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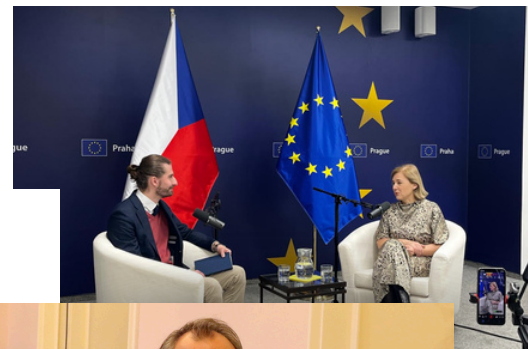
Semi-annual journal of the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy



EUROPE'S SECURITY AT STAKE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- NATO's role in EU security
- Interviews with Rem Korteweg, Ian Brzezinski and Věra Jourová
- Why a resilient V4 media matter?



EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

Staroměstské náměstí 4/1
110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic

europeum.org

Executive Director: Martin Vokálek

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EUROPE'S SECURITY AT STAKE

Edited by


Liljana Cvetanoska

With contributions from

Viktor Daněk, Zuzana Krulichová, Filip Křenek, Danielle Piatkiewicz and Mateusz M. Piotrowski, Oszkár Roginer-Hofmeister



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FOREWORD

Message from the Executive Director and the Editorial Team

Dear readers and partners,

We are thrilled to introduce the inaugural edition of **EuroLens**, EUROPEUM's new journal dedicated to fostering informed debate and offering actionable insights into European Union policymaking. With over 25 years of expertise as an independent think-tank operating both in Czechia and Brussels this initiative represents a new chapter in our mission to bridge the gap between rigorous analysis and practical policymaking.

EuroLens is designed with a clear vision: to engage key stakeholders, including public administration professionals, NGOs, and business representatives, with expert-oriented content that balances depth and accessibility. Our approach combines the rigour of policy analysis with semi-journalistic elements such as interviews, op-eds, and infographics to provide a comprehensive yet digestible view of the most pressing issues facing Europe today.

The theme of our first issue is **security**

ahead of a Trump 2.0, reflecting the critical importance of this topic for Europe's current and future policymaking. This edition features:

- Three exclusive interviews with senior policymakers, offering practical insights into security challenges and solutions;
- Policy papers from EUROPEUM's researchers, exploring key dimensions of EU security policy;
- A timeline of important security events for the coming year;
- A reflection on our recent Transatlantic Policy Forum, summarising key takeaways from this important dialogue.

This issue is not just a collection of research; it is a call to action—a space for discussion, reflection, and collaboration. We see EuroLens as more than a journal. It aims to be a platform for sparking conversations that matter, for connecting stakeholders, and for influencing the EU policymaking process in meaningful ways.

We are proud to have brought together this first edition entirely in-house, and we look forward to future editions where we wish to incorporate diverse external voices and perspectives. This will not only enrich the quality of the discourse but also help us scale up the journal's impact and reach, fostering a broader community of contributors and readers dedicated to the common European project.

We hope you find EuroLens to be an engaging and insightful resource for your work. Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we welcome your ideas and collaboration as we continue to grow this exciting initiative.



Martin Vokálek
Executive Director
and the editorial team



ANALYSIS

Realigning Europe's Indo-Pacific Approach

ANALYSIS



REALIGNING EUROPE'S INDO-PACIFIC APPROACH:

Navigating Security and Economic Challenges in Light of the War in Ukraine

Zuzana Krulichová



*Traditionally, the EU has perceived the Indo-Pacific mainly through the lenses of economic cooperation. However, recent events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the re-election of Donald Trump as US president, have only increased the debate on **other aspects** of the EU's approach to the region, such as **traditional security or forming new partnerships and alliances** to serve as a counterbalance to China.*

The Indo-Pacific region has become increasingly important to the European Union's (EU) foreign policy in recent years. This shift is driven by the region's economic importance and the need to strengthen ties with Asian partners. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had profound implications for European security, forcing the EU to shift its foreign policy focus back to its borders. At the same time, the full-scale invasion highlighted some of the issues connected to global security, which have already been present but are now seen as pressing, such as the resilience of supply chains and societies against disinformation or cyber security. Some analysts argue this shift has redirected the EU's resources and security attention away from the Indo-Pacific [1], limiting its

[1] Gorana Grgić and Giulia Tercovich, 'Shifting Narratives? The EU's Approach to the Indo-Pacific after the War in Ukraine', *Journal of European Integration* 47, no. 1 (2 January 2025): 63–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2024.2361339>

ability to engage militarily in the region as it concentrates on strengthening NATO and reinforcing European defences. Others see the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a confirmation that the Indo-Pacific and European security are interconnected, particularly considering the growing alignment between China and Russia. [2] Considering these complexities, the EU will have to recalibrate its Indo-Pacific strategy in several aspects. So far, the full extent of the changes is unclear. However, the EU may need to focus more strategically on selected priorities in the future [3], such as economic security, its competitiveness or its increased role in global security. Thus, some consequences of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine also emphasised the EU's interests in the Indo-Pacific. The economic fallout of the war, including disruptions to energy supplies and global markets, has made member states reconsider the architecture of European security and highlighted the importance of secure and resilient supply chains. For instance, vulnerabilities in energy and critical goods supply have emerged, underscoring the need for diversification as a strategic priority. These disruptions have emphasised the need to focus on the Indo-Pacific from a geopolitical standpoint. Any potential conflict involving China could

similarly destabilise global trade routes and profoundly impact European economies, necessitating continued strategic engagement. Therefore, maintaining and furthering such engagement in the Indo-Pacific is essential for protecting Europe's broader economic and geopolitical interests.

Considering these complexities, the EU has had to recalibrate its Indo-Pacific strategy in several aspects. Traditionally, the EU has perceived the Indo-Pacific mainly through the lenses of economic cooperation. However, recent events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the re-election of Donald Trump as US president, have only increased the debate on other aspects of the EU's approach to the region, such as traditional security or forming new partnerships and alliances to serve as a counterbalance to China. The EU's approach may become more strategically focused on selected priorities in the future. This paper thus explores the likely direction of the shift in the EU's approach to the region in these two aspects: security and alliances. It first briefly presents the Indo-Pacific as a concept, then dives into the two elements of EU-Indo-Pacific cooperation, and lastly, briefly discusses the potential effects of the recent US election results on the whole regional dynamics.

[2] Alice Billon-Galland and Hans Kundnani, 'How Ukraine Will Change Europe's Indo-Pacific Ambitions', Chatham House, 24 April 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/04/how-ukraine-will-change-europes-indo-pacific-ambitions>

[3] Grgić and Tercovich, 'Shifting Narratives?.'

The Indo-Pacific: A Rising Concept

The Indo-Pacific concept refers to a strategic and geopolitical framework that emphasises the interconnectedness of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Although often vaguely defined or used differently by various actors [4], it underscores the region's critical role in global trade, security, and political dynamics. Key countries include India, Japan, Australia, and Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia and Vietnam and extend to countries from East Africa to the Pacific Islands [5]. While the region encompasses China, the Indo-Pacific has evolved to signify a counterbalance to China's rising influence within the Euro-Atlantic sphere, even if China is not explicitly named in official documents [6]. Initially driven by economic interests, the EU's approach to the Indo-Pacific has broadened to include additional objectives such as promoting sustainable development regional stability [7]. The publication

of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in 2021 [8] marked a pivotal shift, emphasising not only the economic significance of the region but also the importance of collaboration on global challenges, including climate change, digital transformation, and maritime security. For example, the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) is implemented within the Northwestern Indian Ocean. Through the CMP, the EU member states can coordinate their regional naval assets to act more effectively to promote rules-based order within the area [9]. Furthermore, the strategy highlights the need for strengthened security and diplomatic partnerships to counterbalance geopolitical tensions, promote open sea lanes, and ensure adherence to international law. The EU also aims to deepen trade ties through, for example, new free trade agreements being negotiated with countries such as Indonesia [10] or the Philippines [11], efforts that precede the strategy itself but may get new momentum. This strategic approach to the region

[4] Bartsch and Wessling, 'From a China Strategy to No Strategy at All'

[5] Igor Denisov et al., 'Russia, China, and the Concept of Indo-Pacific', *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2021): 72–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1879366521999899>

[6] Matt Ferchen, 'Europe's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Moving Beyond US-China Rivalry and Refocusing on Asia' (Leiden Asia Centre, 2022), <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/LAC-report-Europes-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

[7] European Commission, 'The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' (EEAS, 2021), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf

[8] European Commission.

[9] EEAS, 'Coordinated Maritime Presences', EEAS, 2024, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/coordinated-maritime-presences_en

[10] 'EU-Indonesia', European Commission, 10 January 2025, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/indonesia/eu-indonesia-agreement_en

[11] 'EU Trade Relations with the Philippines', European Commission, 18 March 2024, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/philippines_en

is expected to continue within the new EU Commission. Von der Leyen drove the EU strategy shift and will likely continue this term. Also, the new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, is known for a similar stricter stance on China. [12]

The interplay of security between Indo-Pacific and Europe

Initially driven by economic interests, the EU's approach to the Indo-Pacific has evolved to encompass broader objectives, including promoting sustainable development and enhancing regional stability. Over time, the EU has recognised the Indo-Pacific as a critical region for upholding global security [13]. This shift has been further emphasised by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which not only refocused European

attention on security but also underscored the importance of strengthening the EU's strategic role in global affairs. This was exemplified by the unprecedented appointment of an EU Commissioner for Defence and Space [14]. As security challenges grow increasingly interconnected, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a focal point for the EU's security and defence cooperation, with discussions often centred on enhancing partnerships to address maritime security, cyber threats, and the broader geopolitical balance in the region. [15]

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU had been focusing on its security cooperation with the Indo-Pacific. That is a dimension included in the EU Indo-Pacific strategy [16] and strategies of several EU member states such as Germany [17], France [18], and the Netherlands [19], which are militarily present in the region. France, with its territorial presence in

[12] Nicholas Vinocur, Hanne Cokelaere, and Eddy Wax, '5 Things to Know about Kaja Kallas' European Parliament Hearing - POLITICO', Politico, 12 November 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/kaja-kallas-european-parliament-hearing-foreign-policy-diplomacy-estonia/>

[13] 'A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence' (EEAS, 2022), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf

[14] 'Confirmation Hearing of Andrius KUBILIUS, Commissioner-Designate, Defence and Space', European Parliament Website, 6 November 2024, <https://acs.europarl.connectedviews.eu/embed/meeting/?refid=20241106-1830-COMMITTEE-CONFIRMATION-HEARING-A&audio=en&language=en>

[15] Dylan Macchiarini Crosson, Stefania Benaglia, and Linus Vermuelen, 'Future-Proofing EU Security and Defence Policies in the Indo-Pacific: Doubling down with Friends' (Real Instituto Elcano, 26 December 2023), <https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ari130-2023-crosson-et-al-future-proofing-eu-security-and-defence-policies-in-the-indo-pacific-doubling-down-with-friends.pdf>

[16] European Commission, 'The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific'.

[17] Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, 'Strategy on China of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany', 2023.

[18] Government of France, 'France's Indo-Pacific Strategy', 2021, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/en_a4_indopacifique_synthese_rvb_cle068e51.pdf

[19] Government of the Netherlands, 'Indo-Pacific: Guidelines for Strengthening Dutch and EU Cooperation with Partners in Asia', 2020, <https://www.government.nl/documents/publications/2020/11/13/indo-pacific-guidelines>

the Indo-Pacific, has long been the leading EU actor in the area. [20] The security of the Indo-Pacific and the EU has been increasingly seen as interconnected from the European point of view. This has been, for example, highlighted recently by the involvement of North Korea in the Russian invasion of Ukraine [21] or via the partnership without limits between China and Russia [22], which continuously, although sometimes cautiously, signals support for the Russian position. [23] The Russian invasion highlighted this interconnectedness and the growing need to prioritise security. It sparked a debate about the EU's realistic ability to expand its already modest presence in the Indo-Pacific, given the pressing demands on its capacities in Europe or the Middle East. [24] The EU's engagement in the Indo-Pacific as a security actor has steadily expanded through multilateral and

bilateral channels. Security cooperation is a part of the EU-ASEAN partnership [25], reinforced by regular leader-level summits and collaboration in various areas. The EU participates in key regional fora, including the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit, and engages in dialogue through platforms like the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Bilateral ties, such as those with Japan, complement these efforts, alongside freedom of navigation exercises conducted by EU member states. This cooperation is a two-way street. Japan is part of the Lithuanian-led demining coalition for Ukraine [26], and South Korea is a significant arms supplier for Ukraine and Poland. [27] The EU faces uncertainty about enhancing its presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific, particularly given the strain on its resources from crises in Europe and the Middle East. [28] Many

[20] Ben Schreer, 'Coming of Age? European Defence Engagement in the Indo-Pacific', IISS, 22 May 2024, <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/05/coming-of-age-european-defence-engagement-in-the-indo-pacific/>

[21] NATO, 'Doorstep Statement by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte Following the North Atlantic Council Briefing on the DPRK's Troop Deployment to Russia', NATO, 2024, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_230105.htm

[22] Anushka Saxena, '75 Years of China-Russia Relations: Indeed a "No Limits" Partnership', Institute for Security and Development Policy, 27 May 2024, <https://www.isdp.eu/75-years-of-china-russia-relations-indeed-a-no-limits-partnership/>

[23] 'China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 24 February 2023, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367485.html

[24] Billon-Galland and Kundnani, 'How Ukraine Will Change Europe's Indo-Pacific Ambitions'.

[25] Giulio Pugliese, 'The European Union's Security Intervention in the Indo-Pacific: Between Multilateralism and Mercantile Interests', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 17, no. 1 (1 January 2023): 76–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2022.2118425>

[26] 'Provision of Demining Machines to Ukraine', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 10 July 2024, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00415.html

[27] Aina Turillazzi and Oscar Luigi Guccion, 'Poland Flexes Its Muscles: Partnering with South Korea for Europe's Eastern Defense', German Marshall Fund of the United States, 23 October 2024, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/poland-flexes-its-muscles-partnering-south-korea-europes-eastern-defense>

[28] Billon-Galland and Kundnani, 'How Ukraine Will Change Europe's Indo-Pacific Ambitions'.

European governments have already increased their spending on defence and will invest in the reconstitution of Ukraine in the future. With other priorities at the EU level, such as the Global Gateway strategy aimed at increased investments in global infrastructure, the capacity to engage militarily in the Indo-Pacific remains limited. [29]

Besides material resources, maintaining a coherent and effective strategy will depend on reconciling member states' differing priorities and ensuring that Europe's Indo-Pacific engagements are sustained and strategically aligned. The diversity of perspectives among EU member states, particularly regarding China, challenges the cohesion and effectiveness of the EU's Indo-Pacific engagement. Some countries, like Germany [30], are more hesitant to oppose China directly. Furthermore, these divisions can be seen in the fact that although more EU member states have a specific strategic document on the Indo-Pacific and the EU strategy, many member states still perceive the role of the strategies differently. [31] These internal divisions may further complicate the European Union's capability to act decisively in a security crisis in the Indo-Pacific region, especially if the crisis requires

swift coordination among member states of the EU.

