



Multiple Challenges for Transatlantic Partnerships

International conference



Introduction

The previous US administration led to a strain and distancing in the relationship between the US and the EU. President Joe Biden's administration brings hope and promise. Nonetheless, there is a certain level of weariness from the European perspective. Despite this, the relationship between Europe and the United States is the foundation for global development and has major implications on the world economy. Cooperation between the partners is also necessary for various other aspects, such as climate issues and addressing other, often rival or challenging global powers.

The 2021 conference on Multiple Challenges for Transatlantic Partnerships focused on discussing three key areas: economy, policy, and security. These topics are often heavily intertwined and must be addressed comprehensively.

As a keynote speaker, Prime Minister **Andrej Babiš** claimed that the Atlantic space is an area for democracy, freedom, liberty, order, as well as freedom of enterprise and market economies. The EU and the US should both compete and cooperate on technology, research, and development and stressed the need for continued cooperation between the partners.

“A united, capable, and self-reliant EU is good for Europe, good for the transatlantic partnership, and good for the rule-based multilateral world system.”

Jakub Kulhánek,
The Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



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**MULTIPLE CHALLENGES
FOR TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP**

Economic Dimension



“There is a real possibility to build something better together than we could build by ourselves.”

Rebecca Christie

1. Post-covid economy

The COVID-19 pandemic created a drop in economic activity that was quickest in previous recorded history. In order to move forward from this economic degradation, new approaches and new ways of thinking need to be used concerning the economy in both the EU and the US.

Ondřej Kovařík, a Member of the European Parliament, emphasized that resilience is what has now become a new priority in the approach of building economies. Supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020), resilience would make them better equipped to handle various crises, such as the covid pandemic, in the future.

Karel Havlíček, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, considered four goals as the most useful for the near future regarding rebuilding and strengthening these economies that the pandemic's recession has hit. The first of these is promoting industrial efficiency, the second supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and the third creating more start-ups while investing in innovation. Finally, pushing for a less bureaucratic environment in Europe is necessary. These initiatives will help reinvigorate an economy that has been repressed for the past year and a half.

Rebecca Christie, Non-resident Fellow at the Bruegel think tank, noted that it might prove strenuous for the US and Europe to grasp how to work together again economically and otherwise outside of emergency conditions. It becomes harder to solve culturally backed challenges, which both partners face, from the distances this pandemic has forced upon us. It is, nonetheless, important to move forward in a coordinated manner with lessons learned from the pandemic in mind.

2. China-US-EU relations

The recent EU-US summit's general position was that the Chinese relationship with the EU and the US is one of cooperation, competition, and systemic rivalry (Sevastopulo, 2021). What can be observed from Biden's visit to Europe, including the G7 meeting and NATO Summit, is that it is clear there is a desire from this administration to emphasize the areas in which the EU and US agree on China. Biden also seems particularly keen on the EU to join the US hardline approach towards China; however, the EU remains wary of this (Sevastopulo, 2021).

Various areas of agreement link the two partners together in their views on China, as **Tony Barber**, a European Affairs Commentator for the Financial Times, outlined. Firstly, China is seen as a one-party state which does not share western values. It is also a rising power, which can even be viewed as a superpower. Also, China is economically a crucial actor. Therefore, in certain areas such as trade and the environment, cooperation is necessary.

Nonetheless, there are also many areas of somewhat contention. First and foremost is geopolitical, as the US has historically been the prominent Pacific Ocean power. This is unlike Europe, which does not hold the same stakes in the area. Another challenge is China's economic weight, which is an issue that can not be discounted when considering how to approach the superpower. More EU companies are reliant on China than the US, and over a third of EU firms were greatly negatively affected by the trade war which the US launched with China (Deutsche Welle, 2019).

There will doubtfully be a united US and EU stance on economic issues related to China. Nonetheless, the two can find solace in their partnership and agreements they hold when facing the rival. On countering China, unlike in the Cold War towards the Soviet Union, there can not be a single united approach towards China that is so blatantly black and white. The policy moving forward must be on multiple levels, which requires significant cooperation.



On economic sanctions and using them against China, **Ondřej Kovařík** affirmed they remain an essential diplomatic tool for dealing with countries that do not respect the international order and its norms. They also tend to work on a greater level when applied by multiple important stakeholders. Coordination between the EU and the US on sanctions is necessary to achieve the desired changes in states' actions, including China. Despite the critique that there are few observable short-term results, there are noticeable positive outcomes in the long term. For instance, there is increased pressure from companies that use unethically sourced raw materials, such as cotton from Xinjiang, to move away from such behaviour.

