Values on the retreat?
The role of values in the EU’s external policies

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ABSTRACT

There is a general perception in Western countries that the role of values as a foreign policy driver is currently on the decline. This study in the series ‘global trends in external policies’ seeks to contribute to the debate by investigating what is meant by ‘values’, whether their importance is on the wane and, if so, how this manifests itself, and how the European Union (EU) can respond to these trends. The broad concept of values has therefore been split into five categories. Socio-cultural values are implicit drivers of foreign policy. In the case of the EU, these are characterised by diversity. ‘Political values’ is used as a term to describe the fundamental principles of political and public action, defining the relationship between the state and its citizens. For the EU, these are often referred to as the triad of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Economic values characterise the nature of the prevailing economic system in a country. The EU advocates a social market economy. The term ‘Earth values’ refers to the inclusion of environmental considerations in external policies. The EU has become a leader in promoting sustainability. Resulting from the preceding four are ‘international order values’, which characterise the overall international outlook of actors. The EU’s international order value is ‘principled pragmatism’. This study compares the EU’s values with those of four reference countries: the US, Turkey, Russia and China. The US in the West comes closest to many of the EU’s values, but does not overlap completely. Turkey and Russia are in the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood and increasingly disagree with the EU on values. Chinese values overlap least with the EU’s values. The study confirms a decline in the influence of the political values preferred by the EU. This decline appears to correspond to a clear West-East spectrum. However, the study also notes an opposite trend of increasing influence of Earth values. For these, a Eurocentric spectrum appears more adequate. For economic values, the definition of trends depends on benchmarks and methodology. The international order notion of ‘principled pragmatism’ has been extended to ‘EU strategic autonomy’. Values are often considered as part of EU strategic autonomy and some policies, such as EU accession or trade policy, incorporate them. A values-based approach to external policies should differentiate according to the partner country and the value category concerned. Whereas cooperation on political values does not appear to be fruitful with certain countries, continued efforts on economic or Earth values may still be possible. The study explores what such a differentiated approach could mean for the four reference countries in the near future. Such an approach should also take into account the differing perceptions of partner countries. Although positive avenues of cooperation on, for example, Earth values are still possible, geopolitical tensions, partly rooted in differing values, are overshadowing this path.
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1 Key dates

- 1789: Declaration of Human and Civic Rights of the French National Assembly
- 1789: United States Bill of Rights, also known as the first 10 amendments to the US Constitution
- 1947: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
- 1949: Foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- 1950: Adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)
- 1957: Treaty establishing the European Economic Community
- 1968: Establishment of a customs union in the European Economic Community
- 1972: Club of Rome report ‘Limits to growth’
- 1987: UN report ‘Our common future’ (Brundtland) introduces the notion of ‘sustainable development’
- 1987: Single European Act setting the deadline for an Internal Market by end of 1992
- 1991: Dissolution of the Soviet Union
- 1992: Completion of the Internal Market for about 90% of planned legislation
- 1992: Adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- 1994: Foundation of the World Trade Organization
- 1997: Adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, implementing the greenhouse gas reductions of the UNFCCC
- 2000: Adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFR-EU)
- 2005: Opening of accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey
- 2009: Entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon entails recognition of the legal value of the CFR-EU
- 2015: Adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations
- 2016: Conclusion of the Paris Climate Agreement
- 2016: Presentation of the EU Global Strategy, introducing the concept of ‘principled pragmatism’
- 2019: The EU Global Strategy three years on acknowledges the emergence of new narratives contesting the EU’s values
2  Value categories and the question of decline

There appears to be a general perception in Western countries that the role of values as a foreign policy driver is currently on the decline. Views vary as to which values are on the wane and in which countries or policy areas this process began. Some have pointed to 2014, when the Russian annexation of Crimea broke with the international value of territorial integrity. Others have cited China, where fundamental freedoms are increasingly being curtailed combined with an assertive geo-economic agenda abroad. Yet others have focused on the rise of populism in the US, where the Trump Administration’s ‘America First’ concept replaced multilateral dialogue by withdrawing support for international organisations and pursuing an aggressive trade policy. The COVID-19 crisis seems to have exacerbated some of these phenomena, leading to restrictions on fundamental freedoms or the pursuit of more protectionist trade policies. Furthermore, Democrat US President Joe Biden, together with the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, have acknowledged that 20 years of efforts to bring democracy to Afghanistan had resulted in a defeat for ‘the West’ and Western values. Some may argue that war in Ukraine has made discussions about values obsolete. Attempts to achieve mutual understanding or even rapprochement based on values may appear to be a futile endeavour. Although most of this study was written in 2021, we nevertheless argue that a better understanding of how values drive foreign policy remains highly relevant. Although the current international order is increasingly dominated by conflict, understanding values serves both to explain the past that has brought us to the present and to suggest positive avenues for the future.

The decline of values as a foreign policy driver is particularly disadvantageous for the EU, which has firmly anchored its policies in certain values and their promotion abroad. The EU Treaties make several references to values as the basis for EU policies. As regards the external policies of the EU, the Treaties recognise that these constitute a blend of interests and values. If other actors are less willing to go along with the EU’s values, the EU faces the dilemma of whether to go along with the trend towards a stronger focus on interests or swimming against the tide by continuing its values-based approach. The picture appears to be mixed for the moment. On the one hand, the EU is more clearly seeking to protect its economic interests. A new focus on trade defence instruments, the screening of foreign investment or proposals to hedge against ‘economic coercion’ demonstrate this. The branding of the von der Leyen Commission as a ‘geopolitical Commission’ and the focus on resilience and EU strategic autonomy in all policy areas in both of the Commission’s strategic foresight reports published since 2020 equally fit the trend. However, on the other hand, the EU still appears to be investing in the promotion of its values and sometimes even to be stepping up its efforts. The presentation of a proposal to introduce the principle of ‘due diligence’ as a horizontal component of many EU policies points towards reinvigorated action for the promotion of values.

This study in the series ‘global trends in external policies’ seeks to contribute to the debate by investigating what is meant by ‘values’, whether their importance is on the decline and how the EU can respond to such a trend in its external policies. Defining values, in particular as a driver of external policies, is not easy. Values can be defined morally as that which defines good and bad behaviour, or they can be defined more pragmatically as ‘principles that influence political beliefs and action’.1 We will stick to the second definition for the most part. One of the reasons for doing so is that the definition of ‘good and bad’ depends on the views of the person doing the defining, thereby already applying a particular set of values. Moreover, in order to clarify the discourse on values, we think it is useful to differentiate values into categories. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, for example, mentions six values: human dignity,

freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These mostly pertain to defining relationships between people, groups of people and the state as the guarantor of these values and the rights deriving from them. Other articles in the EU Treaties mention values regarding the distribution of wealth or the ecological sustainability of EU policies. These appear to refer to relationships between human beings and their material surroundings. **By differentiating between categories of values, we will try to clarify the concept of values and then demonstrate how they offer differentiated options for international cooperation.** In doing so, we will for the most part use the term ‘value’, although we will also use the term ‘principle’ without drawing a strict line between the two. Intellectually, we can imagine a descending line from the abstract to the concrete in the Platonic sense, starting with ‘ideas’, from which ‘values’ and ‘principles’ are derived, which then find their way into international agreements and strategies, and finally into national policies. Empirically, we start by observing actions and try to retrace them back to the principles laid down in international agreements or constitutions, which sometimes refer explicitly to ‘values’. This study will work in both directions, using ‘value’ and ‘principle’ almost interchangeably, but distinguishing them from agreements, strategies and actions.

Before delving into political realities, we would like to define four value categories, each of which have an influence on foreign policy and the international order.

The first category is rarely an explicit object of study in international relations and investigating these values easily leads to sensitivities which cannot be surmounted at negotiating tables: these are socio-cultural values. However, not dealing with them can lead to problems in perceptions and an incomplete picture of international relations. We therefore introduce socio-cultural values at the start of our investigation on the basis of two approaches: Hofstede’s typology and the World Values Survey. Socio-cultural values often have their roots in religion, tradition or historical experiences. When it comes to views on the international order, these factors should not be underestimated.

A second category consists of values which determine relations between actors. In the national context, relationships between actors are normally regulated by the law: a constitution can set the general framework for the relationship between the state and its citizens, including its forms of governance, but also indicate the fundamental rights which these citizens are supposed to enjoy vis-à-vis the state or each other. In Western societies, this category of values is often jointly referred to as ‘human rights, democracy and the rule of law’. For purposes of comparison, however, we have to realise that these represent a particular manner of organising relations within a state, which other countries may not agree with. Therefore, we utilise the more neutral term political values for characterising the set of values which determines relationships between actors. The political values of a country will certainly shape its foreign policies. How other countries deal with democracy or human rights is, for example, an important yardstick for the EU’s foreign policy.

When it comes to relationships with our material surroundings, we have to differentiate between two further categories. In the first instance, our relationship with the Earth’s resources – whether mineral, plant or animal – and with products made from these, is as producers and consumers. How we think we can best organise production and consumption, including all the services related to this economic use, defines a third category of economic values. How the economy is organised is ultimately a question of values, even if this is not explicit. Whether it is considered better to distribute goods via a free market or via government planning, for example, is an old dilemma concerning which different views still exist at global level.

