

POLICY PAPER

The post-pandemic future of the transatlantic relations – time to rebuild or repair?

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After already enduring a 4-year term under United States' President Trump, the future of the transatlantic relationship is at a critical junction. The US faces an upcoming election where the next administration can either further deteriorate relations or seek to rebuild and strengthen them. No matter the outcome, the future path will be intrinsically tied to how the transatlantic partners cope with the political, economic and security fallout of the global pandemic.

Will the US return to the fold of multilateralism and restore an equitable world order in cooperation with the EU, or does the EU stand alone and will have to rapidly grow into a more influential geopolitical player? Or will relations continue their downward trajectories current and spur an accelerated retreat towards isolationist policies, creating space for external challengers like China and Russia to reassert their global positions and challenge the established order? This analysis will examine the current and upcoming challenges on the transatlantic horizon in regard to post-COVID economic recovery. Each region has proposed policies to tackle the current and upcoming economic aftermath of the pandemic, but as Europe outlines strong policies, the Trump administration's approach has had dire consequences. The Biden campaign's approach, on the other hand, shows similarities to that of Europe, evoking hope for a more harmonized approach that has proven successful in the past.

This analysis will examine the US and EU's diverging approaches to global issues, challenges and external challengers, such as Russia and China. As demonstrated by the Trump administration, the US is retreating on many of its multilateral and international commitments – how will the Transatlantic relationship look like if there is a second Trump term as opposed to if Biden takes over? Is the relationship irreparably damaged or can it be repaired? Finally, this paper will examine the future of transatlantic security under the

framework of NATO's 2030 reflection process and appraise how the new security landscape will look like post-COVID, especially as external threats mount and impact the Central and Eastern European front.

The path to post-COVID-19 recovery – diverging approaches

The pandemic has exposed many weaknesses and cracks within both democratic and non-democratic nations, notably when it comes to the various health and economic responses. The US and Europe have taken very different approaches in addressing the pandemic and experienced setbacks with regards to handling the novel situation, especially as the US numbers continue to rise and Europe undergoes a second wave. The coordination process, in a sense, never started off on good terms. President Trump's travel ban against Europe back in March was deemed "undiplomatic in tone" as there was a lack of coordination with European counterparts, prompting an "unusually sharp rebuke from EU leaders the following day."¹ While relations have progressed to some degree since the early days of the pandemic, the variability in response to the COVID pandemic can be an emblematic case of a deeper fracture in the West and future of multilateralism. The lack of a coordinated international but also transatlantic efforts have highlighted a missed opportunity for democracies to take a lead on handling the pandemic, leaving a space for China to showcase its 'mask display' by sending supplies and equipment to hard-hit areas (including Europe) and for Russia to 'lead' the way on a vaccine research.

While a global retreat in order to deal with pressing domestic issues, including health and economy, can be seen, the pandemic has also accentuated global interconnectedness and exposed our interdependencies. The full impact of the global shutdown of trade, commerce and businesses are too early to tell, but what is certain is that a coordinated effort to get the global economy back on

¹ Brattberg, E. (2020). The troubling impact of COVID-19 on transatlantic relations. *Confrontations Europe*, La revue, N.128. Retrieved at: [http://confrontations.org/wp-](http://confrontations.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Confrontations-Revue-128-EN-Transatlantic.pdf)

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track is in the best interest for the transatlantic partnership, which encompasses two out of three largest economies in the world, including China. In order to rival the era of great power competition, both the US and European economies will require massive economic support and policies in place in order to resume economic growth and prosperity, or at least to mitigate the economic downturn of the past months and upcoming years. The European Commission's economic package focuses on investing in a range of initiatives aimed at tackling multiple threats, including climate and developing cleaner energy. The United States' economic recovery policy under the current administration lacks a cohesive objective whereas Presidential candidate Biden has focused his economic recovery proposal on similar green initiatives that the EU has laid out, aimed at boosting the economy through job growth and investment. These approaches have the potential to become mutually reinforcing but ultimately hinges on the outcome of the upcoming US Presidential elections.

