The EU Strategic Autonomy: Central and Eastern European Perspectives
Centre for Global Europe at the GLOBSEC Policy Institute provides constructive ideas and promotes innovative policy recommendation to ensure that the European Union remains an attractive, successful and viable project that is setting global norms and defining international system.

The Europe Center at the Atlantic Council conducts research to guide the actions and strategy of key transatlantic decision makers on the issues that will shape the future of the transatlantic relationship.

The GLOBSEC Policy Institute is a policy-oriented think-tank analyzing policy and the international environment. The Institute wants to make an impact so that the values of the GLOBSEC organization – liberal and democratic order in the transatlantic world – are deeply embedded in the agenda of governments.

The Atlantic Council is a nonpartisan organization that promotes constructive US leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today’s global challenges.

**Disclaimers**

All of the views expressed in this piece are of the authors and thus do not necessary represent the official position of GLOBSEC, the Atlantic Council or the institutions that the co-authors represent. The authors are solely responsible for its analysis and recommendations.

© GLOBSEC

GLOBSEC Policy Institute
Vajnorská 100/B
831 04 Bratislava
Slovakia
www.globsec.org
About the Authors

Piotr Arak
is the Director at the Polish Economic Institute. He previously worked at Deloitte, the Polityka Insight think-tank, the United Nations Development Programme, the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation, and the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. He completed his degree in social policy from the University of Warsaw, and continued his studies in business, completing an MBA at the Warsaw School of Economics and the Université du Québec à Montréal. He is writing a PhD on public policy at the University of Warsaw.

Aleš Chmelař
currently serves as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic. He was previously the State Secretary for European Affairs and the EU Sherpa to Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and Prime Minister Andrej Babiš. He worked as the chief EU analyst at the Czech Government Office and as a researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels. He completed his degree in Political Economy of Europe from Science Po Paris and the London School of Economics in 2011.

Jan Havránek
currently acts as the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Czech Republic. He previously worked as the policy adviser at the Policy Planning Unit of the Office of the NATO Secretary General in Brussels. He was also the head of the defense section at the Czech Republic’s Permanent Representation to NATO in Brussels (2014-2017), Assistant First Deputy Minister of Defense (2013-2014), and foreign policy advisor to the Minister of Defense (2010-2012). He completed his M.A. in International Security Studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Kinga Brudzinska
is a Policy Director at the Centre for Global Europe at the GLOBSEC Policy Institute. Prior to this she worked at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Permanent Representation of Poland to the OECD. Her main research interests lie in the fields of EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and EU institutional architecture. Kinga holds a PhD from the University of Warsaw and Diploma in Latin American Studies from TEC Monterrey in Mexico.

Benjamin Haddad
is currently the Director of the Europe Center at the Atlantic Council. Prior to this he was a fellow at Hudson Institute in Washington, DC. He has been published in several notable news media outlets, is a frequent guest on television news programs, and authored the book Paradise Lost: Europe in the World of Trump. He completed his M.A. in International Affairs and HEC in financial economics at Sciences Po Paris where he has since returned to lecture on the topic.

Alena Kudzko
is Director of the GLOBSEC Policy Institute think tank in Bratislava where she oversees policy development, research, and programming in the areas of defence and security, the future of Europe, technology and society, and economy. Before joining GLOBSEC, she worked at various NGOs and academic institutions in Belarus, Estonia, and Hungary, specializing in the area of foreign relations, democratization, and community development. She completed her M.A. in International Relations and European Studies at Central European University.
Damir Marusic

is a Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Europe Center where he specifically works on the Council's #BalkansForward Initiative. He is also co-founder of Wisdom of Crowds, an online debate platform and podcast based in Washington DC. Previously, he was Executive Editor of The American Interest, a foreign and domestic policy magazine that sought “to explain America to the world, and the world to America.” He has written extensively about U.S. politics, foreign policy, and European affairs. He completed his M.A. in International Relations at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Žiga Turk

is a Professor in Construction Informatics at the Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He previously acted as Minister for Growth in the Government of Slovenia (2007 and 2008), Minister for Education, Science, Culture and Sports in the Government of Slovenia (February 2012 to March 2013) and as Secretary General of the Felipe Gonzalez’s Reflection Group on the Future of Europe. He completed his PhD in Technical Sciences at the University of Ljubljana.

Jakub Wisniewski

currently serves as a Vice-President of GLOBSEC. He is a former Polish Ambassador to the OECD (2014-2016) and director of the Department of Foreign Policy Strategy at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010-2014). He has written several publications and articles on the EU and authored a book. He acted as a speechwriter for former Minister of Foreign Affairs Radek Sikorski. He holds a PhD in Arts of Political Science, Faculty of Political Science and Journalism from the University of Warsaw.

Elena Poptodorova

is a founding member of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, where she is currently the Vice-President, Director for Euro-Atlantic Affairs and Project Manager of the Three Seas National Program. She previously served as the Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United States (2002-2008/2010-2016). Elena worked at Bulgaria’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1975-1990) and was subsequently elected to the national legislature. She completed her M.A. at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in English and Italian linguistic and literary studies.

Tomáš Valášek

is currently a Member of Parliament of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Previously he was the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to NATO (2013-2017) and worked at the Slovak Ministry of Defense (2006-2007). He also has vast experience working in think tanks, previously acting as the Director of Carnegie Europe, the Central European Policy Institute (CEPI) in Bratislava and at the Centre for European Reform in London. He completed his M.A. in International Affairs at George Washington University.

Michael Žantovský

is the former spokesman for President Václav Havel and Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United States, Israel and the United Kingdom. After serving as a diplomat, he authored Havel: A Life, a biography of Václav Havel that was immensely popular in both Czech and English. He completed his M.A. in psychology in 1973 at Charles University. He currently serves as the Executive Director of the Václav Havel Library and a member of the Global Commission on the Post-Pandemic Future.
## Contents

**About the Authors** ................................................................................................................................................. 3

**Executive Summary** ............................................................................................................................................... 6

**Thinking Clearly on Strategic Autonomy** ........................................................................................................... 9
Elena Poptodorova, Amb. Ret, Vice President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

**Europe in a Stronger West** .................................................................................................................................. 13
Michael Žantovský, Amb. Ret, Executive Director, Václav Havel Library

**The EU in the Face of the New Cold War between China and America** ....................................................... 17
Jakub Wiśneiwski, PhD, Amb. Ret, Vice-President for Strategy, GLOBSEC

**In Select Areas the Case for Strategic Autonomy is Strong for CEE** ............................................................ 22
Tomáš Valášek, Member of Parliament, National Council of the Slovak Republic

**Czech Perspective on European Strategic Autonomy: Towards NATO-EU Cooperation** ......................... 25
Jan Havránek, Deputy Minister for Defence Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic

**How are New Technologies Changing the Way We Think About Europe’s Place in the World?** .......... 29
Žiga Turk, PhD, the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

**The Vision and Realities of Europe’s Drive for Technological and Digital Sovereignty** ............................. 32
Alena Kudzko, Research Director, GLOBSEC

**The Covid-19 Wake-Up Call and the Great European Naïveté: Navigating EU’s Economic Interests Between Openness and Protectionism Into the 21st Century** ........................................... 39
Aleš Chmelař, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

**Caught Between Free Trade and Protectionism: The CEE Perspective on Economic Strategic Autonomy** ........................................................................................................................................ 42
Piotr Arak, Director, Polish Economic Institute

**Concluding Remarks** ........................................................................................................................................... 45

**Endnotes** ............................................................................................................................................................... 46
Executive Summary

The past two years have been marked by crisis. The global pandemic has been transformational. Its challenge comes on the heels of broader geopolitical changes already afoot. Against this backdrop, the European Union (EU) is now rethinking how best to bolster its position on the global stage. Even though the EU remains one of the world’s three largest economies and a center for global trade, research, and development, its international clout has waned.

Even before COVID hit, Europeans had already started discussing “strategic autonomy,” a vision for Europe in the world that is to enable the continent to decide its own future without overly depending on others. French President Emmanuel Macron, in his much-cited Sorbonne speech, invited a broader discussion on what all this could mean. The freedom to act should not merely be thought of in reactive and defensive terms. It could give the bloc the ability to engage and cooperate with its preferred actors.

Academic research has shown that EU member states agree in principle to the notion of an interest-driven Union capable of defending its economic and political interest abroad. But years later, the concept of strategic autonomy remains vaguely defined and lacks necessary public buy-in. Instead of defining its content and discussing constructive ideas and solutions, many European leaders have either focused on semantics and terminology (“European sovereignty” vs. “collective sovereignty” vs. “strategic responsibility” vs. “open strategic autonomy”), or have sought to silence the discussion tout court.

With President Joe Biden in the White House, the debate is heating up again. But once again, the same voices are making their well-worn arguments. Less prominent, until now, has been the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)’ states.

This report explores ongoing debates about strategic autonomy transpiring in the bloc across a number of fields, including defense, trade, and digital. It looks to ground EU foreign policy in a “stronger West,” as a response to intensifying confrontation between China and the United States. The report, which is a joint endeavor of the Atlantic Council and GLOBSEC, brings together contributions from nine distinguished practitioners, experts, and policymakers from the region.

Here are a few of the top-line takeaways from this exercise.

First, Central and Eastern Europe is neither ignorant nor indifferent to geopolitics. The challenges faced by CEE largely map onto those faced by the broader EU, but in a microcosm. Or, looked at another way, many of the risks facing the entire EU are even more pronounced in the CEE context. CEE countries are both allies of the United States and members of the European Union, two geopolitical poles that constitute the region’s major points of reference. While it is understood that strategic autonomy’s success will depend on Europe securing a wide and diverse range of partnerships, its pursuit must at the same time not weaken the transatlantic bond. Any discussions that call into question the role of NATO and the United States in the region make CEE countries apprehensive.

Second, CEE recognizes that the concept of strategic autonomy is evolving. It was originally conceived of, and primarily remains, a security-related objective. Strategic autonomy, however, has increasingly gained an economic underpinning, a foundation that has, paradoxically, been deepened by pandemic-related challenges. And while calling for European economic autonomy must not be taken to autarkic extremes, adoption of a strategic approach could potentially increase Europe’s economic power, both by developing new production and know-how capacities and, perhaps more importantly, by enhancing its role in the globalized economy so that it can render its trade and investment ties more predictable and enforceable.

Third, CEE is taking a cautious approach towards defining the degree of strategic autonomy it envisions to be ideal and feasible without entirely opposing the concept. In short, CEE will not resist strategic autonomy at all costs. These countries are cognizant of the fact that Europe remains dependent on outside powers in ways that are undesirable. But the devil lies in the details. It is generally agreed that decoupling should be measured, and above all eschew isolationism. Strategic autonomy, moreover, should not become synonymous with applying double standards within the common market, nor should it be used as a tool to justify protectionism. For example, a Franco-German consensus on fostering an environment conducive to the creation of “European Champions” big enough to be globally competitive has stirred suspicions about protectionism and distrust among Central Europeans.

Strategic autonomy is not an impossible lift, but before things get off the ground, some fundamental questions need to be answered. What is clear, at least for now, is that complete autonomy will make
Central Europeans nervous; if “full” become the goal, debate in Brussels will be tense and progress slow.

Finally, **CEE doesn’t buy into central planning.** Central and Eastern European countries recognize that innovation cannot be centrally planned or spurred merely by regulation. The region has learned from the past that slogans, five-year plans, and development directed from above are no way to catch up or lead the way. Europe needs to restore its old recipes of success. This includes an openness to ideas from abroad and a willingness to experiment with different concepts in different regions and learn from what works.

The concept of strategic autonomy has traditionally conveyed the impression that the bloc is curtailing its ambitions by focusing solely on security and, consequently, underscores a failure on the part of the EU to implement its global vision as a contemporary, postmodern, and transformative power. This need not be the case. It is understood in the region that, properly articulated, strategic autonomy holds tremendous promise. But to be realized, the EU must first clarify the types of standards and capabilities it needs and its readiness to use them.

As for Central and Eastern European countries, they will need to do a better job at articulating their own positions, including on strategic autonomy, and converting them into policy. CEE is a vast and diverse region, and it is understandable that avoiding cacophony is a challenging task. Additionally, CEE diplomats and negotiators are less networked and less embedded in European formal and informal institutions than their Western counterparts. There is a certain void to be filled in terms of fostering shared constructive regional views and communicating them effectively.

European Strategic autonomy of some sort seems unavoidable in the emerging world of the 21st century. The challenge is to shape it into something that has maximum positive impact on the region going forward. This report, we hope, is a good first step in that direction.