Finally, the last few decades have witnessed an increased interest in dealing with the Earth and its living creatures as an end in itself, apart from the economic value they may have. Preservation of the environment and of biodiversity or combating climate change have become international policy goals driven by values. We call this category ‘Earth values’.
Every human being has a personal relationship with each of the value categories: we are moulded by the socio-cultural values of the surroundings in which we grow up, we have to act within the framework of the political values of the societies we live in and we can, to a certain extent, make our own choices regarding economic or Earth values in our behaviour as consumers or travel patterns. Large group entities such as countries also make choices about values, even though this sometimes remains implicit. Shared views on socio-cultural values can be a component of national identity, as we will explore in the following chapters. Countries are internally organised according to certain political and economic values, leading to a particular political and economic system. Earth values are translated into environmental policies at national level. When it comes to values as a driver of foreign policy, states have views on the international order and will – based on the other four values – shape a fifth category of ‘international order values’, which define how international relations are supposed to be organised. In this study, we will use ‘international order values’ as a neutral descriptive term, which can be ‘filled in’ with different concepts by different actors.

**Figure 1:** Four value types on the individual and national level

The following chapters will also explore values at the supranational level for the EU as a whole. As regards socio-cultural values, we will see how diversity is the main characteristic of the EU. Whereas the EU’s motto of ‘unity in diversity’ may have originated from the necessity of dealing with diversity, this diversity has also been portrayed as a strength, yielding a multitude of talents and capacities. As regards political values, we have already noted that the EU focuses on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As for economic values, the EU advocates a social market economy. Regarding ‘Earth values’, the EU has become a leader in promoting sustainability. The next chapter briefly looks into the origins of these political, economic and Earth values to understand how they came to be the EU’s lead values. It will conclude by turning to the ‘international order value’ which the EU has developed and practised as ‘principled pragmatism’. This term expresses the combined effort of promoting the EU’s values and its interests in its external policies.

Having characterised the five types of values and the preferences of the EU for each of these, we will turn in Chapter 4 to a short comparison with four key non-EU countries: the US, China, Russia and Turkey. Any choice of countries is open for debate, but we will be focusing on these four countries, not only because they have a particular importance to the EU, but also because their attitude to values in comparison to the EU’s is interesting. The US is the EU’s main international partner in terms of security and trade. It has a substantial overlap in values with the EU. Even if non-EU countries such as Switzerland or Canada might be closer to the EU in terms of values, the sheer breadth and depth of the EU-US relationship make the US the most important value partner for the EU. China is the EU’s main trading partner apart from the US, but is also a country with which the EU differs fundamentally on several values. Just after agreeing
on an EU-China investment agreement, EU-China relations have been particularly tested in a stand-off involving mutual sanctions. **Russia and Turkey** are important because of their geographical proximity on the eastern borders of the EU and the intensity of their relationship with the EU, whether positive or negative. Turkey is particularly important, because as a candidate country to the EU – even if that prospect is rather unlikely at the moment – its values would become internal to the EU upon accession. Russia is important for economic and security reasons, but is also a case worth looking at for the purposes of comparing values, which seem increasingly different.

**Chapter 5 will return to the values of the EU and try to understand how they influence EU foreign policy.** By summarising the results of the country comparisons in a table, we will carry out a first assessment of the trends as regards values in the various countries. We will see confirmation of a decline in the influence of the political values preferred by the EU, as well as an increased influence of Earth values. The question is how to position the EU amid these global trends. Is the EU only part of a Western value system in opposition to an Eastern value system, or does the EU sometimes take the lead from an original middle position? In order to better grasp the depth of this question, we will look at recent trends in the role of the EU as a driver of values in foreign policy. The concept of the EU as a normative power has been prevalent for more than a decade since the new millennium. It has been contested in theory and practice, and the notion of interests has gained new attention. However, it seems that the shift from values to interests in the EU has not been a zero-sum game. Greater attention for interests does not necessarily lead to less attention for values. Instead, the question is **how the EU can develop strategic autonomy regarding values, differentiating between countries and value categories.** By returning to our four comparison countries, we will look more specifically at the EU’s relations with each of them and briefly explore what a differentiated approach could mean in the near future. By doing so, this section will also look into the notion of ‘perceptions’. Perceptions, on the one hand, blur our view of others, but on the other, and if used consciously, could also help in enhancing mutual understanding for different narratives.

The final chapter will provide a summary and some conclusions, as far as the vast and complex topics covered allow. In this context, it should be noted that this study can neither replace more in-depth analyses of the countries mentioned nor can it give a comprehensive insight into the concepts discussed. Rather, this study endeavours to take a helicopter view and carry out a meta-analysis of developments regarding the EU’s position in the world from the specific perspective of values. If this leads to a better understanding of values as an EU foreign policy driver, this study has served its purpose.

### 3 Five value types and EU choices

#### 3.1 Socio-cultural: diversity

Looking at the world from a socio-cultural perspective, countries appear to have different values. Such ‘socio-cultural values’ can be derived from tradition or religion. They are often implicit and it may take a foreigner time to get to know and understand them. However, because of their implicit nature, they can influence people and nations unconsciously and become drivers of national and international policy. Therefore, it is important for an analysis of values as a foreign policy driver to get to know and to map out the various **socio-cultural value systems** in the world. Models for socio-cultural values are difficult to find. Whereas before the Second World War, social scientists tried to develop general characteristics of peoples,
they have more recently been reluctant to do so, fearing stereotyping\(^2\) and nationalistic narratives.\(^3\) Nevertheless, denning or ignoring group identities, including national ones, would produce a reductionist view of reality. This explains why new theories about national and group identity have emerged. In this section, we will consider two models. Firstly, a typology used by Hofstede Insights, a business consultancy based on Professor Geert Hofstede's analysis of values. Secondly, we consider the depiction of values created by the political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. Their ‘World Cultural map’ is based on data drawn from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey. Without advocating the use of either model, we draw on both in order to provide some descriptions of cultural differences.

**Figure 2:** Six cultural dimensions according to Hofstede

1. **Power distance:** the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
2. **Individualism** (versus collectivism): preference for a loosely knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families.
3. **Masculinity** (versus femininity): a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive.
4. **Uncertainty avoidance:** the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.
5. **Long-term orientation** (versus short-term normative orientation): encourages thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.
6. **Indulgence** (versus restraint): a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun.

**Source:** Hofstede Insights

The Hofstede typology is based on six ‘cultural dimensions’. Hofstede developed his model between 1967 and 1973 to assess how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He analysed a large database of employee value scores collected within IBM, from which he initially used data from 40 countries, which was extended to 76 countries in 2010. He defined culture as ‘the programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group’. Culture is considered as layers leading from outer symbols via heroes and rituals to a set of values. Values are defined as ‘broad preferences for a certain state of affairs’. Although Hofstede developed his model for international business, focusing on organisational culture, differences between national cultures play a central role in his models. The six dimensions are used to characterise national cultures and Hofstede Insights presents a simulation tool on its website to compare countries on these dimensions.\(^4\)

A search for common European values according to the Hofstede model turns out to be a thorny issue. The **Hofstede dimensions tend to confirm the socio-cultural diversity of the EU.** A comparison of, for example, France, Germany, Italy and Poland shows some interesting differences, which may contrast with popular views. People from France and Poland share a high degree of ‘power distance’, for example, which is defined as ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a

\(^2\) See for instance ScienceDirect: Stereotyping means making ‘generalisations about the personal attributes or characteristics of a group of people’. Stereotypes can, for example, pertain to gender, race, ethnicity or nationality. In the 19th and early 20th century, the social sciences often combined elements of biology, anthropology, psychology, sociology and history to construct national group identities. In the post-World War II and post-colonial era, many of these group identities have been criticised as biased, drawing attention to the risks of stereotyping leading to discrimination, ethnic hatred or racism.

\(^3\) Nationalistic narratives and stereotyping played a particularly negative role in both World Wars, for example, by attributing negative characteristics to the nationality of the enemy and positive ones to the country’s own nationality. Under Nazism, this kind of stereotyping was combined with racial elements. In ‘Stereotypes, prejudices, self and ‘the other’ in history textbooks’ (2012), Katalin Morgan gives a range of examples of stereotyping. In reaction to stereotyping in history and socio-psychology, the social sciences have turned to concepts such as ‘identity’ and ‘identity building’, which are often more focused on the individual than on the group. The surge in attention for human rights in the decades immediately following the Second World War bear witness to this.

\(^4\) All simulations for this study have been carried out with the country comparison tool, which can be found on the Hofstede Insights website at [https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/](https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/) and all quotes come from this website.
country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally’. This may apply to power relations within families, business or government. Germans, on the other hand, have a low power distance, which could relate to – according to Hofstede Insights – a decentralised government, a strong middle class and an appreciation for expertise in deliberations. Individualism is the dimension on which the four countries converge most.