Maintaining solid alliances in the Indo-Pacific

Strong partnerships with the Indo-Pacific countries are essential for achieving several goals of the EU, such as increased competitiveness or strengthened security, both economic and traditional. New alliances are needed to secure their supply chains and to lower the dependency on China in areas such as the supply of raw materials. However, in the traditional security domain, the rule of law in the region must also be maintained.

Nonetheless, establishing new relationships within the region presents challenges, many of which are primarily normative. So far, the EU has been focusing on regional partnerships with like-minded countries, such as Japan or South Korea, to mitigate security risks and reduce economic dependencies on China. However, in pursuing new partnerships, every EU member state has been increasing its diplomatic presence or considering new alliances with countries such as India or Vietnam, whose governance systems, characterised by varying degrees of democratic principles,

[29] Frederick Kliem, 'How the EU Can Still Succeed in the Indo-Pacific Despite the War in Ukraine', *The Diplomat*, 28 May 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/how-the-eu-can-still-succeed-in-the-indo-pacific-despite-the-war-in-ukraine/>

[30] Pugliese, 'The European Union's Security Intervention in the Indo-Pacific'.

[31] Bernhard Bartsch and Claudia Wessling, 'From a China Strategy to No Strategy at All', 2023.

differ from those of established liberal democracies. [32] Many Indo-Pacific countries ran very low on democracy as measured by both the Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Both institutions rank 23% of the countries as either not free or authoritarian, respectively. [33] Others considered more democratic still face several challenges. For example, India, which is regarded as a potential strong partner in the region by the EU [34], has been under the government of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, and the government with Prime Minister Modi has been criticised for targeting political opponents and religious minorities through governmental institutions and for excessive corruption. [35]

Balancing strategic interests, such as trade and security, with its commitment to democratic governance poses a challenge, potentially weakening the EU's global influence and authority. The EU often attaches conditionality to its

partnerships to promote its normative principles through trade and cooperation. However, engaging with non-democratic countries in the region risks undermining its coherence as an international actor, a critique sometimes levelled against its foreign policy approach. [36]

The diverse regional reactions to the Russian invasion of Ukraine showed that gaining support on issues critical to European security within the area might be difficult for the EU. While countries like Japan and Australia [37] have aligned with the EU's stance on Russia. Others, like Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam have maintained a cautious stance or oppose the EU's stance based on their political ties to Russia and China. Only the Philippines and Singapore have taken a more explicit position, expressing direct support for Ukraine in its defence against Russia's invasion. [38]

As discussed, the EU focuses on increasing regional relations within its

[32] James Crabtree and Manisha Reuter, 'Rebooting EU-India Relations: How to Unlock Post-Election Potential', ECFR, 17 April 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/article/rebooting-eu-india-relations-how-to-unlock-post-election-potential/>

[33] 1. Alana Ford, 'The State of Democracy in the Indo-Pacific', Indo-Pacific Analysis Briefs (Perth USAsia Centre, 2024), <https://perthusasia.edu.au/research-insights/publications/the-state-of-democracy-in-the-indo-pacific/>

[34] 1.EEAS, 'EU-India: Joint Press Release on 5th Strategic Partnership Review Meeting and 10th Foreign Policy and Security Consultations in Brussels', 4 December 2024, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/india/eu-india-joint-press-release-5th-strategic-partnership-review-meeting-and-10th-foreign-policy-and>

[35] Gareth Price, 'Democracy in India', Chatham House, 6 April 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/04/democracy-india>

[36] Carmen Gebhard, 'The Problem of Coherence in the European Union's International Relations', in *International Relations and the European Union*, ed. Christopher Hill, Michael Smith, and Sophie Vanhoonacker, 3rd edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[37] 'US, Australia, Japan, India Condemn Russia's Nuclear Threats', Ukrainian World Congress, 24 September 2024, <https://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/us-australia-japan-india-condemn-russias-nuclear-threats/>

[38] Andrea Passeri, 'The Russia-Ukraine War Is ASEAN's Latest Political Headache', Australian Institute of International Affairs, 9 June 2023, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-russia-ukraine-war-is-aseans-latest-political-headache/>

strategy. Some EU member states have similar strategies, such as the Czechia [39], Lithuania [40], and the Netherlands [41]. Most of them highlight increased diplomatic presence in the region as one of their goals, creating new posts such as the Czech special representative for Indo-Pacific [42] or cyber attaché for the Indo-Pacific region [43]. Such increased presence is significant in terms of increased future cooperation. It should be continued, even at the EU level under the new EU Commission or within the framework of Global Gateway.

The role of the US in EU-Indo-Pacific policy

The Indo-Pacific represents a critical arena for both EU and U.S. strategic interests, yet their approaches reveal key differences and areas for collaboration. Historically, the U.S. has developed a security presence in the region, focusing on military alliances such as AUKUS and strategic partnerships like the Quad to counter

China's growing influence. [44] Conversely, the EU has pursued a more multifaceted approach and prioritised economic partnerships, sustainable development, and norms-based diplomacy while steadily increasing its security role.

Donald Trump's return to the presidency is expected to have notable implications for EU-China and Indo-Pacific relations. For Europe, Trump's resurgence brings renewed uncertainty in U.S.-EU diplomacy. European leaders worry about a shift in U.S. commitments to NATO, the weakening of transatlantic unity, and a further pivot to Asia. [45] The tough stance on China present within the first Trump administration is expected to return, increasing pressure on the EU to follow suit. Thus, as the overall rhetoric within the EU on China has become more critical in recent years, China's policy could potentially serve as a point of convergence between the US and the EU. However, for that to work in practice, the EU policy on China would have to become more united internally, as it is currently

[39] 'The Czech Republic's Strategy For Cooperation With The Indo-Pacific' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2022), https://mzv.gov.cz/file/4922486/CZ_Strategy_Indo_Pacific_2022.pdf

[40] 'For a Secure Resilient and Prosperous Future: Lithuania's Indo-Pacific Strategy' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023), <https://www.urm.lt/en/foreign-policy/lithuania-in-the-region-and-the-world/lithuanias-cooperation-with-the-indo-pacific/1219>

[41] Government of the Netherlands, 'Indo-Pacific: Guidelines for Strengthening Dutch and EU Cooperation with Partners in Asia'.

[42] 'Nový zmocněnec pro Indo-Pacifik', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021, https://mzv.gov.cz/newdelhi/cz/udalosti/novy_zmocnec_pro_indo_pacifik.html

[43] 'Cyber Attaché', National Cyber and Information Security Agency, accessed 20 January 2025, <https://nukib.gov.cz/en/contacts/cyber-attache/>

[44] Manjari Chatterjee Miller, 'The Quad, AUKUS, and India's Dilemmas', Council on Foreign Relations, 13 October 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/article/quad-aukus-and-indias-dilemmas>

[45] Alicia García-Herrero and Abigaël Vasselier, 'Updating the EU Strategy on China: Co-Existence While Derisking through Partnerships', Bruegel, 25 September 2024, <https://www.bruegel.org/policy-brief/updating-eu-strategy-china-co-existence-while-derisking-through-partnerships>

highly fragmented considering. Notwithstanding the rhetorical shift on China in many member states, their stances still vary significantly. Germany generally takes a more careful approach, while some smaller member states, such as Lithuania or Czechia, are highly critical. Overall, the increasingly critical rhetoric is often not followed by concrete policy steps, and economic cooperation with China is still more or less the same or steadily rising [46]. The member states' divisions thus focus on developing their approach or strategic autonomy on this issue rather than a close convergence with the US.

Conclusion

The EU's evolving Indo-Pacific strategy reflects a balancing act between addressing immediate security threats at home and maintaining a solid presence in a region critical to global trade and geopolitics. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced the EU to redirect resources toward European security, to some extent limiting its possibilities to strengthen its engagement in the Indo-Pacific. However, the region's importance in terms of secure supply chains, particularly in light of growing tensions with China, compels the EU to sustain its strategic focus there. Economic diversification has become essential

more robust partnerships with India, Japan, and other Indo-Pacific nations as the EU seeks to reduce its dependency on China. Nevertheless, forging alliances in this diverse and politically complex region presents challenges, especially when dealing with non-democratic regimes, which could weaken the EU's commitment to democratic values. Finally, the new incoming Trump administration adds further uncertainty to the future developments within the region.

About the author:

Zuzana Krulichová is a research fellow in the Global Europe programme at EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy and PhD student at the Department of European Studies, Charles University. She holds an MA in International Relations from Leiden University and an undergraduate degree in Area Studies from Charles University. Generally, she is interested in EU foreign policy and the role of member states in its development, relations between the EU and Indo-Pacific, and global infrastructure projects, such as the BRI or Global Gateway and non-coercive influence in IR. Before starting the PhD programme, she worked for People in Need.

[46] 'China-EU - International Trade in Goods Statistics', Eurostat Official Website, 2024, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU - international trade in goods statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=China-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics)

INTERVIEW

Rem Korteweg: Trade Has Become a Dirty Word



INTERVIEW

TRADE HAS BECOME A DIRTY WORD

The New European Commission Risks Neglecting It, warns Rem Korteweg

Viktor Daněk



*The European Commission already once saved the continent against trade war with the United States (US). In 2018, **Jean-Claude Juncker** as the Commission's president struck a deal with at that time president Donald Trump that stopped him from imposing tariffs on European Car Export. Trump is now threatening to wage much more aggressive tariffs to help the American economy. The President-elect used them before and **will use them again.***

The European Commission already once saved the continent against trade war with the United States (US). In 2018, Jean-Claude Juncker as the Commission's president struck a deal with at that time president Donald Trump that stopped him from imposing tariffs on European Car Export. Trump is now threatening to wage much more aggressive tariffs to help the American economy. The US President used them before and will use them again, warns **Rem Korteweg, senior research fellow at the prominent Clingendael Institute** in an interview with EuroLens. According to him, the European Union (EU) will likely struggle to face the incoming global turbulence united. Instead, it seems, that in terms of priorities of the new Commission, the trade policy was eclipsed by other.

Donald Trump pledged to impose general tariffs of up to 20% on US imports, with a 60% tariff for all imports from China. In Europe, we can often hear doubts about whether Trump is serious about this idea, given the severity of the economic shock it would bring. It seems that many politicians view this merely as his tactic to enter negotiations from a position of strength. What is your perspective? Is Donald Trump serious about his plans?

I believe it's best to take him seriously, and there are a couple of reasons for this. First, Donald Trump has been talking about tariffs since he ran for president for the first time in the early 2010s. He has consistently maintained that tariffs are a way to address what he perceives as significant vulnerabilities in the U.S. economy—namely, that the U.S. imports more than it exports. He believes that imposing tariffs could drive domestic economic revitalization, creating opportunities for the U.S. to export more rather than import.

There are significant questions regarding the economics behind this strategy, but we saw during his first four years in office that he actually imposed tariffs—not to the extreme levels he might be discussing now. However, during his first term, tariffs affected between 25% and 40% of all goods in the U.S.-China trade. So, the fact that he utilizes tariffs in his policy is, I think, a no-brainer.

Now, the question is why he continues to pursue this strategy despite the economic arguments against it. A tariff is essentially a tax on domestic consumers. At the same time, it creates challenges for domestic producers due to the international nature of supply chains. U.S. companies also source materials from abroad, making it more difficult for them to compete since they too must pay these same import tariffs. Additionally, there will likely be retaliation from Europeans or the Chinese if tariffs are increased.

Here it gets more interesting. David Autor, a professor at MIT, published a paper in March calculating the net economic impact of Trump's first term and his tariffs. He offered two intriguing insights: first, the tariffs Trump imposed during his first term did lead to economic growth in certain sectors, such as coal mining and steel production. However, due to the counter-tariffs imposed by Europeans, the Chinese, and others, there was a net economic loss across the broader U.S. economy. However, those are only the economics behind it.

Politically, the tariffs have proven to be very popular. This is something we often overlook: While the overall economic impact might be painful, politically, tariffs can be quite successful. Many people do not connect the closure of businesses to Trump's tariffs; instead, they attribute it to competition from China, protectionism from the European Union, or automation. People fail to

recognize that the tariffs themselves can create economic disturbances leading to losses. This disconnect is crucial to understanding the situation, as we often adopt a segmented, economically rational approach that views tariffs as detrimental. Politically, however, they have been very successful for Donald Trump.

I'll try to counter your analysis. You based it on the effects of tariffs imposed during his first term; however, those were very limited compared to what he has promised in the election campaign ahead of the recent elections. If the US President were to follow through with those promises, it would be much harder to overlook the negative economic consequences, wouldn't it?

Let me mention another point. It's not just Trump. Robert Lighthizer [1] has also been pushing this agenda. He has even written a book about it, which outlines a clear game plan. Lighthizer views tariffs as a necessary element to rebalance the U.S. economy. Yes, there will be some costs, but he believes it is essential to place the economy on a new, better industrial footing. The fact that it's not just Donald Trump advocating for this, but also Robert Lighthizer, suggests we should expect quite significant tariffs to be introduced.

If there were a 10% to 20% uniform tariff on all imports, it would ultimately be the U.S. consumer who pays that, and the rest of the global economy would not be significantly disrupted. Why? Because the tariff would apply to everyone equally. The real disruption would arise if Donald Trump were to impose selective tariff levels for specific countries and started granting exceptions. This is where we should be concerned. For instance, if he were to impose 10% tariff for everyone and a 60% tariff for China, it would raise serious questions about the disruption of supply chains. Would a European car sold in the United States, which relies on some technology from China, be charged a 60% tariff or a 10% tariff? This is where I think much of the anxiety lies.

We also saw this during Trump's first term; he tends to grant exceptions and engage in bargaining. He might start with a uniform tariff of 10%, 15%, or 20%, and then ask, "What can you give me in return to justify a reduction?" This is where the bargaining aspect comes into play.

So, in that sense his tariff plan would indeed amount to at least partially a negotiating position, right?

Yes, but it's a pretty aggressive negotiating position and I think we should expect quite a bit of turbulence as a result, particularly due

[1] Robert Lighthizer was the U.S. Trade Representative in the Trump administration from 2017 to 2021. During his time in office, he shaped Donald Trump's trade policy that led the U.S.-China Trade War.

to the retaliation element that will likely come strongly into play.

The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is one of the leaders who says, and I'll paraphrase: 'He's a transactional politician. This is just his way of entering talks and we should prepare accordingly.' However, if he were to negotiate from a position of strength, it means we should also get some strong cards to play with. Is the EU able to do that?