---

* For this exercise, we identify “Central and Eastern European” countries as EU member states that acceded to the Union in 2004 or later and are former members of the Eastern Bloc: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The Visegrad Four (V4) states are the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.
Almost 65 years after the Treaty of Rome, the European Union (EU) managed to create a remarkable political environment where almost two thirds of its citizens are now used to viewing Europe as a region of peace and stability in an increasingly restless and dangerous world. For the populations of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), EU membership was a dream come true. The accession of former communist countries to a political order defined by freedom, democracy, and solidarity brought about incalculable positives, granting new members equal status with the most advanced and developed countries (and economies) in the world.

The pursuit of a Europe whole and free has been a continuous work in progress. Many years of growth, prosperity, and calm have, however, been interrupted rather abruptly. Having survived the global financial crisis of 2008, the 2015 migrant crisis, and having just gone through an extremely difficult divorce with the UK, the EU is now further being challenged by the devastating effects and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. In parallel, President Trump’s election in 2016 put the transatlantic bond to an existential test, which raised in an unprecedented way the perennial issue of self-sustainable European defense and security. More (un)predictable crises are likely to arise in the future, impacting other critical areas. More lurches towards disintegration are not to be excluded.

The above events provoked a soul-searching reaction within the EU. The Union was already looking for a bigger role for itself on the international stage, aspiring to become a more geopolitical, global player. These ambitions surfaced European strategic autonomy concept, first introduced in the 2016 Global Strategy of the EU, is a nice catchphrase, not unlike ‘America First’ or ‘Made in China 2025.’

What is your opinion on a Common Foreign Policy of the Member States of the EU? (% -EU)

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 94, May 2021

“European strategic autonomy concept, first introduced in the 2016 Global Strategy of the EU, is a nice catchphrase, not unlike ‘America First’ or ‘Made in China 2025.’”
The EU Strategic Autonomy: Central and Eastern European Perspectives

The concept, first introduced in the 2016 Global Strategy of the EU. It is a nice catchphrase, not unlike “America First” or “Made in China 2025.” But what does it mean in practice? The concept is too general and needs further clarification and precision.

Getting it right demands the strong engagement of both governments and citizens. EU citizens, however, are growing increasingly alienated from, and frustrated with, EU institutions. Perhaps worse still, collective foreign policy is showing itself to be weaker than the individual foreign policy preferences of member states. Bulgaria is but the most recent example, with its stubborn position on blocking the start of the accession process for the Republic of North Macedonia.

This is a daunting context within which “strategic autonomy” is expected to get traction. It is not an impossible lift, but before things get off the ground, some fundamental questions need to be answered. Autonomy: vis-à-vis whom? Autonomy: complete or in specific sectors only? Which ones? Autonomy: when?

The answers to these questions differ from country to country, and from region to region, sometimes dramatically so. Both CEE, and Southern and Eastern Europe (SEE) have important lessons to teach, given their geopolitical, security, economic, and technological realities. Today, with over fifteen years as EU members, the countries from the region are no longer “new Europe”. They have “graduated” and have no excuse for lesser compliance, engagement, or contribution. The worrisome tendency has been that CEE/SEE countries — as a whole but to a differing extent individually — tend to lag behind and slow down the overall faster advancement of the Union in practically all critical areas: industrial policies, energy policies, new technologies, digital, and research and development. Investments in the region have been well below average, and in some cases non-existent. As a result, the gap between Western and Eastern Europe has been growing wider.

The situation in the region has been further aggravated by an increasingly aggressive Russia and an advancing China. Both competitors of the EU have sought to exploit the region, in part because of the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the individual countries, but also because of insufficiently forceful engagement by Brussels. While the China challenge could be handled with the right regulations and enforcement, the Russia threat demands urgent action practically on all fronts.

The Western Balkans are a region where Russia sees itself successfully fighting the West. Moscow has employed practically every possible tool and weapon — the control of gas supplies, trade bans, disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, paramilitary groups covertly deployed for subversion — all used as part of a strategy to firmly establish itself as a driver of European security affairs. For similar reasons, the Black Sea needs to be acknowledged as a top priority in the common defense and security policy of the EU.

The challenge for Europe is that it is only too obvious that its eastern external border can only be properly secured by NATO in even the medium term. The EU is simply not up to becoming autonomous in providing security at this moment. The Libya operation of 2011 remains a painful reminder of some basic realities. It is no accident that Germany has vocally and continuously insisted on the inviolability of the transatlantic bond. Anything else would mean that Germany and France would have to shoulder the common security burden, given the frailty of other member states. Europe has no adequate military capabilities, intelligence, command and control systems, high-precision weapons, or communications and logistical capabilities to secure its own perimeter, and will not likely be up to the task in the foreseeable future either. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is important in its own niche and in a complementary role, but it cannot be viewed as an alternative.

That does not mean that the status quo is sustainable either, though. Indeed, the conversation on EU’s strategic autonomy is complex and is only just beginning. There are several basic arguments we need to keep in mind:
The biggest problem for Strategic Decoupling from the United States countries, and Romanians are divergent reactions. Poles, Baltic challenges of particular concern to chains or in industrial policies. It
Autonomy is a lack of common assessment of risks and threats by a majority of European citizens member states. While the catchphrase is indeed “catchy” and a majority of European citizens may be superficially attracted to it, when probed in depth it provokes divergent reactions. Poles, Baltic countries, and Romanians are the leanest if the concept implies decoupling from the United States and NATO. That said, overlaps in threat perceptions could be used to bring together subgroups of member states to address specific challenges of particular concern to them. Call it “coalitions of the willing” within the EU. This may happen in areas beyond hard security, such as in the re-shoring of critical supply chains or in industrial policies. It is not to be excluded that a kind of “hybrid” autonomy would be a realistic outcome. One might envision the task of crafting a workable strategic autonomy concept as something akin to creating an Excel table. The columns on the table would have headings such as “Autonomy in what?” (national policies, EU’s sectoral policies, and/or other policy areas); “Autonomy from whom?” (a country, a region, an industry, a multinational); “Internal EU compensation?” (Yes/No); “Time-span”. Filling out such a matrix, buttressed by opinion polling and other methods for public input, would be helpful for delineating a new strategic approach for Europe. We should not rush things, however. A shared strategic culture needs to be patiently cultivated, especially given the kinds of divergences in perspective among member states that I have already alluded to above. While this strategic reassessment is proceeding, several more traditional, existing avenues of effort need to be pursued:

- EU and NATO enlargement needs to proceed. All the countries from the Western Balkans should be brought into the Western institutions as soon as possible. Any lack of willingness or commitment by member states will only amplify the sense of resignation and abandonment already festering among the citizens of these nations, stirring up already plentiful reservoirs of anti-Western sentiment. Neglecting this will furthermore only embolden the Kremlin and its proxies to take even bolder destabilizing steps.
- Democracy and the rule of law must be further encouraged and supported, both among aspirant nations in the periphery, and among member states. This is the best way to build resilience of the systems of governance in the region.

 crafted balance between national instincts and the Union’s strengths and benefits. The achievement of this goal can only happen when the economic, technological and cultural gap between the western and the eastern halves of Europe is eventually narrowed through a common and focused effort. Failure to achieve this outcome will doom Europe to a regionalization that may even burst into hostilities occasionally. Such an unfortunate development might put an end to the great project of United Europe. We, the citizens of Europe, must prevent such an eventuality from happening at all costs.

“A stronger Europe in the world is no longer just the dream of the founding fathers of the EU. It has become a necessity — a condition of the successful survival of its populations in a highly competitive and increasingly unsecure world.”

The media environment in the region is deplorable. Independent journalism is struggling harder and harder with disinformation fueled by pro-Kremlin and oligarchic outlets. Populism and anti-European and anti-Western forces have not gone away. An independent critical perspective of the EU and NATO is needed and should be supported. As a practical goal, it needs to be pursued collectively in a finely
Stronger Europe in the World
Europe in a Stronger West

Michael Žantovský, Amb. Ret, Executive Director, Václav Havel Library

Setting oneself an ambitious goal can be motivating. It often leads to a mobilization of energies and resources. To set oneself an impossible goal, however, is self-defeating, because it can only lead to frustration and finger-pointing. The question is to which of these two categories the goal of “building a stronger Europe in the world” belongs. Judging by contemporary trends and developments, a dose of realism seems to be in order.

It is a sobering but inescapable fact that by any objective measure, Europe’s strength and power has peaked in the recent past, and that it is unrealistic that it can notably strengthen itself in the immediate future. The European Union’s share of the global population is currently at around 6 percent and is expected to decrease by a third by the end of this century.

“For Central and Eastern European countries, “the West” is not some kind of geographic label. Rather, it represents an idea of solidarity among a community of liberal democracies that share a set of values and pool their resources for collective security. Any weakening or fragmentation of this community, CEE countries understand, will inevitably make Europe weaker.”

Source: GLOBSEC compilation²

“Europe in a Stronger West”

Michael Žantovský, Amb. Ret, Executive Director, Václav Havel Library

Setting oneself an ambitious goal can be motivating. It often leads to a mobilization of energies and resources. To set oneself an impossible goal, however, is self-defeating, because it can only lead to frustration and finger-pointing. The question is to which of these two categories the goal of “building a stronger Europe in the world” belongs. Judging by contemporary trends and developments, a dose of realism seems to be in order.

It is a sobering but inescapable fact that by any objective measure, Europe’s strength and power has peaked in the recent past, and that it is unrealistic that it can notably strengthen itself in the immediate future. The European Union’s share of the global population is currently at around 6 percent and is expected to decrease by a third by the end of this century.

“For Central and Eastern European countries, “the West” is not some kind of geographic label. Rather, it represents an idea of solidarity among a community of liberal democracies that share a set of values and pool their resources for collective security. Any weakening or fragmentation of this community, CEE countries understand, will inevitably make Europe weaker.”

Source: GLOBSEC compilation²
Demographic Outlook for the European Union 2021

EU-27 and the global population

Fertility rate (births per woman)

EU-27 population (number of women and men by age group)

for 2001 and 2019

for 2020 and 2050

Data source: UNDESA, Eurostat, World Bank – World Development Indicators data.


The continent’s share of the world’s population has halved in the last fifty years. Europe’s population growth rate is approaching zero. The share of global GDP of today’s EU 27 has declined from 26 percent in 2004 to under 15 percent today.

Although these facts do not portend an absolute decline or a permanent trend, they do suggest that Europe has been losing some of its power relative to other parts of the world. The EU remains one of the three largest global economies, a center of global trade, research and development, and one of the most prosperous places on the planet. But its international clout has nevertheless waned.

Hard power deficits are an important part of the problem. Europe spends three times less on defense than the United States as a proportion of GDP, and is not likely to increase its share significantly any time soon. The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) experienced its heyday at the beginning of the century, but today exists more in name than in reality. Brexit diminished Europe even further, and especially so when it comes to defense and security capabilities. With Brexit, the EU has lost one half of its nuclear attack capability, two thirds of its aircraft carriers, half of its heavy-lift air transport and its heavy drones, and almost half of its airborne early warning capability.

Some of the risks facing the EU as a whole are even more pronounced in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) context. While in the last two decades Moscow has failed to become an economic power worth reckoning with, and its demographic trends are even more ominous than those of Europe, it has successfully modernized its military and with its aggressive foreign policy, military, and intelligence posture it now poses a real security risk to the European continent. In the last decade, Russia has undertaken significant military, intelligence, and political offensives against its immediate neighbors, with many of its operations focusing on CEE. A new Iron Curtain has descended from Tallinn in the Baltic to Burgas in the Black Sea.

Security concerns about migration have also become more pronounced since 2015. Somewhat belatedly, Western European countries have become aware of the need to be more proactive about European border security, while the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are realizing that without solidarity and cooperation in coping with these risks, they can hardly expect the same in coping with the security threats from the East.

And while China has taken care not to appear as a security threat to Europe, it has increasingly exercised its soft power through the Belt and Road Initiative and other combined political-economic instruments, including its visible interest in the Three Seas Initiative project. The time has come for the CEE, and for the whole of Europe, to realize...
that they are not insulated from the effects of the Chinese global ascendancy.