Figure 3: Cultural comparison of four Member States according to the Hofstede model

![Cultural comparison of four Member States according to the Hofstede model](image)

Source: simulation performed by the author on the website Hofstede Insights

Another example is the World Values Survey (WVS).5 Their research is based on a model developed by the political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel and maps the world according to two axes of cultural variation: ‘traditional versus secular values’ and ‘survival versus self-expression values’ (see definitions below). The methodology of the survey attributes scores to countries on the basis of datasets and places them on the map. The resulting cultural map bears little resemblance to the geographical world map, although countries on the same continent tend to be in the same cultural group. The survey is repeated approximately every five years and the map changes according to the results. In order to facilitate reading the map, WVS states that ‘in a somewhat simplified analysis, through an increase in standards of living and a transit from development country via industrialization to post-industrial knowledge society, a country tends to move diagonally in the direction from lower-left corner (poor) to upper-right corner (rich), indicating a transit in both dimensions’. Whereas this would seem to emphasise economic causality, the authors immediately add that attitudes among the population are also correlated to a great extent with the philosophical, political and religious ideas that have been dominant in the country. It is this socio-cultural perspective that WVS tries to capture. Recently, Welzel has coined the term ‘nationology’ for the study of nations as ‘gravitational fields of human culture’. He responds to scepticism about analysing culture at the level of nations because of their large internal heterogeneity by stating that ‘culture is by definition a collective phenomenon and focusing on individual differences contradicts the very concept of culture’.

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Figure 4: The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map 2020 and definitions of their value types

Definitions of the four WVS value categories:

- **Traditional values** emphasise the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook.

- **Secular-rational values** have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common.)

- **Survival values** place emphasis on economic and physical security. They are linked to a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.

- **Self-expression values** give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and increasing demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life.

*Source: World Values Survey 2020 under ‘Finding and Insights’ for both the map and the definitions*

This *World Cultural Map* also shows that Europe is part of at least four different culture groups, identified as ‘Orthodox’, ‘Catholic’, ‘Protestant’ and ‘English-speaking’ Europe. Three of these groups refer to religion, one to language. According to the European countries named on the map, these four groups appear to roughly coincide with the four cardinal directions: Protestant in the North, Catholic in the South, English-speaking in the West and Orthodox in the East. These differences reflect the historically evolved diversity of Europe. Even if many countries experienced the same ‘great epochs’ of European culture, such as the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution, the socio-cultural impact of these experiences has apparently been different.

The EU has tried to overcome the potential problems of disintegration resulting from cultural diversity by stressing the added value of having different cultures in a single economic and later political community, expressed in its motto ‘unity in diversity’. Socio-cultural diversity in the EU has further increased owing to immigration from outside Europe. Immigration has taken place in various waves...
of labour immigration and refugees. Immigrants can only partly keep their original culture and the pressure on them to adopt at least certain elements of the national culture of the receiving country, which are deemed necessary for successful political and economic integration has increased, for example learning the receiving country’s language. Immigration has revived discussions on national cultures and a presumed common European culture. This is reflected in the appointment of a European Commission Vice-President for ‘promoting our European way of life’, currently Margaritis Schinas, whose portfolio appears to be mostly linked to immigration and integration. His mission letter states that ‘the European way of life is built around solidarity, peace of mind and security’. He is supposed to work on these rather diverse notions through engaging in dialogue with religious and other ethical or philosophical associations, but also through focusing on skills, education and integration. According to the mission letter, this ‘will require us to work together to find common solutions which are grounded in our values and our responsibilities’.

In response to immigration from non-European countries, the focus on the national identity of the receiving EU countries has increased as well. This reinforced focus on national identity has been taken up by governments with respect to education, by political parties and by populist movements. Although most of these developments were initiated in response to non-EU immigration, they can have an effect on intra-EU cohesion as well. The political campaigns for the departure of the UK from the EU (Brexit) have actively employed or accidentally created anti-immigration sentiments which affected non-EU and EU immigrants equally. Given that such developments are pushing the acceptance of socio-cultural diversity to its limits, they are endangering the political unity of the EU as well, as the case of Brexit has shown. For the EU to act coherently in foreign policy, a certain degree of internal coherence based on common values is necessary. If shared socio-cultural values do not seem to be the main basis for cooperation in the EU, we have to define other types of values which countries can share as a basis for integration and international cooperation.

3.2 Political: human rights, democracy, the rule of law

A crucial value set underlying internal and external EU coherence can be characterised as ‘political values’. For the purposes of this study, these do not refer to political ideologies or party programmes, but to the fundamental principles of political and public action, defining the relationship between the state and its citizens. For the EU, these are often referred to as the triad of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Human rights encompass the fundamental freedoms of speech, press or assembly, which are guaranteed by the rule of law and are a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. The origins of these political values lie to a great extent in Europe. Apart from its Greek origins, democracy developed from the struggles of the nobility, later joined by groups of mostly economically privileged citizens, to gain power over sovereign monarchs. Several European countries have their own historical reference document in this respect, for example the Magna Carta for the United Kingdom, dating from 1215, the Union of Lublin for Poland from 1569, or the Union of Utrecht for the Netherlands from 1579. One of the most influential documents is the Declaration of Civic and Human Rights of the French National Assembly from 1789, which introduced the new notion of the ‘natural, unalienable and sacred rights of man’. The authors considered...
these as universal without distinction by social status or nationality, although initially not yet applicable to women. An equally important source for European political rights are the founding documents of the United States of America. Some ‘unalienable rights’ were mentioned in the Declaration of Independence from 1776, but most political rights were laid down in 1789 in 10 amendments to the Constitution, named the Bill of Rights, which were intended to harness the power of individuals vis-à-vis the federal government. Article 3 of the Bill of Rights contains the crucial freedoms of religion, speech, press and assembly. These rights expressed by the French and American citizens’ assemblies developed into the modern notion of human rights. The recognition of such rights logically reinforces the power of citizens also to express and pursue their intentions politically, hence their crucial role in the development of democracy.

As the adoption of such political rights was initially limited to Europe and North America, the concept of universal values became a concept of ‘Western values’. When the US became the hegemonic power in 1945, this marked a new attempt to transform these Western values into universal ones. The United Nations (UN) were instrumental in creating several documents granting universal rights. The famous Article 1 of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood, clearly echoes the call of the French Revolution for freedom, equality and brotherhood. Article 2 emphasises universality, stating that everyone is entitled to these rights and freedoms. The ensuing 28 articles read as a list of fundamental individual rights, including the right to life, the prohibition of torture, equality before the law and the freedoms of thought, religion and expression. They also include a set of socio-economic rights, such as the prohibition of slavery and the right to social security and employment. To further implement this non-legally-binding declaration, the UN adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966. Following an article on peoples’ right of self-determination, to be viewed in the context of decolonisation, they focus on individual rights, while clarifying the obligations of states to guarantee those rights. The difference between civil-political and socio-economic rights does not dovetail with our distinction between political and economic values. In our logic, socio-economic rights are a subset of political rights, referring to individual human rights. Economic values in this study refer to the economy of countries or regions as a whole. Finally, in the logic of this study, cultural rights come under socio-cultural values.

The new activism since 1945 to codify universal rights at global level was reflected back to Europe, leading to efforts to codify fundamental rights at European level. The Council of Europe, comprising Western and Eastern European countries alike, adopted the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) in 1950, which not only laid down basic political rights, but also established a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to implement the Convention. Fifty years later, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (CFR-EU) was adopted in 2000 by the EU institutions. Its preamble lists four universal values: human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity. The latter three echo the demands of the French Revolution. The first was mentioned in Article 1 of the 1948 UN Declaration and is emphasised by being enshrined in the first article of the CFR-EU: ‘Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected’. Furthermore, democracy and the rule of law are mentioned as principles on which the EU is based. The CFR-EU is structured according to these four values and two principles and specifies each of them in separate articles. Since 2009, Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) gives the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR-EU) the same legal value as the EU Treaties and

\[\text{9 The idea of ‘reflection’ expresses the fact that these political rights originated in Europe, then moved to the US, where they were further developed, after which they moved back to Europe, which had lost several of them under autocratic regimes and in two World Wars.}\]

\[\text{10 This resembles Article 1.1 of the German Constitution: ‘Human dignity shall be inviolable. Respecting and protecting it shall be the duty of all state authority’. The prominent place of human dignity in the 1949 German Constitution is a reaction to its violation during the Nazi regime. The fact that former German President Roman Herzog chaired the convention drafting the CFR-EU is the likely reason for the equally prominent place of human dignity in the CFR-EU.}\]
provides for the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), thereby completing the interlinkage of EU and Council of Europe human rights law. Apart from this, as mentioned in the introduction, six EU values have also found their way into Article 2 TEU: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Mentioning ‘human rights’ separately curiously enough suggests that the five preceding values are not part of human rights. The EU is said to be founded on these values. Although these six values encompass almost all possible political values, the next sentence of the article nevertheless adds more values, which are said to prevail in ‘society’, referring to the Member States. These other values seem to complement or specify the first six, which are more general in scope. All in all, fundamental political values have been anchored solidly in EU law, even having some overlaps.

