

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

EP Working Group Proposals

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1. EU and the world in the 21st century

We have seen huge global geopolitical changes during the last 30 years: emergence of a multipolar world with several new powers, including one superpower. Economic and demographic forecasts suggest the deepening of these trends, which indicate the end of the global lead of the West. Despite that, the EU is still the world's largest donor of development aid and one of the main donors of humanitarian aid. This gives EU a major diplomatic role as a game changer actor in the international arena. While recognizing the right of others to develop, we need to answer the question: to what degree the EU, with its like-minded partners, will be able to continue shaping and improving the multilateral order based on cooperation, international law, human rights and freedoms? How do we want to make sure that we have a chance to protect and enhance the security and effective competition of our common European civilization?

The EU needs to equip itself adequately to meet the challenges of the shifting geopolitical order of the 21st century, in a way that the security, prosperity and human rights of its citizens are enhanced. For that reason, the EU needs to have clear and consistent, strategies, based on the EU values and international law, on how to tackle major regional and global challenges by addressing their root causes; what kind of alliances to develop and how to reinforce the cooperation with like-minded countries and organizations (US, UK and NATO, among others), as well as how to become able to act autonomously if it is needed. Finally, we have to find answers on how the EU decision making and institutional architecture must be changed in order for the EU to become much more effective in pursuing its own geopolitical goals.

2. EU and its European neighbourhood. EU enlargement

The condition for maintaining a strong position of the EU in the world is to further strengthen the Community. This means, first of all, consolidation of the prosperity, democracy and rule of law zone in the EU itself, which can only be achieved through a socially sustainable and just economic recovery and uncompromised adherence to the rule of law in all Member States. The EU has to rediscover its ability to lead by example and to inspire the societies in its neighbourhood and beyond to emulate its experience. This also means the enlargement of the prosperity zone, in order to prevent the radicalization of disenchanted societies in the EU's vicinity.

Perspective of the enlargement is one of the tools to incentivise the positive transformation of the societies in the EU's outer ring, particularly in the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership region. How can the Union bear the burden of the enlargement and increase its efficiency and decision-making at the same time? Improvements in the effectiveness of sectoral EU policies and the electoral failures of populism in the EU countries – are these a sufficient basis to accelerate integration processes and to increase the EU's position in and cooperation with its Balkan and Eastern European neighbours in a mutually beneficial way? Can alternative models of ties with the Union (e.g., under the formula “everything, but the institutions”) productively eff replace the current EU enlargement process, which has been stagnating for 10 years?

Strength of the EU comes first of all from its “soft power” - ability to stabilize and reinforce its own neighbourhood by offering it the possibility of integration. That is the way how the EU can foster stability, instead of risking that instability of the neighbourhood will also expand inside the Union itself. The EU needs to have capacity, appetite, concrete political will and commitment to enlarge, while neighbouring countries need to have and to keep their motivation for reforms. In order to be ready for the next wave of enlargement, the EU needs to reform its institutions and decision making process (e.g., by introducing the Qualified majority voting in the majority of decisions). Before those institutional changes will be made inside the EU, the Union should offer its neighbouring countries the integration into the EU Single Market (European Economic Area) and to other selected areas of cooperation, according to the formula “everything, but institutions”.

3. EU: development cooperation and humanitarian aid

Fighting global poverty and inequality, building resilient societies in third countries in the Global South remains a priority in the interest of the EU, which has to be reflected in a coherent overall EU strategy and a roadmap for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

The current health crisis has demonstrated that when it comes to vaccination strategy and tackling the pandemic, rich countries have left behind the most vulnerable ones. We need to strengthen access to health and public goods in general, since no one is safe until everyone is safe. Despite our efforts, more has to be done in order for Europe to prove its true solidarity with the poorest nations, which are facing many other socio-economic challenges. Increasing production capacities of vaccines in Europe and in developing countries need to become a reality in order for the vaccination nationalism to no longer prevail. Furthermore, the current pandemic has deepened the debt crisis without a coherent long-term debt sustainability strategy from rich countries.

Humanitarian crises around the world are at an all-time high partly due to the climate change, thus creating an increasing funding gap.

Strengthening content-wise but also financially both policies, enhancing their synergies and ensuring more coordination and coherence become crucial in order to ensure that the EU continues its leading role as an international actor via its soft power.

4. EU trade: how to defend European values with our trading partners?

Trade policy is an area where Member States willingly pool their sovereignty recognizing that their collective power is far greater than the sum of their individual powers. EU trade policy focuses not only on growth and on job creation, but also on combatting climate change and promoting environmental, labour, and human rights globally. EU trade policy should help to promote European values on the global stage. Any trade agreement concluded on EU's behalf should include robust social, environmental, labour and human rights protection clauses. The EU has spared no efforts in the past decades to ensure that trade is functioning in a rules-based environment founded on predictable norms, stable procedures and competitiveness in global markets. Only such an environment creates win-win situations at a global level, and creates for European industries and companies a level playing field, undisturbed by uncompetitive measures imposed by such state regulated economies as e.g. China.