While CEE economic and political interests are increasingly intertwined with the EU, the region looks for its security to a larger geopolitical context. Although institutionally this has often meant NATO, CEE countries look beyond the North Atlantic alliance to what sometimes seems to Western Europeans like an outmoded concept: “the West”. For CEE countries, “the West” is not some kind of geographic label. Rather, it represents an idea of solidarity among a community of liberal democracies that share a set of underpinnings, the leverage of countries looking beyond the North Atlantic to what sometimes seems to Western Europeans like “the West”.5

To get there, Europe needs a strategic concept. The last time it had anything resembling such a thing was in the early 2000s, when the “soft superpower” idea, based on the writings of Joseph Nye and developed by Robert Cooper, former Director-General for External and Politico-Military Affairs at the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, was ascendant. At the time, this concept may have looked like a winner, especially in contrast with the United States’ entanglements in Iraq and Afghanistan. But its weaknesses became apparent in the last decade when the US, under the Obama administration, adopted a version of the soft power strategy for itself. It soon became all too obvious that without hard power underpinnings, the leverage of soft power is insufficient to achieve foreign policy goals — or to prevent opponents from achieving theirs.

Europe’s less-than-successful attempts to contribute to the Middle East peace process, its inability to mitigate the migration crisis, and its failure to deter Russia from its adventurism in Ukraine are a testament to the idea’s shortcomings. Even the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2015, which temporarily imposed restrictions on Iran’s civilian nuclear enrichment program, only had the EU playing the role of a junior partner, and would have been impossible without the latent threat of U.S. and possible Israeli military intervention.

In 2021, Europe is consumed with prevailing over the COVID-19 pandemic and setting forth ever-more ambitious goals for a carbon-free future. Its foreign policy ambitions are conspicuously muted, and worse, are being poorly coordinated. Its two recent diplomatic overtures to Moscow and Istanbul have both ended up as embarrassments. These failures have shown that there is no single foreign policy source of authority in the EU. The President of the Commission, the President of the Council, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy are all vying for the role as the single foreign policy source of authority. Henry Kissinger once bemoaned the fact that there wasn’t a telephone number which he could dial in order to contact the EU. Today, he has more than he ever bargained for: if we add the ever-louder attempts of the European Parliament to play a foreign policy role, the EU now has four telephone numbers one can call.

And yet none of them are particularly effective. This is hardly surprising, considering that appointments to these EU high offices are decided based on political balancing between groups in the European Parliament rather than on foreign policy expertise. During the recent diplomatic crisis between the Czech Republic and Russia, for example, the EU has limited itself to verbal declarations. It was left up to the individual countries of Central and Eastern Europe, standing alongside the United States, to show solidarity and determination in the face of a clear Russian aggression.

In the latest eruption of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the EU has also been unable to speak with a single voice. While the President of the Commission unequivocally condemned the “indiscriminate missile attacks by Hamas on Israel”6, the High Representative called for a stop in “the grave escalation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the major upsurge in violence in and around Gaza” although he added that Hamas attacks are “unacceptable.”7 It’s hard to imagine that even a temporary solution to the never-ending tragedy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be crafted with important input from Brussels.

So what should a coherent strategic concept look like? If Europe is to regain some of its global influence, it must both revisit some of its geopolitical assumptions and reframe its ambitions and goals in a larger context.

The idea of “strategic autonomy” is very much in vogue in many European capitals these days, but the truth is that in focusing on autonomy, it amounts to wishful thinking. Europe is too enfeebled and disorganized to get there from here. Václav Havel famously said that “Europe should finally abandon the feeling that it is duty-bound to export itself into the remainder of the world, and replace it with a more modest, but more demanding intention: to start the quest for a reform of the world with itself.” To achieve this vision, a refashioning of European project itself needs to take place.

“{quote}
The recent developments have shown that there is no single foreign policy source of authority in the EU (…). In fact, instead of one, the EU now has four telephone numbers one can call.”{quote}
But while there is value to thinking in such lofty terms, we should not paralyze ourselves until we have figured it out. There are several things the EU ought to undertake now to start the process of thinking through these issues. Parallel with the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU should convene an expert Conference on the Security of Europe to propose a European Strategic Concept 2022-2030, which would be then adopted by the European Council and the European Parliament. The concept should explicitly list the main strategic risks and threats to Europe and devise the measures and policies to cope with them.

More pragmatically, in day-to-day politics, the EU should strive to coordinate its policies within the strategic triangle of Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom, aiming for political cooperation, close trade and investment ties, and a NATO-led military and intelligence alliance. This triangle should in turn cooperate with like-minded Asian and Pacific countries to create a treaty-based “Democratic Alliance” to counter global threats to liberty and democracy.

Finally, NATO, with EU support, should reestablish a credible deterrence against possible future aggressive actions by Moscow. Russia represents the most credible near-term threat to the European vision, and it must be countered. The EU in general, and the countries of the CEE in particular, should undertake decisive and coordinated actions to push back the Russian intelligence and cyber activities in Europe and to identify and make accountable their domestic collaborators.9

Recommendations:

● Parallel with the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU should convene an expert Conference on the Security of Europe to propose a European Strategic Concept 2022-2030 which would be then adopted by the European Council and the European Parliament. The concept should explicitly list the main strategic risks and threats to Europe and devise the measures and policies to cope with them.

● The EU should coordinate its policies within the strategic triangle of Europe, North America and the United Kingdom, aiming for political cooperation, close trade and investment ties, and NATO-led military and intelligence alliance.

● This triangle should further cooperate with like-minded Asian and Pacific countries to create a treaty-based “Democratic Alliance” to counter global threats to liberty and democracy.

● NATO, with EU support, should reestablish a credible deterrence against possible future aggressive actions by Russia.

● The EU in general, and the countries of the CEE in particular, should undertake decisive and coordinated actions to push back the Russian intelligence and cyber activities in Europe and to identify and make accountable their domestic collaborators.
The EU in the Face of the New Cold War between China and America

Jakub Wiśneiwski, PhD, Amb. Ret, Vice-President for Strategy, GLOBSEC

In their search for strategic autonomy, Europeans are trying to find a proper place for the European Union in an intensifying confrontation between China and the United States. The challenge is to forge new policy towards China, without forsaking the position of a steadfast ally of America. Given its unique character and identity, the EU is well placed to help to avert the worst-case scenario of full-blown Cold War between China and the United States or — if a Cold War is not avoidable — mitigate the fallout and de-escalate tensions. It is in the interests of America to have a friendly third force balancing between the two poles, ultimately reinforcing the position of the whole West.

China is posing serious national security concerns to the whole family of democratic nations. Both the United States and the EU cannot ignore endless transgressions of human rights at home and its aggressive posturing abroad, including its diplomatic bullying of smaller countries. At the same time China is not the Soviet Union from the Cold War. The Chinese economy is much larger and more significant for the world economy (accounting for 18 percent of the world’s GDP) for ties to be simply severed.\(^\text{10}\)

Source: Statista\(^\text{11}\)
In contrast to the 1980s, the world economy today is much more globalized, and nobody serious can consider a full-scale detachment of economic links between the West and China. This means that hard choices will have to be made, striking a delicate balance between economic necessities and geopolitical imperatives. This balance will have to be fine-tuned on a case-by-case basis. The EU will necessarily approach things differently than the United States.

Second, there is a diplomatic effort on the Chinese side to counter American influence in international organizations (and among developing countries in Africa, Asia, and even Latin America). The system of rules that has been the backbone of global commerce is teetering. The need for cooperation on issues like climate change, public health, and migration has never been greater. In this multilateral system, America has lately disregarded the position of the EU, taking unilateral actions against China, by imposing tariffs, banning technology exports, and temporarily leaving the World Health Organization. China, for its part, has tried to cement its own position in the vacuum that America has created in disregarding these institutions.

Third, there is a question of the global economy. A rapidly rising China has already outgrown America in terms of absolute GDP. The spirit of confrontation and distrust is palpable — the average tariff on Chinese-American trade is 20 percent. World financial markets are still based on the American dollar, though China has ambitions to elevate the role of its own currency, the yuan. The tech industry is splintering: some countries, especially emerging economies, embrace Chinese technologies (of which Huawei is a potent symbol) while the United States penalizes the company and all its suppliers, preventing American-made hardware and software to be part of Huawei’s supply chains. The logic of disengagement and bans cannot, however, be applied to all aspects of trade between the two giants, as the two countries’ economies are inextricably tied up as a result of decades of globalization.

Fourth, America portrays itself as a global champion of democracy while China believes that the principle of national sovereignty trumps any concerns over human rights. It perceives democratization as an attempt by the West to preserve its advantage and retain its global influence. These kinds of ideological disputes have flared up concerning the fate of Hong-Kong, Myanmar, and Xinjiang province in China. China has been heavily criticized by the United States for cracking down at home, and for the aggressive expansion of its influence abroad.

All this sets up a formidable set of challenges for European policymakers seeking to position the continent in this confusing new global reality. The EU ought to be prepared to side with America on some, but not all, areas of engagement mentioned above. Wherever Europeans and Americans do not speak with one voice, however, the allies should agree not to take unilateral steps versus China — steps that could catch the other side by surprise.

On hard security cooperation, NATO is the best choice for coordinating responses. The EU’s own record on security and defense is patchy at best, as Brussels relies on American tanks and troops for defending its own territory. Technological aspects of security policy, however, do need coordination, and the EU needs to be seen as an important partner in these matters. The borders between civilian and military technologies are often blurry, and European capacities in areas such as cyber need to be developed in tandem with the United States.

Second and third, regarding multilateralism and the global economy, the EU needs to be prepared to defend its own interests, which might require a little bit of distancing from America. The EU is a market of 450 million people and is thus a formidable force in setting standards on consumer products, or shaping the world’s response to worldwide problems, such as COVID-19 or climate change. On trade, the EU should be able to make its own choices — how to do business with a giant vibrant economy without compromising on democratic standards and national
security. Flashpoints such as the case of Huawei, where America and the EU should be speaking with one voice, represent a small subset of trade flows with China. It is obvious that Europe and America are competitors, and the United States wants to keep its competitive edge over Europeans in areas such as cloud computing. It is also natural for Europeans to resist and look for its ways to compete against both America and China.

Still, there is much to be gained from cooperation. To illustrate my point, let’s look at events surrounding the EU’s ill-fated investment pact with China. Though it was negotiated successfully in December of last year, its ratification was suspended after a tit-for-tat exchange of travel bans following the EU’s criticism of China’s policy in the Xinjiang province towards its Uyghur minority. Meanwhile, the United States has negotiated a very similar pact that is still in force. All this suggests that it would be better if the United States and the EU could coordinate on questions of trade and investment where possible, especially on the creation of common standards of open governance among Chinese companies present in the West. Together, America and Europe account for over half of world’s GDP, China can’t ignore the concerns of such a bloc on issues of regulation, labor rights, and intellectual property.

“When it comes to human rights and democracy, Europeans should be on the same page with Americans: values are non-negotiable.”

Finally, on the question of human rights and democracy, Europeans should be on the same page with Americans: values are non-negotiable. Nevertheless, there needs to be a common coherent framework for human rights so that officials and entities involved in abuse are sanctioned. Supply chains should be screened. It’s commendable that the EU and the United States joined forces in March 2021 by launching targeted sanctions against Chinese officials involved in clamping down on the Uyghur minority. This should serve as a template for further discussions of developing the necessary framework for future cooperation.

In short, if the Chinese challenge is to be taken seriously in America and Europe, the transatlantic link needs to be revived after a particularly turbulent four years, and even reinforced in some areas. America needs to understand that the unipolar moment has passed, and that American supremacy does not mean that European partners can be treated as junior policy-takers. The EU, for its part, needs not consider itself a junior partner in the transatlantic partnership. The confrontation between China and the United States is an old-fashioned one, in the sense that it involves two powerful states — one on the rise and the other in relative decline — locked in diplomatic, trade, military, political, and even ideological rivalry. Other countries are either bystanders or allies of one of the two superpowers. European countries fall into the category of allies of the United States.

At the same time, most European countries are part of the EU, which is far more than just a sum of its parts. It is an entity with supranational authority in areas such as trade. The EU was created at the time of disillusion with nationalism, as it was the rivalry between the nation states in Europe that had led to disastrous two world wars. Ever since the European Economic Community was founded in the 1950s “the European way” involved the gradual pooling of national sovereignty and the cautious and slow honing of its global actions. The EU’s diversity is both a weakness and a strength. The EU is slow to act, often undecided. At the same time its actions have legitimacy and carry moral weight that no other national actor could possibly acquire.

The world can hardly afford an old-style clash of global superpowers. It therefore helps that the EU is “post-national”. Europe’s strengths lie in its ability to forge a consensus among many stakeholders. The United Nations has never been in the position to fulfill its promise of bringing forth a harmonious multilateral environment on the global stage. Hence there has been a need for other actors to step up, such as the OECD and other EU-led efforts. Climate change is accelerating. Income disparities between global South and North are mounting to unprecedented levels. The EU, with its expertise of development aid, its ability to interact meaningfully with its neighborhood, and its multi-faceted approach to global crises, is often a more trusted partner of countries and communities worldwide than the two other superpower “national” actors.