Figure 5: Key articles on fundamental rights in global and European law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preamble – paragraph 2: Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 2 TEU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 6 TEU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties. The provisions of the Charter shall not extend in any way the competences of the Union as defined in the Treaties. The rights, freedoms and principles in the Charter shall be interpreted in accordance with the general provisions in Title VII of the Charter governing its interpretation and application and with due regard to the explanations referred to in the Charter, that set out the sources of those provisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. The Union shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Such accession shall not affect the Union’s competences as defined in the Treaties. |

| 3. Fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, shall constitute general principles of the Union’s law. |

Source: OHCHR and CFR-EU; all references to articles of the Treaty on European Union or the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in this study have been taken from the Official Journal of the European Union, C 115 of 9 May 2008 at EUR-Lex. Emphasis added.

Comparing key elements of the various declarations and legal texts shows that they are not completely consistent. However, we can distinguish a pattern of overlaps based on the original slogan of the French Revolution. Later texts add more values and differentiate between values, principles and rights, although the boundaries between these remain somewhat opaque. The 1966 UN Covenants do not add new categories of individual rights, which is why we have left them out of the following comparison.
While referring to the European Commissioner for ‘promoting our European way of life’ in the context of socio-cultural values, we have to refer to the Commissioner for ‘values and transparency’, currently Vera Jourova, for political values. According to her mission letter, her tasks include strengthening democracy and transparency, upholding the rule of law, efforts to ensure the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, monitoring the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and paying ‘special attention to the protection of the right of peaceful assembly and the freedom of association’.

When it comes to values as a driver of foreign policy, this means that the EU will not only seek cooperation with countries sharing the same political values, but will also try to spread these values to countries which have not embraced them to the same extent or have not embraced them at all. These efforts are based on the assumption that human rights are indeed universal and that citizens all around the world have the right to enjoy them and demand them from the governments ruling over them, in the same way as European citizens did in the past. The promotion of human rights and democracy is not only based on legal action, public diplomacy and private action, but also on support for human rights and democracy defenders and capacity building programmes for citizens or institutions. The European Parliament has chosen to play a key role in the promotion of the EU’s political values, for example through the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, programmes for democracy support, such as the Jean Monet Dialogues for peace and democracy, or election observation.

In order to succeed, especially in the case of democracy promotion, some degree of interest and willingness from the partner country is a precondition. ‘Democracy promotion’ is therefore often renamed ‘democracy support’, pointing to support for internal democratic developments. The greater the extent to which the conditions for democracy and human rights have been fulfilled in the partner country, the more successful the EU’s efforts can be. Central European countries after 1989, for example, were motivated to introduce democratic reforms and were able in part to build on experiences of the era between the World Wars. If, however, these conditions are lacking or on the wane in other countries, the EU’s efforts will be increasingly unlikely to succeed. In such cases, the EU may focus on supporting civil society groups instead of governments, as has been the case in Russia and Belarus for example. Efforts to support democracy in countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan have met with substantial setbacks, which is probably attributable to their very different political history and traditions. This is why it is important to map the extent to which political values in other countries are similar and whether these are converging with or diverging from the EU’s values. This exercise will be carried out in Chapter 4.

Finally, coherence inside the EU on its political values is important for its credibility in the eyes of third countries. Different views of Poland and Hungary on certain human rights and the rule of law have led the
European Commission to launch legal proceedings against these countries.\textsuperscript{11} These differences have not only caused debate inside the EU, but are also detrimental to the image of the EU as a consistent and coherent supporter of democracy and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{12}

3.3 Economic: the social market economy

The modern economic order has become global. The origins of economic globalisation are again rooted primarily in Europe. The economy emancipated itself from the nobility and the church as the main property owners. From independent cities, merchants developed international trading markets, banking systems and stock markets. Building on the experiences of the Templars or the Hanseatic League, European merchants from coastal counties such as Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England and France – later followed by other European countries – built overseas trade networks. At the same time, this development was always accompanied by some role for the government, whether through financing colonial expeditions abroad or providing national infrastructure. Since the 20th century, national economic policies have also become an instrument to implement socio-economic values, such as labour conditions, working hours or minimum wages, finally leading to complex welfare states. Through the establishment of the internal market, national governments delegated market-regulating competences to the EU, while keeping most social security regulations in the national realm. The economic systems which emerged from this long process were no longer pure market economies, but referred to as ‘mixed economies’ or ‘social market economies’. This was ultimately reflected in various articles of the EU Treaties, in particular Article 3 TEU. Article 3(3) TEU speaks of a ‘social’ market economy, linking the market economy to full employment, social progress, protection of the environment, combating social exclusion, social justice and solidarity.

\textbf{Figure 7:} Article 3(3) TEU (emphasis added)

\begin{verbatim}
Article 3(3) TEU
The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance. It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child. It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.
\end{verbatim}

The social market economy is not mentioned as a value in Article 2 TEU, but in Article 3, which starts with the notion that – once again – the EU must ‘promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples’. Furthermore, the description of the social market economy contains several values. Articles 119 and 120 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) emphasise three times that the economic policies of the EU and the activities of the Member States must be ‘in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition’. The social aspect of this market economy comes back in a different form in Article 14 TFEU, mentioning ‘the place occupied by services of general economic interest in the shared values of the Union’. Services of general economic interest refer to ‘commercial services of general economic utility subject to public-service obligations’ of which transport, energy, communications

\textsuperscript{11} The Commission launched proceedings against Hungary and Poland for violations of the \textit{rights of LGBTIQ people} in July 2021 and against Poland for \textit{violations of EU law} by its Constitutional Tribunal in December 2021.
\textsuperscript{12} According to the Governments of Poland and Hungary, these are only differences in the interpretation of certain political rights and competences, while others see a broader decline of democracy in several Central and Eastern European countries; see, for example, \textit{Krastev and Holmes} on the discontents generated by imitating Western values.
and postal services are prime examples. Although these services are not formulated as rights, the Treaty seems to imply an individual right of access to transport, energy and communication.

As with political values, the fact that the social market economy and several of its aspects are enshrined in the EU Treaties does not prevent some differentiation between Member States in the implementation of these economic values. First of all, not all Member States have introduced the euro as a currency. This is sometimes a deliberate choice, sometimes because the economic conditions for the euro have not been fulfilled yet. Member States also have different views on what constitute acceptable levels of government debt and spending, leading to discussions on the rules of the stability pact. Nevertheless, the basic assumptions of a market economy with a certain degree of social security are firmly shared by all Member States.

However, the EU’s model of a social market economy, or even the principle of the market economy itself, is not universally accepted in the rest of the world. On the one hand, countries such as the US do not agree to the inclusion of the social aspect and on the role of the state to the same extent as the EU and its Member States do. On the other hand, countries may consider themselves developing countries, which cannot (yet) fulfil the criteria of a market economy, countries in transition to a market economy or countries that have not fully embraced the principles of a market economy and rely on strong state intervention in the economy, such as China. We can therefore speak of the co-existence of a variety of economic values.

In spite of these differing economic values, a certain global economic order has developed since World War II, known as the Bretton Woods system. Three of its most important pillars are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO was founded in 1994 and incorporates the older General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and several sector-specific agreements. The WTO provides a set of common rules, keeping the option of further liberalisation in bilateral or multilateral trade agreements open. Because the WTO rules must be applicable to all members, regardless their economic system, the Agreement establishing the WTO does not require a market economy for accession, nor does it define the concept of market economy. According to the WTO, over three quarters of its members are developing countries and countries in transition to market economies and only ‘a number of simple, fundamental principles’ run throughout all WTO agreements, these being:

- Non-discrimination: consisting of ‘most-favoured-nation treatment’ (MFN), granting trade favours to all countries, once they have been granted to one, and ‘national treatment’, treating a product, service or item of intellectual property that has entered the market in the same way as those of national origin.

- Progressive liberalisation: trade barriers such as tariffs, import bans or quotas should be lowered through negotiations – if need be in successive steps, to enable adaptation to world market pressure.

- Predictability: binding commitments – setting a maximum tariff that may be lowered at a later stage, but only increased after renegotiation – leading to a more stable and predictable business environment.

- Fair competition: WTO rules discourage practices that are considered unfair in the economic sense, such as export subsidies and dumping products at below-cost prices.

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13 Definition from EUR-Lex.
14 Source: Section entitled ‘Encouraging development and economic reform’ on the WTO’s website.
• Development and economic reform: developed economies should give preferential market access to developing countries, which must endeavour to reform and adjust their economies to the world market.

At first sight, non-discrimination seems to represent an economic value – mirroring the non-discrimination of individuals in the area of basic human rights – and predictability and fair competition could also be classed as values. However, liberalisation, development and reform seem to qualify more as a means to the end of ‘catching up’ with the world economy. Development was an important driver of the current round of WTO negotiations, referred to as the Doha Development Agenda. The leading principles of the WTO therefore seem to be a blend of values and instruments. However, some authors argue that the principles and agenda of the WTO are implicitly based on ‘assumptions of a market economy’ and therefore ‘non market economies’ practices have presented a significant conflict with the GATT/WTO principles. In order to resolve this conflict, countries classified as ‘non market economies’ tend to commit themselves – on paper at least– to adopting the main characteristics of a market economy. When these commitments are incomplete or not implemented, problems may recur. In such cases, the question is whether the problems related to the WTO are linked to temporary adaptation issues or to deeper differences in economic values. The latter seems to be the case and results from the fact that the end of the Cold War led to one global market, but not to global consensus on the principles to be applied to trading on this market. These problems cannot be resolved as long as the underlying issue of economic values has not been addressed. The constant growth in WTO membership since its foundation in 1994 may exacerbate such problems, or – in the long run – lead to global convergence on a set of economic values.