3. EU-US cooperation

Despite the two powers being essential partners, and that there has been somewhat of a political restart, much work is yet to be done before Europe can be reassured that the US is “back” after the decrees in cooperation and multilateralism during the Trump administration. Significant concrete work remains left to be done. Advancements such as the recent resolutions regarding the Airbus-Boeing trade dispute is good progress. However, many other trade issues remain, such as the aluminium tariffs imposed by the US (Amaro and Josephs, 2021). However, a meaningful positive change must be mentioned. There was a notable switch of tone from the US side, relentlessly showing its European allies that it is eager to work closely once again together. Finally, the digital sector, including taxation, is an area that is seeing increased cooperation and interaction between the EU and the US.

According to **Rebecca Christie**, education and research should be a future focus of cooperation. Although not necessarily as exciting and attractive as manufacturing or technology, it has significant potential, she noted. Another area of possible collaboration includes production and flexibility on visas and investing, which would make a difference in the types of talent and opportunities created regarding education for the partners. Additionally, the dig-

ital sector and services, data, AI, and cybersecurity are also areas of possible cooperation. For cross border data flow in particular, the transatlantic partners have an opportunity to reach a fruitful agreement for the economy and beyond, while still protecting data privacy and security.

State investments and also Public – Private Partnership Projects are crucial to stimulating economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic. For the future of EU-US relations, stability and predictability are of the utmost importance to achieve long-term, concrete results. Borders must stay open, and we should find ways to cooperate every day to make it the norm (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020).

4. EU-US challenges

A possible future challenge to highlight is the societal differences in how we think technology should be implemented. The US has primarily focused on change, innovation, and providing a wide range of products for citizens as quickly as possible. The EU, on the other hand, has concentrated on precaution, ensuring that most, if not all, risks are considered before moving forward and rolling back changes if they prove harmful to society or citizens. These differences in thinking affect regulation, trade, taxation, and how economies interact with each other more generally. It has also made EU citizens and governments wary of big US tech companies and what they are doing with the consumer's data. Because of these different approaches in the EU and the US, compromises and regulations will have to be increasingly implemented. This is especially crucial considering how widely used the products and services of these big tech companies are across Europe. It was an important topic during Biden's visit to Europe. The EU and the US agreed to share data flow while making people's privacy a priority. However, how this will be done is still in question (Scott, 2021).

Trust is an essential factor for powers on both sides of the Atlantic, which is still not at its strongest. The EU has to trust that the US

will not fall back into nationalism and protectionism. On the other hand, the US must count that the EU aims to be a global player when working towards strategic autonomy. Continued cooperation and dialogue are necessary to build a better world together.