There is still lack of consensus about the EU’s detailed policy on China, but its broad parameters were established in a 2019 strategy document where China was called a partner, a competitor, but also a “systemic rival”. Clearly there are divergences within the European family on how best to tackle the challenge presented by China, with some countries more economically exposed than others. Germany, for example, annually exports €96 billion worth of goods to China, amounting to half of the EU-China exports.

“For Central Europeans, just like for the EU as a whole, there is a need for striking a balance. We must be able to differentiate between political confrontation against China, competition, and cooperation.”

The challenge for Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is largely that of the broader EU, but in microcosm. CEE countries are both allies of America and members of the EU, and these two geopolitical poles constitute the major points of reference. For Central
Europeans, just like for the EU as a whole, there is a need for striking a balance. We must be able to differentiate between political confrontation against China (national security, human rights, and the promotion of democracy), competition (trade), and cooperation (working through a multilateral system pertaining to global public goods such as climate change, fight against pandemics). Given the scale of China, confrontation — when it is necessary and inevitable — will also require coordinating with the United States.

Superpowers – strategic partners

Which of the following countries are the most important strategic partners of your country today? Pick max. 2. (respondents could choose from a randomised selection of 6 countries including the US, Russia, China, Germany, France and the UK)

For some decision-makers in CEE countries, divisions of competence between national and European levels are often perceived as a zero-sum game. It shouldn’t be; this is a dangerous pose. The 17+1 format of negotiating with Beijing, where smaller CEE countries are trying to attract Chinese investments on a separate track from other European institutions, is a mistake. Central Europeans do not stand a chance to forge their own policy towards China. Instead of undermining European, and transatlantic, solidarity, they should help to shape a distinctive European multi-faceted strategy.

The Cold War between the United States and China, with its stifling atmosphere of animosity pervading all areas of interaction, is still just a dark scenario, one of many. How this bipolar relationship unfolds is dependent on other actors, such as third countries (Japan, Indonesia, Russia) but, most notably, the EU. The EU is not a neutral bystander in the emerging world of great-power politics. Europe’s and America’s fortunes and objectives are deeply intertwined. At the same time, the EU wants to be able to shape its policies independently, sometimes diverging from America. Of course, with rights there comes responsibility: Europeans striving for a place at a big table will need to prove that they have a one long-term vision rather than collage of 27 self-incompatible ad-hoc plans. Time will tell whether the European ambition of strategic autonomy was a pipe dream or awakening of the third giant.

“Central Europeans do not stand a chance to forge their own policy towards China. Instead of undermining European, and transatlantic, solidarity, they should help to shape a distinctive European multi-faceted strategy.”
A Europe that Defends and Protects
In Select Areas the Case for Strategic Autonomy is Strong for CEE

Tomáš Valášek, Member of Parliament, National Council of the Slovak Republic

The case for European strategic autonomy in select areas is strong and simple. There are some dependencies across the Atlantic that are both undesirable and surmountable. For example, it is unreasonable for Europe to expect even its closest allies to export many vaccines and critical components in times of great emergencies, such as the COVID pandemic. Allies will be under tremendous pressure to help their own populations first, and by the time they get around to supplying us, tens of thousands of Europeans may be unnecessarily dead. Because Europe has a strong vaccine industry of its own, the continent can become self-sufficient in the vaccine realm with a relatively modest expenditure of money, and in a reasonably short time. Put differently, this particular dependency must and can be overcome.

Had EU discussions of strategic autonomy been focused on addressing these kind of dependencies, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries would have been easy to convince. Governments in this part of the world tend to fret about security – for good reasons – and they think a great deal about their defense arrangements. It is generally understood and broadly accepted here that the United States is preoccupied in the Indo-Pacific and elsewhere, that America’s emotional and political attachment to Europe is waning over time, and that a continent as rich as Europe ought to be able to carry a greater defense burden than it currently does. This being the case, the best way to look after the security of this part of the world lies not in conserving the defense bonds as we have known them, with its lopsided dependence on the United States, but in giving Europe the means to do more on its own while still being embedded within the transatlantic relationship.

The trouble with strategic autonomy in the defense realm – and the reason many in Central and Eastern Europe are sceptics – is that too often it focuses on the wrong kinds of dependencies. Instead of rebalancing the defense relationship where necessary and feasible, it ventures into two other directions.

The first mistake is to seek to eliminate dependencies that are generally acceptable and perhaps even desirable, because they allow both sides to focus on their relative strengths. A good example is the dominant U.S. role in transatlantic defense trade. Europe and the United States are ‘frenemies’ in the arms market; their industries compete ruthlessly but governments frequently, if not symmetrically, buy from each other’s manufacturers.

In this market, the Central Europeans produce little; they are nearly always buyers. They generally prefer to have the choice of buying either American or European products, because competition reduces prices and allows them to seek other perks from willing sellers. But they are willing to accept that some defense goods will only be made in the U.S., and have watched with some annoyance that a big chunk of the EU’s new defense fund is slated for bolstering European “autonomy” in the production of fifth generation fighter aircraft. The argument that dependence here makes Europe vulnerable does not square with Central Europeans’ experience: the U.S. has been happy to send F-35s to any willing EU buyer. The prevailing sentiment around here is that the expenditure

“The best way to look after the security of this part of the world (in Central and Eastern Europe) lies not conserving the defense bond as we have known it, with its lopsided dependence on the U.S., but in giving Europe the means to do more on its own, though still within the transatlantic relationship.”
on the next generation European fighter jet is less about autonomy for Europe and more about jobs in France and Germany.

Then there are the dependencies that are undesirable – dependencies that put the EU in a potentially vulnerable spot – but they are impossible to address without prohibitive expenditures and on unrealistic timescales. This is a reference to the most expansive definition of strategic autonomy that holds that Europe ought to be able to defend itself without the United States. It’s not that the Central Europeans have not thought about the risk that the United States might one day leave Europeans to fend for themselves. How could one after the Trump experience? Nevertheless, seen from this part of the world, there is no replacement for the United States.

The idea of the defense of Europe sans les Américains works well if the sort of war you envision yourself fighting involves Sahel or Libya-type interventions, or Balkans-like stabilization operations. Here, too, Europe currently depends on the U.S. for crucial support roles, but the leap towards autonomy, while expensive, is imaginable. So, if you are Belgium or Italy, then yes, full strategic autonomy sounds doable (though this still does not make it desirable) because your definition of “full” does not necessarily include having to worry about the consequences of not being able to take on Russia.

Further east, things look very different. Most Central Europeans regard conflict with Russia as both possible and as a threat to their existence; defending against it is at the heart of their defense planning. And in such case, the need for U.S. help looms large. The view not just here but also in NATO HQ is that U.S. conventional and nuclear firepower, and its willingness to take risks, is essential to deterring any systemic challenger, including Russia, and would be decisive in a conflict. If Washington has grown impatient of doing too much within NATO, the answer is for Europe to do more in the southern and eastern neighborhoods, but to keep the U.S. involved in the defense against Russia.

In theory, nothing is irreplaceable, not even U.S. arms. In practice, it would take far too long and cost far too much to defend against Russia without the United States.

The EU Strategic Autonomy: Central and Eastern European Perspectives (23)
fense link post-Trump is not what it used to be, most Central Europeans assume that the uncertainty whether the U.S. would get involved or not, while less dissuasive than the certainty that it would, is still good enough – and better than all alternatives.

So does this mean Central and Eastern Europe will resist strategic autonomy of any sort? It does not. There are plenty of dependencies in the defense world that are both undesirable and surmountable. The first are aforementioned limited operations in the EU’s neighborhood. There is simply little excuse for not being able to carry out Libya-style operations, or to stabilize an area such as the Balkans, using NATO’s command chain but without having to rely on other support coming directly from the United States. This also happens to be the view of most in Washington, even if tempered with fear of “duplication”. This is not to say that if Europe acquires the means to intervene alone in the neighborhood, the U.S. should be a priori excluded from such operations. It only means that Europe ought to be able to proceed by itself should Washington not want to be included for whatever reason. Most Central Europeans will welcome the additional option of Europe being able to intervene alone. Geography makes them more vulnerable to trouble in the Balkans and Europe’s eastern neighborhood than the rest of the EU.

Another domain ripe for more European autonomy is intelligence. There is a strong case to be made for Europe to be able to come to its own conclusions on strategic matters. This is already the case for many trouble spots of interest to Europe, but far from all. A greater commonly owned and operated ability to collect and analyze intelligence would also make Europe a more attractive, if somewhat more difficult, partner to the U.S. in joint endeavors, not just of the military kind but also in diplomacy, such as in the talks that led to the nuclear agreement with Iran. Getting such capacities will, however, require a far greater investment in human and technological means of espionage, including, crucially, cyber. A push for European autonomy in intelligence matters could leave the Central Europeans in a delicate position of having to face a potentially unfriendly U.S. response. On the other hand, it will give them additional options of comparing different intelligence assessments, which is generally a good thing.

What sort of progress the EU makes towards strategic autonomy depends in great part on whether the conversations focus on the right kind of dependencies. Full autonomy will make Central Europeans nervous; if “full” become the goal, the debates in Brussels with be tense and progress slow. The same applies if strategic autonomy becomes a byword for protectionism. The French presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2022 will be important; many in Central Europe regard it with concern, expecting Paris to prioritize the wrong kinds of dependencies. But this leaves France in a happy position of being able to positively surprise the rest of Europe, including Central Europe, with a measured focus on areas where autonomy is both desirable and achievable.
European strategic autonomy has recently become a burning issue on both sides of the Atlantic. The concept can be understood as a response to the current development in international relations, the changes in the security environment, growing European ambitions, and a shift in the U.S. foreign policy. The EU’s strategic autonomy aspiration greatly concerns the relationship between the EU and NATO: It may have significant implications for shared responsibilities between the two organizations and their cooperation, especially when it comes to capability development and taking more action in defense.

There are many different and often conflicting views among the relevant actors in this debate. First, it can be viewed through the high-level clash between Europe and the United States, which mainly revolves around defense spending and defense responsibility. The second layer of the problem lies in the divergent views on European defense and security among the main European players such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. And lastly, the debate can be perceived as a concern of all NATO members and NATO as an institution. After all, transatlantic security and defense involves all players in the region, all members of the Alliance and the EU.

Until now, Central European perspectives on the concept of strategic autonomy have not been viewed as significant. But it may be that the Central European perspective on the significance of NATO, the future course of Europe’s Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and the linkages between the two organizations can provide more clarity, assurance, and most importantly help deescalate emotions that are currently running high.

Central and Eastern European countries are often under pressure to take a clear stance and to pick a side. Over the past six months, I have been asked whether the Czech government subscribes to the “French concept” or prefers the “German approach” to strategic autonomy; similarly, I have faced questions on the Visegrád Group (V4)’s position on this issue. All these approaches are simplistic. To start with,CEE is not a monolith. To demonstrate this, I would like to use the Visegrád Group as a reference point.

Generally, the region shares a similar perception of threats, is a proponent of fielding a single force, and is deeply concerned about the question of the role of NATO and the United States’ presence in the region. Nevertheless, within the partnership of the four Central European countries alone, there are four different outlooks on European strategic autonomy and defense matters in general.

Poland is a loud proponent of a strong NATO and U.S. presence in the region and European strategic autonomy is therefore approached with cautious skepticism.

Slovakia is open to greater EU defense cooperation but underlines the need for European strategic autonomy to be complementary to NATO.

Hungary has accepted the erosion of NATO’s commitment and has been advocating for an autonomous EU military force – independent of the United States – for some time now, while not discounting its bilateral ties to the United States.

The Czech Republic integrates all of these approaches. It recognizes that NATO is the bedrock of our collective defense, but also points to the importance of capability development in the EU context. It sees the effort by the EU, and Europe in general, to take on more responsibility as natural and inevitable. Here are three main reasons why:

First, Europe’s political and security cooperation with the United States has undergone major changes. America has moved its attention to the Indo-Pacific theater and has put its main focus on competition with China, consequently shifting its attention away from Europe. Russia still causes a rivalry headache, but China is a bigger challenge. The traditional transatlantic bargain was based on the United States providing security in Europe in return for Europe’s assistance in crisis management (e.g. Balkans, the Middle East). This idea about division of labor within the Euro-Atlantic bond will now have to change. The United States’ activity in Europe...
will as a result be increasingly centered around core tasks, such as collective defense and crisis management, military exercises, or the effort to increase Europe’s own capacities, without weakening the embodiment of the transatlantic bond, i.e. NATO. At the same time, the United States will be reaching out to EU members to step out of their Europe-centric focus and align their interest and action with America.