The European Commission has set out a series of ambitious recovery plans that aimed to mitigate the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It has combined the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and a recovery effort called the Next Generation EU (NGEU), which is aimed towards helping the EU to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic, by supporting investment in the green and digital transitions.² European Commission President von der Leyen recently laid out blueprint for recovery in her State of the Union speech, stating that "30% of the bloc's 750 billion euro coronavirus recovery package of grants and loans, which the EU as a whole will borrow, should be raised through green bonds."³ This budget will address the impact

of the COVID-19 crisis including development and deployment of a COVID-19 vaccine and towards the Corona Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+), which redirects unspent money from the EU budget to tackle the COVID-19 crisis by supporting healthcare systems, small and medium-sized enterprises and labour markets while staying flexible and focusing on the most affected regions (€5.1 billion).^{4 5}

In contrast, the United States' recovery efforts have been uncoordinated at multiple levels, and, as cases continued to soar throughout the US, the 'summer recovery' that was envisioned never materialized. Vice President Pence has been on the election rounds asking voters to not judge them on their response to the pandemic but rather "convince voters that the pre-coronavirus economy — with its record unemployment figures and stock market gains — can be restored only if Trump is reelected".⁶ Both sides of Congress continue to be in stalemate as they have failed to agree on a new coronavirus stimulus relief package aimed at getting more financial relief to millions of Americans who are facing financial hardship.⁷ Currently undergoing another round of budget review by the House, the economy is relying on job creation as cities open up. However, as joblessness remains at a historic high the pace of economic recovery remains tied to the US elections outcomes.

Vice President and Democratic Presidential candidate Biden has outlined an economic plan that aims to set up 18.6 million new jobs during his first term whereas Trump's policies would lead to an increase of 11.2 million new jobs by 2025, with minimal real income gain for average households.⁸ Biden plans to spend more money on

² European Council (2020). COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/>

³ France 24 (2020). EU's von der Leyen unveils blueprint for recovery in 'state of the union' address. Retrieved at:

<https://www.france24.com/en/20200916-eu-s-von-der-leyen-gives- maiden-state-of-the-union-address>

⁴ European Council (2020). COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Retrieved at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/>

⁵ European Council (2020). COVID-19: the EU's response to the economic fallout. Retrieved at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/coronavirus/covid-19-economy/>

⁶ Orr, G. (2020). Trump and Pence try a messaging reboot on economic recovery. Politico. Retrieved at:

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/07/trump-pence-try-economic-recovery-409582>

⁷ CNBS News (2020). Congress to send more financial aid to Americans. Retrieved at:

<https://www.cnb.com/2020/09/24/stimulus-standoff-what-could-make-congress-provide-more-financial-aid.html>

⁸ New York Magazine (2020). Retrieved at:

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/09/economist-biden-plan-creates-7-million-more-jobs-than-trump.html>

infrastructure to boost growth, which includes focusing on research and development into projects including clean energy, telecommunications, artificial intelligence and other fields and spending \$2 trillion to fight climate change and cut carbon emissions from power plants to zero by 2035.⁹

Discussion of a transatlantic economic recovery plan could be an area to tackle not only the global pandemic but address additional borderless issues such as energy and climate change through collaborative financial packages that encourage investment into greener and cleaner energy. Given the historical interconnectedness of EU and US economies, harmonization of approaches provides a unique opportunity to find common transatlantic ground while simultaneously reclaiming global leadership in security-relevant industries and areas that has been ceded to external challengers in recent years. In this light, the results of the upcoming US presidential elections have a potential to make a difference and improve the transatlantic dialogue on multiple fronts. In case of an appointment of VP Biden into the office, the change in Washington's rhetoric, after President Trump's stance on the issue of climate change and the need to actively tackle it, would represent a point of likely joint effort of the US and the EU for the upcoming years in both economic and climate policies, including reconciling on trade disputes with China for instance.

Transatlantic retreat – at what cost?