We have seen in the previous section that the convergence of political values in Europe and the US has led to the notion of Western political values, which have been laid down in international UN declarations and agreements, with a claim of universality. We have seen that agreement between the EU and the US on the merits of a market economy – while diverging on its social component – have not led to this principle being laid down clearly in an international agreement. The WTO Agreement was adopted decades later than the UN documents on political rights, does not explicitly prescribe a market economy but a set of principles instead, and does not claim universality for these principles – although it encourages all countries to converge towards them. This leads to the paradoxical situation that, on paper, there is less agreement on economic values than on political values, whereas in practice, the forces of the global economy push countries of various economic systems more towards a market economy, rather than that any force is pushing countries towards common political values.

3.4 The Earth: sustainability for saving the planet

Even with the existing diversity of socio-cultural values and the potentially increasing divergence of political values, countries still need to cooperate in certain areas, because they share one planet: the Earth. Without conserving planet Earth and its ecosystems as the very basis for human life, humanity would destroy itself. This ‘planetary approach’ to transboundary problems has been reflected in warnings about the limits to economic growth and the fact that natural resources are finite, for example by the Club of Rome in its groundbreaking 1972 report ‘The Limits to Growth’. It was further developed as the concept of
‘sustainable development’ in the 1987 UN report ‘Our Common Future’. Environmental protection measures and attempts to limit global warming and climate change could all be placed in this group of values. Scientists have developed ever more comprehensive models about the boundaries of human impact on the planet, which can serve as incentives for positive action. For the purposes of this study, we categorise this group of values which focus on the preservation of the Earth and its ecosystems as the basis for healthy human life as ‘Earth values’.

Although modern environmental policies can be traced back to the 1972 and 1987 reports cited with their warnings about the overconsumption of natural resources and pollution, consciousness of the importance of nature and the natural environment is much older. In Europe, it dates back at least as far as 19th-century Romanticism, which itself was a reaction to the growing rationalism and industrialisation of that age. In a more philosophical sense, Rousseau, Herder and Schelling had explored the relationship between humankind and nature. In the US, settlement and industrialisation substantially reduced the vast areas of wild nature in the country, calling for its preservation in national parks, for example. It was only in the 20th century that the focus shifted from the conservation of nature for its own sake to protecting the environment also in order to reduce the negative effects on human civilisation. This paradigm shift can be characterised as moving from the intrinsic value of nature (admired by Romantics and conservationists) to the instrumental value of nature for human existence (emphasised by the modern environmental movement).

The difference between these approaches can be illustrated by two examples. A nature reserve can be deemed intrinsically valuable for its flora and fauna or as a tourist destination, while having less instrumental value for combating climate change. On the other hand, carbon capture in empty underground oil fields may be instrumentally of importance in terms of combating climate change, but have no intrinsic value for humans in the region or tourists.

The modern view of the natural environment focuses on its instrumental value and has led to efforts to quantify this value and the effects of environmental policies. We will work with some of these quantitative indicators in the next chapter. According to the instrumental view, Earth values overlap with economic values. Natural resources play an important role in both value sets and the economic use and environmental value of resources can compete. Economic gains through neglecting sustainability can work in the short term, but in the long term the depletion or destruction of the natural environment will have a negative impact on the economy as well. Climate change, erosion or bee colony collapse will have a negative impact on the agricultural economy, and air, water or land pollution will have a negative impact on human health and therefore ‘human capital’. Earth values differ from socio-economic rights, which focus on the right of peoples or individuals to make use of their natural resources, whereas Earth values assess whether these natural resources are being used in a sustainable way for the whole of humankind or the planet as such. A healthy natural environment has also been recognised as an essential precondition for the quality of human life, with a regenerative effect on human health and well-being. Interestingly, the widening and deepening of the instrumental aspects of Earth values have brought the discussion back to the original view of the concept of Earth values as an intrinsic value in itself. This is reflected in current debates about whether people should be granted a ‘human right to

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18 For example, the planetary boundaries concept of Stockholm University, which identifies ozone depletion, aerosol loading, ocean acidification, biogeochemical flows, freshwater use, land system change, biosphere integrity, climate change and novel entities as the nine most important boundaries for keeping the planet sustainable.

19 For a recent analysis of the development of environmentalism, see for example: Robert Falkner, ‘Environmentalism and global international society’, Cambridge University Press, 2021. See also the scientific journal Environmental Values, which traces the development of environmental values since 1992.
environment\textsuperscript{20} or whether nature should be granted ‘rights of nature’.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, there are researchers who consider that the conservationist and the instrumental approaches should be merged. Instead of separating wildlife in parks from people in urban areas who are practising a technological form of environmentalism, people should integrate nature into their daily lives. If farmers were, for example, to use hedges instead of wired fences to separate their lands, they would reduce damage through storms (instrumental), embellish the landscape (intrinsic) and enhance biodiversity (both).\textsuperscript{22}

The EU has chosen to adhere to the value of ‘sustainability’ as an important Earth value. As mentioned above, Article 3(3) TEU states that the internal market must also work for the sustainable development of Europe, aiming, inter alia, to achieve a ‘high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment’. Article 11 TFEU repeats a similar requirement for all EU policies, also ‘with a view to promoting sustainable development’. EU environmental policies include both conservationist and instrumental elements. The Natura 2000 programme, for example, focuses on the preservation of natural habitats and biodiversity, and can be seen as an example of a conservationist approach. The EU Emissions Trading System is, by contrast, an instrumental tool to combat climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. One particular aspect of the EU’s support for sustainability is the ‘precautionary principle’, which is aimed at ensuring a high level of environmental protection through preventative decision-making in the event of risk. The principle had been mentioned at international level in the 1992 Rio Declaration and was incorporated into the Maastricht Treaty. Article 191(2) TFEU provides that all EU policy on the environment must be based on the precautionary principle. Although the principle derives from an international UN declaration, it is not generally applied internationally, and even in the EU, differences in interpretation remain.\textsuperscript{23}

Although all EU Member States subscribe to the value of sustainable development as laid down in the Treaty – both in its intrinsic/conservationist and in its instrumental approach – differences exist as regards certain choices. Differences between Member States regarding environmental values appear, for example, in choices regarding controversial technologies such as nuclear energy and genetically modified crops. France and Germany have, for example, diametrically opposed views on the environmental impact of nuclear energy. French President Macron announced in November 2021 that France would build new nuclear power plants, not only to be less dependent on foreign providers, but also to meet the Paris climate goals. The underlying environmental assumption of this decision is that reducing carbon emissions prevails over producing nuclear waste. Germany, on the other hand, has decided to stop using nuclear energy by the end of 2022. The underlying assumption of this decision was that safety concerns – raised after the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima – and the lack of a permanent solution for nuclear waste prevail over the benefit of carbon emission cuts. The question for our study is whether these diametrically opposed decisions reflect a difference in values. Different authors have arrived at different conclusions. A 2019 study by the OECD attempts to sidestep the realm of values and suggests that knowledge increases support for nuclear energy, by pointing to higher public support in countries with nuclear power plants. The validity of this assumption is open for debate, however, as another study.


\textsuperscript{22} See for example: Bram Buscher and Robert Fletcher, The Conservation Revolution, Verso, 2020, who use the term ‘convivial conservation’.

\textsuperscript{23} The precautionary principle is not defined in the TFEU. Principle 15 of the 1992 Rio Declaration states: ‘Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation’. The Commission tried to clarify its interpretation in a communication in 2000.
from 2018, showed that support for nuclear energy had substantially declined in France as a result of
environmental concerns. Opposition to nuclear energy in Germany dates back even longer and appears to
be deeply rooted in public and political opinion, leaving a group of opinion makers in favour of nuclear
energy in a minority position. In order to understand the differing views of France and Germany, it is
necessary to place them in the wider context of political systems and even socio-cultural values. In an
article from 2017, Teva Meyer provides this context. Some authors focus on (socio-cultural) differences
between a ‘technocratic France’ and a ‘nature-loving Germany’ whose environmentalism goes back to the
19th century and could even become a partial substitute for national identity, since traditional nationalism
became taboo after World War II. Meyer focuses on other causes for the success of German
environmentalists in winning their cases. These include their ability to form a coalition with the peace
movements of the 1970s and 1980s, the decentralised German political system which facilitates local
protests, proportional representation which facilitated the rise of the Green Party and coalitions of farmers
and industries preferring green investments over nuclear ones. The Franco-German difference over nuclear
energy became a matter of EU decision making in 2022, when the European Commission defined nuclear
energy as a ‘green investment’ in its taxonomy proposal. Whereas five Member States issued a statement
against this, several others supported the proposal. This example also shows how the European
Commission resolves such differences: instead of supporting one of the views or ‘values’ over the other,
the Commission proposal is a compromise that gives something to each party: France can count
investment in nuclear energy as green and Germany can do the same for gas.