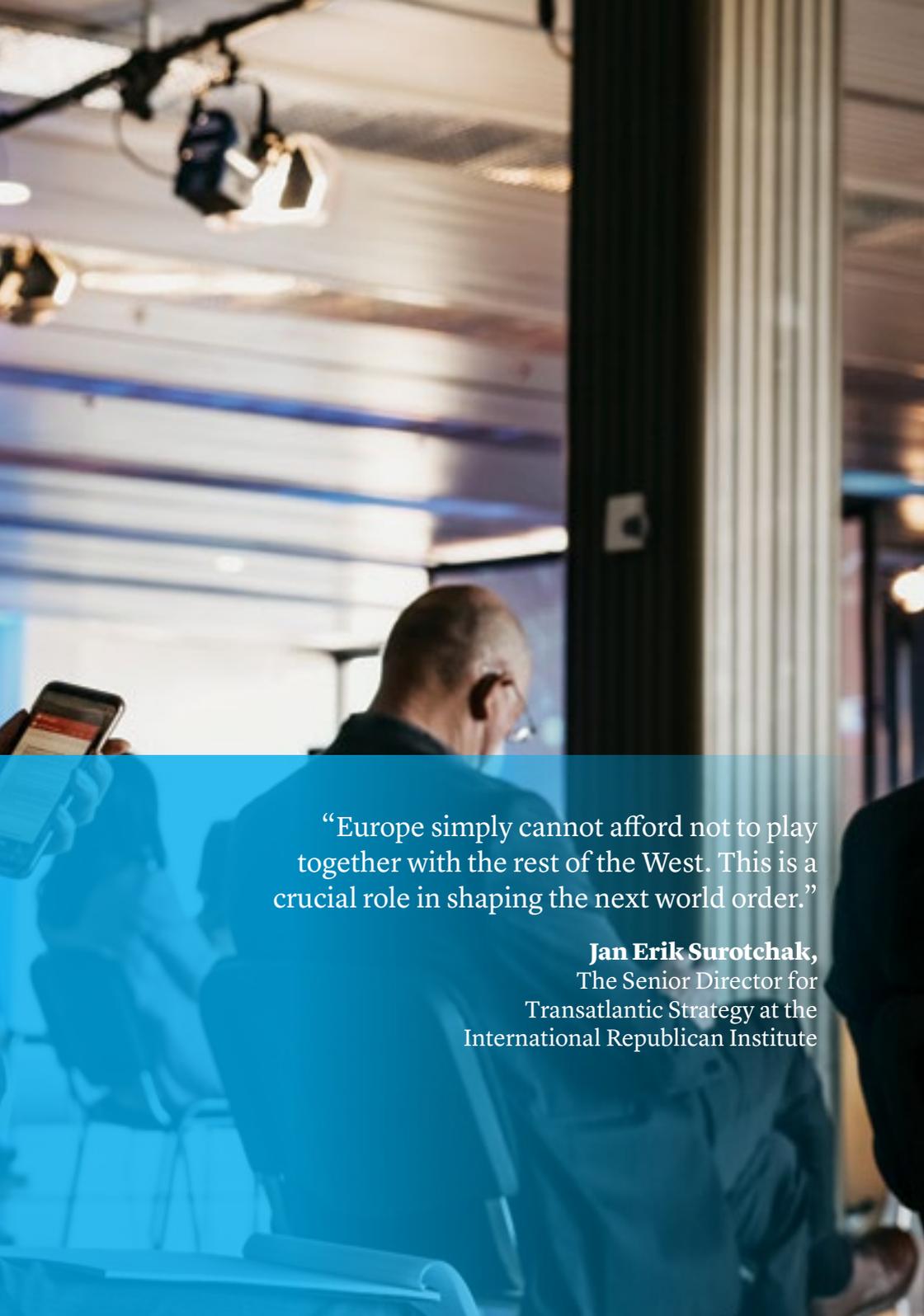
Recommendations

- » The EU should not remain a neutral actor towards China, as that is certainly not how China perceives the EU. Regarding cooperating with the US on the issue of China, it is necessary to focus on the areas of agreement and build multiple levels of policy in the areas of disagreement. Sanctions should remain an option when facing China.
- » For a positive future of EU-US economic relations, stability, predictability, and trust are of the utmost importance in the goal of achieving long-term, concrete results. Borders and dialogue must stay open, and we should find ways to cooperate every day to make it the norm.





Political Dimension



“Europe simply cannot afford not to play together with the rest of the West. This is a crucial role in shaping the next world order.”

Jan Erik Surotchak,
The Senior Director for
Transatlantic Strategy at the
International Republican Institute

1. Russia

There has been a shift in the US attitude towards Russia, which is more aligned with the approach of European leaders, compared to the previous US administration's unique admiration for Putin and his government. Both the US and the Czech Republic are now considered and categorized as “unfriendly” countries by Russia (The Economist, 2021). Restrictions from the Kremlin to these countries followed the labelling. Notably, these are the only two countries on this list, sending a clear message from Russia. **Dita Charanzová**, the Vice President of the European Parliament, outlined that this is a clear call for a coordinated approach and supported an EU-US dialogue specifically on the matter of Russia.

There is also an existing Russian narrative that all of Europe goes through Berlin. **Debra Cagan**, a Distinguished Energy Fellow at the Transatlantic Leadership Network, suggested the US should circumvent that narrative by engaging with all European countries to a similar degree rather than displaying certain states preferences. European countries and how they view issues should be considered equally because no country is too small in size or population to have an important and relevant impact on transatlantic relations.

The transatlantic partners should not allow Russia to define the narrative of their relationship or to leave them the chance to pit the allies against each other as they are attempting to do. As diligently as Russia has been trying to tear down the transatlantic partnership is as hard as we should be working to strengthen and reinvigorate it.

2. Brexit

As reported by Peter Walker for The Guardian (2021), the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, was hoping for an “even more special relationship” with the US following Brexit and the start of the

Trump presidency, a phrase that he has now rejected. Nonetheless, the relationship is still a high priority for both countries. It appears optimistic, particularly in the context of the slowly degrading relationship between Trump and Johnson.