As demonstrated in the last 4 years, the US's disengagement from the global arena has only been exacerbated by mounting and novel threats, such as climate change and COVID-19 respectively, which challenges the established global order. Furthered by the weakening of security frameworks such as NATO, the transatlantic partners seem to be losing industrial influence amidst the 4th industrial revolution especially to China and losing

energy autonomy amidst changing global energy mix due to markets increasingly gravitating towards green value - and supply chains. By retreating from the global stage, the US has inadvertently opened a power vacuum that has given way for challengers like China and Russia to reshape and challenge the rules-based system. The EU has sought to take on the mantle of these challenges by supporting some of the institutions that the US have withdrawn but will it be enough?

Dealing with an encroaching China

The mishandling of these external threats has been exacerbated by the different approaches taken by the United States and the EU in dealing with China's political and economic geo-strategic moves, especially in its dealing with COVID-19. From discrediting democratic values to manipulating public discourse, previous tools used for manipulation have gained new dimensions in the times of the pandemic and are only growing stronger. For instance, China's robust disinformation campaign has taken a page from the 'Kremlin handbook' to discredit the United States and Europe's pandemic responses, "painting them as ineffective and weak"¹⁰ accordingly to expert Torrey Taussig from the Harvard Kennedy School. In addition, China has been accused of manipulating "statistics for political reasons and engaged in vigorous propaganda — all in an attempt to turn the narrative of its early failure into one of a benign response to the pandemic."¹¹ This led to the Trump administration announcing that his administration will "halt funding while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization's (WHO) role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus."¹² This move has only highlighted the lack of US leadership and withdrawal from the global stage in a time when multilateral institutions supported by both sides of the Atlantic are vital in dealing with nations that are trying to challenge

⁹ VOA News (2020). Biden Unveils Economic Recovery Plan for Working Families. Retrieved at:

<https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-politics/biden-unveils-economic-recovery-plan-working-families>

¹⁰ Braml, J. & Mölling, Ch. (2020). How will COVID-19 affect the transatlantic relationship? DGAP. Retrieved at:

<https://dqap.org/en/research/publications/how-will-covid-19-affect-transatlantic-relationship>

¹¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/16/coronavirus-pandemic-china-united-states-power-competition/>

¹² BBC News (2020). Coronavirus: US to halt funding to WHO, says Trump. Retrieved at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52289056>

democratic norms – as well as the global challenges themselves that these institutions are created to tackle.

China, in turn, continues to take the charm offensive approach or even ‘mask diplomacy’ to repair their international image – and to salvage their 5G deals in Europe. China has, for instance, been sending support and resources to hard-affected areas despite reports of faulty tests and equipment, causing President Macron to issue calls “for more European “sovereignty” over medical supplies and equipment”.¹³ Meanwhile, China continues to inject millions of dollars to support the WHO in response to the US’s cutting of funds and withdrawal, a move that many in the international community deem an attempt to inject more Chinese power and influence geopolitically through strengthening influence over multilateral institutions and frameworks.¹⁴

However, China’s claims in the South China Sea, human rights track record with violations towards the Muslim Uyghurs minority and growing unrest and protests in Hong Kong have also stirred division among the international community. The United States and China have been embattled with a diplomatic tit-for-tat, but President Trump’s recent executive order ending economic preferential treatment for Hong Kong spurred criticism from other Western countries worrying that the “law will end the freedoms promised when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule.”¹⁵

The EU’s approach towards China has been shaped by the European Commissions’ strategic outlook document that painted China as “an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance”. The recent EU-China

summit that took place in September covered climate change and economic and trade issues centered on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU leaders called for a better market access to China and continuous digital dialogue. Concerning cooperation on a global reaction to the pandemic, the EU also called for strengthening the WHO as well as for developing a green response, including China setting climate neutrality goal and other objectives in the area of combating climate change.¹⁶ Both of these areas are ones where Trump’s administration is limping after Washington’s withdrawal from WHO and Paris climate agreement. The EU-China summit did not showcase any increased level of transatlantic cooperation in terms of sharing some common China strategy, and it seems that for the moment, Washington’s “America first” stance is pushing Europe further into trying to secure some reasonable cooperation with the Chinese authoritarian regime.

A joint approach towards China will first require the US and the EU to mutually align further on their policies and within a multilateral framework – rather than unilaterally. Otherwise, the transatlantic partnership faces another problematic area, as it would suffer under a relentless US-China competition.