I believe the Europeans will respond as they always do in a trade dispute: with an eye for an eye. There will be retaliation. During Trump's first years in office, we saw retaliation in the form of tariffs on Harley Davidson motorcycles, bourbon, jeans, and more. We should expect similar actions this time as well. At the same time, in the first four years of the Trump administration, there was also a negotiation; Europeans managed to prevent additional tariffs by promising they will buy more U.S. LNG [liquefied natural gas], leading to a deal. However, that was a relatively isolated agreement, and we still have Section 301 tariffs on steel and aluminium in place, which the Biden administration has not been able to remove. The tariffs on U.S.-China trade are also still in place, impacting European companies due to the interconnected nature of supply chains.

I think the significant difference between Trump and Biden is that

Biden has used subsidies to generate economic growth in the United States, whereas the Trump team emphasizes tariffs, tax cuts, and deregulation for the same goal. These two philosophies are different, but we have also faced our share of challenges with the Biden administration on trade. For instance, the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides subsidies for green technology in the U.S., has raised significant concerns in European circles, leading to real trade issues with the United States. And we had challenges with Trump, and we are likely to face them again. This, I believe, reflects the nature of the transatlantic trade relationship, which has considerable friction.

Ultimately, Donald Trump is quite bombastic in his flirtation with tariffs. It's not just about a 10% to 20% uniform tariff and a 60% tariff on China; he also makes outlandish claims like imposing a 100%, 200%, or even 2000% tariff on all cars from Mexico. I don't think that will happen; it really should be considered a negotiating position in this particular case. However, tariffs will remain on the table, and he will use them as a tool.

You've already mentioned that the biggest risk is the disruption of supply chains. One of the major concerns is that if the Trump administration imposes selectively much higher tariff on China, it will inevitably lead to flooding other markets with Chinese over-

production, ultimately putting European producers in existential danger. As a result, the EU would be forced not only to retaliate in EU-US trade, but also to simultaneously defend its market against Chinese imports and do that during a time of growing dependencies...

Yes, and there is also the question of potential currency devaluation, which will make imports from China even more competitive, creating real turbulence in the system.

So, when we saw how difficult it was for the EU to impose antidumping measures on car imports from China, would the Union be able to act even more ambitiously in a time of need?

But from a US perspective, isn't that great? By imposing tariffs on China, the Europeans will need to do the same without even being asked. You can just watch as this ripple effect creates pressure on the Europeans to act similarly, or else they'll face Chinese industrial overcapacity on their market. This is precisely why it's considered such an attractive tool in the circles around Donald Trump.

It's not my style, but I can see where this is coming from. They look at Europe and say, "Well, the Europeans like to play both sides; they want to continue trading with us and also with China. We have real problems with China, but it's difficult to get the Europeans on board. Guess what, as

strongest economy in the world, when you impose tariffs that impact all your supply chains, the ripple effect of these tariffs means that some of the partners you've been trying to coerce will have to take steps to protect their own markets.

There's one really interesting dynamic which might follow from the Trump tariffs that in Europe we now have a debate regarding trade with China which is becoming more negative. You have talked about the electric vehicles, the industrial over capacity, concerns about economic dependencies... With Trump back in, what you're going to see is the Chinese are going to start to flirt with the Europeans again on trade and say look at this bully in the White House, shouldn't we be talking a lot more. Actually, what you're going to see, I would expect, is that from the Chinese side there is going to be a lot more willingness, they're going to soften their position towards the Europeans, meaning it will be very interesting to see how Europeans respond to this because the current wind is blowing in a different direction.

Draghi's report clearly states that we should finally lose our naivety and use the tools we have at our disposal to defend ourselves. However, if we see further and much more intense turbulences in global trade, it may be quite tempting to listen to China. What reaction on the EU's side do you expect?

Europe has always had the problem of how to speak with one voice, as we saw with the electric vehicle tariffs. In the end, a few countries voted against them—Germany or Spain among them. I think we should view this as an attempt by China to pursue a divide-and-rule strategy within Europe to avoid a much tougher response toward Chinese overcapacity and its disruptive subsidies, and within the overall economic security argument.

Let us take an even broader look. For many years we witness a global shift in trade policy. Globalism and liberalism seem to be, if not in decline, then at least at a crossroads. We see a rise in protectionism everywhere, making it more difficult to negotiate trade deals. And we see it regardless the political leadership. You mentioned Biden's trade policy, which is also quite protective, albeit packaged more subtly. What does this mean for the future of the EU's trade policy? Is it time for a complete rethinking of the European approach?

I believe the pendulum is shifting back, and the trick is to ensure that it doesn't swing all the way to the other side. For decades, the EU has functioned as a market regulation mechanism to ensure an internal market and facilitate free trade, thereby ensuring a level playing field. Up until 2017 or 2018, every international trade measure or regulation was framed with the idea of

ensuring a level playing field. Then came the reality check, because economic interdependence creates geopolitical vulnerabilities. The war in Ukraine is a perfect example, as Europeans began to realize that despite a level playing field, we need to protect our markets more to reduce unwanted economic dependencies. The COVID-19 pandemic added to this concern, as did the purchase of certain critical technology firms in Europe by Chinese investors. Since then, we have seen the development of more economic security thinking, with an emphasis on identifying critical sectors for future competitiveness, protecting them from non-market investments, and promoting them to generate a certain critical mass so they can compete on an international scale.

This is essentially an industrial policy. Over the past few years, we've seen a new political commitment, and the new European Commission is moving forward with this focus on industrial policy with great enthusiasm. However, I'm concerned that while industrial policy is one side of the coin, trade policy is the other and tends to be neglected. In Europe, we've talked a lot about which sectors need protection, what kind of trade defensive measures we should implement, how to conduct investment screening, and whether we should provide subsidies to semiconductor firms or foster new communities in biotechnology or quantum computing. We need to

reduce our dependencies on China, Russia, and India, rising questions like why is 100% of our paracetamol produced in India?

While all of this is valid, we must also consider the trade aspect: how do we make our economy resilient? It's not by producing everything ourselves. That would be ridiculous. We're not North Korea. Trade policy is integral to allowing firms to establish resilient supply chains and diversify, so they are not solely dependent on single-source suppliers—for instance, relying on 70% of natural gas from Russia or 80% of rare earth elements or batteries from China. Diversification is essential, and trade is a critical route to achieve that.

This brings me to your point. In the current European Commission, the trade portfolio is neglected for several reasons. One is that it's not seen as sexy; it takes a long time to negotiate a trade deal, and it is politically sensitive. As we speak*, we may be on the cusp of finalizing to the EU-MERCOSUR agreement, which has been 25 years in the making. And there aren't hundreds of billions of euros at stake in trade policy. The economic benefits of a new trade deal are not substantial, as tariffs are already quite low. Still, it makes sense to pursue these deals because they create strategic relationships with other partners and lay the foundation for trust, enabling companies to diversify and enhance economic

resilience. So, I think the pendulum is shifting away from the liberal free trade mindset toward more industrial policy and economic security thinking. However, I worry it might shift too far, leading Europe to neglect how important trade is to overall prosperity. We should not forget that the European Union is much more dependent on international trade than both the United States and China.

Using your metaphor of the pendulum: Should the EU try to stop the swing and revert to rules-based trade? Or has the pendulum swung so far that it needs to adjust to the new reality of power-based trade and the EU should learn to play the same cards that others are using?

I believe we have no option but to continue investing in the rules-based trading system, simply because it is a part of the European DNA. However, we shouldn't be naive. I agree that we need to pay attention to the economic security agenda and think clearly about how to shape our industrial policy. There are significant questions regarding how the EU should approach this. But let me make a general observation about the European political debate.

Trade has almost become a dirty word. Well-organized special interest groups lobby against any type of trade relationship, whether it's with MERCOSUR or, in my home country of

* The interview was conducted on 15 November 2024

he Netherlands, where we had a very tense debate over the EU's trade agreement, with Canada. I mean, it's Canada—the country that liberated the Netherlands during World War II. It is not a big Uncle Sam, it's not an economic adversary that would challenge us, yet it was still very difficult to get that trade agreement passed. There are too few voices making the case for trade, especially in this period when economic security is the dominant paradigm through which we view international economic relations.

You admit that it is inevitably necessary to connect economic policy with security and industrial policy; we just need to ensure that we don't forget about our trade policy. In your view, how should this principle be translated into the priorities of the next European Commission?

Part of the solution is to foster a genuine, fact-based debate about trade. The Draghi report will likely serve as the Bible for the new European Commission. In its composition, we see seven Commissioners who will now deal with industrial policy or economic security and trade constitutes only a small part of their responsibilities. This will present a significant challenge in terms of coordination that the EU will face. And there is a real question of

how the EU uses the resources of individual member states. Up until now, member states have closely guarded their economic security and industrial policy, as well as the state aid policy claiming those are national competencies.

So, I believe, that the first important step is to establish a mechanism that allows coherent policy development. Currently, the situation is very fragmented, and we don't have the luxury of time, especially with Donald Trump back in the picture. We need to be prepared.

Rem Korteweg is Senior Research Fellow and Head of Strategic Initiatives & Outreach at the Clingendael Institute in Netherlands. He works on Europe's strategic role in the world, with a specific focus on the intersection between foreign policy, trade and security issues. He was a Fulbright scholar at the Johns Hopkins-SAIS Center for Transatlantic Relations in Washington DC. He holds a PhD in International Relations from Leiden University.



ANALYSIS

EU Enlargement with Zelenskyy at the Helm

Image: Canva

ANALYSIS



EU ENLARGEMENT WITH ZELENSKYY AT THE HELM:

Why a Resilient V4 Media Mater?

Oszkár Roginer-Hofmeister



As generations used to broadcasted and printed news content are slowly disappearing, while digital native news consumers never developed the habit of following linear programming and print, it is certain that the V4 will follow global trends in the paradigmatic restructuring of the news media landscape.

It is impossible to envision Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fully integrated into the EU, equally impossible to imagine them entirely outside the EU, and yet unthinkable to ignore their place in the European conversation altogether. This is an impasse an average news consumer often encounters in the Visegrad countries (V4) in between opening apps, tuning into a television or radio broadcast, or leafing through a freshly bought news magazine. Since February 2022, this complex portrayal of the country and its leader has become a daily interpretation exercise in newsrooms across the Visegrad states.

In a rapidly digitalising media landscape, where the access to reliable news differs vastly depending on who you are, where you are and which devices you are using, the

competition for the attention of the voting audience generated a highly polarising effect across the V4. The future of Ukraine and the image of Zelenskyy were worked into the discourse on governmental changes in Poland and Slovakia, regime survival in Hungary, EU parliamentary elections, and the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. It is a dense and potent image, capable of evoking emotions and opinions, which is why it has been used and reused to accommodate and nuance a number of domestic issues on the daily political level. The way it emerges is also a symptom of the radicalisation and further (self)isolation of Hungarian media, the spread of parallel news consumption patterns in the social media universe of Slovakia, the relative resilience of the mainstream news media landscape of the Czech Republic, but also of the expanding news deserts across the V4 slowly filling up with deceptive information.[1] As our final publication shows, Ukraine's future in the EU and the role of Zelenskyy were not only incorporated into the usual

news production and consumption patterns of the Visegrad countries, but they were also utilised to divert attention from domestic issues, to underline the political agenda, or to propagate policy decisions.[2] They also showed, however, how vulnerable mainstream news consumers are and how the irrevocably changing news media market affects this consumer base. In this article, I explore how Ukraine's future in the EU and President Zelenskyy within this process are presented in mainstream news and how audiences react to this topic across the V4. Specifically, the main focus is on examining how a resilient media landscape contributes to an informed V4 news audience, with a special focus on the portrayal of President Zelenskyy and the accession process of Ukraine to the EU. Based on collaborative research with partners from V4 countries, I summarize the key findings emanating from V4 mainstream media monitoring and focus group discussions.[3] We examined news published between June 2022, when Ukraine gained EU

[1] For more detail see: Roginer-Hofmeister (ed.): *Discussing Ukraine in V4 mainstream media: The future vis-à-vis European Integration*

[2] Ibid.

[3] Partners include the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration (HU), the Res Publica Foundation (PL) and the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SK), who gave valuable input to this article through their research. A special thanks goes to Dorka Takácsy, Magdalena Jakubowska, and Miroslava Pisklova, who wrote the case studies. As this article focuses only on the image of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukraine's prospective accession to the EU, for more detail and a more comprehensive comparison of the findings, please refer to our publication mentioned above. The research was conducted within the project 'Discussing Ukraine in V4 mainstream media: The future vis-à-vis European integration' funded by the International Visegrad Fund (project ID: 22310364)

candidate status, and November 2023, when the Israel-Hamas war diverted some of the international attention. On one side, we monitored the mainstream narratives on Ukraine's future in the EU on the V4 level, while on the other, we also organised follow-up focus group discussions during May 2024 in all four countries simultaneously.[4][5] Sixteen participants from each V4 country reacted to the discussions of news emanating from nationally available mainstream media. Sixteen participants from each V4 country reacted to the discussions of news emanating from nationally available mainstream media.

Following the research methodology of news media monitoring on one side and how V4 audiences perceive such news on the other, the article – after a brief overview of the V4 media landscape – examines how Ukraine's EU accession with a specific focus on the image of Zelenskyy in this process is represented in V4 media, but also how it is interpreted from the side of news consumers. Including quotes from Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak media outlets, but also

anonymous references to the statements from the focus group discussions, the article provides an insight into EU enlargement process of Ukraine and Zelenskyy. It also aims to point out the relevance and role of a robust and resilient news media sector in shaping the opinion of an informed and knowledgeable news audience on the level of the V4.

V4 news media landscape

Slovak media outlets, but also anonymous references to the statements from the focus group discussions, the article provides an insight into EU enlargement process of Ukraine and Zelenskyy. It also aims to point out the relevance and role of a robust and resilient news media sector in shaping the opinion of an informed and knowledgeable news audience on the level of the V4. The already somewhat strained V4 cooperation collapsed into a rather dormant phase since the Covid-19 pandemic and receded even more into inertness since the full-scale outbreak of the war in Ukraine.[6]

[4] The focus groups were conducted according to a methodology shared across all partners and they were executed via the same agency (InsightLab). It included two rounds of discussions during May 2024 with sixteen respondents from each V4 country.

[5] This article is written as part of a larger project supported by the International Visegrad Fund, titled: Discussing Ukraine in V4 mainstream media: The future vis-à-vis European integration (project No. 22310364). The final publication can be found here: <https://www.europeum.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-project-publication.pdf>

[6] Tomasz Żornaczuk- Jakub Pieńkowski (eds.): Regional Cooperation in Central Europe After Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine: Changes and Prospects. April 2024.