The Union levels the playing field between European and foreign companies and safeguards EU's interests by:

- (1) negotiating and concluding with third countries trade and/or investment agreements based on the European values, notably human rights, labour and environmental standards;
- (2) ensuring a strong implementation, monitoring and enforcement of such trade agreements.

The recent addition of, and the ongoing discussions on some key trade defence instruments to our toolbox (e.g., the International Procurement Instrument, the Anti-coercion Instrument, foreign subsidies regulation, etc.), assists us in supporting an assertive external action and a vibrant Single Market. Since 2017, the Union has concluded trade agreements with Canada, Singapore, Japan, Vietnam, MERCOSUR, and the United Kingdom. The Union has also modernized its agreement with Mexico. However, most of these agreements are applied only provisionally, as they still await for Member States national and regional parliaments' ratification. This greatly risks undermining our credibility and somehow hinders the so-called "Brussels effect". This must change as the Union cannot defend European values and enforce rules that are not in force. The Union - but more specifically the Council and the Member States - should find a solution to intensify their negotiations towards a swifter speed up of the ratification process or this could entail ratifying trade and investment agreements at the EU level only via the European Parliament.

5. EU and USA. Defence of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Democracies vs autocracies

If China within next decades becomes the strongest global economical power and global geopolitical leader, that will increasingly shift the US geopolitical focus and resources towards the Indo-Pacific region. The EU needs to prepare for the security implications of an expected progressive scaling down of the US commitment to the defence of Europe, as well as on who will take that responsibility of security, now taken by our transatlantic partners, mostly within NATO fora.

In the light of long term global geopolitical changes, the Union should rethink its relations with the Transatlantic Alliance. The EU should, acting in a cooperative spirit, invest more in a transatlantic partnership, based on common values and shared vision of a cooperative international order, with the aim to reinforce the whole Western Community in its endeavours for a global defence of democracy, rule of law, human rights and our way of life.

Within transatlantic partnership, we need to understand, that the global scenario would look totally different, if such countries like Russia and China had transformed themselves into democracies during the 21st century. Efforts of both US and EU will determine whether such a scenario will develop itself globally.

On the other hand, the EU needs to take its future security options to its own hands, even though the preferred way of action will always remain the one based on coordination with partners and like-minded allies. Should the interest and resources of the US be shifted outside the Euro-Atlantic area, the Union could not remain dependent on the policies of some individual Member States, but should aim to be more engaged in providing security in its own neighbourhood. In order to meet this challenge, the Union needs to have a clear strategy now, not in 20 years time.

The EU should invest more in building its own resilience and capability to defend itself against security threats, both conventional ones (such as a revisionist Russia), and a new generation of threats that will likely acquire even more relevance in the future, such as foreign electoral interference, cyber-sabotage, psychological operations, fake news, disinformation and other malign activities designed to undermine European democracies from within.

The EU should foster its own strategic autonomy, understood as an ability to identify its collective geopolitical interests and mobilize means to achieve them. That entails a strategic and coherent use of all external action tools at its disposal, including diplomacy, trade, aid, soft power, but also upgraded defence capabilities.

6. EU and China

China's geopolitical ambitions are rising in tandem with its economic expansion. Do we want to find a way to balance China? Alone or together with like-minded partners, such as the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, or South Korea? How to build an internal EU consensus on the strategy and tactics towards China? How to rebalance our relations with the United States so we become its equal partners? How to reduce the areas of transatlantic discrepancies as to methods of effective competition with China? How can we minimize the Beijing's political and economic interference in EU Member and candidate States?

During the next decades, China may become the strongest global economy. There is a high probability that in such circumstances China will also have ambitions for the global geopolitical leadership. The major challenge for the rest of the world will be very clear and will depend on whether the Chinese global geopolitical leadership will stem from its autocratic or democratic regime. Global geopolitical leadership of autocratic China could lead to a radical change throughout world, where, for the last 300 years had a tradition of having democracies the global geopolitical leadership: Great Britain in the beginning, and the United States after that. China already started asserting its power in its own neighbourhood. In the upcoming decades, we will see enhanced China's efforts to secure a geopolitical hegemony in the South-East Asia. That would increase a likelihood of a conflict with the United States. The EU should, therefore, forge closer relationships with countries that are likely to become increasingly targets of Chinese expansionism, such as Japan, India and Australia, as well as foster closer ties with Taiwan and keep calling out Chinese violations of democracy in Hong Kong and violations of human rights of the Uighur minority. In such a way EU reaffirms the Western commitment to the defence and promotion of democratic values. Taking such positions would also be our attempt to assist China to turn itself towards democracy. Such assistance is needed very much today, because this is the way China can learn lessons of democracy and to prepare itself for the future global geopolitical leadership.