Dealing with an entrenching Russia

The COVID-19 pandemic also showcased the continuous Russian efforts to destabilize the Western democracies and transatlantic partnership as Europe remains “the most

¹³ Brattberg, E. (2020). The troubling impact of COVID-19 on transatlantic relations. *Confrontations Europe, La revue*, N.128. Retrieved at: <http://confrontations.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Confrontations-Revue-128-EN-Transatlantic.pdf>

¹⁴ Riotta, Ch. (2020). Coronavirus: China investing millions in WHO to make up for Trump cuts and boost its influence, officials say. *Independent*. Retrieved at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/trump-china-coronavirus-who-funding-invest-world-health-a9482366.html>

¹⁵ ABC News (2020). Hong Kong will suspend some legal cooperation with United States, China says. Retrieved at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-20/hong-kong-suspend-some-legal-cooperation-us-china/12580456>

¹⁶ European Council (2020). EU-China Leaders’ Meeting: Upholding EU values and interests at the highest level. Press release. Retrieved at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/09/14/eu-china-leaders-meeting-upholding-eu-values-and-interests-at-the-highest-level-joint-press-release-by-president-michel-president-von-der-leyen-and-chancellor-merkel/>

important geographic theater for Russia¹⁷, both historically and contemporarily.

After being rebuked following its aggression in Ukraine, Russia's strategic position in Europe suffered as a result of an introduction of economic sanctions, reinforcement of NATO's determination to counter Russian aggression, as well as due to its intensified perception as a security threat to Europe, especially the Central and Eastern European region.¹⁸

In order to reverse its weakened position and to undermine the transatlantic relationship, Russia continues with its efforts to influence public opinion in European countries also during the ongoing pandemic. For this purpose, it regularly engages in disinformation campaigns across Europe disseminated via traditional news outlets as well as social media.¹⁹ Apart from spreading fake messages about the coronavirus situation itself, including a news about Russia "winning" the race in inventing a vaccine against COVID-19²⁰, the distributed narratives accentuated an alleged lack of European solidarity in terms of its reaction to the pandemic, supporting and strengthening a long-term pro-Kremlin disinformation narrative of a Western collapse.²¹ Considering this, a common response of the US and the EU to the pandemic would provide less space for Russia to fill in with propaganda, as it shows being keen to focus on this topic, among others. The ongoing second wave of the pandemic within Europe seems to be a perfect opportunity to demonstrate a functional transatlantic cooperation and embrace a role of leader(s) in a combat against coronavirus.

Furthermore, after Russia's efforts to undermine international law through the annexation of Crimea, it has created (again) international condemnation through its meddling in Belarus's recent elections. Belarus has served as a usual Russian ally benefiting from its position as a buffer zone between NATO in exchange for economic advantages. These are two reasons why President Lukashenko and Putin have kept their geopolitical loyalty for now.²² However, considering the ongoing mass public protests in Belarus, which unfolded as a reaction to reported falsified August 2020 presidential elections, Lukashenko's future leadership is questionable. A potential change of rule in the country could thus trigger further deterioration of relations with Russia, which would be another area where a solid transatlantic partnership and potentially also an appropriate response from Brussels and Washington would be needed.

A step toward an increased resilience towards the Russian threat, in the context of energy security, also revolves around the widely discussed option of cancellation of Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. This idea was presented by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel as an option of a reaction to poisoning of Kremlin critic and Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny by a Novichok nerve agent, which is known to be connected to Russian military. Voices from inside chancellor's conservative party as well as European experts participating in the debate about the future of Nord Stream project are underlining the importance to base the final decision on consultations with the EU and NATO in order to form a collective response.²³

¹⁷ Rumer, E. & Sokolsky, R. (2020). Etched in Stone: Russian Strategic Culture and the Future of Transatlantic Security. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/09/08/etched-in-stone-russian-strategic-culture-and-future-of-transatlantic-security-pub-82657>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Fiott, D. & Parkers, R. (2019). Protecting Europe: The EU's response to hybrid threats. Chapter 3, p. 34-41. European Union Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved at: https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/CP_151.pdf