Due to the lack of an agreement on the basic directions of foreign policy towards Russia, leading to no internal coordination on the V4 level for a synchronized media approach about the conflict, news consumers of the four countries had not only access to quite differing content from mainstream media, but also often to news which were rather contradicting in a V4 comparison. Nevertheless, since the overlap in nationally distributed content is negligible, consumption of news remained within the boundaries of every member state.[7]

Although there is no overlap in content consumption, the V4 is not a set of four mutually segregated news markets in terms of production and distribution. The media landscape, including its freedom, structure, and functions, is often shaped by the intertwined influence of political and

market forces in power. Trans-border ownership structures, target audiences, and differing visions of how mainstream and public media should operate all contribute to this dynamic.[8][9][10][11] Our research also indicates the detrimental effects of Eurosceptic and anti-democratic political actors on the audience – the most notorious being the Hungarian Fidesz and its KESMA media network[12] with its over 480 outlets and a nearly 50% market share.[13][14] While such practices may stabilise ruling parties and exert systemic influence over the dissemination of specific narratives, they can also deliberately restrict access to news content, monopolise the media sector, and even amplify Kremlin-favourable narratives.[15][16] As a result, these actions negatively affect how audiences perceive and engage as citizens and voters.

[7] Ľuboš Kostelanský, Kristína Kroková: The crisis of local journalism in the V4 countries and the specific role of municipal newspapers in it. Transparency International Slovensko, 2022.

[8] Ivan Godársky and Marek Mračka, "Country Report 2023: Slovakia," Euromedia Ownership Monitor, September 2023, <https://media-ownership.eu/findings/countries/slovakia/>

[9] Josef Slerka, Katerina Hrubesova, Stepan Sanda, "Country Report 2022: Czechia," Euromedia Ownership Monitor, September 2022, <https://media-ownership.eu/findings/countries/czechia/>

[10] Péter Bajomi-Lázár, Péter Krasztev, "Country Report 2022: Hungary," Euromedia Ownership Monitor, September 2022, <https://media-ownership.eu/findings/countries/hungary/>

[11] Michał Głowacki et al., "Country Report 2023: Poland," Euromedia Ownership Monitor, September 2023 <https://media-ownership.eu/findings/countries/poland/>

[12] KESMA: Közép-Európai Sajtó és Média Alapítvány; in English: Central European Press and Media Foundation

[13] Although Fidesz from Hungary is the most notorious example, it is also significant how Andrej Babiš or Robert Fico communicate via their social media accounts in relation to Ukraine's future and Zelensky

[14] Márton Sarkadi Nagy, "The rise of KESMA: How Orbán's allies bought up Hungary's media," International Press Institute, May 5, 2024 <https://ipi.media/the-rise-of-kesma-how-orbans-allies-bought-up-hungarys-media/>

[15] Kateryna Odarchenko, "Slovak Vote Shows Need for NATO Action on Russian Disinformation," Center for European Policy Analysis, January 31, 2024 <https://cepa.org/article/slovak-vote-shows-need-for-nato-action-on-russian-disinformation/>

[16] Andrei Yeliseyev and Veronica Laputska, "Major pro-Kremlin disinformation narratives and their transmitters in Poland, Czechia and Slovakia," Association for International Affairs, June 2023, https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AMO_Pro-Russian-Narratives-in-Czech-Republic-Slovakia-and-Poland.pdf

Historically, the media landscape of the V4 endured a structural transformation process during the 1990s by merging post-socialist institutional forms with Western expectations of media pluralism. With the prospect of integration with other European democracies and their market-economy approaches, the media landscape in all four countries became heavily commercialised. The public service broadcasters and the traditional press remained at the centre of news consumption for the majority of the population. However, the entry of foreign companies (Axel Springer, Bertelsmann/RTL, etc), into the market during the 1990s emerged as a call of the Polish Law and Justice party (PiS) and the Hungarian Fidesz in the 2010s for the ‘re-polonisation’ and ‘re-magyarisation’ of media in the 2010s.[17][18] Arguing for a more ethno-national approach in news interpretation, these efforts aimed to reduce foreign ownership and concentrate media in nominally national but, in reality, party-related hands. As a result, this led to a notorious level of media capture of

public broadcasters and mainstream media in both countries, followed by the belated efforts of Direction—Social Democracy (SMER) in Slovakia after its power re-take in 2023.[19] [20][21] In the late 2010s and 2020s, the information, infotainment and news media landscape of the V4 has been increasingly shaped by intensified efforts from anti-establishment political actors to undermine media freedoms. Efforts to stabilise party-mandated content have led to developments such as the creation of institutions, like the Hungarian National Sovereignty Defence Office and radical legislative changes, including the Law on Slovak Television and Radio. However, there were also positive steps. These include the amendments to the 2017 Conflict of Interest Act in Czechia, better known as ‘Lex Babiš’—although in one of its most recent motions, the Constitutional Court dismissed the possibility of a ‘lex Babiš II’ which would have tightened even more the particular rules for media ownership and expanded the legislative options to target the real owners of the Czech

[17] “With firing of four editors, “repolonisation” under way in Poland,” Reporters Without Borders, May 10, 2021, <https://rsf.org/en/firing-four-editors-repolonisation-under-way-poland>

[18] Nagy, The Rise of KESMA

[19] Natália Silenská, “Fico government OKs law to overhaul Slovak public broadcaster,” Euractiv, April 25, 2024, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/fico-government-oks-law-to-overhaul-slovak-public-broadcaster/>

[20] Robert Nemeth, “Media Capture Monitoring Report: Hungary,” International Press Institute, November 6, 2024, <https://ipi.media/publications/media-capture-monitoring-report-hungary/>

[21] “Media freedom at a crossroads: Journalism in Poland faces uncertain future ahead of election,” Media Freedom Rapid Response, October 5, 2023 <https://www.ecpmf.eu/media-freedom-at-a-crossroads-journalism-in-poland-faces-uncertain-future-ahead-of-election/>

media outlets.[22][23] One of the benevolent developments was also the dismissal of the supervisory boards of three state-owned media outlets in Poland, as they were accused of operating as mouthpieces for the PiS government.[24] The V4 news media sector also reflects global trends in the technologies of production, consumption, and distribution. Traditional formats like the printed press and linear broadcasting are losing relevance as they struggle to meet the evolving demands of news consumers. Meanwhile, on-demand services, AI, and social media content are rapidly gaining prominence, despite a lack of clear regulatory frameworks. According to the annual Report of the Reuters Institute, on the V4 level, print news consumption ranges in 2024 only between 6%(HU) and 15% (CZ), with a constantly declining television and a steadily rising social media audience, which is nowadays equal at around 40-50%. [25] This is comp

lemented by the broadening news consumption on phones, where around 75% of V4 audiences primarily follow news on their personal devices. [26] As generations used to broadcasted and printed news content are slowly disappearing, while digital native news consumers never developed the habit of following linear programming and print, it is certain that the V4 will follow global trends in the paradigmatic restructuring of the news media landscape. One of the symptoms of this process is that most daily newspapers and a large number of weekly magazines will probably cease to exist, with linear programming also handing its place over to on-demand services by 2030. Projections are that the complete displacement of the traditional newspaper consumer will occur by the mid-2030s. [27] It is significant, however, that due to the conservative perception of newspapers as a reliable source of information by consumers but also as a well-

[22] Petr Kozelka, "The Constitutional Court annulled 'lex Babiš II'," *Novinky.cz*, December 10, 2024, <https://www.novinky.cz/clanek/domaci-ustavni-soud-zrusil-lex-babis-ii-40500462>

[23] Kamila Abbasi, "Pozměňovací návrh představoval neústavní přílepek. Ústavní soud proto vyhověl návrhu na zrušení zákona podaného skupinou poslanců z řad opozice," *Ústavní soud*, December 10, 2024, <https://www.usoud.cz/aktualne/pozmenovaci-navrh-predstavoval-neustavni-prilepek-ustavni-soud-proto-vyhovel-navrhu-na-zruseni-zakona-podaneho-skupinou-poslancu-z-rad-opozice>

[24] "Depoliticizing Poland's Media Landscape: Assessing the Progress of Media Reform in 2024," *Media Freedom Rapid Response*, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom, 2024 <https://www.ecpmf.eu/depoliticising-polands-media-landscape-assessing-the-progress-of-media-reform-in-2024/>

[25] Nic Newman et al., "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024," *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*, June 17, 2024, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/RISJ_DNR_2024_Digital_v10%20lr.pdf

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Andrey Mir, "Postjournalism and the death of newspapers- The Media After Trump: Manufacturing Anger and Polarization", *Independently Published*, 2020

controlled communication channel by some regimes, the decay of print is not so visible in the V4. It is kept artificially alive regardless of its market value in Hungary with the county newspapers under the umbrella of KESMA, but also in Czechia and Slovakia, where local newspapers are published and distributed for free by a number of municipalities. [28] In both cases, this does not contribute to information access but to a further concentration of information sources while also enabling a broader possibility of political self-promotion and interference in the newsroom. [29] Although current levels of (social) media literacy are not alarming, the tendency of most V4 countries is to traditionally occupy the mid-to-lower end of the annual Media Literacy Index published by the Open Society Institute of Sofia.[30] Nevertheless, with only sporadically available media literacy programmes the rapidly

expanding habits of social media news consumption enable not only the spread of misinformation but also impact the overall trust in media, which ranges only between 23% (HU) and 39% (PL).[31] This is only exacerbated by the increasing news desertification of the V4 countryside, where due to the reasons described above, audiences have very limited access to independent and reliable news.[32] In Slovakia, this amounts to almost one-third of the country; in the Czech Republic, more than half of local outlets have ceased to exist between 2009 and 2019, while in Hungary, the regime controls almost the entire television, radio and print market from the national down to the municipal level.[33] In turn, this leads to information fatigue and a significant decrease in political participation. [34] Envisioning Ukraine's EU accession under Zelenskyy's leadership not only highlights these complexities but also underscores the critical role a resilient

[28] Lenka Waschková Císařová, "Backed Into a Corner : Structural Changes That Lead to Local News Deserts," *Media and Communication*, Vol 11, No 3 (2023): 381-389, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i3.6731>

[29] Ľuboš Kostelanský, Kristína Kroková, "National Study: The crisis of local journalism in the V4 countries and the specific role of municipal newspapers in it," *Transparency International Slovensko*, November 2022, https://www.oziveni.cz/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Policy_Paper_V4_TransparencyInternational_Slovakia.pdf

[30] Martin Lessenski, "Media Literacy Index 2023," *Open Society Institute – Sofia*, 2023, <https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/MLI-report-in-English-22.06.pdf>

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] "News deserts on the rise: a first comparative study indicates the fragile situation for local media across the EU," *Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom*, February 28, 2024, <https://cmpf.eui.eu/news-deserts-on-the-rise-and-local-media-across-the-eu/>

[33] "Uncovering news deserts in Europe Risks and opportunities for local and community media in the EU," *European University Institute*, 2024, https://cmpf.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/CMPF_Uncovering-news-deserts-in-Europe_LM4D-final-report.pdf

[34] Císařová, "Backed Into a Corner"

media landscape can play. By providing access to diverse and reliable news, a resilient media landscape actively supports audiences to make well-informed decisions.

How it's aired...

"It is visible that the Ukrainian leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy made the wrong decision and is fighting until the last Ukrainian."[35][36]

One of the most frequent but also divisive images across the V4 is the media representation of Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Cutting across national media landscapes, party-controlled and independent outlets, and deeply into the social media bubbles of all four countries, his name has an overall positive frame in the mainstream media networks of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia. Comparatively, most of the nationally available outlets in Hungary were adamant during the research period in portraying him as negatively as possible. Aside from KESMA, the

ruling parties rely on a great number of smaller outlets as well, and are one of the biggest social media spenders in the EU,[37][38] Fidesz disseminated quite a coherent – albeit rather negative – picture of Zelenskyy. Encountering this image as text, video and audio and in all possible formats of television, radio, written outlets major social media platforms, the Hungarian audience of all demographics is exposed to it in some form and degree.

While Czech and Slovak news consumers are suggested to see him as an ordinary man in extraordinary circumstances,[39][40] as a wartime leader and as a man standing his ground both amongst soldiers and diplomats, Zelenskyy is framed for the Hungarian mainstream audiences as a leader whose actions are misguided and detrimental to his people. Citing Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka in the excerpt above, at the beginning of this section, Zelenskyy is portrayed as a weak and naïve person who is only deceived by his allies. Representing him as a

[35] "Becsapták Zelenszkijt," Magyar Nemzet, July 10, 2023, <https://magyarnemzet.hu/kulfold/2023/10/becsaptak-zelenszkijt>

[36] All quotes from both media and the focus group discussions have been translated into English by the author

[37] Clothilde Goujard, "Orbán leads the way in EU election advertising," Politico, June 2, 2024,

<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-election-political-ads-spend-online-meta-google-fidesz/>

[38] Bulcsu Hunyadi, Róbert László and Csaba Molnár, "Fidesz's €3.2m digital ads aimed at smearing opponents," euobserver, May 30, 2024, <https://euobserver.com/eu-political/arbc9004c2>

[39] Simone Radacicova and Ondrej Soukup, "An unexpected warlord. Former comedian Zelensky leads Ukraine through one of the darkest periods in modern history," Hospodářské noviny, 28 February, 2022,

<https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-67038360-necekany-valecny-lidr-byvaly-komik-zelenskyj-provadi-ukrajinu-jednim-z-nejtemnejsich-obdobi-v-modernich-dejinach>

[40] Laura Smitňová, Anna Krištofčová and Juraj Buch, "Donbas bude väčší problém, oslobodenie Krymu bude jednoduchšie, domnieva sa Zelenskyy (SME Minúta)," SME, November 30, 2023,

<https://svet.sme.sk/c/23250125/ukrajina-rusko-vojna-online-minuta-po-minute-30-11-2023.html>

puppet and product of the West, who is harmful to his country and its citizens, Hungarian mainstream media mocks not only his deeds but also his persona.[41] For example, while all other mainstream outlets emphasise his transgression from an actor into a politician as an extraordinary achievement,[42] Hungarian media ridicules him as an antihero and a political jester.[43]

As it is readable in our publication,[44] in the overwhelming majority of V4 mainstream press outlets, he is portrayed as a leader capable of defending his country both in cooperation with his military commanders and politically with his diplomatic staff. He also emerges as a European politician capable of negotiations and with an awareness of boundaries. Zelenskyy is realistic in this image and understands that entering the EU means deep structural reforms, which corresponded well with our focus group participants, who also agreed that EU accession

necessitates a paradigmatic transition not only in various sectors of the economy, industry or transport but also in terms of social habits and mentality. This grants him an image of a statesman respected by Western democracies in all Visegrad countries – except for Hungary.

In Czechia, Poland and Slovakia this image of him is congruent with representations of support of EU accession if extensive institutional reforms occur and democratic standards prevail.[45][46] The image of Ukraine's aspirations to enter the EU with Zelenskyy spearheading these efforts was also addressed when reporting on the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union.[47] Voicing the moral responsibility of support, but also the strategic and industrial benefits of EU enlargement towards Ukraine, news content during the examined period from across V4 mainstream media (except from Hungary) presented a picture of Ukraine already as a desirable

[41] Odrobina Kristóf, "Már egy négyéves kisfiú is leválthatja Volodimir Zelenszkijt + video," Magyar Nemzet, January 11, 2023, <https://magyarnemzet.hu/kulfold/2023/11/mar-egy-4-eves-kisfiu-is-levalthatja-volodimir-zelenszkijt-video>

[42] Radacicova and Soukup, "An Unexpected Warlord."