This “special relationship” has been present since World War II., labelling the unique alliance which is strengthened by shared values and language, and therefore represents another way in which Brexit could result in significant changes in the transatlantic relationship (The Robert Schuman Foundation, 2016). The UK in the EU was in many ways viewed as the “engine” of transatlantic relations within the EU, **Dita Charanzová** stated. Its exit has undoubtedly influenced the EU’s positions vis-à-vis the US. It is crucial now for like-minded European countries to promote the importance of the EU-US relationship and fill the role the UK once played as this engine for transatlantic relations.

The EU mustn’t leave a void following Brexit where the relationship between the US and the UK once was. Instead, this can be utilized by other European countries to foster new and closer ties with the US. There may be a pivot towards closer relations between France and Germany with the US, but this also presents an opportunity for more cooperation with other EU countries, particularly those the US has not closely worked with in the past (The Robert Schuman Foundation, 2016).

3. Change in US administration

Andrea Keerbs, the Resident Program Director of Transatlantic Strategy at the International Republican Institute, sees Biden’s recent visit to Europe as a step in the right direction towards re-engagement. There is an opportunity presented to the transatlantic partnership with the recent change in US administration, and a chance to build a post covid world. The US is back as Europe’s ally; furthermore, this is powerful and fruitful alliance is as alive as can be. Even if it has faced times of turbulence and uncertainty.

Luis de Almeida Sampaio, the Portuguese Ambassador to the Czech Republic, stressed that because the transatlantic relationship is a two-way street, dialogue must always remain open between the US and Europe, particularly with the EU.

Despite the persistent divergences, **Dita Charanzová** stressed that methods of communication have changed since the new administration took over. There is an apparent effort towards increased dialogue mainly coming from the side of the US, as Europeans are fortunately no longer getting updates solely via Twitter. The US has also recently returned to the Paris Agreement, and there is an overall reappearance of US presence in multilateral frameworks. Hopefully, these trends will continue, considering that it is vital for both partners to be equally committed to the alliance to continue developing and prospering. If one side falters in cooperation, dialogue, or an attempt to foster positive relations, then the alliance as a whole will suffer. A partnership that is not continually being improved upon is, therefore, deteriorating.

4. How the EU should approach the US

Although the change in US administration thus far appears to be positive for transatlantic relations, it does not guarantee solutions. There is a feeling that normality has returned with the election of President Biden.

However, certain ideas have lingered in American spaces, **Claus Gramckow**, the Head of Regional Office in North America at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, asserted. One such idea is “America first”, which Europeans should be mindful of as a protectionist and nationalist tendency. In this regard, the European pivot towards strategic autonomy (e.g., in healthcare equipment and defence) is understandable as it aims to get a stable footing in the face of an unstable strategic ally. In another sense, however, it can also be a continuation of increased isolationist and protectionist measures in both the EU and the US, affecting both extremes of the political spectrum.

Trumpism is yet another concerning emergence in the US, which Europe must continue to survey. This development could be a detrimental threat to the stability of democracy. The solution is to open to new ideas and information; however, we tend to be most receptive only to the news, which generally reiterates our beliefs and perspectives.

Overall, the US is politically divided heavily, and this is not an issue that has ended with the Biden administration. It is a concern Europe should keep in mind for the years to come.

To keep the EU-US block united, the decision-making process in the EU must also be more efficient and effective, especially with regards to foreign policy. To bolster the efficiency, **Claus Gramckow** suggested Europeans should be quicker to make decisions and have a clear goal in mind when working with the US, despite the difficulty of making compromises in the EU. Europeans must be prepared to tell the Americans what they can offer them and what they expect.

Recommendations

- » On the issue of Russia, the EU and the US should aim to create a coordinated approach, particularly considering their recent classifications of “unfriendly countries”. This coordination would also go against the goal of Russia to divide the EU, the US and the alliance they have.
- » When approaching the US, the EU should keep in mind the political division, nationalism, and protectionism prevalent in the US, despite the change in administrations. During the engagement, the EU should also be in clear agreement on what is wanted and expected from the US in order for more efficient and fruitful cooperation.



Security Dimension



“Enhanced EU-US cooperation to support democratic aspirations in the world to preserve democratic gains and counter the global autocratization trend is an imperative.”