²⁰ Morkowitz, L. (2020). No, Russia did not invent a medicament against the new coronavirus. AFP Czech Republic. Retrieved at: <https://napravoumiru.afp.com/ne-rusko-nevvinulo-lek-na-novy-koronavirus>

²¹ European External Action Service (2020). EEAS special report update: short assessment of narratives and disinfo around the Covid-19 pandemic (update 23 April – 18 May). EU vs. Disinfo. Retrieved at: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/eeas-special-report-update-short-assessment-of-narratives-and-disinformation-around-the-covid19-pandemic-updated-23-april-18-may/>

²² Preiherman, Y. (2020). Pandemic Heightens Need to Reset Belarus-Russia Ties. Security. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved at: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/27/pandemic-heightens-need-to-reset-belarus-russia-ties-pub-81909>

²³ Erlanger, S. & Eddy, M. (2020). Navalny Poisoning Raises Pressure on Merkel to Cancel Russian Pipeline. New York Times. Retrieved at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/03/world/europe/navalny->

Such emphasis on transatlantic cooperation in formulating a common response to Russian aggression can be a useful point in case of reinforcing its position on a global stage.

Security, defense and NATO post-pandemic

Following the decision at last December's NATO meeting, NATO leaders initiated a forward-looking process aimed at further strengthening the NATO's political dimension by the process of recommendations to reinforce Alliance unity, increase political consultation and coordination between Allies, and strengthen NATO's political role. NATO 2030 comes at a time when the long-term political and economic impact of COVID-19 remains unknown. The future of transatlantic security cooperation could become an indirect victim as the economic fallout from the crisis by forcing member states to reevaluate their budgets and approaches towards security and defense. NATO's reflection process will need to address these concerns.

One of the main challenges to the Alliance will be member states defense spending and future commitment to missions and operations, especially with key supply chains beyond the military sector including health supplies. However, the pandemic may be an opportunity to redefine the concept of security and shift the focus back towards the Alliance and importance of critical infrastructure. Such a shift will also hold long-term benefits vis-à-vis climate change, which is a threat multiplier posing considerable security challenges. However, it requires the maintenance of strong transatlantic leadership not only in the areas traditionally under NATO's purview – security and defence – but also green transformation of industry, energy, and policy and regulatory harmonization in order to strengthen the foundation upon which transatlantic relations are founded.

As one of the leaders and main contributors to the NATO alliance, the impact of US leadership on the Alliance remains

crucial to the political cooperation and continued success of the Alliance. The current administration has taken various stances on their future role within the Alliance, often questioning the financial contribution of members. This remains an area of contention within Europe, especially as many CEE countries have met or have made the financial pledges to meet the 2% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. The fixation on this contribution goal needs to be revised, especially in reflection of post-COVID-19 economic recovery.²⁴ Financial focus will naturally resort to domestic rebuilding; fixating on the 2% threshold may cause more division within the Alliance rather than cohesion. Since the Alliance's inception, security spending has deepened along with European integration; more focus should be on other NATO achievements and on using existing mechanisms for further European defense and security coordination through avenues such as PESCO/CARDS as a means to pool European finances, capacity and military capabilities in pursuit of European strategic autonomy, forming a stronger pillar of NATO.

Strengthening the Transatlantic and CEE Security Umbrella

As a result of deteriorating transatlantic relationship under Trump's presidency, the EU leaders started to look for other options. Apart from abovementioned efforts for a constructive dialogue with China and Russia, an internal debate about the need to develop a European strategic autonomy has gained traction. The debate gained momentum after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and was reinforced by Washington's isolationist and unilateralist foreign policy over the past years. President Trump's hot and cold approach towards NATO, which was a long-time security anchor for Europe perceived mainly as a deterrent to Russia, motivated the EU member states to start look up for themselves, pool their resources and work on developing their defense capabilities. France and Germany took initiative in these efforts, leading the EU towards

[poisoning-merkel-nord-stream.html?auth=login-email&login=email](#)

²⁴ Goldgeier, J. & Martin, G. (2020). NATO'S never-ending struggle for relevance. War on the Rocks. Retrieved at:

<https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/natos-never-ending-struggle-for-relevance/>

establishing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), but also took an extra step towards establishing closer ties with Russia. Whether it was Angela Merkel's invitation for Putin to join its international Libya conference in Berlin²⁵, or Emmanuel Macron's call for an establishment of a structured dialogue with Moscow²⁶, Western Europe seemed to become more open to balancing its geopolitical position, more independent from the US.