[43] Jacques Guillemain, "The Party is Over for Zelensky," Magyar Nemzet, May 18, 2023, <https://magyarnemzet.hu/velemenyt/2023/05/zelenszkij-szamara-vege-a-bulinak>

[44] Roginer-Hofmeister (ed.): Discussing Ukraine in V4 mainstream media: The future vis-à-vis European Integration

[45] "Zelenszkij uistil EÚ o pokračovaní reforiem na Ukrajine," tvnoviny.sk, November 8, 2023,

<https://tvnoviny.sk/zahranicne/clanok/866047-zelenszkij-uistil-eu-o-pokracovani-reforiem-na-ukrajine>

[46] "Angličtina na Ukrajine? Vláda pripravuje zákon, ktorý z nej spraví jazyk obchodu," ta3, June 7, 2022,

<https://www.ta3.com/clanok/238007/anglictina-na-ukrajine-vlada-pripravuje-zakon-ktory-z-nej-spravi-jazyk-obchodu>

[47] "Jsme s vámi, budete s námi, vyzval Zelenszkij v českém Parlamentu. Vládě poděkoval za pomoc s uprchlíky,"

iRozhlas, June 15, 2022, https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/volodymyr-zelenszkij-proslov-cesky-parlament_2206151215_lou

member of the EU family.[48] It also reported extensively on the steps, obstacles and recommendations of how, when and under which circumstances this inclusion could occur.[49][50] Comparatively, the Hungarian media landscape during its Presidency is dealing with the future of Ukraine only within the rogue “peace mission” of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the international backlash following it. [51] Sheding light more on himself than on Ukraine, news audiences were flooded with narratives of unprecedented travels to all parties, where despite his intentions, the efforts were met only with resistance.

This also shows how these two interconnected representations are utilized for domestic purposes. As we summarized it in the project’s final

publication, in Poland, the EU accession and Zelenskyy’s efforts were tied to the argument of Polish farmers and agricultural goods. [52] In Slovakia, although the government changed several times in recent years, it was only with the re-establishment of Robert Fico that the rhetoric on EU membership and solidarity with Ukraine shifted onto a less positive tone. [53] In Hungary however, with the regime’s constant need to talk about anything else but its own crises, Zelenskyy and Ukraine’s prospective EU membership are regularly used as attention decoy from domestic problems. This results in a repertoire of systemic delegitimization efforts, including unresolvable corruption,[54] the oppression of minorities,[55] Ukraine’s legislative unpreparedness, the constant emphasis on the

[48] Kateřina Šafaříková, “Z Ukrajiny se může stát obrovská vyzbrojená černá díra, která nás bude ohrožovat. Proto musí do EU a NATO,” *Hospodářské noviny*, May 19, 2023, <https://archiv.hn.cz/c1-67205830-z-ukrajiny-se-muze-stat-obrovaska-vyzbrojena-cerna-dira-kerata-nas-bude-ohrozovat-protomusi-do-eu-a-nato>

[49] Jowita Kiwnik Pargana and Jarosław Junko, “Ukraina w Unii Europejskiej. Ruszyły negocjacje akcesyjne,” *Bankier.pl*, June 25, 2024, <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/Ukraina-w-Unii-Europejskiej-Ruszyly-negocjacje-akcesyjne-8771315.html>

[50] Dagmara Pakuła, “Przełomowy dzień dla Ukrainy. Ruszają długo wyczekiwane rozmowy,” *interiaWydarzenia*, June 25, 2024, https://wydarzenia.interia.pl/zagranica/news-przelomowy-dzien-dla-ukrainy-ruszaja-dlugo-wyczekiwane-rozmo_nld.7596743#google_vignette

[51] “Orbán Viktor: A következő fél év a békemisszióról szól,” *Hirado.hu*, July 5, 2024, <https://hirado.hu/kulfold/cikk/2024/07/05/orban-viktor-a-kovetkezo-fel-ev-a-bekemissziorul-szol>

[52] Robert Kędziński, “Rolnicy protestują. To nie Unia i Ukraina są ich największym problemem,” *money.pl*, February 21, 2024, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/rolnicy-protestuja-to-nie-unia-i-ukraina-sa-ich-najwiekszym-problemem-6998103587711488a.html>

[53] Andrej Matišák, “Vystrašené Rusko? Ukrajina v EÚ odradí Moskvu od ďalšej vojny, myslí si expertka,” *Pravda*, November 11, 2023, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/688071-vystrasene-rusko-ukrajina-v-eu-odradi-moskvu-od-dalsej-vojny-mysli-si-expertka/>

[54] “Egyre nagyobb problémát okoz Ukrajnában a szerteágazó korrupció,” *Hirado.hu*, August 15, 2023, <https://hirado.hu/kulfold/cikk/2023/08/15/egyre-nagyobb-problemat-okoz-ukrajnaban-a-szerteagazo-korrupcio/>

[55] “Menczer Tamás: A kormány elvárja, hogy a kárpátaljai magyar kisebbség visszakapja a 2015 előtti jogokat,” *Hirado.hu*, January 30, 2024, <https://hirado.hu/kulfold/cikk/2024/01/30/menczer-tamas-a-kormany-elvarja-hogy-a-karpataljai-magyar-kisebbsseg-visszakapja-a-2015-elotti-jogokat>

accession of the Western Balkans and many others.[56]

This tightly interlinked image of a wartime leader and a European future ahead of his country is visible in all genres and all types of content across the V4. Produced and disseminated amongst audiences to inform them, mainstream news consumers across the V4 encountered this topic instantaneously from the earliest days of the war. However, they were also exposed to other sources, thus altering their perception to varying degrees. Revealed through our focus group discussions, the perception of Zelenskyy and his efforts to pave the way to Ukraine's EU accession diverges across the V4 and it is directly linked to the resilience of the (social) media ecosystem of the respective country.

How it's landing...

“In 30 years, when Ukraine meets the standards [to join the EU]. Corruption in Ukraine, it's still Soviet standards. If Ukraine comes out of this war, the reconstruction itself will take 10, 20, 30 years to rebuild. But the entry will only be taken if it meets the standards that Poland had to meet. Then it will be another European country.”

Answering when Ukraine could join the EU, the respondent emphasised the paradigmatic difference Ukraine must achieve in all aspects of society. Implications to a necessary shift from a post-soviet and post-socialist mentality were recognised across the focus group discussions, where most participants agreed Ukrainians are similar to Czechs, Slovaks and Poles in many aspects, but they will need to shed these social reflexes in order to enter the EU. Reflecting also the support for Ukraine, the most significant difference across the countries was in the gradations between the projected and received images. Indicative also how resilient the audiences are towards foreign and domestic malign influence, there are differences across V4 countries between what is being said and written in mainstream media and how it is perceived and understood by the news consumers.

The image of Zelenskyy and the future of Ukraine in the EU is a great example of this. While it is anticipated that there will be some differences, our research of mainstream narratives and how they are received proves that this discrepancy is far greater in some countries than expected.[58]

[56] “ Szijjártó Péter: Magyarország elkötelezetten támogatja a nyugat-balkáni térség EU-integrációját,” Hirado.hu, May 26, 2023, <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2023/05/26/szijjarto-peter-magyarorszag-elkotelezetten-tamogatja-a-nyugat-balkani-terseg-eu-integraciojat>

[57] Focus group discussion: Poland, 2024 (moderation: Anna Kuczyńska)

[58] Roginer-Hofmeister (ed.): Discussing Ukraine in V4 mainstream media: The future vis-à-vis European Integration. 2024.

The only exception is Hungary, where mainstream media is one of the main sources of disinformation.[59] In Czechia, Poland and Slovakia, our focus group discussions showed that the difference from mainstream narratives indicates a significant impact of social media and other non-mainstream sources in shaping public opinion. This also correlates with the rising news consumption trends via social media tracked by the Reuters Institute.[60] In this sense, influencing the level of support for Ukraine's EU accession and the perception of Zelenskyy as a competent leader is reflected amongst news audiences quite differently in the four V4 countries.

Our focus groups showed that amongst Czech news audiences, this image is, to the largest degree, congruent, meaning that the image discussed by the respondents corresponds the most to what is being presented in mainstream media. Slovakia and Poland deviate significantly across demographics, while Hungary is the most peculiar case because of the role state media plays in mass informing. Although there have been mistrustful and radical voices amongst Czech

consumers also, they constitute a minority. Our respondents largely agreed that Ukraine "will join the EU, when the current generation is gone, in about 25 years." [61] Similar to the Polish case, they also discussed that a "change in mentality is necessary" [62] – a change in post-socialist patterns, which in their view "occurred in the Czech, Polish and Slovak case." [63]. They also discussed how solidarity with Ukraine is important, but they also highlighted that a high level of transparency is needed so that "help reaches the people", [64] especially in terms of infrastructure, water supply systems and hospitals.

EU enlargement occurred somewhat differently in the Polish case, where supportive and dismissive voices mixed, with responses usually encompassing a sceptical tone of economic and agro-industrial reasoning. Our respondents discussed that the condition for joining would be for Ukraine to enter the EU on the same terms as anyone else, especially in terms of agricultural policy, which regulates quality and price. "The inclusion of Ukraine in economic structures will not have an impact on military issues but will have

[59] Dorka Takacsy, "Illiberal Disinformation is No One-Way Street: Russian and Hungarian Domestic Propaganda at Each Other's Service," AuthLib, May 04, 2023. <https://www.authlib.eu/illiberal-disinformation-russian-hungarian-domestic-propaganda/>

[60] Newman, "Reuters Institute"

[61] Focus group discussion: Czech Republic, 2024 (moderation: Vit Havelka)

[62] Focus group discussion: Czech Republic, 2024 (moderation: Vit Havelka)

[63] Focus group discussion: Czech Republic, 2024 (moderation: Vit Havelka)

[64] Focus group discussion: Czech Republic, 2024 (moderation: Vit Havelka)

a disastrous effect on our country. Because Ukrainians have already shown how they can 'integrate'. They are our competitors. They have cheaper products and cheaper labour. If there should be an integration, then it should be well thought out so that they have to meet the same conditions as us, even identical ones. So that there won't be much cheaper products. A lot of this poor quality grain has come to Poland.”[65]

Although news content in Slovakia is diversified and accessible to the same degree as in the Czech Republic, the perception of Ukraine in the EU differs significantly across the demographics. The respondents said in terms of helping Ukraine that Slovakia should “not lean towards or stand against any side”[66] and it should “stay in the middle.”[67] The concern about Ukraine’s accession to the EU was also voiced as it would ignite a world war “because Russia would not like it.”[68] similarly, the idea that Ukraine is fighting for the defence of all Europeans and its values was also less shared by our Slovak respondents. While Czechs mostly agreed on this, Slovaks decided that

its “Ukraine fighting for itself against the Russians.”[69] There is a similar difference between the Czech respondents and Zelenskyy. Slovaks discussed him with a distinct negative undertone as someone who “is too active”[70] and “should focus more on his people.”[71]

It would also be expected that in an institutionally isolated and deliberately hostile media environment, such as in Hungary, a large portion of the news audience would perceive Eastern EU enlargement and Zelenskyy as somewhat negative. However, it came as a surprise that even respondents who otherwise declaratively followed non-regime media had a rather critical perception of both. They agreed across all demographics that Ukraine “deserved”, [72] and the United States of America and the West “provoked”[73] the war while only prolonging it by helping Ukraine. Hungarian respondents also reiterated that “the West will fight until the last Ukrainian,”[74] which echoes the Lukashenka quote above. They also discussed that “it shouldn’t be the Hungarian people to pay the price of this war”[75] and “it is the war of two

[65] Focus group discussion: Poland, 2024 (moderation: Anna Kuczyńska)

[66] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[67] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[68] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[69] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[70] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[71] Focus group discussion: Slovakia, 2024 (moderation: Miroslava Pisklová)

[72] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[73] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[74] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[75] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

Slavic nations”[76] and this is why Hungarians “should stay out of it.”[77] It is indicative that these are not only the exact messages the regime spreads via its vast media networks, but also the words of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who keeps repeating them in his radio and television appearances, as well as through his social media content since the beginning of the war. They were supporting the thought of “immediate peace”[78] at any cost, because Russia “just took what it’s fair share.”[79] Accordingly, the image of Zelenskyy also diverges completely from the rest of the V4. Being completely dismissive, the respondents perceived him as dishonest and “to be just an actor.”[80]

Comparing the narratives in mainstream news with how the audience responds exposed not only the benevolence and willingness of Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak news consumers to help Ukraine, but also the resilience they showed when forming opinions about longer processes, such as EU membership and the ability of Zelenskyy to lead Ukraine towards EU accession.

Why robust media matters – a conclusion

The image of Zelenskyy as a politician leading Ukraine towards a European future is both inevitable for V4 news consumers but also something that charges audiences and polarises opinions. In turn, this makes this topic a perfect vehicle for both foreign and domestic malign content creation. While the autonomy of the V4 newsrooms and the reception of certain narratives varies in every state, this complex image depends on systemic preconditions of production and distribution (media ownership concentration and political interference) but also from new habits, devices and skills of news consumption. In short, it relies on the preparedness of both news producers and consumers to handle such information.

The impossibility of thinking of Ukraine and Zelenskyy in the EU, the impossibility of thinking of Ukraine and Zelenskyy outside the EU, and the impossibility of not thinking of it at all is, therefore, a prime example of V4 news production, distribution and consumption patterns. It shows the presence of the topic and the level at which it is ingrained in opinion-making

[76] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[77] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[78] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[79] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

[80] Focus group discussion: Hungary, 2024 (moderation: Dorka Takácsy)

processes. It sheds light not only on how it is utilised to inform and influence citizens and voters but also on how susceptible a media landscape and its news consumers are to malign influence.

V4 audiences see the future of Ukraine vis-à-vis EU enlargement and Zelenskyy at the helm of this process in different ways, thus forming different opinions depending on the state of mainstream media, the condition of the entire media landscape, including social media, and lastly, the ability of the news consumers to recognise and evaluate reliable news content. In the case of the Czech Republic, access to trustworthy news, as well as the capability to resist dubious content, is on the highest level in the V4, with Poland and Slovakia occupying the intermediate position and Hungary remaining in the last spot. Our comparative research revealed, on the one hand, that empathy and a moral imperative to help Ukraine is the highest amongst audiences, who have access to a diversity of reliable sources while also trusting mainstream media. They are also the ones, who are capable on the one side of forming informed opinions on Zelenskyy, relying less on the stereotypes. On the other, they can also discuss why helping Ukraine is a strategic objective for the society as a whole. Comparatively, the less resilient media landscapes and audiences are highly repetitive on this

topic. The more persistently the media reruns the same narratives on Zelenskyy or standardised panels on Ukraine, the more likely it is that the audience will repeat them.

