

**June 2021**

*The European Union has gradually expanded its competences in external policies. Today it aims to play a leading role on the international scene, as a key supporter of the multilateral system, guided by the fundamental values of human rights and democracy. The Union is a strong defender of the multilateral trade system in accordance with the norms of the World Trade Organization, and pursues open and mutually beneficial trade relations with other countries. It is a major development aid provider and stands ready to provide humanitarian help whenever a crisis occurs. It has enhanced its capabilities to act as a peace and security provider. According to its founding Treaties, the Union shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations. The Union fosters broad political, trade and economic relations with other countries, particularly the geopolitically important ones such as the United States, Japan, Canada, Russia, India and China, and has established strong partnerships with regional and global organisations, such as the African Union and the United Nations.*

## On EU external policies:

### A new approach to EU enlargement

*Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, March 2020*

The Thessaloniki Summit (2003) opened the door to a European future for the Western Balkans. However, since then progress towards EU membership has been slow. In February 2020, the European Commission announced a revised enlargement methodology. The new approach aims to strengthen the political process by improving tools to push reforms forward, notably in the areas of the rule of law and the economy. It makes accession negotiations more credible, more predictable, more dynamic and guided by a stronger political steer.

### Charting a course through stormy waters: The EU as a maritime security actor

*Briefing by Tania Latici, Eric Pichon, Branislav Stanicek, February 2021*

The European Union is a one-of-a-kind maritime actor, which brings both opportunities and responsibilities. It is argued that if the EU-27 were to combine the capacities and capabilities of their navies, they would form one of the world's largest maritime powers. There is therefore space for better integration of capabilities and for greater coherence among the EU's tools to promote its multi-dimensional strategic maritime interests.

### Critical raw materials in EU external policies: Improving access and raising global standards

*Briefing by Marcin Szczepanski, May 2021*

Global demand for CRMs is rising, yet the export restrictions imposed by the resource-rich countries intensify competition for these materials. To boost its access to CRMs, the EU has a dedicated strategy based on three pillars: two internal ones (increasing domestic sourcing and circularity) and an external one, which is mostly about securing supply from third countries.

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## **International trade dispute settlement: WTO Appellate Body crisis and the multiparty interim appeal arrangement**

*Briefing by Jana Titievskaia, April 2021*

As the WTO Appellate Body is unable to hear new appeals, no disputes can now be resolved at the highest instance, causing widespread concern in the context of escalating global trade protectionism. To find a temporary solution to the impasse, the EU and a number of trade partners set up a multiparty interim appeal arbitration arrangement (MPIA).

## **International trade policy**

*EPRS Ideas Paper by Jana Titievskaia, July 2020*

Trade accounts for a higher proportion of the EU economy than that of the United States of America or China, which can make the EU's economic model more vulnerable to import and export disruptions. In recent years, the multilateral liberal trading order has already been facing unprecedented turbulence, including the rise of protectionism. At the same time, the European Commission remains committed to the promotion of free and fair trade.

## **On the path to 'strategic autonomy': The EU in an evolving geopolitical environment**

*Study by Suzana Anghel, Beatrix Immenkamp, Elena Lazarou, Jérôme Saulnier and Alex Benjamin Wilson September 2020*

The EU is at risk of becoming a 'playground' for other global powers unless it develops both 'soft' and 'hard' power tools, allowing it to speak the 'language of power'. In the short term, the EU is set to continue to rely on such 'soft power' tools as sanctions, trade and climate diplomacy. In the long term, however, it may consider developing 'hard power' tools. Political will and the capacity to act are key prerequisites to achieving effective 'strategic autonomy'.

## **Peace and Security in 2021: Overview of EU action and outlook for the future**

*Study by Tania Latici and Elena Lazarou et al., June 2021*

The promotion of global peace and security is a fundamental goal and central pillar of European Union external action, following the model of its own peace project. Nevertheless, the deteriorating security environment of the past decade has posed significant challenges. In response, the EU has been intensifying its work in pursuit of peace and security in a number of key policy areas.

## **Qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy: Pros and Cons**

*Briefing by Tania Latici, January 2021*

The crises and security challenges accumulating in and around the European Union have added to the urgency of having a more effective and rapid decision-making process in areas pertaining to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It is in this context that the debate about the adoption of qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy has resurfaced and continues to be the subject of policy discussions.

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## Religion and the EU's external policies: Increasing engagement

*In-depth Analysis by Philippe Perchoc et al., February 2020*

Religion has been emerging as a new dimension in the EU's external policies. This paper provides an overview of the principles, institutional set-up and policies underpinning the EU's approach to religious issues in third countries. Nine case studies meanwhile serve to illustrate the important role played by religion in the foreign policies of a number of different countries worldwide.

## Global mega-trends: Scanning the post-coronavirus horizon

*Briefing by Danièle Réchard, November 2020*

This paper aims to help distinguish the 'signal' from the 'noise'. It provides a rolling review of the 'inflections' to the mega-trends – or at least of their perception among a wide array of global thinkers – that were identified in the 2019 ESPAS Global Trends Report. In particular, two 'meta-trends' might be singled out that transversally permeate all other trends and indeed all aspects of human life: technological innovation and inequality.

## Support for democracy through EU external policy: New tools for growing challenges

*Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, February 2021*

The crisis of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism across the globe, compounded by the coronavirus pandemic, highlight the importance of taking a more strategic and autonomous approach to supporting democracy worldwide – an objective which has often been balanced against other external policy aims until now.