Second, the EU must become a stronger player in its immediate neighborhood, particularly in two main areas. It must be able to face the challenges on its southern flank, especially in the Sahel region, where EU countries already operate. It needs to take into consideration the many threats that are likely to come from the region in the coming years, such as terrorism and extremism, political instability, or security impacts of climate change. We have already seen that instability in the neighborhood has a direct impact on Europe, be it due to migration influx or conflicts erupting on Europe’s doorstep. The other threat the EU must address in a better way comes from the east and is primarily embodied by Russia. Russia’s ongoing efforts to destabilize Europe through employing hybrid tactics has had a direct impact on our collective defense, Europe’s political stability, and overall security.

Third, a large part of the geopolitical competition is moving into new domains and into the information space. It revolves around new technologies and information warfare. There are new players in the arena, be it China as the emerging rival, or private companies that assume new roles as autonomous international and defense/security actors.

In this context, the EU’s CSDP cannot remain solely defense-centric and constrained by the EU’s geographical boundaries anymore. It must reflect recent changes in the strategic environment and become more flexible. It has many legal, financial, and political tools at its disposal that can help it escape its current predicament.
Only by doing so can it also strengthen the transatlantic bond and the overall security of the Euro-Atlantic area. What is more, NATO-EU cooperation must be the tool through which we address these challenges. The two organizations could improve their strategic partnership in a number of areas. The first, overarching topic is resilience in the context of the pandemic. NATO and the EU need to analyze the lessons learned from COVID-19 and prepare for similar future scenarios. One area where better cooperation requires little politics is coordinated response in non-military situations. As obvious as it may sound, NATO and the EU could do better on this. Our practical experience comes from the second wave of COVID-19 that hit my country in October 2020; while help was readily available, coordination, both domestically and internationally, was not easy to achieve. At one point, we Czechs were issuing identical demands for medical assistance from NATO, the EU, and individual nations, resulting in much duplication and confusion. The fix is easy: strengthen the role of the EU in NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and make the EU and the UN “permanent members.” Second is shared situational awareness. A system of cooperation in information and intelligence sharing must be adopted; given political realities that have hampered this in the past, we have to come up with a creative solution to bolster NATO and EU’s situational awareness. A way forward in this area is to foster open-source analysis, draw upon technological solutions in the private sector, and improve communication and data sharing among individual members e.g. through unifying the legal norms regulating these processes. The experience with NATO and EU developing a parallel playbook to respond to hybrid threats shows that such a creativity can work. Third is coping with Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) and space security. NATO and the EU should establish a common assessment of EDTs’ security implications to be able stay up to date and to foresee and prepare for the threats and challenges this domain poses. What is more, they must become confident and relevant players in this field and set principles of responsible use. They should work together to foster innovation, research, and development; NATO’s strength lies in standardization and soon, hopefully, also in funding mechanisms to incentivize further innovation and modernization as well as responsible use. The EU has the European Defense Fund (EDF) and other tools, such as various centers of excellence, though which it can complement NATO’s activity and reach technological sovereignty. The same principles apply to space security. Furthermore, it is crucial to work on space situational awareness, including data sharing, as well as work on better understanding the threats space presents. Common rules, norms, and principles on behavior in outer space should be introduced. Fourth is improving capabilities for planning and development. NATO and the EU should continue to work together on developing defense capabilities that will be mutually compatible and coherent. The ongoing efforts of EU member States to develop and improve their defense capabilities should be done in a way that will strengthen both NATO’s and the EU’s capacity to act. If done right, these efforts can help these organizations increase their position as strong defense providers and global players. The single set of forces principle must be followed in these endeavors. For more than a decade, we have been witnessing the EU and NATO’s capability shortfalls in the defense sector. For instance, they have struggled to reflect and quickly react to the rising threat of China, the growing importance of new domains, or the increase in use of hybrid warfare. Now is the time to reflect and improve. And finally, more improvements must be made in military mobility. Military mobility is currently the flagship of EU-NATO cooperation and should remain a key priority. The aim here should be to further integrate NATO and EU activity within the PESCO project on Military Mobility and adopt a whole-of-society perspective by including institutions from across various sectors; the two organizations can also foster cooperation in this area by exercising procedures or by improving information-sharing processes and creating a strong messaging infrastructure. They also must develop and employ technological solutions. One example could be the employment of the newest communication technologies to improve military mobility through digitalization. The main precondition for both NATO and the EU to manage these tasks successfully is strong political will. Although developing new capabilities is crucial, the EU’s ability to act is preconditioned by its political will and effective tools that will help the Union carry out its ambitions, as long as they strengthen, not weaken NATO. The EU’s pursuit of bigger defense aspiration translates not only into action but financial resources. It must be realized not only by increasing defense spending but by overall incentives. The EU defense initiatives (EDF, PESCO) as well as NATO’s discussion on future funding of activities are mutually reinforcing. After all, they aim to strengthen the transatlantic defense capacity and capability and will lead to Europe taking more responsibility. Key documents in this endeavor will be the EU’s Strategic Compass and NATO’s new Strategic Concept, which should get more fleshed out at the upcoming NATO Summit. They pose a great opportunity for both institutions to bolster NATO’s European pillar. The documents, and their subsequent implementation, must be transparent to strengthen trust between the two institutions, but also among individual member states. The worst possible scenario is an institutional decoupling, which would weaken Europe, the United States, and the transatlantic bond.

* Tereza Balková of the Czech MOD contributed to this article.
A Europe Fit for the Digital Age: Technology and Digital Transformation
How are New Technologies Changing the Way We Think About Europe’s Place in the World?

Žiga Turk, PhD, the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Europe had a dominant position in the world because it capitalized – technologically and organizationally – on communication technology based on paper and print. It has been losing this position even before the invention of digital technology. One can identify three views of its current place in the world: (1) being a follower in the technological race, behind the United States and China, in spite of different ambitions; (2) being a leader in a reframed race, reframed so that technology is constrained with respect to values, humanism, etc; and (3) being a standard setter for the rest of the world in this “humane” approach to technology, taking the leadership position it has been used to having in the last couple of centuries.

Options 2 and 3 are second rate options: they are futile without achieving technological relevance first. Therefore, Europe needs to restore its old recipes of success, namely being open to ideas from abroad, experimenting with different things in different regions, and learning from what works. Central and Eastern European Countries see more clearly that one cannot centrally plan innovation, regulate oneself into being innovative, or simply change the criteria of success if one is not successful.

Atop of the world

500 years ago, the Gutenberg revolution catapulted Europe to its leadership position in the world. The technology to manufacture inexpensive, plant-based paper and to print on it using movable type has been known across Asia, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. But only in Europe was it used widely, and as a result provided a basis for the technological, scientific, and political revolutions that followed. Europeans charted the globe and found themselves on a trajectory that, by 1950, would concentrate more than 80 percent of global GDP in Europe, and in countries descended from European culture such as the United States.

In the 20th century, this part of the world dominated economically, politically, and militarily. The European wars of the 20th Century were world wars. The Cold War between European powers — even though one was on the other side of the Atlantic and the other spanned vast Asian territories all the way to the Pacific — dominated global affairs in the second half of the 20th Century. This struggle led to massive investments in research and development. Technologies underpinning the internet are the result of these investments.

The 20th Century also saw the shrinking of two empires “over which the sun never set”: the British and the Russian. As a result of this, the center of gravity for technological development and innovation moved across the Atlantic to the United States. Although Europe did contribute to the digital revolution with the labors of Konrad Zuse (the first computer), Alan Turing (the Turing test), Stephen Furber and Sophie Wilson (RISC architecture), Tim Berners-Lee (the Web), Linus Torvalds (Linux), and many others, commercialization, industrialization, and the majority of development happened in America. Europe thereby lost its geopolitical and technological supremacy. It remained, however, a close partner and ally, at least until the fall of the Berlin wall. Since then, this bedrock alliance has been questioned more and more frequently, even though both sides share many cultural values and history.
The Flat World of the 21st Century

Globalization, which accelerated with the Chinese opening to the world and after the fall of the Iron Curtain, has been an engine for the reduction of global inequalities. Living standards markedly improved across the so-called third and second worlds. First Japan, then the Asian Tigers, and then finally China took off. All these countries improved their education systems, opened their markets, and joined the technological race. The world became flat, in a famous turn of phrase.21

One hundred years since World War I, Europe’s position in the world has dramatically changed. Europe used to be a continent of capitals of global colonial empires and home to practically all Nobel Laureates. Now the former global powers have joined forces in the EU, which collectively represents only one of a handful of powers in a multipolar world. That multipolarity also extends to the field of science and technology. And Europe is lagging behind the United States and East Asia in the development of digital technology. Unfortunately, it is this very technology that has been the driver of almost all productivity growth22 in any industry, not to mention the bedrock upon which new businesses in digital equipment, software, and services have been developed.

European Digital Ambition

At least since the 1994 Bangemann report,23 Europe has been aware of its digital challenge. The solutions are known:

Yet despite this report, and many such other plans, Europe has been losing the race. Among the top global digital companies there are hardly any European ones. Member government and Commission strategies were more comfortable with playing catch-up. An occasional fine by the Competition Commissioner did not stop U.S. companies from winning the innovation race and building market share. Even in areas where Europe happened to lead, such as in mobile telephony with the legendary Nokia and Ericsson, it was unable to maintain its position. Its champions became virtually obsolete after Apple’s invention of the smartphone. The socio-political environment in Europe has not been friendly enough for an industry as fast-paced as digital. Europe was the best place in the world to capitalize on the paper communication revolution. But it is not the best to capitalize on the digital one.

What is not to be done

Realistically, Europe cannot replicate neither the dynamism of the U.S. economic and financial system, nor the centrally planned concentration of resources deployed by China. The highest policy-making levels in Europe do not seem to sincerely want to recapture the mantle of technological leadership or co-leadership, even though speeches to this effect are frequently made.

Instead, Europe seems to be specializing in adding adjectives to others’ innovations — in other words, protecting their citizens from the dangers of the digital world. This approach is nicely captured in the catchphrase “a human-centric digital age.” On the one hand, this is a noble idea. On the other, it sounds a little like sour grapes: we cannot have the latest and greatest, so we will instead focus on more dated approaches that will be more “humane”. While Europe will be contending under what circumstances it might still be possible to use Big Data for a good cause, China will be mining vast collections of personal data to discover patterns of diseases for developing innovative, personalized medicines, for example. Europe wants to protect its citizens from the evils of technology. Yes, innovation disrupts. It would not be innovation if it doesn’t. But not all disruption is evil.

Similarly, “trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI)” and “unbiased AI” are efforts to make artificial intelligence less scary and more politically correct. But there is no way to tame scary machines that see patterns better than humans can, apart from crippling both these machines and those that develop them. One cannot make mathematics and statistics come up with results which are desirable. Math does not care for feelings. Instead of improving a socio-economic system so that it can be friendlier for innovation and disruption, Europe is creating a layer of rules and regulations by which European and foreign companies using AI will need to abide.

“Actions must be taken (...) to strike down entrenched positions which put Europe at a competitive disadvantage: it means fostering an entrepreneurial mentality to enable the emergence of new dynamic sectors of the economy; it means developing a common regulatory approach to bring forth a competitive, Europe-wide, market for information services; it does not mean more public money, financial assistance, subsidies, dirigisme, or protectionism.”

Policymakers also talk about “strategic autonomy” these days, which in this context is meant to signify an aspiration at self-sufficiency in a couple of key technologies. This implies creating a market in Europe for the local replication of what others have done already elsewhere. Finally, a chance for a European Apple and a European Google! Except Apple and Google will be working on new things European consumers and industry would like to have.

Europe also likes to fancy itself as a rule maker. It cannot export devices, apps, or services, but it can be a rule-setter in AI, privacy, and robotics. Users on all continents
could benefit from our GDPR. Users across the global internet could be clicking through cookie consent forms on Web pages, not just Europeans! This approach indeed may work. The most intolerant wins, quipped Nassim Taleb.24 Faced by developing two versions of the same service — one for Europe, one for everyone else — providers could simply opt to use European version everywhere. Or, of course, this strategy could backfire, with providers choosing not to do business in Europe, which is the case with quite a few American web companies these days.25

There is a real danger that in the future we will see a Balkanization of the Internet. China already has built a completely different thing behind its own great (fire)wall. As Europe protects a growing list of rights for its citizens, and the United States opts to protect a much more limited number of rights written down 200 years ago as its companies search for the next big thing in tech, the rest of the world is watching. Authoritarian regimes, for their part, are taking regulation one notch higher than the Europeans, to repressive levels.

