

**Progress Report**

The Transatlantic To-Do  
List: Biden's first 100 days

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## Summary

Last October, the third annual Transatlantic Policy Forum (TAPF) took place virtually. The Forum not only brought together a wide range of experts but provided inputs and interesting takeaways, including recommendations and a “Transatlantic To-Do List”, which outlined action points on how the US and the EU should approach the given challenges ranging from increased multilateral collaboration to further development of economic and security engagement.

Now that Biden is hitting his 100 days in office, EUROPEUM experts Danielle Piatkiewicz and Miroslava Pisklová re-examine their “Transatlantic To-Do List” and provide a progress report.



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**1. The next US administration needs to continue to rebuild European trust in America as a reliable strategic partner and rebuild democratic values through strong leadership;**

- **Ongoing:** Early on in his term, Biden and his team have set out to undo Trump's unilateral approach to global relations and mend damaged international ties, especially with the EU. Post-elections, the Union's representatives admitted their relief with its result and expressed anticipation of warming the Transatlantic relations under the new administration. This has been echoed by the US Secretary of State Blinken's recent visit to Brussels to discuss NATO cooperation and Biden's pro-EU remarks at the March European Council meeting. Biden's invitation to join this meeting was a powerful symbol of the EU re-committing to a strong transatlantic alliance, as his predecessor never got such opportunity as a reaction to his foreign policy steps. Both sides can agree that the US-EU relationship is officially back on track. However, as both global and domestic challenges continue to mount, these democratic allies will need to start translating these symbolic and powerful commitments into action.

**2. Coordinate on creating joint economic recovery efforts to help rebuild transatlantic relations post-COVID;**

- **Pending:** Given that the pandemic is still raging on a global scale, including in the US and the EU, it seems that any forms of joint post-COVID recovery will be on hold until each region can manage the rise in cases as well as vaccine roll-out. As the EU currently lags behind the US in this regard quite significantly, we can expect such initiative to take months before even starting to take some concrete shape.

**3. Further develop existing multilateral systems in place to help bolster economic, trade and security growth vis à vis Three Seas Initiative (3SI) and look to renew outdated ones;**

- **Completed:** There has been good news in this area. Biden has called for the continued development of the region's defense capabilities, so far prioritizing the 3SI to strengthen transatlantic business, energy, and geopolitical ties to the CEE. In March, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution in support of the 3SI.

**4. Work on infrastructure in terms of military mobility as well as of cyberspace and technologies;**

- **Ongoing:** Outlined in the NATO 2030 and in the Biden's strategic plan, modernizing military capabilities while also investing in digital infrastructure, including securing 5G networks, cyberspace, information technology and countering emerging threatening digital technologies, remain at the top of both agendas. In order to shape emerging tech standards and to boost joint security, economic competitiveness, and values, Biden has emphasized the need to partner with democratic friends and allies to amplify our collective competitive advantages.

**5. Rethink the 2% threshold on defense spending and further invest in European joint capacity building, cohesion and consistency;**

- **Ongoing:** So far, there has been no concrete updates from the Biden's team on defense spending requirements from NATO allies. However, Blinken's recommitment towards NATO and plea for a stronger EU support on countering growing threats may require the EU member states to ramp up their military spending in the long term. Such expectation enunciated from the other side of the Atlantic are nothing new and the EU should seek to balance their strategic autonomy ambitions by continuing to invest in their security and defense capabilities. The EU member states need to work



on preventing their defense budgets to suffer as a reaction to negative economic implications of the ongoing pandemic, as this would potentially irritate the recently re-established relations with the US ally and would generally not be a wise move in times of increasingly deteriorating security environment.

**6. Develop a standard policy under which security considerations come before economic ones in order to lessen the danger of global dependencies;**

- **Pending:** Unfortunately, economic concerns are still outpacing security concerns evident from the recent EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) and the ongoing Nord Stream 2 project. These make it challenging to adequately address continuous external security threats.

**7. Restrengthen ongoing work on diplomacy and dialogue, as these cannot be stopped because of major disruptions, such as a pandemic or elections;**

- **Completed:** Biden and his established foreign policy team have certainly delivered by quickly reengaging on multilateral agreements such as the World Health Organization and recommitting to the Paris Climate Agreement, among other initiatives. The new US administration also instantly reestablished a friendly and prospective/promising dialogue with the EU, as well as NATO, trying to show everyone its strong intention to solidify American position as a determined protector of democratic values and a trustworthy and reliable ally.

**8. Work on mitigating the impact of disinformation and propaganda, both foreign and domestic, on our citizens;**

- **Ongoing:** Unfortunately, the US election and events of January 6<sup>th</sup> have only amplified the growing threats that disinformation can have on democracies by eroding existing international rules and promoting alternative models of authoritarian governance. Biden has called for the US to help strengthen democracy around the world and has called upon fellow democracies to help in this endeavor, including the EU. Meanwhile, the EU is getting increasingly troubled by an escalating wave of disinformation incoming from the East and consolidation of some leaders with authoritarian tendencies, which are growing due to issues brought by the pandemic, such as vaccine approval and procurement. The need for a joint transatlantic response to these developments is thus only becoming more urgent.

**9. Develop a joint US-EU approach towards Russia and China as security threats; and**

- **Pending:** Both the US and the EU, and especially within the context of NATO, consider Russia and China as geopolitical challengers and growing threats to global stability. However, when it comes to a cohesive EU and US policy, so far diverging security and economic approaches have hindered this development. We may see more alignment on security approaches under the framework of NATO towards Russia, especially as relations on the Ukrainian border increase. However, economic relations so far outpace security approaches towards China and a joint policy is unlikely to develop in the immediate future. Nevertheless, digital and cyber policy could be a uniting issue as China increases its dominance in this area.

**10. Work commonly in the area of energy (and climate) security (ex. by reinforcing LNG export-import between the US and the EU).**

- **Ongoing:** The US and the EU have both set out ambitious goals to tackle climate change. The US has recommitted to the Paris Climate agreement and the EU placed climate and green transformation at top of the agenda under its Next Generation post-pandemic recovery plan. However, when it comes to energy collaboration, Nord Stream 2 continues to be a thorn in Transatlantic relations as Biden claims that it will threaten national security and pose potential regional threats, especially to the CEE, while the EU under the tutelage of Germany, does not seem to be willing to step back from this project.



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