Věra Jourová,
The Vice President of the
European Commission

1. Hybrid threats

According to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, 2019), an issue that is only increasing in severity is the increasingly blurring lines between what is civilian and military due to hybrid threats, including non-military tactics like propaganda, sabotage or deception. These hybrid threats should lead us to strengthen our institutions and responses to disinformation, malicious cyber activity, and risks associated with new technologies.

Countering hybrid threats should be considered a pressing concern for the EU and the US. It is important to recognize that military affairs can no longer be separate from political decision-making, pointed out **Jan Havránek**, the Deputy Minister for Defence Policy and Strategy at the Czech Ministry of Defence. Therefore, we need to implement new civilian and military tools, work across the Atlantic, build defence capacities, and integrate new technologies originating from SMEs, which are not always geared towards military use. The importance of NATO-EU cooperation and coordination should also not be underestimated. However, because hybrid warfare often operates below the threshold of military aggression, we do not always know who the perpetrator is. This makes it more challenging to respond for countries and organizations such as NATO.

Regarding disinformation, it is an issue that has spread across the world and affected multiple elections already. Despite its far-reaching grasp, it is difficult to combat it due to the logistics of approaching disinformation campaigns. They are usually far-reaching on all corners of the internet and off, and in relation to the thin line between countering disinformation and infringing on freedom of speech. Overall, there needs to be a concerted effort on multiple fronts to prevent it in the future.

“We need to go back to one simple truth,
we need each other.”

Daniel Kaddik,
Executive Director of the
European Liberal Forum

2. NATO

The strategic environment that is NATO currently facing, which includes an authoritarian pushback against the international order, demands a greater need for transatlantic convergence and cooperation. This is especially due to persistent instability in the European neighbourhood. Cyberattacks, hybrid attacks, climate change, pandemics, and a shift in how wars are fought and won have contributed to an increasingly unpredictable security situation for the EU and its allies.

To combat this, we must develop both stronger militaries and societies as the grey space enlarges between military and civilian, stated **Benedetta Berti**, the Head of Policy Planning at the Office of the Secretary-General at NATO. More resilient societies are more flexible societies, and as such, can survive the stresses of disinformation, cyberattacks, and other pressing crises. Overall, today's situation for NATO is much more complicated than it once was during the Cold War. There is no longer one strong military opponent, and the world has become less black and white.

Petr Pavel, a retired Czech Army General and former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, outlined that China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea present myriad threats. He added that they are in tandem with various non-state actors such as terrorist groups, using hybrid warfare and technologies against democracies across the globe. NATO was not built and is not necessarily equipped to face hybrid threats. This is because they often fall beyond traditional military focus areas and instead become economic or media related. NATO will therefore need to cooperate closely with the EU to access a wider number of tools.

NATO has also brought climate change into the centre of its political agenda by adopting a concrete strategy and commitment to adapt, mitigate, and understand the security implications of climate change. This was positively received, and the US, in particular, has pledged its commitment to the topic.

Considering the new security challenges such as hybrid threats and cyberattacks, whether NATO needed to adapt its treaty to deal with a rapidly changing world is another worthy question to pose. This, however, would be unnecessary as a severe cyberattack on one country is tantamount to a physical attack. **Benedetta Berti** stressed that NATO drafters defined an armed attack politically and without any preconditions that maintain its relevance in today's age. As a result, it places the threshold and burden on allies, and it becomes a political decision, which is good for deterrence as it relies on ambiguity.

3. Afghanistan

On September 11th 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC left a lasting mark on the US and its allies. For the first time in history, the NATO mutual defence clause of the treaty was activated, and less than one month later, the first airstrikes in Afghanistan by the US and allies were conducted. Since then, action and operations to support the Afghan security forces have not ceased, and after two decades of military presence, the US army troops and a large coalition of countries that participated in Afghanistan are withdrawing. Although it is generally agreed that the situation is not what this coalition had hoped for after such a long presence, considering the Taliban still has a strong presence in the country. Nonetheless it is counterproductive to remain, making withdrawal the best option. The US has decided that Afghanistan is no longer a significant enough threat to justify its presence (Felbab-Brown, 2021).

Petr Pavel noted that the Taliban is not the only destabilizing group active in the country. It is important to continue financially supporting the Afghan government and to foster the peace process. NATO is also at a critical junction with the withdrawal from Afghanistan for defining future crisis management operations. NATO and other international actors can and should continue to support the Afghan government through crucial military training. It is vital to continue the commitment to the country and invest in

training prevention. Involving local partners is also critical as they know the local context and culture, have the necessary tools and are often at the forefront of dealing with their country's security issues.