On genetically modified crops, included in the category of genetically modified organisms or GMOs,
opinions inside the EU are divided along complex lines. Although the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA)
has issued positive opinions on the use of several GMO crops, public support for growing GMOs is low
across Member States. Currently, only two Member States (Spain and Portugal) grow GMO crops. More EU
countries import GMO crops from third countries, mainly to be used as animal feed. As arguments in
favour of or against GMO crops mostly affect relations with third countries – which are the main producers
of GMO crops – we will return to this issue in the next chapter.

Notwithstanding the internal differences outlined above, EU Member States have been able to find
enough common ground on sustainable development to enable the EU to play a leading role in
promoting Earth values at global level. Article 3(5) TEU about the EU’s relations with the wider world
stipulates that the EU must contribute to the ‘sustainable development of the Earth’. As part of the General
Provisions on the Union’s External Action, Article 21(2)(f) TEU states that the Union must pursue common
policies and actions to ‘help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the
environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable
development’. In the 1980s, the EU and its then Member States were among the drivers of the UN
Convention on Air Pollution (1983) and the 1987 report ‘Our Common Future’. The EU also played a major
role in bringing negotiations on the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to a conclusion, especially after the US withdrew
from it. Under the 1992 UN Convention on Biodiversity, the EU committed to the conservation and
sustainable use of biodiversity. The EU was, furthermore, instrumental in brokering the 2016 Paris
Agreement and is strongly committed to its implementation. This expresses itself in the agreement of the
EU countries to put the EU on the path towards becoming the first climate-neutral economy and society
by 2050. The European Green Deal is essential for the implementation of these goals.

25 Meyer (see previous footnote) quotes Rambour (2006), Jacquot (2008) and Uekotter (2014) on German environmentalism as a
matter of alternative national identity.
26 On 11 November 2021, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal, in the margins of COP21, issued a ‘Joint
Declaration for a nuclear-free EU Taxonomy’.
27 Information taken from gmoanswers.com, a website funded by the biotech industry.
3.5 International order: principled pragmatism

According to classical realist political theory, the international order is characterised by competition and conflicts of interests. Perhaps the most quoted author in this respect is the German General von Clausewitz, who stated that ‘war is the continuation of politics by other means’. States compete for territory or natural resources and relentlessly pursue their interests, if necessary through military conflict. Dominant states create spheres of influence in which they establish international order according to their interests. Although the notion of ‘national interest’ seems self-explanatory, it has been defined and interpreted differently by political scientists and practitioners. Interests are often related to security and the economy, but can cover other areas as well. The studies on national interest of the German-American political scientist Hans Morgenthau have been influential in realist political theory. He defined ‘national interest’ as ‘survival – the protection of physical, political and cultural identity against encroachments by other nation-states’. The international order of the Cold War had strong characteristics of a realist international order: the US and the Soviet Union partitioned large parts of the world into two conflicting spheres of interest, serving the economic and security interests of the respective ‘superpower’. Both rivals were only to a very limited extent capable of agreeing on an overarching international order, for example in the United Nations framework.

However, this is not the whole story. States have never been driven by their interests alone; when trying to shape the international order, they were also driven by their values. Wars have been fought in the name of democracy or to obtain basic political rights, even when the latter were often civil wars. The Cold War was also a conflict between two competing sets of values, with individual rights, democracy and a free market pitted against class rights, the rule of the Communist Party and a state-driven planned economy. And even without going to war, states will also pursue their values through their international policies. They may promote socio-cultural or political values through information and education programmes, or economic or Earth values through investment flows, development aid and voting behaviour in international organisations. Since the end of the Cold War, the geopolitical changes in the international order have been linked to changes in values in former Communist countries, which now adhere to democracy and the market economy. We can therefore distinguish a separate category of ‘international order values’ that defines how international relations are supposed to be organised, based on the complex interaction of the other four values. In this study, we will use ‘international order values’ as a neutral descriptive term, which can be ‘filled in’ with different concepts by different actors.

We have already noted in section 3.2 that the EU is founded on values (Article 2 TEU) and is linked to the values of the CFR-EU and the ECHR (Article 6 TEU). Moreover, the promotion of values in the EU’s external policies has been codified in the Treaties, but on an equal footing with the EU’s interests. Article 3(5) TEU states that the Union must uphold and promote its core values and interests in its relations with the wider world. The article specifies several of these values and interests, which we can easily relate to our categories: peace, security, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, the development of international law (international order), the sustainable development of the Earth (even mentioning the Earth), free and fair trade and the eradication of poverty (economic values and socio-economic rights), and the protection of human rights (political values).

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Values on the retreat? The role of values in the EU’s external policies

As Article 3(5) TEU clearly states, the EU as a foreign policy actor will uphold and promote both its values and its interests, even when the focus on one of these may vary over time.

**The combination of interests and values is considered a guiding principle of the EU’s external action and has been termed ‘principled pragmatism’ in the [2016 EU Global Strategy](#).** The text of the Global Strategy states that ‘Our interests and values go hand in hand. We have an interest in promoting our values in the world. At the same time, our fundamental values are embedded in our interests. Peace and security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order are the vital interests underpinning our external action’ (Global Strategy, page 13). This leads to the conclusion that: ‘We will be guided by clear principles. These stem as much from a realistic assessment of the strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world [...] “Principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead”’ (Global Strategy, page 16).

In 2019, the EU published ‘The EU Global Strategy three years on’, in which the approach of principled pragmatism was not fundamentally changed, although the growing complexity and rivalry in the world around the EU were acknowledged. The document notes for instance ‘the emergence of different political narratives, some of which openly contest the values underpinning liberal democracies worldwide, and those of the EU itself’.

Furthermore, Article 21 TEU, which further defines international action by the EU, speaks of the ‘principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement’, instead of EU values and interests. However, the first paragraph repeats the notions which were identified as ‘values’ in Article 2 TEU. It adds to the list ‘respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law’. Furthermore, it states that the EU must develop relations and build partnerships with countries and international organisations which share these principles. Multilateral solutions are mentioned as the preferred approach. The second paragraph states that this must be achieved though common policies and actions, once again listing the various values-oriented policy fields. The third paragraph adds that the EU must respect these principles and pursue these objectives consistently in all areas of its external action and other policies.
Figure 9: Article 21 TEU: principles of EU action on the international scene (emphasis added)

Article 21 Treaty on European Union

1. The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.

2. The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to:

(a) safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity;
(b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law;
(c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders;
(d) foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty;
(e) encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade;
(f) help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development;
(g) assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters; and
(h) promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance.

3. The Union shall respect the principles and pursue the objectives set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 in the development and implementation of the different areas of the Union’s external action covered by this Title and by Part Five of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and of the external aspects of its other policies. The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect.

4 Five value types in the US, China, Russia and Turkey

Having characterised the five types of values and the preferences of the EU for each of these, we will now turn to a short comparison with four non-EU countries: the US, China, Russia and Turkey. We have explained the choice of these countries in the introduction. We will compare them with one another and with the EU according to the five value categories. Three questions will lead our research: 1. what are the dominant values in each category for these four countries?; 2. how do they compare to the values the EU has chosen?; and 3. how have these values been developing over time in these countries? These brief comparative country impressions serve as input for an assessment of the EU’s relations with each of them in Chapter 5.

While comparing values, we are aware that most available studies use Western or European values as the yardstick by which to measure other countries and create rankings. The following sections will contain such rankings: political values will be measured by the level of democracy, economic values by the level of market economy and Earth values by the level of sustainability. We are aware that one dimension cannot explain all aspects of a particular value. We have already noted, for example, that the EU’s economic values are not only about market freedom, but also about the market’s social aspects and public goods and services. When comparing the EU with non-EU countries, rankings on one dimension may become even less adequate. China may, for example, contest its classification as an autocracy and argue that its political
Values on the retreat? The role of values in the EU’s external policies

value system constitutes an original value system of its own. However, we are not aware of a universally accepted methodology comparing all value categories between countries. Therefore, we will use the Western yardstick for comparison, as it appears to be the sole consistent yardstick of values which has been largely codified and is available – even when we know that it overlaps with the EU’s value stance to a great extent, while the meaning of some EU values is contested and other countries may not subscribe to the full catalogue. To compensate for this restriction, we will reflect in each section on possible alternative value systems if this seems appropriate and if information is available.

4.1 Socio-cultural: diversity

As regards socio-cultural values, we have noted that diversity is the dominant characteristic of the EU. Neither the Hofstede model nor the World Values Survey provide common values for the whole of the EU. We will therefore make comparisons at country level and focus on the same four EU Member States as selected in Chapter 3 (France, Germany, Italy and Poland), which comprise three founding states and one central European state which acceded in 2004, while making some references to other Member States, including smaller ones.

