France”, at Ifri on 15-16 November 2018.



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