Mark Pfeifle, the President and CEO of Off the Record Strategies, suggested that the EU and the US continue to keep an eye on Afghanistan also from an intelligence standpoint. If there is a new organization like Al-Qaeda or ISIS, it will allow the allies to nip it in the bud.

4. Cyberspace and Cyberattacks

The US and the EU remain somewhat disconnected in cybersecurity coordination. The EU does aim to achieve digital sovereignty, however some cooperation on common interests can be beneficial (Schuetze, 2020). An open political discussion and increased cooperation on the types of threats in cyberspace would be useful to strengthen their cyber defence capabilities.

Jan Havránek explained that it appears to be a trend for many politicians and world leaders not to perceive cyberattacks as an immediate concern, as discussions on these issues are left to the experts rather than the politicians. This is perhaps due to the lingering prevalence of realism in world politics, expecting that material threats are most damaging and of utmost concern. Still, the pandemic has changed this perception to some degree, yet cyberattacks are still perceived as an intangible threat.

It is essential to ensure there are consequences for those executing cyberattacks. The actors must be sufficiently punished, for example, through sanctions. Importantly, the Council of the EU extended the “framework for restrictive measures against cyber-attacks” for another year through May 2022, which outlines the measures to take place in the case of a significant cyberattack from an external actor (The Council of the European Union, 2021). This is crucial, as it is important to recognize that if cyberattacks are happening in

one country, such as the EU, similar attacks are more than likely to be affecting other allies. There needs to be more coordination and personnel training in the public and private sectors to prevent this.

Benedetta Berti stressed that resilience would be an important security aspect in the near future. Hardening society against potential threats, adopting strict rules that avoid importing more vulnerabilities to society, and implementing mechanisms for countering foreign interference are essential parts of this resilience framework. Today, there is a wide range of threats facing our societies. As well as resilience, once again, US-EU collaboration by focusing on the common goals and issues is crucial (Schuetze, 2020).

Recommendations

- » Involving local partners is also crucial as they know the local context and culture, have the necessary tools and are often at the forefront of dealing with their country's security issues.
- » The EU and the US should also continue to keep an eye on Afghanistan from an intelligence standpoint. If there is a new organization like Al-Qaeda or ISIS, it will allow the allies to nip it in the bud.
- » Cybersecurity and the threat cyberattacks pose must become a greater concern for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. It is essential to ensure there are ramifications for cyberattacks, and the actors must be sufficiently punished, for example, through sanctions. Hardening society against potential threats, adopting strict rules that avoid importing more vulnerabilities to society, and implementing mechanisms for countering foreign interference will also become increasingly necessary.



Conclusion

Joe Biden must continue to work with US partners across the Atlantic, just as the EU must be receptive to cooperation. Hopefully, reaching the end of the pandemic with increased in-person communication and gradually opening borders presents a fresh opportunity to work together on a non-emergency, progressive basis. Countless sectors of the economy would benefit from increased cooperation, and lowering tariffs and barriers makes this a possibility for the future.

Nonetheless, hurdles which the US and the EU will continue to encounter are present. The most significant is the lingering weariness from the Europeans that the US as an ally is still not as active as it once was, following the Trump presidency. However, it is important to acknowledge that partnerships are two ways, and the EU must also continually work towards increased cooperation. Following the effects of Brexit, the partners should aim to fill the role the UK once played in the transatlantic relationship.

As much as the US wants the EU to join its hardline approach towards China, this is an unlikely stance for the union to take. Instead, they should focus on areas of agreement and continue to cooperate on necessary areas such as climate change. One power that the allies have a greater chance of having a unified approach on is Russia. Russia views both the US and countries in the EU as “unfriendly”. From a security standpoint, the world is also becoming an increasingly dangerous place as the lines continue to blur between civilian and military with the increase of hybrid warfare and cyberattacks. World leaders, especially in NATO, which still plays an essential role in today’s world, must continuously adapt to better counteract these threats.

Overall, the US and the EU are strong allies who need each other. A united alliance can build a much better and stronger world for the future than individually. Neither the US nor the EU should fall deeper into the trap of isolationism and protectionism to the degree that it harms the transatlantic partnership. Disagreements between partners are bound to occur, but it is vital to ensure that the alliance is always stronger than this challenge.

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