What is to be done

What has been somewhat harshly summarized above is not a counsel for despair, however. Digital communication is too new and dynamic a field to admit confident predictions about its future. It is perhaps a good thing that different jurisdictions are trying different regulatory regimes. And here Europe has an advantage.

And while technical standards should remain harmonized to the greatest extent possible across the world — we want to be able to charge our phones with the same cables in Asia, Europe, and the United States — non-technical regulations that have societal implications are perhaps better left unharmonized. The simple reason is that we do not know, and indeed cannot know, which approach is ultimately best. A “human-centric” digital age, or just a digital age without addjectives? “Responsible” AI or just AI? Cookie warnings or no cookie warnings? Free social media or social media that “protects” citizens from “disinformation”?

One of the success factors of late medieval Europe was that there were many jurisdictions with many different rules. If one jurisdiction would want to protect its people from the evil of books and allow only “human-centered presses” to print, another would allow printing without limitations. One jurisdiction would stick to a political and governance system optimized for oral communication, another would experiment written communication and democracy. People could see across borders what works and what does not. In big eastern Empires, there was little such experimentation.

Therefore, there is little need to harmonize everything across the Atlantic, or even across the EU. Digital disruption is significant, yes, but we do not have all the answers. Let the member states experiment and we shall see what works.

As for the European place in the global innovation race, the basics are simple. The progress of civilization lies in the ability to engage a growing number of brains in collaboration so that there is more specialization and more division of labor.26 Europe has a lot to contribute, with its well-educated citizens and traditional links between culture and technology. Its strategic position should be indispensable in some areas, showing excellence in a few niches, and part of a pool of talent in the free and open world.

In Central and Eastern European countries, digitalization and democratization walked hand in hand since 1989. There have been fewer national champions to protect from digital disruption. In some countries, much had to be created from scratch, and many of these startups are the digital tigers of tomorrow. But most importantly, we in CEE countries have learned that slogans, five-year plans, and directed development from one center does not even work when trying to catch up. And it works even less well when trying to lead the way.

“Europe also likes to fancy itself as a rule maker. It cannot export devices, apps, or services, but it can be a rule-setter in AI, privacy, and robotics. Users on all continents could benefit from our GDPR.”

“In Central and Eastern European countries, digitalization and democratization walked hand in hand since 1989. There have been fewer national champions to protect from digital disruption.”
The Vision and Realities of Europe’s Drive for Technological and Digital Sovereignty

Alena Kudzko, Research Director, GLOBSEC

While there is a general consensus in the EU that the bloc needs to collectively do considerably more to enhance its technological and digital prowess, Central and Eastern Europe is taking a cautious approach towards defining what is the desirable and feasible degree of envisioned sovereignty, decoupling, and detachment — and how to get there. The fuzziness of the regional approach is undergirded by apprehensions related to the potential dismantling of ties and relations that CEE, for economic and security reasons, cannot afford to sacrifice, concerns that the region will be unable to efficiently revamp its economic model, and fears that Western companies will benefit from favoritism. Instead of grand theoretical discussions, the region would prefer the EU to return to more banal but concrete topics that are targeted, among other aims, towards creating a proper digital single market and capital market union.

The vision of European digital and technological sovereignty

Europeans have come to terms with the fact that technology, innovation, and the digital economy are both of critical importance for a prosperous economy and also increasingly are the terrain upon which competition takes place among global rivals.

The recent Huawei case underscored the fact that imported technologies often carry immense national security risks. But core principles are also at stake: competitors like China embed different sets of values into their own technologies and the frameworks that govern them. Avoiding standards dictated by Chinese tech providers will necessitate that Europe partakes in designing and implementing technological standards and rules regulating the digital space that reflect its own democratic values.

The EU’s failure to lead the first wave of digitalization and technological developments has contributed to the bloc taking a backseat to the U.S. and China, and to some extent forgoing innovation-steered economic growth altogether. The EU’s strategic vision, nonetheless, now appears rather clear: the bloc aims to set standards for the use of new technologies and the digital space that are compatible with the values of privacy, a free society, democratic freedoms, and sustainability. Europe aspires to enhance its technological and digital capacities, including through the development and use of its own innovations. The EU, moreover, is seeking to shield the European digital space from hostile and anti-democratic elements in the world.

Digitalization, more broadly, provides newfound impetus to EU endeavors to delineate its global ambitions. The bloc has recently come to recognize its own limitations in transforming the world in its image, especially when compared to the lofty expectations from the 1990s and early 2000s. The EU’s transformative role on technology and digital norms, coupled with the looming green transition, however, presents a real opportunity for Europe to make up for lost time. The “Brussels effect” in global standard-setting holds tremendous promise. Within the digital domain, the EU could prove influential as a norm setter.

“The concept of strategic autonomy has traditionally conveyed the impression that the bloc is lowering its ambitions by focusing solely on security, and consequently underscores a failure on the part of the EU to implement its global vision as a contemporary, post-modern, and transformative power. This need not be the case.”

The concept of strategic autonomy has traditionally conveyed the impression that the bloc is lowering its ambitions by focusing solely on security, and consequently underscores a failure on the part of the EU to implement its global vision as a contemporary, post-modern, and transformative power. This need
not be the case. Properly articulated, strategic autonomy holds great promise. But for the promise to be realized, the EU must first clarify the types of standards and capabilities it needs, as well as its readiness to use them.

For pragmatic pessimists (a not-uncommon breed in Europe), though, this ideal borders on fantasy given that the US and China occupy the “speed lane” and the bloc the “slow lane”. Discussions concerning the ultimate scale of EU ambitions and the most optimal way to achieve these aims remains wide open.

The CEE Perspective

Central Europeans are neither ignorant nor indifferent to global developments shaping discussions on Europe’s relations with technology and digital matters. CEE governments are cognizant of the underlying factors steering Europe’s prioritization of strategic autonomy on technological and digital issues, though these topics are playing out in a distinct way across the region.

The region, for one, is not oblivious to the increasing geopolitical importance of technology and digital, and their roles as tools for wielding economic and political power.29 In light of the CEE’s history as a geopolitical playground, in fact, certain scenarios pertaining to technological and global power competition and its implications for the region make countries nervous. Moscow’s advances, marked by the manipulation of the digital information space and the use of cyberattacks and spyware, have laid bare Western (and regional) technological vulnerabilities. The exploitation of technologies like facial recognition and the monitoring of communication channels similarly evoke historical memories of a surveillance state, but in a much more enhanced and terrifying version.

The United States, for its part, has been seen as a staunch ally of the region, though for many Europeans that status has been tarnished by four years of erratic and unpredictable behavior by the Trump administration. While the Biden presidency has assuaged these fears to some extent, disagreements remain on a long list of topics including data protection, regulation of big tech, and the design of rules for technological and digital innovations that are increasingly spurring economic growth and reshaping democracies.

For most Central and Eastern Europeans, security concerns trump considerations around how to best arrange digital trade and regulations. Paired with a pragmatic recognition of their countries’ reliance on American tech companies, the region is hesitant towards seeking out technological and digital sovereignty and decoupling from the U.S. in too hasty a manner.

Technological competition between the U.S. and China, nevertheless, has reinforced Europe’s ambition to develop its own model. While the bloc has emphasized its alignment with the U.S. on values and support for the liberal rule-based international system, the EU does not want to burn its bridges with Beijing even though Chinese assertiveness, recently displayed anew through an aggressive posture during the pandemic, have significantly shifted views in Europe.

The region, in fact, lacks a common position on Beijing. Eschewing China could result in difficult-to-offset economic and financial losses due to the country’s embeddedness in global supply chains, and the attractiveness of Chinese investments (including through the 16+1 format seen as divisive by Western partners) and cost-effective digital infrastructure solutions.

At the same time, like elsewhere, disruptions in supply chains during the pandemic have shed light on the vulnerabilities of the region. Interdependence, though beneficial, needed to be combined with diversification to minimize risks.

That all said, the region’s economic model, premised on manufacturing and low labor costs, is outdated and reforms are long overdue.33 It is rather old news that the region needs to shore up its future economic viability by considerably progressing on innovation and digitalization and embracing technological solutions. COVID-19, however, has accelerated the CEE’s timeframe for this economic transformation.

“For most Central and Eastern Europeans, security concerns trump considerations around how to best arrange digital trade and regulations. (…) The region is hesitant towards seeking out technological and digital sovereignty and decoupling from the U.S. in too hasty a manner.”
Regional Innovation by Country Performance Group

Note: Countries ordered by their performance score in the European Innovation Scoreboard 2019
Source: Regional Innovation Scoreboard, European Commission, 2019, pp. 17 (table 7)
The region’s interpretation of global patterns and developments is, undoubtedly, linked to the perceived cornerstone of the CEE’s successful transformation following the fall of the iron curtain: interconnectedness with the world. The internet, technology, and trade flows are all associated with the introduction of freedoms long denied and the integration of the region as part of the free and developed world. Confrontations between the U.S. and China, discussions on splinternets and splinter-economies, and excessive regulation and restrictions — these are all processes that conflict with the region’s perceptions on the ingredients necessary for achieving success.

In other words, there is little, if any, opposition to the proposition that Europe needs to up its game on tech and digital and mitigate its vulnerabilities towards (hostile) outsiders. Despite a general alignment on an overarching vision, profound differences on the approach that should be pursued to attain it are abundant. How rapidly should the EU proceed? By what means? Through what types of global relations and institutions? And how far should the bloc pursue these aims? CEE countries harbor special reservations towards the concept of European digital and technological sovereignty and the pathways put forward to attain it.34

Doubts pertaining to the EU’s “trend setter” status rank chief among CEE qualms. While this ambition is noble and worth pursuing over the long haul, it is important not to delude ourselves into thinking that we are already there. Aggressive decoupling is not an option in the foreseeable future and any interest in strategic autonomy should not lead to strategic isolation.

Numerous indicators that measure digital transformation and technological prowess reveal most CEE countries to score below the EU average, leading to questions concerning the feasibility of this transition and the preferred pace in the region. The need to play “catch up” underscores concerns that, if Europe moves towards European digital sovereignty too quickly and accelerates its decoupling from other global regions, CEE might not be able to adapt swiftly enough and will consequently lose out more than others.

There are also differences in economic philosophies including preferred pathways to success. A Franco-German consensus on fostering an environment conducive to the creation of “European Champions” big enough to be globally competitive has stirred suspicions about protectionism and distrust among Central Europeans. To achieve the necessary size and reach, the
champions are likely to generally come from large European countries and benefit, for example, from subsidies and/or exemptions from rules on mergers. These moves could, in fact, inhibit a productive climate for innovative businesses.

Efforts to create European success stories, in this vein, could run contrary to goals to pursue stricter competition policy to promote efficiency and economic prosperity. CEE countries do not believe that “central planning” at the European level is the most efficient approach if the continent is to compete effectively with the U.S. and China. Moreover, the region relies on small-to-medium enterprises, businesses that are not likely to thrive in an environment fixated on celebrating global champions.

The region, however, is cognizant of unfair competitive practices practiced, for example, by China. The task facing Europe, consequently, is to calibrate its competition policy in a manner that both preserves the free market and enables European companies to compete globally—even if rules of fair competition and trade are not dutifully upheld internationally.

There are also a range of challenges endemic to CEE that need to be overcome if the region is to become fit for the EU’s geo-economic ambitions. Technological developments shaping the global agenda and economy are not entirely embedded into CEE thinking, including both integration and planning perspectives. Understandably, technologies like AI, 5G, and quantum computing require significant investments in research and development. CEE countries are small and no country in the region can afford to pay for a broad portfolio of investments matching those of larger countries.

But the region is also aware that investing in innovation will be key to a post-pandemic recovery. The EU Recovery Fund, with its emphasis on a digital and green transition, provides an opportunity for the region to hasten its transformation in a more favorable and strategically sound direction. To capitalize on their potential, CEE countries will need to cultivate an entrepreneurial ecosystem, invest in infrastructure, think regionally, and craft a workforce for an innovation-driven economy.37

CEE will, indubitably, also be faced with fostering greater specialization—not necessarily a difficult goal. Each country already is home to emerging knowledge clusters and specializations which will allow them to focus their investments and organically benefit from specialized developments happening in other parts of the region.

The necessary, banal steps
What is particularly confounding in Europe’s discussion on technological and digital sovereignty is the attention and zeal devoted to big ambitions and concepts (something that Europe is arguably not so good at), juxtaposed with a relative loss of fervor to work on, implement, and constantly update details and boring legislature that is necessary if the aspirations are to have a chance of success (something that the EU is typically good at).