About the author:

Oszkár Roginer-Hofmeister has been working for the Prague based think-tank EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy since September 2022. He first worked as a Project Coordinator and Analyst, and since January 2025 he has become the Head of the Global Europe Programme.

He holds a Phd in Literary Sciences (University of Pécs), a PhD in Southeastern European History (University of Graz), an MA in Cultural Sociology (University of Zadar), and has a primary education in Hungarian Studies (University of Novi Sad).

His main interests lay in media politics, social media, policy and content analysis, structure of media landscapes and press freedoms in Hungary and the Western Balkans.

INTERVIEW

Ian Brzezinski: Trump's America Is Not Isolationist



INTERVIEW

TRUMP'S AMERICA IS NOT ISOLATIONIST

Unless Europeans Push Him There, says Ian Brzezinski



Viktor Daněk



I worry when people claim that America's shift toward isolationism is complete and inevitable because it is neither of those things. My point is that when Europeans exaggerate the nativism and isolationism of incoming President Trump, they may inadvertently push him further in that direction.

With Donald Trump's return to power, many European allies fear the implications of his revived "America First" sentiment for the ongoing war in Ukraine, United States (U.S.) presence in Europe, and for the global security environment in general. "NATO members should rapidly fulfil their long-overdue defence commitments, or they will face the consequences they fear the most," warns **Ian Brzezinski, a renowned American foreign policy and military affairs expert**, in an exclusive interview with EuroLens. The former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence spoke at the Transatlantic Policy Forum in Prague last November. According to him, there is a way to keep the 47th American President engaged and serving as a stabilizing force. However, Europe needs to sort its priorities out, regardless of how painful it may seem.

One of the common fears related to Donald Trump's return to the White House is that he might actually succeed in negotiating an agreement that would end hostilities in Ukraine. However, instead of achieving lasting peace, it would merely create a temporary reprieve for the Kremlin to recover and to prepare for further aggression. What can European partners do to prevent this scenario?

The most obvious way to prevent that scenario would be for President Trump and the other NATO allies to do what is necessary to enable Ukraine to win swiftly and decisively, on its own terms. This would require a strategy with four or five key elements. First and foremost, there needs to be unequivocal support for Ukraine's objectives, which currently include total territorial reconstitution. When the United States and its allies fall short of these objectives or are ambiguous about what kind of outcome they desire from this war, it sends a disillusioning message to the Ukrainians and empowers Putin, giving him the green light to continue his aggression. Therefore, the first element is consistency and continuity across the alliance regarding war objectives with Ukraine.

The second element involves providing Ukrainians with the weapons they need, in the necessary volume and capabilities, without restrictions. This includes everything from

ammunition and missiles to drones, tanks, aircraft, and armoured personnel carriers, along with lifting limitations that have prevented Ukrainians from using this equipment to strike legitimate military targets inside Russia.

The third element of the strategy relates to implementing truly severe economic sanctions against Russia. The fact that Russia's economy has grown by about 3% or more annually over the last two years, with projections for similar growth in 2025, reflects the inadequacy of the current sanctions regime and its enforcement. The transatlantic community has the capacity to significantly harm the Russian economy. Severe sanctions aren't a silver bullet, but they can slow down Russia's war machine and create political unrest within the country. Moreover, they signal a political commitment from the West.

The fourth element, which has been lacking in the Western strategy, is a comprehensive and aggressive engagement with political stakeholders across Russian polity - not only the elites but also the general population. This encompasses information warfare and leveraging the power of the truth. We don't need to resort to disinformation; we have more than enough truth to inject into the Russian society that could create considerable instability. This approach is not a definitive solution, but it needs to be part of a comprehensive

strategy to push Putin into submission. Finally, the fifth element is establishing a clear path for Ukraine to achieve full NATO membership and extend the alliance's Article 5 security guarantee to Ukraine. NATO membership is often discussed as something that happens after the war ends, acknowledged as key to ensuring stability and peace. But, who knows when the war is going to end? From my perspective, NATO membership for Ukraine should be integral to the strategy for achieving victory in this conflict. Article 5 security guarantees would complicate Russian military planning, forcing them to think twice before confronting the Western alliance. Ultimately, it's the only path to convince Putin that Ukraine is no longer in a grey zone of European security—vulnerable and alone, open to Putin's hegemonic and imperial ambitions. This is a crucial role that NATO membership must play as part of a genuine victory strategy to enable Ukraine to win the war decisively and swiftly on its own terms.

What you've described makes perfect sense, but it represents the hard way for achieving a lasting resolution. However, Donald Trump is convinced that he can find a quicker way and that, as a dealmaker, he can strike a deal between Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vladimir Putin.* The leader of the most powerful nation on the planet equipped with a

nuclear arsenal will be in a position to push for such a deal. Is it possible that he might actually succeed and establish, if not a complete resolution of the conflict, a long-term truce?

The strategy I outlined is designed to force Putin into submission and defeat him, which I believe is the most effective way to bring stability, if not peace, back to Europe swiftly. This approach would likely be the most effective means of ensuring that Putin thinks twice before re-attacking Ukraine or any other independent democratic nation in Europe. It also serves to demonstrate to Putin's allies and other adversaries worldwide that the transatlantic community still has the resolution, will, and readiness to fight for its interests and values—a characteristic that has contributed to its success over the last 75 years.

I specifically referred to the U.S. as a nuclear superpower for a reason. Let's recall the meeting between Trump and Zelenskyy that happened in Trump Tower in New York shortly before the elections. We don't know what happened behind closed doors, but it appears that Volodymyr Zelenskyy skilfully brought up the issue of nuclear weapons. He later disclosed that he warned Trump that if Ukraine couldn't join NATO, it would have to seek nuclear weapons for its own protection. I would speculate, of course, but what if

* The interview was recorded before Donald Trump contacted Vladimir Putin in early February 2025 and announced that United States would negotiate the resolution of the war directly with Russia."

Zelenskyy told Trump: "If you don't want to support us anymore, just let us have the nuclear arsenal back, and the war is over." Is the possibility of nuclear rearmament a card that Donald Trump can play to try to find a quick fix?

I don't know so much as it can play a role as much as it reflects a complete collapse of confidence in Ukraine and its relationship with the West. It is more a manifestation of the West's lack of resolve to assist a European sovereign democracy in securing itself and integrating into transatlantic institutions, including NATO and the EU. If Ukraine were to pursue nuclear armament—which I believe is a feasible option—it would reflect not only Putin's aggression but also the failure of the West to come to Ukraine's aid.

Let me add that Ukraine has faced the most intense warfare globally since World War II, resulting in the deaths or injuries of 200,000 to 300,000 combatants alone. Millions have been displaced internally, while others have fled Ukraine, some finding refuge here in Czechia. When a country endures such intense aggression, it inevitably changes its strategic culture. Ukraine regained its independence as one of the most peaceful and politically tolerant countries in Europe. If we are not careful, our hesitancy to take the necessary steps to support Ukraine could lead to its emergence as a

more independent actor in Euro-Atlantic security—something we may not fully embrace. This shift would be driven by desperation, as Ukraine accurately perceives itself and us in an existential moment.

There is a broader debate about the growing isolationism in current U.S. foreign policy, which has influenced politics regardless of who is in the White House. This trend can be traced back to the Obama era as a response to the previous Bush administration, where you served. It expanded rapidly with Trump's "America First" policy, and it has continued even under Biden, albeit in a more refined manner. Many analysts suggest that this trend is likely to persist in the long term. When you hear concerns about American isolationism coming from Europe, you often respond by saying, "Be careful not to create a self-fulfilling prophecy." What do you mean by that?

First, isolationism and nativism have always been elements of the American political landscape. At times, they have been more prominent, though they have not been the prevailing view since World War II. While there are more pronounced strains of these sentiments over the last decade, I would not characterize them as the dominant perspective among the American public. Polls

indicate that Americans, as a whole, are remarkably internationalist in outlook. Although I don't have the exact data in front of me, approximately 60% to 70% of Americans believe the United States should lead in world affairs and that it is in our interest to shape global affairs. A similar number believes we should either sustain or increase our level of commitment. A clear majority of Americans agree that if a NATO ally is attacked, the U.S. should come to their defence.

Interestingly, when examining the MAGA (Make America Great Again) movement, they are actually more internationalist than the so-called Republican moderates, or "rhinos," as they are often referred to. According to data from the Ronald Reagan Institute- specific to the MAGA community, a majority of them believe the U.S. should be internationalist and play a role in shaping world affairs and that NATO is a valuable institution. An even larger majority supports the idea that if Estonia is attacked, we should defend them. In Congress, security assistance and financial packages for Ukraine were passed with Republican majorities. Even the last package, initially held up by Republicans and President Trump, eventually garnered robust Republican support, with no political repercussions for them during their re-election campaigns.

So, I'm always a little bit taken aback when people label America as

isolationist, especially considering we have aircraft carriers deployed to defend Israel and to engage against threats in international trade lanes from Houthi attacks. We maintain a substantial international presence in the Indo-Pacific region, and not only do we have 60,000 U.S. troops permanently stationed in Europe, but an additional 40,000 have been deployed in Central and Eastern Europe to support the Eastern flank. There has been little to no opposition from Capitol Hill or the general public regarding these deployments. This is not the picture of an America that is becoming isolationist.

So, in your view, the term "isolationism" does not accurately describe what is happening in American foreign policy, even though the U.S. has shown for many years a decreasing willingness to engage, especially when it comes to the use of force. There is a change of tone visible in this respect, isn't it?

It is indeed different. The commitment to shape international affairs and to deploy U.S. forces may be more hesitant, but it remains fairly robust. I worry when people claim that America's shift toward isolationism is complete and inevitable because it is neither of those things. My point is that when Europeans exaggerate the nativism and isolationism of President Trump, they may inadvertently

push him further in that direction. Therefore, they need to exercise greater agency and consider what actions are necessary to strengthen President Trump's outlook on world affairs and reinforce the value he places on international alliances, including NATO. Instead of adopting a defensive posture and lamenting about nativism, they should engage in actions that animate President Trump's interest in alliances and his desire to collaborate with countries that are effectively taking action, achieving results and that are on the winning side. This includes increased defence spending, putting Ukraine on a path to victory, and enhancing engagement in the security dimension of the Indo-Pacific. Europeans, in their own self-interest, must step up to meet their obligations, which, would also enhance the likelihood that Trump will value institutions like NATO more highly.

In other words, there is a clear way, how the Europeans can keep Donald Trump engaged in our continent.

Absolutely. There cannot be any guarantees of course, but the approach that Europeans should be taking to President Trump should be the following: first, reminding him that the most pressing issue before the transatlantic community, and the foremost item on his national security agenda as President of the United

States, is preventing the consequences of three crises from spiralling into a global conflagration with potentially cataclysmic outcomes. Specifically, I'm addressing the connections between the high-intensity war in Ukraine driven by Russia's aggression, escalating violence in the Middle East, and increasing provocations from China in the Indo-Pacific. These are no longer regionally distinct issues; they are interconnected and driven by the collusion of four states: China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran. We are dangerously close to a scenario where these conflicts could escalate into something far more difficult to manage. Like any U.S. president, Donald Trump does not want to commit troops to another major war. However, if we allow these three contingencies to develop unchecked, then that is a recipe to have that force commitment coming in fast, hard and ugly.

So, how do we prevent that? It comes down to sequencing. The first and most urgent task is to end the war in Ukraine on terms that provide the best foundation for stability if not peace. Why is this critical? Because that is where the most intense conflict is taking place right now and it is draining our resources. Defeating Putin will stabilize the region and send a powerful message to other adversaries that we possess the resolution, political will, and readiness

fight for our values and interests. This resolve will serve to deter further aggression from China, North Korea, and Iran. And it will free up our resources to collaboratively address the other two contingencies as a Euro-Atlantic community.

In your view, the defence spending within the Alliance should rise to a level between three to four per cent of GDP, with three per cent serving as the new baseline. That is a recommendation that is not uncommon. There are NATO members that would already meet this target, but they represent a minority. The majority have struggled to reach the current 2% target, and there are major European powers such as Italy or Germany, which are still far behind. Expecting these countries to essentially double their defence spending in a short period seems unrealistic. If some of the NATO allies refuse any further increase, what would it lead to?

If they're not able to do that, then that's the spear that'll puncture the power of unity in the Alliance. You'll just raise questions in Washington, if not elsewhere, why should we carry all the burden? When countries fail to fulfil their obligations and are naive about the security requirements—especially in their own backyard—it paves the way for the very outcome we are trying to avoid: American disengagement from Europe.

Is Donald Trump right when he says that Europeans have taken U.S. presence and security guarantees for granted for far too long and have essentially abused American goodwill?

He is dead right on that. The President is not the only one making this point, but he has certainly articulated it more abrasively in a way that has been more shocking than his predecessors. Unfortunately, this might have been necessary to awaken several of our allies so they could make the long-overdue defence commitments.

Donald Trump already announced that he is expecting the NATO member states to increase defence spending to 5 % of GDP. Many European allies might feel the need to appease Donald Trump not only by ramping up their defence budgets but also promising to purchase more American military technology. However, this stands in contradiction to the Draghi Report and the ambitions of the current European Commission, which seeks to boost investment in European defence industry capabilities. Draghi even pleads for preferential buying and argues that without those investments, Europe will continue to lag behind the U.S., ultimately hampering European competitiveness. Is the Commission's plan still realistic given the results of the U.S. elections?

I don't really care how Europeans acquire their capabilities; they simply need them quickly and effectively. If they can procure these capabilities faster from the European defence industry, so be it. If European industry produces top-tier equipment—perhaps even better than that of the United States—great, fine. If it has to come from the U.S., that's fine too. Yes, this may lead to a little more of an appreciation from Donald Trump since it would enhance our trade balance. From my perspective, this is a shortcoming, that needs to be remedied fast. So, when the European Commission comes in and makes an effort to boost the home industry instead, then I think they got the priorities wrong.

You have described various scenarios that could unfold knowing European allies well for many years, if you were to make an informed guess about whether they would rise to the challenge in terms of increased defence spending and their commitment to Ukraine, do you think Europe would actually follow through?

Yes, absolutely. Consider the imbalance of power between Europe and our most immediate and urgent adversary, Russia. I don't have exact numbers right now, but according to NATO, the combined GDP of the NATO alliance in 2024 is projected to be \$58 trillion,

which is more than 25 times Russia's GDP. If you exclude the United States and Canada, there still remains a significant disparity. In terms of NATO defence spending, I believe it will be around \$1.5 trillion in 2025 compared to roughly \$150 billion for Russia, while its forces are being depleted in high-intensity warfare. So, we're talking about defence spending that is ten times larger than Russia's. For the European portion, it might be roughly five times larger. Europe has the capacity. It's just not demonstrating it effectively. And with the United States, it is not showing the political will necessary to leverage these capabilities to bring this war to a swift, decisive and just conclusion.

That's exactly where I was aiming with the question. The numbers clearly favour Europe. Yet, we lack the political will to give up the peace dividend we got used to and to focus on security and stability adequately.