## The European Parliament's evolving soft power – From back-door diplomacy to agenda-setting: Democracy support and mediation

*Briefing by Naja Bentzen and Beatrix Immenkamp, September 2019*

Over recent decades, the European Parliament has significantly raised its profile as a credible moral force with strong focus on strengthening human rights, supporting democracy and enhancing the rule of law worldwide. Parliament can convey messages through channels that are different from, and complementary to, those employed by the EU's traditional diplomatic players.

## The future of multilateralism and strategic partnerships

*EPRS Ideas Paper by Elena Lazarou, September 2020*

Beyond its internal strengthening, the EU has set the defence and reform of multilateralism as one of its key priorities under the current European Commission. This will require a more coordinated and autonomous EU foreign policy, a smart approach towards the escalating US–China rivalry, reinvigorated cooperation with major democracies, and mobilisation of the EU's foreign policy tools, widely defined.

## Understanding EU financing for external action

*In-depth Analysis by Velina Lilyanova, February 2021*

This paper aims to examine the structure of the EU external financing in the 2014-2020 MFF and the agreed changes for the upcoming post-2020 period. It gives a general outline of the main financing instruments and mechanisms along with the multiple actors involved, while also underlining the complexity of the architecture and highlighting the proposed changes and main trends for the future of financing the EU's external action.

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## On relations with third countries and international organisations:

### After Cotonou: Towards a new agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states

Briefing by Eric Pichon, February 2021

The Organisation of the ACP States (OACPS) – and the EU started negotiations on a 'post-Cotonou' agreement in September 2018. The main challenge for the EU is to maintain its cooperation with the three OACPS sub-regions and to continue to promote the values enshrined in the EU Treaties.

### EU-China relations: Taking stock after the 2020 EU-China Summit

Briefing by Gisela Grieger, June 2020

Looking at EU-China relations through the lens of the 2019 EU-China strategic outlook, China is seen as being at once a partner for cooperation and negotiation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival. China has been a cooperation and negotiating partner for the EU in several fields where interests have converged. Nonetheless, the different norms and values underlying the EU and Chinese political and economic systems have made cooperation challenging.

### EU-Turkey customs union: Modernisation or suspension?

Briefing by Branislav Stanicek, December 2020

Turkey is the EU's fifth largest trading partner, while the EU is Turkey's largest. The EU-Turkey customs union came into force in 1995. Since 2016, EU-Turkey relations have suffered due to a deterioration of democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law in Turkey, in the wake of a failed military coup. A European Commission recommendation of 21 December 2016 to launch talks with Turkey on modernising the EU-Turkey customs union was halted by the General Affairs Council of 26 June 2018, which concluded that no further work in this direction should be planned.

### European Union involvement in the United Nations system: Broad partnership based on shared commitment to multilateralism

In-depth Analysis by Ionel Zamfir, September 2020

Over the years, the EU has become a key player in the United Nations system. It enjoys observer status in many UN bodies and is the only international organisation to have secured enhanced observer status in the UN General Assembly. The EU leverages its influence through its significant financial contribution to the UN system, through its enhanced partnerships with various entities within the UN system, and through close coordination with its Member States on positions to be defended in the organisation.

### EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement: An analytical overview

In-depth Analysis by Issam Hallak et al., February 2021

The TCA will constitute the cornerstone for a new future relationship between the EU and the UK, as it creates a single framework covering a wide range of areas of economic activity and cooperation, and allows for the broadening of those areas.

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## From momentum to action: A transatlantic agenda for global common goods

*In-depth Analysis by Tania Latici, Suzana Anghel, Piotr Bakowski, Meenakshi Fernandes, Liselotte Jensen, Matthew Parry and Marcin Szczepanski, June 2021*

This study focuses on three main topics that are at the height of the transatlantic policy agenda. First, it explores pathways towards a transatlantic green deal by looking at climate action, trade and climate diplomacy. Second, aspects related to the social fabric of transatlantic societies are analysed through the lens of violent extremism, the rule of law and technological disruptions. Third, prospects for crisis-proofing the transatlantic space are examined by engaging with the areas of defence, health security and multilateralism.

## The EU and Russia: Locked in confrontation

*Briefing by Martin Russell, July 2020*

Following the post-Cold War reset of the 1990s, EU-Russia relations have become increasingly tense. Responding to Russian aggression in Ukraine, the EU adopted hard-hitting sanctions. After six years of deadlock, there is still no sign of a breakthrough.

## Towards a new EU strategy with Africa: A renewed focus on outreach

*Briefing by Eric Pichon, June 2020*

In order to preserve its own economic and security interests in the face of increased geopolitical competition, the EU intends to continue to be an important player on the African continent. The EU and the AU have converging interests in a number of areas, such as the fight against climate change and the promotion of a sustainable, job-creating African economy. However, they still have to find common ground on migration, security management, and fundamental values.

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## Understanding EU-NATO cooperation: Theory and practice

*Briefing by Tania Latici, October 2020*

The European Union and NATO have gone through the most acute strategic challenges of the Euro Atlantic space together. Their history of cooperation is long and has seen both ups and downs. The materialisation of EU ambitions for strategic sovereignty, not least through multiple defence cooperation initiatives, will present a test to the resilience of EU-NATO cooperation.

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