Proposal of MEP Tonino PICULA (S&D)

At the same time, the EU should not give up on engaging China in areas of mutual interest and in multilateral formats, such as progress on Agenda-2030 and SDGs within the UN framework. China's growing ambitions should be channelled in a responsible direction, i.e. global fight against climate change, reduction of poverty, non-proliferations of WMDs, among others. In these and other areas of multilateral interest, the EU should not give up on its efforts to engage China.

7. EU and Russia

The Union and Russia objectively have many common or converging interests, including security, economy, development of science, and culture and their good relations could be mutually beneficial. However, most of the potential cooperation scenarios today are ruled out by Russia's aggressive policy at EU borders and worldwide. How we can change the situation? Is a cooperative model of climate cooperation with Russia, developed as a long-term preparation for the inevitable decline of Russia's position as a supplier of hydrocarbons, possible? Is the EU supposed to proactively increase the offer for Russia and - most notably - Russian people in selected areas (e.g. education, research, youth exchange, culture) without guarantees that such areas will not be subject to authoritarian intervention by the Russian authorities?

Democratic transformation in Russia would be a major change on the European continent. Such a transformation is desirable for the benefit of the Russian people. Such a change would create totally new and much more favourable conditions for cooperation in areas of security, economy and global challenge of the climate change. This is why there is a need to build European unity and resilience against today's Russian authorities' attempts to undermine EU democracies through electoral interference, support for far-right political parties, cyber-attacks, disinformation and other forms of malign interferences. That is why the EU and Transatlantic Alliance should be much stricter on "pushing back" on violations of human rights and principles of democracy inside Russia. They should also be much more effective in containing aggressive Kremlin threats towards Russia's neighbours, as well as be more ambitious with support and integration agenda in the Eastern Partnership region, where the EU can assist to build success of those countries . Such a success could become an inspiration for Russian people to follow their example of democratic transformation and support a democratic transition in Russia in the long-term.

Proposal of MEP Tonino PICULA (S&D)

At the same time, the EU should pursue selective engagement with Russia in areas of mutual interests, such as non-proliferation efforts (reviving the Iran nuclear deal as an example), strategic stability in Europe through arms control, counter-terrorism, fighting trans-national criminal networks, etc.

8. EU and Africa. EU and Mediterranean

For the EU, Africa represents, together with the Mediterranean, an area with great potential for deepened partnership. The dynamic demographic growth in the close vicinity, especially in Africa, provide an opportunity for a favourable development of cooperation, and on the other hand, they may constitute an unprecedented threat of uncontrolled migration of multi millions. How do we want to support a positive scenario inspired by the intention to foster socio-economic development in the African continent? Are we able to multiply the funds for cooperation with Africa and link them to clear, realist and measurable outcomes? Is it possible to move away from competition and replace it with coordination between Africa's main partners (i.e. EU, USA and China)?

According to forecasts, Africa will grow from 1.5 billion inhabitants now to 4.5 billion by the end of the 21st century. Either such growth will create an economically stable, new global power of manufacturing, or the world (with Europe in the first place) will deal with a continent of major instability. In addition to challenges currently faced by Africa in the area of economic development , the climate change can bring an additional heavy burden. A failure to intervene on these issues maintains a crisis of high unemployment, which directly affects peace and stability in the continent, at the same time magnifying other existing challenges in the Sahel, Central African Republic, the Horn of Africa and Mozambique.

To make a significant impact, the EU needs to present a holistic package anchored on a strategy of growing, shared and inclusive, economies, which are green and sustainable. The EU also needs to present itself as a reliable partner, and to assume global leadership in building both a coalition and the clear strategy on assisting Africa through both prudent trade policy and modernization assistance, tailored to the needs of particular countries and regions of Africa. At the same time, both sides have to strengthen their cooperation and undertake more concrete commitments in the joint management of migratory flows.

The Mediterranean has always been an important strategic area for the EU. and there is much mutual benefit to be garnered from closer cooperation with the countries of the southern and eastern

Mediterranean. As a geographical region, whose countries face many shared challenges, given their joint proximity to a common sea, efforts of establishing a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean region should be further and more intensively explored by the EU. Among such challenges are the Covid-19 pandemic, the digital transformation, environmental protection, climate change and energy, migration and mobility. Such a cooperation must be conducted under common rules based on the respect for international law and national sovereignty as well as protection of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Proposal by MEP Tonino PICULA (S&D)

Need for collaborative action remains a priority on a number of key thematic areas, among them the post COVID-19 recovery encompassing both vaccination and a stimulus package towards small businesses and the informal sector, most of which were hard hit by the pandemic but are still unable to access sustainable loans.