A first comparison of the four non-EU countries according to the Hofstede model shows that the US stands out for its low scores on power distance and long-term orientation and its very high score on individualism. Hofstede Insights notes that low power distance and high individualism in the US are ‘evidenced by an explicit emphasis on equal rights in all aspects of American society and government’ and an informal communication culture. The low score on long-term orientation can be seen in business, which measures its performance on a short-term, often quarterly, basis. However, in a deeper sense, long-term orientation describes ‘how a society maintains links with its past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future’. Societies with a low score are characterised in the Hofstede model as ‘normative societies’, which prefer to maintain traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. In this sense, Hofstede Insights states that ‘many Americans have very strong ideas about what is “good” and “evil”. This may concern issues such as abortion, use of drugs, euthanasia, weapons or the size and rights of the government versus the States and versus citizens’. In this respect, the US is similar to Poland, which also has a fairly normative view of society and scores the lowest on this dimension of our four EU countries.

Figure 10: Comparison of four non-EU countries according to the Hofstede model

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29 As in Chapter 3, all simulations for this study have been carried out using the country comparison tool, which can be found on the Hofstede Insights website under https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/ and all quotes come from this website.
If we compare all eight countries, the US leads on individualism and almost leads on low power distance. Only Germany scores lower on power distance, contrary to popular perceptions of the country. Power distance is defined as ‘the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally’. In a political context, it could therefore be an indicator of the degree to which decisions about foreign policy are made top-down or through horizontal democratic deliberation. Both the US and Germany have a ‘low power distance decision making process’. However, power relations with third countries do not appear to be covered: the US is not shy of using power in foreign policy, whereas post-World War II German foreign policy is characterised by a reluctance to use power. Visualising these scores geographically, we can see that power distance increases and individualism decreases quite accurately across a West-East spectrum.

Figure 11: Country scores on power distance (top) and individualism (bottom)

According to Hofstede Insights, the dimension ‘uncertainty avoidance’ expresses ‘the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity’. Comparing the eight countries on ‘uncertainty avoidance’ shows that the US and China share a low score (46 for the US and 30 for China), whereas all others, except Germany, score particularly high (over 75 out of 100). Hofstede Insights links a low level of uncertainty avoidance in the US and China to an entrepreneurial and pragmatic attitude in both countries. People and governments in countries with a high score – so the Hofstede group notes – prefer creating a feeling of security by adhering to rules, planning and bureaucracy. The interesting conclusion on this cultural dimension could therefore be that China is not so much – or not only – the bureaucratic party apparatus perceived in the West, but also a fairly pragmatic country in doing business. This distinguishes China from Russia and Turkey. Another – perhaps inconvenient – conclusion could be that the Poles, the French and the Italians are culturally closer to the Russians or the Turks in their efforts to control uncertainties than they are to the Americans.

From the World Values Survey (WVS) (see Figure 4 in the previous chapter) we can draw some interesting conclusions as well. Firstly, the Western world is not very homogenous on the survival–self-expression axis.

The West ranges from more survival-oriented countries such as the Baltic States, Poland and Italy, to those which are more self-expression oriented, such as the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands or New Zealand. The US tends more towards survival, Germany towards self-expression and France is in the middle. Variation on the vertical axis is less pronounced, ranging from the most tradition-oriented in Poland and Portugal to the most secular in the Czech Republic and Sweden. These observations are interesting in terms of understanding the role of socio-cultural values in defining the international order and the concept of a unified ‘West’. Whereas the US is usually viewed as the political leader of ‘The West’, its position on the cultural map is more in the middle. Inglehart and Welzel note in this respect that ‘the United States is not a prototype of cultural modernization for other societies to follow, as some modernization writers assumed. In fact, the United States is a deviant case, having a much more traditional value system than any other post-industrial society except Ireland. On the traditional/secular dimension, the United States ranks far below other rich societies, with levels of religiosity and national pride comparable with those found in some developing societies. The United States does rank among the most advanced societies on the survival/self-expression dimension, but even here, it does not lead the world. The Swedes, the Dutch, and the Australians are closer to the cutting edge of cultural change than the Americans’.  

Our other three comparison countries – Russia, Turkey and China – are more survival-oriented than the West, though not far removed from Lithuania, Hungary or Croatia. On the vertical axis, Russia and China balance traditional and secular values on a similar level to the Western average, but Turkey is more focused on tradition. All three countries also distinguish themselves culturally from the West by belonging to different culture groups: Orthodox for Russia, Islamic for Turkey and Confucian for China. 

Both the Hofstede and the WVS models show cultural differences between Europe and the US on the one hand, and Russia, Turkey and China on the other hand, which justify speaking of ‘the West’. Western countries stand out most strongly in terms of individualism. However, neither the West itself nor the group of the other three countries are culturally homogenous. On some variables, Western countries can even be closer to non-Western ones than to other Western ones. Examples are the US and China on low uncertainty avoidance, Poland and Russia on high uncertainty avoidance, or similar power distance levels in France, Poland and Turkey. 

4.2 Political: between democracy and autocracy 

4.2.1 Civil and political rights 

In order to assess how other countries compare to the EU regarding their adherence to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, several institutes have developed assessment methods and rankings. Based on these, the EU can also assess which countries might benefit from democracy support. Much research in this field has been carried out by the ‘Varieties of Democracy Institute’ or V-dem for short, in Gothenburg, Sweden. Their methodology ranks countries within four types of political system: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral autocracy and closed autocracy. Based on regular assessments of more than 3,000 country experts, V-dem observes trends over time and attributes an index-score (LDI or Liberal Democracy Index), taking into account election processes, the rule of law, human rights, access to justice, media freedom or power distribution.

Figure 12: Regimes of the World typology used by the Variety of Democracies Institute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closed Autocracy</th>
<th>Electoral Autocracy</th>
<th>Electoral Democracy</th>
<th>Liberal Democracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No de facto multiparty, or free and fair elections, or Dahl’s institutional prerequisites not minimally fulfilled</td>
<td>De facto multiparty, free and fair elections, and Dahl’s institutional prerequisites minimally fulfilled</td>
<td>The rule of law, or liberal principles not satisfied</td>
<td>The rule of law, and liberal principles satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No multiparty elections for the chief executive or the legislature</td>
<td>De jure multiparty elections for the chief executive and the legislature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In its 2020 democracy report, V-dem notes a ‘wave of autocratisation’ around the world, which is accelerating and deepening. Democracy declined in 26 countries during 2019, prior to the COVID-crisis. According to the 2021 report, this trend towards autocratisation has continued during 2020, and 68 % of the world’s population now lives in autocracies. Between 2010 and 2020, democracy declined not only in countries such as the US, Brazil, India and Turkey, but also in EU Member States, namely Poland, Hungary and Slovenia. Bucking the trend, democracy improved in some countries, such as Armenia, Tunisia or South Korea.

Figure 13: The state of liberal democracy in 2020

Source: 2021 V-dem report, page 12

An alternative evaluation of political values comes from the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), which defines its mission as ‘advancing democracy worldwide’. IDEA distinguishes between three political systems: democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. Democracies are subdivided into low, mid-range and high performers. IDEA relies strongly on V-dem data, but presents it in a different way, as ‘Global State of Democracy Indices’ for a more limited set of 162 countries. Its conceptual framework also endeavours to link to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Its report entitled ‘The Global State of Democracy 2019: Addressing the Ills, Reviving the Promise’ states that the past four decades have seen a remarkable expansion of democracy throughout the world, but recent years have witnessed declines in the fabric of both older and younger democracies. It specifies: ‘New democracies are often weak and fragile. Older democracies are struggling to guarantee equitable and sustainable economic and social development. The share of high-quality democracies is decreasing and many of them are confronted with populist challengers’. On a more optimistic note, it states that
‘Democracies have also shown, with some exceptions, to provide better conditions for sustainable development’.

**On political values, the United States stand apart from China, Russia and Turkey as the only liberal democracy.** Moreover, the US has one of the oldest democracies and has served as a source of inspiration to European countries. Even De Tocqueville in his book ‘Democracy in America’ of 1831 admitted that on fundamental rights, the US initiatives had preceded the French. Lincoln’s famous *Gettysburg Address* may have delivered the most concise definition of democracy as ‘government of the people by the people for the people’. **The US is therefore a natural partner for the EU in upholding and supporting democracy and human rights.**