As CEE countries form a legacy of being former satellite communist states, dissatisfaction was palpable after seeing this tendency of the Western European states. Having a relentless feeling of being threatened by Russia, whether it being based on concerns over a close Russian military presence, military exercises, disinformation campaigns or its involvement in Ukraine, the CEE countries have a good reason to support and actively work on rebuilding a strong and reliable transatlantic relationship as a security guarantor in lieu of Russian rapprochement. One of the cornerstones of this relationship will be a stronger European pillar of NATO, making Europe more independent as a result of significantly increased defense capabilities and deeper coordination between member states, which will, however, take years to accomplish. The EU needs to reduce the divergences in Western European and CEE countries' perception of Russia and an appropriate level of cooperation with Moscow, to prevent any significant frictions between these regions, as these could weaken the European unity and enable Russia to undermine it.

By continuing to invest and commit to defense, modernization and procurement, NATO member states should look for further opportunities to harness the potential economic output from the investments – especially while post-COVID economic recovery remains uncertain – and creating stronger ties within NATO.

Transatlantic Relations – Repair or Rebuild?

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will be followed by an economic crisis for an unforeseeable future. Coupled with the aforementioned continuously active threats posed to Western democracies and the multilateral world order, this evolving crisis provides the transatlantic allies with a unique opportunity to rebuild their relationship and become leaders in a response to the second wave and post-pandemic recovery. As the upcoming US presidential elections will clarify which way will the transatlantic partnership develop, the EU member states as well need to focus on improving its internal cooperation and unity before speaking with a strong joint voice in current global affairs.

Establishing a common response to global challenges is a fundamental aspect of the transatlantic partnership, which has been the bedrock of the US-EU relations since the end of World War II and post-Cold War era. The relationship needs to be maintained in order to ensure the democratic standards the US and EU have worked to build, and which are now weakening under transatlantic discord. With China and Russia actively working on enforcing their positions on a global stage with a pursuit of seizing leadership, a united alliance of Western democracies needs to use the opportunity of post-pandemic recovery for introducing a safer, prosperous and greener future for all. Failing to cooperate in terms of economic support or research in developing a coronavirus vaccine should be now, at the beginning of a second wave of pandemic, an impetus to join forces and make transatlantic partnership flourish. Further collaboration through security frameworks, such as NATO and programs via Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), will be vital in the continued coordinated defense efforts specifically for regions in CEE with growing threat perceptions from Russia. As NATO embarks on its reflection process called NATO 2030, a closer and more coordinated

²⁵ Ciulla, M. et al. (2020). Views from the capitals: The Libya conference in Berlin. The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). Retrieved at: https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/vfc_views_from_the_capitals_the_libya_conference_in_berlin

²⁶ Emmot, R. et al. (2019). EU divisions over Russia mount as France, Germany seek peace in Ukraine. Reuters. Retrieved at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-eu/eu-divisions-over-russia-mount-as-france-germany-seek-peace-in-ukraine-idUSKCN1WL04D>

transatlantic approach will be key in ensuring stability in the region.

As the crisis continues to evolve, it is difficult to gauge who will emerge from this as the global leader, especially as the economic and political aftermath remains uncertain. One hopes that Europe will be able to develop unified positions on contentious affairs in order to spearhead the revitalization of the transatlantic relationship, as the only alternative is, potentially, the US under new leadership. Only time will tell, but what does remain constant is the need to support the multilateral system in place including those established to help during times of crisis. Combatting COVID- 19 will require global cooperation and multilateral support on economic, political and security elements – not a unilateral approach. The only actors capable of credibly taking the lead in this are jointly the EU and the US.



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