Look at what Olaf Scholz said last year at a major political summit. Assistance to Ukraine is, according to him, important, but not at the expense of the German pension or healthcare system. What message does that send to Ukrainians? What does it communicate to the Russians? It conveys a complete absence of political will and reinforces the perception in Moscow that the Germans—and likely the Alliance too

—don't possess the resolve to take decisive action. Even with all this capacity, we lack the moral fibre necessary to confront this challenge. That was one of the most damaging statements I've heard in a long time. It must have been terrifying for Ukrainians and entirely empowering for Putin.

*Ian Brzezinski (*1963) is a prominent American foreign policy expert and military affairs analyst. He served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Europe and NATO Policy under President George W. Bush. A senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, Brzezinski provides insights on transatlantic relations, defence strategy, and geopolitical developments. He is a widely recognized commentator and has contributed to various publications and forums. With a strong academic background and years of leadership in defence policy, Brzezinski remains an influential voice in international security discussions.*

About the author:

Viktor Daněk joined EUROPEUM Institute in fall 2023. Before that he worked for almost ten years as a journalist. He focused mainly on covering EU affairs. He spent almost five years as a permanent correspondent in Brussels. He holds university degrees in Media Studies and International Relations.



TRANSATLANTIC POLICY FORUM 2024

Image: Canva

TAPF 2024

TRANSATLANTIC POLICY FORUM 2024: Summary



Danielle Piatkiewicz and Mateusz M. Piotrowski



The Transatlantic Policy Forum (TAPF) is a regular closed conference organised by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy in close cooperation with Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, US Embassy to Prague and Atlantic Council. The recent edition took place in November 2024 in Prague's Czernin Palace and focused on the key issues of Transatlantic relationship in the era of growing uncertainty in the international relations.

The result from the 2024 Presidential elections have, once again, shook the foundations of the Transatlantic relationship – but to what degree, remains the question. The transatlantic relationship will enter 2025 against a backdrop of significant geopolitical tension, testing the strength of the post-Cold War international order and its core values of democracy and the rule of law in the wake of critical elections around the world.

The election of President Trump signals the re-entry of an 'America First' foreign policy, set to redefine future transatlantic relations. Meanwhile, the fate of the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine hangs in the air as concerns over the durability

of U.S. and EU support against Russia's ongoing war of aggression is called into question. This geopolitical complexity is further heightened by continued crises in the European neighborhood, including the escalating Israel-Hamas conflict and Chinese interference posing risks to Taiwanese political stability and regional peace.

Recognizing these formidable challenges, together, a diverse range of transatlantic experts convened on November 14-15, 2024, for the seventh Transatlantic Policy Forum (TAPF). The event was organized by the EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy in partnership with the Atlantic Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and supported by the International Visegrad Fund and the U.S. Embassy in Prague.

The forum tackled a wide range of topics, starting with the state of global democracy in the wake of a 'super year' pivotal election and the rising influence of AI-fueled misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Discussions examined NATO's and the EU's enlargement policies, particularly Ukraine's membership ambitions and their potential impact on EU integration and security. This tied seamlessly into deeper conversations about cooperative efforts for Ukraine's reconstruction, showcasing shared strategies and resources.

Discussions then turned its focus to collective security in an increasingly

multipolar world, addressing transatlantic approaches to challenges from major powers like Russia and China, alongside regional issues in the Middle East and Taiwan and emphasized the need for Europe to step up significantly in its own defense and military resources. Sessions also delved into global trade practices and explored the future of transatlantic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, emphasizing economic resilience and strategies for de-risking.

Based on the engaging discussions, we offer a comprehensive set of takeaways, including actionable recommendations and a strategic "To-Do list" for the transatlantic alliance in the coming years.

Transatlantic To-do list

The Forum concluded with its annual transatlantic to-do list which identifies key areas for the transatlantic partnership to address over the next year.

1. Election Integrity: Governments, civil society, and tech stakeholders must strengthen civic resilience against misinformation, polarization, and cyber threats. Local governments, with their community insights, should lead in fostering trust and engagement. Politicians must avoid divisive rhetoric that harms democratic processes.

2. **Ukraine Reconstruction: Rebuilding Ukraine's critical infrastructure** requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving governments, industry, and civil society, supported by international partnerships to secure financial investments for long-term stability and development.

3. **European Defense: Europe must invest more in its militaries and defense industries**, with the EU playing a key role in industrial strategy and military aid. Bold actions are needed, including increasing NATO spending (up to 3% of GDP) and committing 0.25% of GDP to support Ukraine, alongside potential bilateral security commitments.

4. **Ukraine's NATO Path: A clear timeline for Ukraine's NATO membership is vital**, shaping its future, enhancing NATO's global significance, and deterring Kremlin aggression.

5. **Moldova and Georgia EU Integration: The EU and allies must actively support Moldova's and Georgia's EU integration**, share reform experiences, and combat Russian disinformation while fostering public support for EU membership.

6. **Indo-Pacific Strategy: By 2025, the U.S. and EU must align Indo-Pacific strategies to strengthen ties with Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and ASEAN nations**, focusing on collective security, resilient supply chains, and sustainable development to counter authoritarian influence.

7. **EU-US Trade Relations: The EU must be ready to negotiate tariffs and link**

trade measures to broader issues, demonstrating readiness for symmetrical retaliation to safeguard economic ties.

About the authors:

Danielle Piatkiewicz is a research fellow at EUROPEUM focusing on issues around Transatlantic and Central and Eastern European foreign and security relations, democracy promotion and NATO. She is also a Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the Alliance of Democracies Foundation and Founder of DEP Consulting. Previously, she was a senior program coordinator for The German Marshall Fund of the United States' (GMF) Asia and the Future of Geopolitics programs (Washington, DC). She holds a M.A. in international and political studies with a concentration in transatlantic studies from Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. She received her B.A. in political science with an emphasis in international relations and a minor in German studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

Mateusz M. Piotrowski is a senior analyst for U.S. policy and transatlantic relations with the International Security Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). His research area covers topics regarding the United States domestic issues, foreign and security policy. That includes transatlantic cooperation within NATO and with the EU, bilateral relations with most important allies and partners in Europe and Asia, as well as the approach of the U.S. to the designated threats and rivals in international space. He is a PhD candidate in political science.



LIST OF SECURITY EVENTS TO FOLLOW IN 2025

Closed events to follow:

Munich Security Conference 2025

- **Dates:** February 14–16, 2025
- **Location:** Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich, Germany
- **Organiser:** Munich Security Conference Foundation
- **Overview:** An annual conference bringing together international security policymakers to discuss pressing global security issues.



Europe as a Task 2025

- **Dates:** May 12-13, 2025
- **Locations:** Prague Castle, Czernin Palace, Prague, Czechia
- **Organiser:** EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, Association of International Affairs (AMO), Institute of International Relations Prague (IIR)
- **Overview:** New format of a regular conference on EU politics in Prague combining high-level and working session formats. The very first edition with focus on European competitiveness and economic security in the new geopolitical reality.



GLOBESEC Forum 2025

- **Dates:** June 12–14, 2025
- **Location:** Hilton Prague
- **Organiser:** GLOBESEC
- **Overview:** GLOBSEC Forum will celebrate its 20th edition. The prestigious high-level conference is dedicated to promoting international dialogue and cooperation to enhance global security and prosperity.



NATO Summit 2025

- **Dates:** June 24–26, 2025
- **Location:** World Forum, The Hague, Netherlands
- **Organiser:** NATO
- **Overview:** A meeting of heads of state and government from NATO member countries to discuss global security challenges and NATO's strategic direction.



Ukraine Recovery Conference 2025

- **Dates:** July 10–11, 2025
- **Location:** Rome, Italy
- **Organiser:** Government of Italy
- **Overview:** The fourth annual conference dedicated to the swift recovery and long-term reconstruction of Ukraine, continuing the series of high-level political events supporting Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war of aggression.





The IISS Prague Defence Summit 2025

- **Dates:** to be announced (2025)
- **Location:** Prague, Czech Republic
- **Organiser:** IISS
- **Overview:** Major forum for political, military and industry leaders to discuss the most effective ways to build defence capacity in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Transatlantic Policy Forum (TAPF)

- **Dates:** to be announced (2025)
- **Location:** Prague, Czech Republic
- **Organiser:** EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy
- **Overview:** An annual closed-door summit that convenes decision-makers and opinion leaders to deliberate on transatlantic relations, encompassing security, defense, and policy strategies.



Warsaw Security Forum

- **Dates:** to be announced (2025)
- **Location:** Warsaw, Poland
- **Organiser:** Casimir Pulanski Foundation
- **Overview:** One of the leading European security conferences devoted to transatlantic cooperation and focused on elaborating shared responses to common challenges, with an emphasis on the security of Central and Eastern Europe.

Open events:

ASIS Europe – From Risk to Resilience

- **Dates:** March 4–6, 2025
- **Location:** Convention Centre Dublin (CCD), Dublin, Ireland
- **Organiser:** ASIS International
- **Overview:** A leading cyber and physical risks conference for security leaders, focusing on expert insights, discussions, and networking opportunities.



Security and Defence 2025

- **Date:** March 6, 2025
- **Location:** Chatham House, London, UK, and Online
- **Organiser:** Chatham House
- **Overview:** This conference will bring together senior policymakers, business leaders, and international security experts to discuss tools needed for future military forces in an increasingly insecure world.

Transatlantic Week 2025

- **Date:** March 18, 2025
- **Location:** Brussels, Belgium
- **Organiser:** American Chamber of Commerce to the EU (AmCham EU)
- **Overview:** A critical forum for Europe and the US to discuss and instill new confidence in transatlantic cooperation, focusing on trade, technology, and green agendas.



EISS 8th Annual Conference

- **Dates:** June 26–27, 2025
- **Location:** University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece
- **Organiser:** European Initiative for Security Studies (EISS)
- **Overview:** A major European gathering of scholars and practitioners discussing security issues, with potential focus on the war in Ukraine and its implications for European security.



Berlin Security Conference 2025

- **Dates:** November 18–19, 2025
- **Location:** Vienna House Andel's Berlin, Berlin, Germany
- **Organiser:** European Security and Defence Association
- **Overview:** One of the largest European security and defence policy events, bringing together international experts to discuss current security challenges.



Calendars to follow:

OSCE Events Calendar

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe regularly updates its events calendar, featuring various security-related meetings and workshops across Europe.



National Security Legislative Calendar

The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation maintains a legislative calendar focused on national security topics, including events and key legislative actions.



INTERVIEW

Věra Jourová: Trump's America Cannot Deal with China Alone



INTERVIEW

Trump's America Cannot Deal with China Alone

But We Must Do Our Homework First, says Věra Jourová

Viktor Daněk

The new administration of Donald Trump and the European Union can build partnerships on many topics of common interest, believes **former Vice-President of the European Commission Vera Jourová**, who has returned to Czechia after a decade in Brussels. She provided an interview for our podcast Café Evropa, in which she discussed what to expect from Donald Trump's return to the White House and how she sees Elon Musk's invectives towards her.

Is it an advantage for the European Union, that it is led by people who have already experienced Donald Trump's first presidency?

Ursula von der Leyen is undoubtedly stronger on her feet. The phone number that Henry Kissinger



The United States and the EU face the same economic rivals. It would be insane to instigate a mutual trade war in such a situation.

mentioned when he asked whom to call when he wants to talk to Europe is hers. At the same time, she will work on a close relationship with the leaders of member states because the Union cannot be strong in its foreign policy without the member states. This also applies to other areas where cooperation depends on our unity, not just foreign policy. In all of this, she has rich experience. But Donald Trump #2 is better prepared too.

Knowing what his first presidency looked like, what can Europe expect

in the coming months and years? What should the Union focus on first and foremost?

We must enhance our diplomacy, which should offer more mutually beneficial solutions. Donald Trump is a transactional politician, and I don't mean this as a criticism. We will have to step up in at least four areas to maintain a strong bond with the United States. First and foremost, it is defence and security. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte will play a crucial role, as he had good chemistry with Donald Trump in the past. The Commission will also have a say in this, and member states must necessarily increase their defence spending. Europe's fate primarily lies in European hands, and we can no longer rely on the hope that the White House is going to be occupied by someone ready to generously provide Europe's security.

We must also build on our existing relationship in the areas of technology and critical infrastructure. We have made a good start on cooperation in artificial intelligence, chip development, biotechnology, quantum computers, etc. We have created strong ties, and we must convince Trump's administration that their continuation is advantageous also for the USA. The third area is the economy. The United States and the EU face the same economic rivals. It would be insane to instigate a mutual trade war in such a situation. Last, but

not least, I see democracy and human rights as a central area. Common enemies should instead unite us, especially as fewer and fewer people on the planet live in democracies. For many decades, the member states of the European Union and the USA were among the pillars of the democratic world. We must strive to continue this.

However, Donald Trump views Europe as a competitor. Can reality, which he will likely encounter, i.e., regarding the impact of tariffs, lead him away from this perception?

Having a partnership based on reciprocity means that both sides must understand the context. If Donald Trump has a good analysis in hand, and I have no doubt about that, he will realize that he probably cannot manage an increasingly assertive China on his own.

You were among the most visible representatives of the Union in the United States through your efforts to strengthen the protection of consumer rights on the Internet and to revolutionize the regulation of digital platforms. How significant turn can we expect with the arrival of Donald Trump and Elon Musk? Is the time when agreements could be made with leaders from Silicon Valley gone?

It is no longer about agreements. In Europe, we have a very clear triplet

of laws that tell companies how to behave in the European Single Market: the General Data Protection Regulation, the Digital Services Regulation, and the Digital Markets Regulation. Anyone who wants to make money here must play by them. A newcomer, the Artificial Intelligence Regulation, is also joining the class. The new Commission will simply do its job, namely enforcing compliance with laws that apply to everyone, regardless of whether they are from America or China.

Věra Jourová (1964*) is a Czech politician and lawyer who served as Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency from 2019 to 2024 and as the European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality from 2014 to 2019. She gained global attention for openly criticizing Elon Musk and the rise of antisemitism on the X network in an interview with Politico last fall. After her return to Prague, she has become the prorector of Charles University Prague and advisor to the Czech President Petr Pavel

I'm also referring to the fact that you recently exchanged sharp messages through the media with Elon Musk. You stated that he cannot distinguish good from evil, to which he replied

that you are the evil one. With the immense economic power and the vast reach of the social network he owns, Musk has now also concentrated political power. How serious cause for concern is this?

I will refrain from evaluating whom Donald Trump trusts. During my ten years in the Commission, I spoke with all the heads of all major companies except Mr. Musk. With all the others, I always saw an effort to understand the European soul, our historical scars, and concerns that prevent us from letting a verbal jungle take over the world. With all, I saw that they understood their extreme responsibility, but not with Elon Musk. Data confirms that there has been an overwhelming surge of anti-Semitism on the X network. I believe in times like this, it is dangerous to remain silent, let alone not to intervene and make an enormous profit from it. That's why I spoke out relatively sharply. I was one of the few who could afford to say it and be heard at the same time.