Central Europeans are keen on seeing less talk and more action when it comes to completing unfinished tasks on the docket since before COVID hit. True, breaching divides, brokering compromises, and fine-tuning legislative details has never been either easy or politically inspiring. But Europe cannot credibly market its sizable ambitions if implementation plans are not adequately addressed.

To that end, two topline items on a list of unfinished business include:

Completing the Digital Single Market
The incompleteness of the Digital Single Market is a major hurdle obstructing Europe’s drive towards achieving digital sovereignty. The EU was developed, to a large degree, on the philosophy that a large and smoothly functioning market would augment the continent’s global economic power and prove a precondition for Europe’s ability to export its norms and regulations abroad. This premise is even more paramount in the technological and digital spheres. If European strategic autonomy starts at home, digital and technological sovereignty begins with a truly barrier-free and vibrant European single market.

Differences in national rules, barriers in the provision of cross border services, the incompatibility and non-transferability of national digital systems, and language barriers have served as only a few of the issues that have fragmented Europe and rendered conceptual discussions on digital sovereignty somewhat detached from reality.

Getting serious about a Capital Markets Union
Access to capital will be a fundamental component to the establishment of an ecosystem that fosters innovation and digital enterprises. A Capital Markets Union is another “old” goal that has gradually progressed and acquired greater urgency in recent years. Ensuring financial flows and the availability and flexibility of financing is critical not only for European companies to gain access to capital but also for them to remain in Europe rather than being forced to relocate elsewhere. This institution would also partially address gaps created through the restriction of foreign investments in sensitive strategic technological sectors.
Articulating positions and not going it alone

CEE countries need to do a better job at articulating their positions and converting them into policy. Central Europe is a vast and diverse region, and it is understandable that avoiding cacophony is a challenging task. Additionally, CEE diplomats and negotiators are less networked and less embedded in European formal and informal institutions than their Western counterparts. There is a certain void to be filled in terms of fostering shared constructive regional views and communicating them effectively.

By better engaging with like-minded countries in Europe, CEE can improve the prospects that its interests become reflected in European policies. On the technological and digital agenda, CEE could particularly benefit through greater coordination with Nordic countries. The Nordics equally value robust and frictionless markets as an efficient means for achieving global competitiveness. Building cross-European coalitions will help the region better articulate its opinions and lend it a stronger negotiating hand in Brussels.

Globally, the EU can hardly succeed lest it leverages and strengthens its alliances. While “strategic autonomy” could convey the impression of retrenchment, its success will depend on Europe securing a wide range and diverse variety of partnerships.

The gap between the more advanced and least advanced innovators in Europe is continuing to grow. In 2011-2019, average innovation performance increased by 67% for all EU regions, while for modest innovators (Romania, Bulgaria) it increased by only 45%.
An Open and Economically Resilient Europe
The Covid-19 Wake-Up Call and the Great European Naïveté: Navigating EU’s Economic Interests Between Openness and Protectionism Into the 21st Century

Aleš Chmelař, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

In December 2013, when the term “European strategic autonomy” was discussed for the first time at the European Council, the debate focused almost completely on security matters. Even in 2017, when this discussion was revived by French president Emmanuel Macron during his Sorbonne speech, references to autonomy were made only in a context of Europe’s capacities to act in its neighborhood. Strategic autonomy was born of and remains a security-related objective. Nevertheless, in the past two years, the concept has increasingly gained an economic underpinning.

The debate surrounding a new European industrial policy, launched by Germany and France in February 2019, arguably as a reaction to the controversial rejection by the European Commission of the Alstom-Siemens merger, was maybe the very first glimmer of the emergence of a new tool for establishing strategic autonomy in economic affairs — an attempt to increase the role of European production, know-how, and capital power in the world. The paradox was that the then-developing COVID pandemic, while overshadowing and delaying further discussion on the possibility of EU industrial policy going in this direction, has put an economic spin to the existing concept of “strategic autonomy.”

The pandemic shocked the European establishment by demonstrating that the bloc was not able to maintain control of key sectors vital to the protection of its civilian population. For months, Europe remained helpless, dependent on receiving respirators, ventilators, and other specific health-related goods being manufactured abroad. Even more damningly, Europe was shown to be poorly equipped to exert interested control even over vaccines invented and produced in Europe. As a result, vaccines were not only not arriving to Europe in contracted numbers, but were indeed being exported from Europe at the very same time. The European Commission’s reaction to this highly political issue with technical and legalistic disputes with license owners instead of resorting to a political reaction based on demands that rules (and its own interests) should be respected.

The issue has gained even stronger salience as non-European governments have attempted to acquire European vaccine production capacities to guarantee exclusivity for themselves. The immediate individual actions of some member states’ governments to control their countries’ exports exposed the unpreparedness of the European framework as a whole. At some point, it seemed as if these authorities were not even sure whether these moves were legal, never mind whether they were in the spirit of European cooperation. It was evident that Europe was not resilient enough.

For a long time, any ad hoc export limit or investment evaluation mechanism had been considered as contrary to the spirit of the EU. Despite stereotypes about Europe being less economically liberal, free market principles are carefully institutionalized within the EU’s single market. Free market principles have also been used as a guide for trade relations with non-EU countries. As a result, the EU remained institutionally naïve for many years, as its competitors employed semi-protectionist principles to carve out preferential stances for themselves. In other words, the EU’s own adherence to the principles of free competition left Europe unable to properly react to challenges from predatory countries abroad, thus lacking control of its economic and health destiny during the pandemic.

While some world powers have de facto nationalized their vaccine production, satisfied their national needs, and are now starting to gain positive points in vaccine diplomacy, others were able to apply restrictive measures to achieve full national control. In stark contrast, Europe maintained its idealistic fealty to

“The paradox was that the then-developing COVID pandemic, while overshadowing and delaying further discussion on the possibility of EU industrial policy going in this direction, has put an economic spin to the existing concept of “strategic autonomy.”
market principles. One way to see this is that Europe has not been shown up by foreign powers, but by its own belief in the mantras of equal treatment and a level-playing field.

"If a sector or a product is to be declared as critical for European strategic autonomy, it needs to become an object of political, and public, debate on the pros and cons as well as on compensation mechanisms."

Its global economic competitors have always carefully balanced between their own narrow interests and international rules, keeping the minimum adherence to free-trade principles necessary for access to other markets while pioneering sophisticated methods to channel government cash into major exporters and building up unshakable national champions supported, often explicitly, by their governments. This is not just an example of a sophisticated state-capitalism in China, where the separation of government and its global exporting companies are blurred, but also of other advanced Western economies which feature many channels through which tax-payer money flows as subsidies or procurements, and where market-concentration rules are much looser than in the EU. In other words, non-market behavior is possible not just in state-capitalistic societies such as China, but also in liberal democracies, where sophisticated rules, direct subsidies, and preferential public procurements stabilize large blocks of technological and production capacities. Many non-European global companies have reaped specific rewards from such arrangements, rewards that Europe does not allow its own companies to realize. While other actors implement these measures largely legally with respect to the dictates of international law, Europe further restricts its behavior in strict adherence to values that nobody else is respecting.

Indeed, the core of Europe’s supposed non-competitiveness might not be its high salaries, its respect for workers’ rights, or its regulatory schemes, as it is often portrayed by some, but rather its over-adherence to free-trade and rules-based principles. It is ironic that the very same respect of free-trade and rules-based principles are often portrayed as a cure to Europe’s limited economic power in the world and not as one of its causes. In other words, Europe has been for long repeatedly called to solve its economic problems by further implementing measures that created the problem in the first place.

But even if we fully accept the concept that Europe needs to leave its naivety behind and use its current powers in a more utilitarian way, how exactly can it proceed down that path? To some extent, it is a victim of its own success of unifying and harmonizing its internal market. While on the EU’s inside, rules have to be respected and trust needs to be a norm for normal functioning, on the outside, the environment is more anarchic. Resolving this divergence will not be easy. Europe must confront these paradoxes. The Siemens-Aistom merger was a case in point. Many in Europe realized that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to both keep up with the EU’s rules on market concentration while at the same time being able to nurture a company with the kind of stature a recipient of non-market support – and others – towards principles not based on level-playing field. If a sector or a product is to be declared as critical for European strategic autonomy, it needs to become an object of political, and public, debate on the pros and cons as well as on compensation mechanisms.

As complex as it sounds, there are feasible solutions, which could also satisfy this inherent distrust of CEE – and others – towards principles not based on level-playing field. If a sector or product is to be declared as critical for European strategic autonomy, it needs to become an object of political, and public, debate on the pros and cons as well as on compensation mechanisms. There are precedents. The global success of Airbus – often criticized over some of its current squeamishness about market-concentration; but as it does so, it has to ensure that overall equality between member states has not suffered. The same will apply for shortening value chains in other sectors, which could create undue advantages for some members over others.

today, competition and the level-playing field are principles that keep up a free and fair competition inside the EU (where, in principle, no one state gets preferential treatment), any adjustments would disrupt this pure logic of a theoreti
cal equality and level-playing field.

Arguably very few, if any, of the potential European champions and potential beneficiaries from shortening value chains in medical and other civil protection sectors are located in Central and Eastern Europe. There is widespread skepticism among CEE countries towards rules which would be in breach of classical level-playing field principles. There is an implicit fear of discrimination in CEE countries, which has created distrust towards non-market tools. Therefore, if countries, such as France and Germany, continue in their discussion on economic strategic autonomy, which might require intervention by governments, or more specifically on a new industrial policy, they need to find transparent instruments of control of these public or non-market interventions.
To put it most controversially, if the EU is to have global champions, they need to be truly and fully European in contributing to the development of all regions — with the possibility of compensation for potential losers of such a policy. The road ahead is not easy, but it is not completely impassable. Getting to the desired end state will require much more internal economic cooperation and trust between member states. And although achieving economic strategic autonomy will be a complex process, and though its realization is not guaranteed, success would allow the European economy the necessary strength, agility, and resilience to navigate all the crises that the looming future is sure to throw its way.

“If the EU is to have global champions, they need to be truly and fully European in contributing to the development of all regions — with the possibility of compensation for potential losers of such a policy.”
Caught Between Free Trade and Protectionism: The CEE Perspective on Economic Strategic Autonomy

Piotr Arak, Director, Polish Economic Institute

The term “strategic autonomy” has been making waves across the European Union. Sometimes it feels like every pandemic-era Zoom panel has featured the new buzzword in one context or another. But what does it mean? In short, two things: that the European Union should be independent, and that the European Union should be united. It should be independent of other international partners such as the United States, China, and Russia, and united so that it can speak with one voice — so that no outside power could play European countries against each other.

Everyone agrees that the areas of integration should be expanded, and most at least grudgingly agree on limiting foreign competition (especially in service sectors or logistics). The COVID-19 and the economic crisis that followed showed that strategic autonomy might also imply focusing on improving economic resilience (while not going so far as endorsing autarky).

Specifically, during the pandemic, it became obvious that the entire Union has limited stocks of critically important health supplies, with many of them no longer produced in Europe at all. Thus, current thinking about strategic autonomy is tied to thinking about how Europe can ensure its independence of supply of key products and raw materials, including microchips, medicines, as well as oil and gas supplies.

Central and Eastern European countries are particularly affected at this pivotal moment. On the one hand, pressures to rethink how the EU approaches trade with the rest of the world are presenting opportunities for these countries as supply chains are re-shored. But at the same time, as momentum builds to protect certain strategic sectors from competition, citizens of CEE countries look on with worry, both because bigger EU countries might apply double standards damaging prospects for their partners, but also because the inherent politicization of protectionism could lead to setbacks to hard-won reforms at home by legitimating corruption and abuse of power in less developed institutions.

The COVID Crisis Reshapes the Supply Chain Discussion

Each EU country has its own strategic sector, considered indispensable for the wellbeing and prosperity of the country, its citizens, or the functioning of the economy. Typically, these sectors include: (1) energy production and electricity supply, (2) mining, transmission, distribution and storage of gaseous fuels, (3) production, transmission and storage of liquid fuels, (4) telecommunications, (5) banking and other financial services, (6) production of documents and minting money, (7) arms production. This list is not exhaustive, and is changing as the global economy evolves.

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to expanding the debate on strategic industries and the need to have a secure supply chain of certain goods. In Europe, this has included pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, and food production. From the perspective of CEE countries, however, other key sectors, such as automotive, ought to be included in the list. These countries have specialized in various aspects of automobile production, and the link between them and the German economy are increasingly vital to prosperity (the automotive sector is one of the biggest employers in the V4 countries’, accounting for 11-13 percent of industrial employment).