In addition, with a strategy for gross capital formation dealing with issues of the African Social Agenda and human development, the EU should present itself as a reliable partner in building effective public health delivery systems while investing in education of young Africans, as well as critical infrastructure.

These strategies should be complemented with the strengthening of public institutions to make them more effective as well as inclusive and accessible. A key component of it will be the role of Parliament in policy formulation and law making as well interaction with citizens including on cooperation priorities.

9. EU “Green Deal” and its geopolitical consequences

The climate change demands us to act now. The EU has its own “Green Deal”, which is a proper European response to the challenge of the climate change. Our “Green Deal” can become a successful global tool to mitigate the impact of climate change, provided similar policies are implemented throughout the world.

Different countries in different continents will face different geopolitical challenges arising from the implementation of EU “Green Deal”. Implementation of the “Green Deal” in the EU will cut its oil and gas consumption by 60-70% during the next two decades. Thus, structure of economies of countries like Russia, as well as countries in the Middle East or North Africa, currently significantly dependant on oil and gas exports, including to the EU, will be challenged. Because of challenges to their economies, some of those countries might also face challenges to their political structures. With less dependency on oil and gas exports, those countries can come closer to democratic transformation. EU needs to be ready to address in advance such geopolitical consequences of its “Green Deal”. In addition, we should seek that climate actions of the EU (as well as other major polluters) are proportionate to the actual environmental impact, at the same time ensuring that objectives set by the “Green Deal” in no way weaken the competitiveness of European companies.

10. EU and its strategic autonomy in security and defence

EU needs to be ready to face a totally different global geopolitical landscape that will be shaped during the 21st century. Considering that instability and unpredictability on the Union’s borders and in its immediate neighbourhood (North Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean, etc.), as well as in its extended neighbourhood (Sahel, the Horn of Africa, etc.), together with Russian aggression against Ukraine and Georgia, pose both a direct and indirect threat

to the security of the continent, the question “Who is going to defend the EU?” can be very realistic and pressing at that time. Preparation to give a proper answer should be started now. A robust European defence and security union is an essential part of the EU’s stated objective of achieving strategic autonomy. Therefore, the EU should pay adequate attention to strengthening its strategic autonomy, reinforcing at the same time in areas of common interests and challenges its cooperation with its historical allies and like-minded partners. To be able to become more resilient and to better defend ourselves against new forms of aggression, the EU should broaden and modernize the use of its collective defence clause (Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union). A European Defence and Security union requires more rapid, robust and coordinated action whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible, and alone when necessary, as well as the affirmation and practical implementation of capacities for a better assessment of crisis situations. In addition, investing more in capabilities, as well as deepening European cooperation and coordination in planning, developing, delivering and using these capabilities through the EU framework are required.

To guarantee necessary response capacity and to become less dependent on the rest of the world, the EU must strive for more of the strategic sovereignty in supply chains, critical infrastructure, defence, digital, energy, financial services and healthcare, while at the same time safeguarding the commitment to free trade and openness.

Very special strategic attention should be paid to the EU strategic autonomy in energy security, where the heavy dependency on gas imports from Russia is becoming a challenge to the geopolitical security of the EU.

Proposal by MEP Deirdre CLUNE (EPP)

Strategic autonomy of the EU in security and defence should fully respect the specific character of the security and defence policies of the Member States.

11. EU effectiveness in its foreign and security policy

The strengthening of the EU's position and influence in the world requires making the idea of a truly common foreign policy more realistic. The most important conditions include:

- (a) the establishment of a common strategic culture and an agreed common strategy towards all major global issues, as well as on the cooperation with partners and the approach towards rivals;
- (b) the immunisation of decision-making abilities by eliminating (or at least significantly reducing) the decision blocking veto (in particular: the EU must move towards the qualified majority voting (QMV) in foreign policy; QMV should also be expanded to decision-making in other areas of CFSP, with a particular focus on human rights);
- (c) increasing decision making and implementation powers of the EU institutions, including the European Parliament.

Proposal by MEP Carlo FIDANZA (ECR)

1. Reaffirming that at the highest level of the EU’s institutional framework for foreign and security policy lie the European Council;

2. The Foreign Affairs Council will remain responsible for the EU's external action; meanwhile the European Parliament will only increase its role with reference to democratic control over policy direction and resource allocation.

3. With reference to the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, voting by unanimity must remain the rule.

- 4. Clearly define relations with Turkey by putting an end to its EU membership process. Only after this, it will be possible to establish a peaceful and positive future cooperation with the Turkish people within a framework of a new trade strategic partnership.*
- 5. An in-depth assessment of the action carried out by the EEAS to date.*