The interview I gave to Politico was read by 80 million people. Mr Musk's response saw a billion people. I am a specialist on Goliaths. Something like this hasn't happened to me for the first time, although not on such a scale. But if just a part of that billion contemplated whether we haven't really stepped towards something very ugly and whether we should better distinguish between good and evil, then it was worth it.

A close-up photograph of a chessboard. In the center is a white, frosted glass globe with a grid of latitude and longitude lines and a stylized world map. The globe is surrounded by several chess pieces, including a white king, a white queen, a white rook, and a white pawn, as well as several black pieces. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the textures of the pieces and the globe.

OPINION

Radical Reforms or a Slow Agony

Image: Canva

OPINION

RADICAL REFORMS OR A SLOW AGONY:


Why Draghi's Report on European Competitiveness Should Be a Mandatory Reading for Czech Policymakers

Viktor Daněk, Filip Křenek



The commentary was originally published in Czech in the Magazine Neovlivní 10/2024.

Europe is not flourishing. This is how the main idea of Mario Draghi's long-awaited report on European competitiveness [1] could be paraphrased in the words of the late Czech president Havel. The presentation of Draghi's report in Brussels in September 2024 was one of the main events of the year. In the Czech Republic, it was overshadowed by catastrophic floods, but we should certainly pay close attention to it. In his nearly 400-page magnum opus, the former president of the European Central Bank not only accurately



*Do this, or it's a slow **agony**. If Europe wants to maintain its economic model and remain a relevant player in the world, it must act in parallel in **all the areas set out**.*

[1] Draghi, Mario. The future of European competitiveness (Part A: A competitiveness strategy for Europe). European Commission, September, 2024. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en

analyses the problems weighing on European businesses, but also offers concrete proposals for solutions that are already being turned into reality by the new European Commission. Draghi's ideas will eventually make it into the Czech public discourse one way or another. Better sooner rather than later.

One thing that is already clear is that many of the proposed changes will require painful concessions from many Member States. Reading Draghi's report also reveals a deep division of the causes of the EU's problems and their possible solutions by leading European experts and the predominant views on the Czech political scene, both within the government and the opposition.

Get ready for Super Mario

When Draghi prevented the collapse of the eurozone in 2012, European media outlets quickly nicknamed him Super Mario. [2] He helped calm panic-stricken markets by saying he would do "whatever it takes" to save the euro. [3] He later won his spurs as prime minister of Italy, around whom other European leaders tiptoed in

awe, and his name was recently floated in the discussions for the new European Council chief. Draghi's credit in European circles is undeniable. So, when European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen asked him more than a year ago to produce a thorough economic analysis of the state of the European economy and its prospects, expectations were not low.

"Il dottore", as Draghi is also known thanks to his academic career and his doctorate in economics from the prestigious MIT university, formulates a precise and ruthless diagnosis in his report. The EU is falling behind its biggest competitors, the US and China, and without major reforms the situation will continue to deteriorate. His report draws on the economic growth model of his university mentor, the American economist and Nobel laureate Robert Solow. [4] In it, Solow named the basic components necessary for economic growth: labour, productivity driven by technological progress and capital. [5] Draghi applies this approach to Europe, pointing out deep shortcomings in all three areas.

[2] Harlan, Chico. "In Europe, High Hopes for High-Energy Italian Taking Over as ECB Chief." The Washington Post, June 27, 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/in-europe-high-hopes-for-high-energy-italian-taking-over-as-ecb-chief/2011/06/27/AGjoIGoH_story.html

[3] European Central Bank. "Keynote Speech by Mario Draghi at the Global Investment Conference, London." ECB Speeches, July 26, 2012. <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2012/html/sp120726.en.html>

[4] Wall Street Italia. "Chi è Mario Draghi: l'incredibile curriculum del futuro premier." February 3, 2021. <https://www.wallstreetitalia.com/chi-e-mario-draghi/>

[5] Solow, Robert M. "A Contribution to the Theory of Economic Growth." The Quarterly Journal of Economics, Volume 70, Issue 1, February 1956, pp. 65-94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1884513>

The missed digital revolution

Let's start with skilled labour. Its shortage is already demonstrating itself. In the Czech Republic alone, according to the Labour Office, 265.000 people are lacking to meet the needs of the labour market. [6] Changes in the population structure are affecting the whole of Europe, but are yet to hit in full force. Demographers expect the EU workforce to shrink by two million people a year by 2040 as a result of low birth rates and an ageing population. [7] In theory, this downturn could be compensated for by "importing" workers from third countries, but because of Europe's strict migration policy, it is already clear that the EU will not be able to make up for the decline. By contrast, the US population is set to grow in the future, albeit at a slower pace.

Why is the declining demographic curve a problem? For the first time ever, Europe is entering an era when economic growth will not be adequately supported by the workforce. To avoid an economic decline, this loss will need to be made up for by faster growth in labour productivity. But Europe is also significantly lagging behind the US in

this regard. For five decades since the end of the Second World War, Europe has been successfully catching up with America's high productivity. The peak came in the mid-1990s, when, at 95%, it was almost at a comparable level. However, since then, the gap between the EU and the US has widened once again. Today, we are at 80% of US productivity and we continue to slow down. [8]

What happened? The data shows that Europe seems to have missed out on the digital revolution that came with the mass emergence of the internet in the 1990s. In the United States, tech giants like Google, Facebook and Microsoft have gradually become the biggest investors in research and innovation instead of the car and pharmaceutical industries. In stagnating Europe, on the other hand, the biggest investors in research are still the same as two decades ago – car manufacturers Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, and the engineering group Bosch. [9] The old continent's tendency to gravitate towards traditional industries has prevented it from jumping on the technological express and thus tap into Solow's second source of growth. But we are also missing out on current opportunities: the vast majority of

[6] Úřad práce ČR. "Tisková zpráva: Nezaměstnanost v říjnu 2024." November 8, 2024.

https://www.uradprace.cz/documents/37855/4767745/TZ_nezaměstnanost_říjen+2024.pdf

[7] p. 5, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[8] p. 23, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[9] p. 234, Draghi, Mario. The future of European competitiveness (Part B: In-depth analysis and recommendations). European Commission, September, 2024. https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/ec1409c1-d4b4-4882-8bdd-3519f86bbb92_en

global venture investment in start-ups in the fields of artificial intelligence and quantum computing is heading to the United States. [10]

Where is the European Wall Street?

Europe's inability to attract technological pioneers is linked to its overall underfunding, which brings us to the third source of growth. European companies spend only half as much on research and innovation as their American counterparts. As a result, only four of the world's top 50 tech companies are now based in the EU, and not even one of them is in the top ten. Not a single greenfield company with a market capitalisation of over €100 billion was built in Europe in the last fifty years. By contrast, in the US, six companies with a value of more than €1 trillion have sprung up in the same period. [11]

According to Draghi, in order for Europe to make up for this gap and cover the loss of labour force, it would need to invest around €800 billion a year, or about 5% of EU's GDP, [12] a pace unseen in Europe for decades. Even higher than the post-war Marshall Plan that helped reconstruct much of Europe.

The necessary funds are available in

Europe – European household savings exceed those of their US counterparts. But because of Europe's fragmented and dysfunctional capital markets, they are not heading in the right direction. The vast majority of global investments in AI and quantum computing start-ups, for example, goes to the United States, including investments funded by European savings. [13]

If European capital markets were better connected, the money of German or Dutch savers could be used to invest in Czech, Danish or Spanish companies and vice versa. But Europe does not have a single financial market like the Wall Street; instead, Member States rely on their domestic capital markets and closely guard their own national stock exchanges. And without access to the finances they need, as many as a third of Europe's fastest-growing companies flee to the US. [14]

The boy who's afraid to grow up

Draghi also discusses other issues that burden European companies and hinder their growth, especially excessive administrative burden. And it grows more severe the more successful a company is. Europe

[10] p. 79, Draghi (Part B), 2024.

[11] p. 20, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[12] p. 59, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[13] p. 26, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[14] p. 2, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

struggles with a phenomenon known as the Peter Pan effect. Like the boy from Neverland, European companies are afraid to grow up, lest they have to deal with new bureaucracy as they expand.

While US lawmakers have passed some 5,500 pieces of legislation in the past five years, this number in the EU was more than a double. [15] According to Draghi, this hits firms in the digital services sector particularly hard, undermining innovation. And the situation is further complicated by the fact that, despite common EU legislation, companies have to contend with differences in its interpretation and application.

Yet another problem are high energy prices that energy-intensive industries have to cope with. Because of Europe's reliance on fossil fuel imports, companies in the EU pay up to three times as much for electricity as their US competitors. [16] To drive down the price of electricity, Europe needs to reform its energy markets and cut down on bureaucracy of permitting new sources of clean energy, relieving itself of its dependence on the imports of fossil fuels.

Greener, but more realistic

In his report, Draghi also acknowledges that the EU's climate

targets pose a challenge for companies. While the US and China are moving themselves towards carbon neutrality, they accompany their climate goals with equally ambitious investment incentives. Yet Europe has huge potential in clean technologies. For example, 60% of high-tech patents, key to the development of modern green technologies, originate in the EU, [17] but European companies struggle to scale up production or even to keep it in the EU.

In the case of solar panels, China produces around 80% of the world's production [18] and Europe is no longer able to compete due to dumping prices. In Draghi's view, there is no choice but to accept reality. However, there are areas where Europe is not losing out completely and should not be afraid to resort to protect domestic producers, as is now happening in the case of special tariffs on imports of Chinese electric cars. In strategically important sectors, the report argues, the EU should actively seek to maintain production capacity in Europe, for example by favouring domestic producers in public procurement.

In other words, the EU should be realistic about its climate targets and ensure that decarbonisation does not lead to deindustrialization. However, Draghi makes it clear that the way to

[15] p. 65, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[16] p. 2, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[17] p. 36, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[18] Wood Mackenzie. "China Dominates Global Solar Supply Chain." November 7, 2023.

<https://www.woodmac.com/press-releases/china-dominance-on-global-solar-supply-chain/>.

prosperity is not through locking ourselves into the fossil car industry, but through massive investment into promising future industries and economic security.

The impact with the Czech reality

By and large, such recommendations sadly do not fit into the Czech political reality, where opposition to e-mobility is the norm and where the government is afraid to extend the emission trading system to transport and heating, [19] a compromise negotiated during its own EU presidency in exchange for free allowances for Czech heating plants. [20] And Draghi's suggestion to improve EU decision-making by extending the qualified majority vote [21] will undoubtedly hit the wall as well, given that the power of veto is held sacred by both the Czech government and opposition. Or, to take another example: to kick-start investment in research and innovation from private pockets, public funds will need to be matched by an amount equivalent to the entire annual EU budget, but the

Czech Republic and other countries have long refused to increase it. Draghi's proposal for joint borrowing [22] instead will also likely hit a politically impasse.

It would be a grave mistake to brush Draghi's unpopular proposals aside and choose, as if from a menu, only those that are easiest to agree on. If Europe wants to maintain its economic model and remain a relevant player in the world, it must act in parallel in all the areas set out. And if not, it does not inevitably mean Europe's bitter demise from the global stage in five- or ten-years' time. However, as the author himself put it when introducing the report, "Do this, or it's a slow agony." [23]

[19] Euractiv. "Czechia Wants to Delay ETS-2 Until at Least 2028." December 17, 2024. [p. 79, Draghi \(Part B\), 2024.](#)

[20] Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic. "Fit for 55: Czech Presidency Manages to Negotiate Agreement on Emission Allowances." December 18, 2022.

https://www.mzp.cz/en/news_20221218_Fit_for_55_Czech_Presidency_manages_to_negotiate_agreement_on_emission_allowances_and_over_50_billion_for_the_most_vulnerable_households_from_a_new_fund. p. 64, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[21] p. 64, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[22] p. 61, Draghi (Part A), 2024.

[23] Reuters. "Draghi Urges Reform, Massive Investment to Revive Lagging EU Economy." September 9, 2024.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/draghi-urges-reform-massive-investment-revive-lagging-eu-economy-2024-09-09/>.



The image shows a close-up, high-angle view of a wooden desk. In the upper right, a silver laptop is open, its screen displaying a document. In the foreground, several sheets of white paper are scattered. One sheet has a pen resting on it, and another has a pair of glasses. A red rectangular overlay is positioned in the center, containing the text 'WORK IN PROGRESS' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background is slightly blurred, showing a stack of books on the left.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Image: Canva

WORK IN PROGRESS



EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy

Green Europe

This year, our Green team focuses on several key areas of research and advocacy aimed at advancing climate and competitiveness agendas in Czechia and beyond. We address transport poverty and investigate possible financing instruments, including the Social Climate Fund's capacity to alleviate both transport and energy poverty. In parallel, we explore the development of carbon pricing through the proposed ETS2 scheme, scrutinizing its complex path through the Czech political landscape. We also examine trends in the second-hand electric vehicle market. Beyond transport, we delve into decarbonization strategies for the Czech industry—especially in automotive, battery production, and energy-intensive sectors such as steel—while positioning these insights within broader EU competitiveness policies, international trade considerations, and the upcoming multi-annual financial framework. Finally, we focus on urban climate adaptation analysing the impacts of rising

temperatures on city infrastructure and populations, highlighting nature-based solutions like green and blue infrastructure, and showcasing best practices from cities across southern Europe.

Just Europe

As Europe navigates the green and digital transitions, the Just Europe programme continues to explore how to make these processes fair for everyone. The Just Green project, in collaboration with the Institute's Green Europe programme and international partners, examines the social impact of the green transition in the V4 countries, focusing on labour markets, transport and the need to improve buildings' energy efficiency. Alongside desk and public opinion research, the project actively involves the public, for instance, through webinars and the forthcoming Climate Assemblies, where citizens, policymakers and stakeholders will tackle key challenges together. Just Europe also leads The Platform Revolution project, which studies the

social effects of platform work in the V4 and Western Balkans. By exchanging experiences and putting forward policy recommendations, this eight-country project aims to improve fairness in platform work and address future challenges, such as the impact of this type of work on labour migration. In addition to its research outputs and roundtables for researchers, the results of The Platform Revolution will be presented at a closing conference in Brussels.

and Brussels while also disseminating the findings to a broader audience through media appearances at both the Czech and EU levels.

Global Europe

In 2025, Global Europe further delves into the topics related to the EU neighbourhood and Europe as a global actor. Aside from co-organising and participating in a wide array of debates and expert panels from Yerevan through Warsaw and Belgrade, we are also responsible for shaping our flagship events, such as the Transatlantic Policy Forum and the Think Tank Forum on EU enlargement, defence, security, media freedom and the rule of law, our researchers will publish a variety of outputs relating to our projects supported by the European Union, NATO, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Visegrad Fund and others. Looking into ongoing issues from Taiwan, through the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans, extending to US-EU relations, we aim to provide in-depth analyses for experts and stakeholders in Prague





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