EU strategic industries in the times of COVID-19

- pharmaceutics
- medical equipment
- food production
- automotive (for CEE)
In Spring 2020 all EU countries (including those in CEE) banned exports that may become scarce during the pandemic. The list of prohibited exports included drugs, specific food products, medical devices (especially ventilators), aprons, masks, gloves, medical shoe protectors, electronic thermometers, and hand-sanitizer. Overall, in 2020, countries across the world introduced 766 interventions in trade, with 529 being harmful to free trade and 237 liberalizing. Most European countries introduced 10-50 export bans on certain goods, and then lifted them as the global economy stabilized. The pandemic showed, however, that without Chinese supplies, Europe cannot even produce ventilators.

Chinese production accounts for one third of generic active pharmaceutical ingredients, and even before the outbreak, there had been growing calls from member states for European strategic autonomy in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry. France, always particularly strong in the sector, was looking to re-shore some of its supply chains from Asia to Europe.

The trend towards re-shoring, however, predates the pandemic and extends beyond just the healthcare industry. According to a database created by European Reshoring Monitor, between 2015 and 2018, around half, (95 out of 218) of all instances of manufacturing industry reshoring were from Asia back to Europe. Of these 95 cases, 78 percent involved a move back from China to Europe. Most companies chose to re-shore to their home countries, mainly in Western Europe, instead of to CEE countries. As a matter of fact, out of the 95 cases, only nine of them re-shored to a different European country than their home country.

CEE was the main destination for those companies reshoring elsewhere than to their home country. Out of the nine cases that re-shored to a different European country, seven, all of which were in the electronic machinery manufacturing sector, were relocated to Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. Cost reduction in the face of increasing wages in China, and enhancing the efficiency through a shortened delivery distance were the main motives behind the reshoring.

Not Every Company is for Sale

During the pandemic, some EU countries introduced laws that gave their governments enhanced powers to scrutinize transactions that could impact national security. Amid concerns that Chinese state-owned groups could exploit the crisis to snap up European groups on the cheap, the European Commission had no problem with EU states taking stakes in companies to stave off the threat of Chinese takeovers.

This trend was particularly pronounced in CEE countries. Poland, for example, gave the country’s competition authority the power to block non-EU companies from taking stakes of more than ten percent in businesses deemed to be providing critical infrastructure, goods, or services for a period of two years. And Poland was not alone in looking for ways to block foreign takeovers of companies flattened by COVID-19. Romania blocked sales of state-owned enterprises and Slovakia introduced screening of direct investments under which…

1 These were labor-intensive sectors of industry, specifically, electronic and machinery (28%), apparel and leather manufacturing (14%), and automobile manufacturing (3%).
they could block risky Chinese capital entering the country.

CEE companies proved to be far more vulnerable to predatory Chinese capital during the downturn than their Western European peers. Many of these companies were founded in the 30 years since the collapse of communism, means that they tend to be younger, and therefore smaller than other European strategic assets. Falls on CEE stock exchanges — blue-chip indexes lost almost a quarter of their value during the first wave of the pandemic — were amplified by drops in the non-euro currencies, rendering the potential targets especially cheap.

Still, the danger exists that by empowering member nations to take these kinds of steps, local CEE elites could take advantage for their own ends, opening the door to the kinds of corruption and abuse of power that reformers have been fighting for decades.

**Trade Reciprocity with China**

The European Commission has postponed the ratification process of the EU-China Comprehensive Investment Agreement (CAI). China imposed sanctions on several high-profile politicians and academics, triggering a reaction among member states that ultimately halted the political process. The agreement was mostly being driven by Western countries. CEE countries were not as optimistic, since it did not provide direct access to the Chinese market. Without reciprocity rules in place, CEE leaders were convinced China would act as it had in the past.

China has pledged to cut tariffs, but these are still too high. In 1992, its average customs duty rate was 32.2 percent, much higher than the global one at the time (7.2 percent). After joining the WTO in 2001, China’s tariffs fell to 7.7 percent, but have remained largely unchanged since. From 2003 to 2018, they averaged 4.8 percent, while the average for the WTO was 2.6 percent during the same period.

China’s development strategy is predicated on boosting exports, so the government supported it through, inter alia, subsidies, tax breaks, and cheap loans. For years, China has prioritized domestic production, and has forced foreign companies operating in its territory to purchase components from local suppliers. Beijing favors the export of finished products and consequently introduces taxes and quotas to restrict access to its raw materials.

China’s failure to comply with WTO rules is reflected in the number of arbitration proceedings filed against it. From 2002 to 2020, Beijing was a party to 68 disputes: 22 times as complainant and 46 times as defendant, making it the third most active member of such proceedings. 20 years after joining the Organization, China still has the status of a non-market economy.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

While it’s true that each EU member state has its own national interest, these sometimes obscure the larger, broader European interest, especially at times of crisis. It’s important to remember that strategic considerations are not only about war and peace, but also about money and influence. CEE countries in particular find themselves trapped between protectionism and free trade at this pivotal post-COVID moment, with temptations of protectionism and go-it-alone deal-making with outside actors like China looming large.

CEE leaders need to first and foremost recognize that the Chinese-led 17+1 project is a façade for Chinese influence within the greater EU. CEE countries could theoretically be articulating their common interests in a more coordinated manner to influence the broader EU on issues of trade, but at this current moment and in this framework, this won’t work. CEE countries do not have a single interest, and in fact when countries like Hungary try to use direct links with Beijing to their advantage, they are disadvantaging the whole community. The best for the region would be to have an EU-wide strategic approach towards China.

As Europe works to refashion the CAI in a way that is more broadly advantageous to it as a whole, CEE leaders must think about how their countries can be competitive if Beijing makes concessions. China has an attractive and enormous internal market, and if future agreements succeed in properly opening it up to European competition, market access to products from CEE has to be part of the picture. While Western European investors are looking for capital projects in the Middle Kingdom, CEE should be building export capacity in food-products, furniture, or other micro-markets that could be boosted because of the size of the rising Chinese middle-class.

Similarly, there is an opportunity with the Europe-wide push for re-shoring for CEE countries to reinforce that they stand ready to step up as a Europe-wide industrial strategy is put into place. At the same time, they should be insisting that this policy does not end up as a free-for-all, wherein the largest countries reap all the benefits of re-shoring.

Finally, it’s important to remember that discussion of trade cannot be had in a vacuum. International trade works because the norms and principles on which it is based are ultimately underwritten by US military might. The EU currently has no such capacity, and will not be able to build enough in time to make a difference to its immediate economic future. That means that any big strategic moves will need to be coordinated with the United States in one way or another. For all the talk of finding a balance between China and the United States on trade issues, at the end of the day Europe cannot go it alone.
Concluding Remarks

The message that emerges from this survey of voices from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) talking about “strategic autonomy” is one of both caution and ambition. No contributor to this paper denies the reality of the current moment: however you come to define the term, and in whatever context you choose to talk about it — foreign policy, security, digital, trade — it is clear that the world has changed significantly, and that “business as usual” is a nonstarter for the EU. Four years of President Donald Trump’s blunt treatment of U.S. allies, followed by the consequences of the COVID crisis which exposed dramatic industrial and medical dependencies on the continent, have made one thing clear: Europe needs to start thinking, and acting, for itself. But how? And how far should it go? Central and Eastern Europe has a critical role in shaping this conversation.

CEE countries feel particularly exposed at this pivotal moment. Vulnerable to the Russian threat, and conscious of the continent’s recent history, they have frequently been among the loudest voices for transatlanticism. The countries on Europe’s eastern flank understand viscerally what their partners to the West have for decades taken for granted: that their security and self-determination is ultimately underwritten by American power. Early talk of the 21st century being “European” — which is to say multilateralist, values-based, and post-sovereign — must have sounded more like a fantasy than a prophecy across CEE.

Paradoxically, it is this same sense of vulnerability, grounded in a realistic assessment of threats and challenges, that has now seeped into the consciousness of “old” Europe, and is helping drive the debate on strategic autonomy. Trump may be gone, but Europeans will not, nor should they, forget the warning he represented.

Worse still, now with the distractions of Trump’s tirades no longer clouding Europeans’ vision, they recall that America’s priorities had started to shift well before the 2016 elections. For all of President Joe Biden’s stated determination to repair trust with allies shredded by his predecessor, it’s clear that the Europe portfolio will be low on the ambitious to-do list of this administration. Domestic issues, China, climate change, and the Middle East all have priority of place.

But even if there is now convergence over a perception of vulnerability, the historical experience of CEE countries continues to shape their reaction to the current moment. While all of Europe now shares a diagnosis of the predicament it finds itself in, CEE leaders and thinkers are more cautious in their approach going forward. As the contributions suggest, perhaps the United States can’t be relied on unconditionally to provide security in perpetuity, but that does not mean that Europe should therefore lurch towards building up independent defense capacities, capacities that will on one hand remain insufficient in deterring Russia for the foreseeable future, and that on the other may alienate Americans further right now. Yes, Europe must chart its own way on trade and digital issues, but it must do so in the spirit of innovation and openness, not one of protectionism and regulation.

The challenge ahead of us is largely political. CEE countries are rightly wary that pursuing an agenda of strategic autonomy too hastily can be dangerous. At worst, they worry it is an excuse for “old” Europe to pursue its own policies, and defend its own business interests, at their expense. But given the convergence in analysis as to the challenges facing Europe today, it appears that making progress on next steps is a matter of confidence-building.

European politicians, especially western European politicians, need to be keenly sensitive to the input coming from their partners in the east. Their warnings are born out of painful practical historical experience, both political and economic, and must shape the debate on the future of Europe.

Europe today teeters at an inflection point, balancing between the past and a pregnant future. It cannot balance forever. The indeterminacy of the future is daunting, but one can’t go backwards. The only choice is to move ahead. One is reminded of the famous quote at the end of Samuel Beckett’s novel, The Unnamable: “I can’t go on. I go on.”
Endnotes

1 Maurer, Heidi; Wright, Nicholas, Ten years after Lisbon, Member States in EU foreign and security policy, LEGOF Policy Brief 1, May 2021.
2 Population change – Demographic balance and crude rates at national level, Eurostat; USA Population Data (live), Worldometer; China Population Data (live), Worldometer
3 European Union: share in global gross domestic product based on purchasing-power-parity from 2015-2025, Statista
4 United States’ share of global gross domestic product (GDP) adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP) from 2015-2025, Statista
5 China’s share of global gross domestic product (GDP) adjusted for purchasing-power-parity (PPP) from 2010-2020, Statista
6 Europe Population Data (live), Worldometer
8 Twitter, @vonderleyen, May 14, 2021.
9 Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on the Escalation of Confrontations, 210512_7, High Representative/Vice President, EEAS, 12 May 2021.
10 Europe and the World, address, Václav Havel, Rome, 4 April 2002.
12 China’s share of global gross domestic product (GDP) adjusted for purchasing-power-parity (PPP) from 2010-2020, Statista.
14 America urges Europe to join forces against China, The Economist, 16 February 2020.
15 Hajdu, Dominika (et. al), GLOBSEC Trends 2021, GLOBSEC, June 2021.
17 Defending Europe: Scenario-based capability requirements for NATO’s European Members, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 10 May 2019, pp. 38.
22 Dejardinas, Jeff, ‘Over 2,000 Years of Economic History in One Chart.’ Visual Capitalist, 8 September 2017.
27 Sentance, Rebecca, GDPR: Which websites are blocking visitors from the EU?, Econsultancy. 2018.
29 Innovation in Europe: Changing the game to regain a competitive edge, McKinsey Global Institute, October 2019.
33 Rethinking Strategic Autonomy in the Digital Age, European Political Strategy Centre, July 2019.
36 Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2019, European Commission, 2019, p. 17, table 17.
37 Pison, Zuzana., Investing in Innovation: Key to recover in Central and Eastern Europe, GLOBSEC, September 2020.
38 Digitalization in Central and Eastern Europe: Building Regional Cooperation, Atlantic Council Task Force on Digitalization in Central and Eastern Europe and the Three Seas Initiative, October 2020.
39 Tocci, Nathalie., European Strategic Autonomy: What It Is, Why We Need It, How to Achieve It, Instituto Affari Internazionali, February 2021.
40 Check Against Delivery, speech, Emmanuel Macron, 17 April 2018.
41 Merger Cases, European Commission, 2018.
41 Strategic autonomy for Europe - the aim of our generation, speech, Charles Michel, 28 September 2020.
44 Global Trade Alert, Global Dynamics, 19 May 2021.
45 Global Trade Alert, Global Dynamics, 19 May 2021.