However, US democracy is not perfect. V-dem qualifies the US as a liberal democracy with an index of 0.7 in which democracy has been declining and IDEA characterises the US as a ‘mid-range performance democracy’ behind Canada, Australia and North-Western European states. The imperfections of US democracy stretch back in time, but continue to play a role in various forms. Three examples serve to illustrate this. Firstly, equal rights for African-Americans have been an issue since the days of Lincoln and it was only after the protests led by Martin Luther King that the 1965 *Voting Rights Act* removed the remaining barriers to their voting rights. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has shown that non-discrimination and equal treatment are still an issue in the US. However, the echoes of BLM around the world, especially in Europe, show that the issue is not uniquely American. Secondly, at institutional level, the US executive branch has gained substantial powers over the past 200 years, swinging the balance with the legislative branch in its favour. Presidents have increasingly used discretionary power through executive orders. A growing dysfunctionality in Congress, where the British-style two-party system impedes compromise, has reinforced this trend. In particular when the House and the Senate have different political majorities, the legislative process can grind to a halt and provisional budgets and ‘government shut downs’ become the new normal. In contrast, European-style multiparty democracy involves the need for coalition and compromise. This difference in political style is projected on to the outside, where the US advocates a more aggressive ‘democracy promotion’ – sometimes including orchestrated ‘regime change’, while the EU sets more store by ‘democracy support’ in processes bringing together all sides, such as the European Parliament’s Jean Monnet Dialogues. Thirdly, populism and illiberalism have increasingly characterised US politics, in particular in the Republican Party. Tracking of the Republican Party by V-dem over time shows that these phenomena have increased in particular under the Presidency of George W. Bush, since the launch of the Tea Party movement in 2010 and under President Donald Trump. Populism and illiberalism are linked but are not identical, populism being a style of political behaviour, whereas illiberalism refers to a decrease in fundamental freedoms. Both phenomena have increased in the EU as well, and on occasion interactions across the Atlantic have taken place, such as the support of UK Independence Party founder Nigel Farage to the Trump campaign. The explanations given for the rise of populism and illiberalism in the US and the EU are often similar, for example, resentment on the part of people who have not experienced the economic benefits of globalisation and who have turned against political elites. However, because in the US these phenomena are mostly linked to one of two parties, their effect is more divisive than in Europe. **President Biden has tried to break with the trend towards populism and illiberalism since his inauguration, by emphasising the importance of values for US national and foreign policies.** Speaking only days after the riot on Capitol Hill, he made a pledge for unity and democracy. Nevertheless, in May 2021, a [survey](#) showed that two thirds of Republican voters (or 29 %

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33 See also: Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein, *The broken branch*, 2006, excerpts on [Brooking.edu](http://Brooking.edu)  
34 For a summary and chart of the V-dem findings regarding the Republican Party, see [The Economist](http://TheEconomist), 31 October 2020.
of all Americans) mostly or completely agreed that the 2020 US election had not been won honestly by Joe Biden, but had been ‘stolen’.

**The US has quite a good track record on human rights in general.** The US is a promoter of these rights globally and was among the leading nations to push for the 1948 UN Declaration on Human Rights and the 1966 UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights. However, the US is not fully consistent in implementing these human rights. A high-profile case of inconsistency has been the denial of access to justice and the torture of prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay facility since 2001, which has damaged the US’s image in the world. The most recent 2021 *Amnesty International report on Guantanamo* expresses the hope that President Biden will relaunch efforts to close Guantanamo, something he pleaded for as Vice-President under President Obama.

**Chinese political values are in many respects the opposite of US and EU values.** According to the preamble of the *Chinese Constitution*, ‘the Chinese people [...] waged heroic struggles for national independence and liberation and for democracy and freedom’. However, the following articles show that democracy and freedom have a different meaning to the individual approach of the French and American Revolutions. Article 1 states that ‘The People’s Republic of China is a socialist state governed by a people’s democratic dictatorship that is led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants’ and ‘Leadership by the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics.’ Similarly, at first glance the three main pillars of the Chinese state bear some resemblance to Western democracies: there is a President, a government called the State Council and the National People’s Congress, which serves as a kind of parliament. However, because the Communist Party is the only political party, the National People’s Congress is not based on competition between parties, but rather on reaching consensus within one party. The current President, Xi Jinping, is also the Secretary General of the Communist Party, which means that he combines the leadership of the executive and the legislative in one person. **As a result of the high concentration of power and the central role of the Communist Party, China is not considered a democracy.** V-dem classifies it as a ‘closed autocracy’ with a very low LDI score of 0.05, and IDEA categorises China as an ‘authoritarian regime’. Given this classification, the question is not whether democracy in China is on the decline, but whether democracy can develop. The political system has kept its main characteristics since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The measurement of political change in China therefore often turns into an analysis of developments in the Communist Party leadership. Until 1975, China’s undisputed leader was Mao Zedong, whose power attained mythical proportions. From the political turbulence after his death, the 1982 Constitution emerged, which tried to create a balance of power between the President, the Secretary General of the Communist Party, the Premier of the State Council and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, posts which were held by different people. However, the reactions to popular protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, demanding real democratic reform, revealed differences in these leaders’ positions. Since the hardliners who suppressed the protests prevailed, a centralisation has taken place, strengthening the autocratic nature of the system. This has culminated in the reign of Xi Jinping since 2012, who combines the functions of Secretary General of the Communist Party (since 2012) and President (since 2013). In 2018, term limits on the Presidency were lifted. On the rule of law, a recent *SWP paper* on the first Chinese ‘Plan on Building the Rule of Law in China (2020–2025)’ concludes that, although China has drawn inspiration from the West in establishing a Chinese concept of the rule of law, the party-state leadership has rejected an independent judiciary and the principle of separation of powers as ‘erroneous western thought’. **We can therefore conclude that China and the EU share hardly any political values, and that there are no signs that this will change soon.**

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As regards human rights, the pre-communist Republic of China voted for the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The communist People’s Republic of China signed the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998, but has not ratified it. China has also been confronted by Western countries with many cases of human rights violations regarding both individuals and ethnic groups. High-profile cases include its suppression of the rights of people in Tibet and, more recently, the Uyghur population in the north-western province of Xinjiang. The latter combines claims of forced labour and torture, which represent violations of socio-economic and fundamental civil rights, as summed up in a 2021 Amnesty International report.

Although the political values of Russia and Turkey often nominally concur with the EU’s, their application in practice differs quite substantially. Under its 1993 constitution, Russia is, on paper, a federal state with an elected President and with members of the lower chamber of parliament, the Duma, elected for five years. Most deputies of the upper chamber, the Federation Council, are appointed by the 85 regions, while some are appointed by the President. Following the July 2020 constitutional amendments, presidents can only serve for a maximum of two terms from 2024, and the Duma has acquired the power to appoint the prime minister and the rest of the government. In spite of these features of a sound democracy, with checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches, power in Russia is, in practice, much more centralised, particularly since President Putin came to power in 2000. He was President from 2000 to 2008. Barred by the constitution from a third consecutive term, he swapped with Prime Minister Medvedev and returned to the presidency in 2012 for two more terms – until 2024, as presidential terms were extended from four to six years. The constitutional amendments even allow him two additional terms until 2036. To stay in power, President Putin will need to guarantee the absolute parliamentary majority of the ‘United Russia’ Party, his main supporter. Limiting the influence of opposition parties is crucial to that end. In an interview in 2020, Putin considered the permitted ‘systemic’ opposition in parliament as necessary, as long as it plays a ‘constructive role’. Acknowledging that United Russia’s dominance makes parliamentary debates ‘boring’, he preferred this to the ‘pandemonium’ of the 1990s. Members of the so-called non-systemic opposition outside parliament – such as the murdered Boris Nemtsov or the imprisoned Alexey Navalny – have encountered substantial problems in participating in politics, but often receive support from the West. According to V-dem’s researchers, Russia therefore does not classify as a ‘liberal democracy’ or even an ‘electoral democracy’, but as an ‘electoral autocracy’. According to IDEA, it is a ‘hybrid regime’. V-dem has not noted a decline or increase in Russian democracy since 2010: the current situation seems fairly stable. However, several organisations have noted a decline in upholding human rights in Russia. The 1993 Constitution dedicates its entire Chapter 2 to human and civil rights and freedoms. Russia has also signed the UN Declaration of Human Rights and ratified a number of other international human rights conventions. Nevertheless, in practice, many fundamental rights are not guaranteed. Reporters Without Borders ranks Russia 150th out of 180 countries. A much-debated decline was instituted with a set of laws, known as the ‘Law on Foreign Agents’, limiting the freedom of NGOs. The Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights criticised the law for having ‘considerably interfered with the rights to freedom of association and freedom of expression of many non-commercial organisations and human rights defenders’. On the basis of the law, the most well-known Russian human rights organisation Memorial International was banned in December 2021.

According to V-dem, Turkey equally classifies as an ‘electoral autocracy’ and, according to IDEA, as a hybrid regime. Both institutes have registered a substantial decline in democracy in Turkey in the past decade. According to the V-dem Institute, this decline can be dated to 2013 and the run-up to the 2014 presidential elections, three years before the failed 2016 military coup. Looking further back in time, the Turkish Republic as founded by Kemal Atatürk in 1923 has always been characterised by weak democratic

36 For example, in the 2018 presidential election, Russia’s Communist Party accused the pro-Kremlin media of running a smear campaign against Communist candidate Pavel Grudinin when he did unexpectedly well in the opinion polls.
institutions and has experienced five military coups since its foundation, in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997 and 2016. As a general rule, these were followed by purges in the army, police, public services and political institutions. The 1960 and 1980 coups were both followed by the adoption of a new Constitution, which were approved by voters, although the freedom of these elections was contested.

**Figure 14:** Decline in democracy in Turkey 2009–2019

![Graph showing decline in democracy in Turkey 2009–2019](image)

Source: V-dem Institute, *2020 democracy report*, Figure 11, page 17

Interestingly enough, the instigators of coups always justified their military interventions by stating they were aimed at restoring democracy and/or fundamental rights, which were said to have been violated previously. The adoption of new Constitutions emphasised the political motivation of the actions. The 2016 coup failed and reinforced the position of President Erdogan. Nevertheless, it was also followed by amendments to the Constitution, this time in support of Erdogan, by turning Turkey into a presidential political system, increasing his powers.

**Although Turkey does very well in terms of the number of human rights agreements it has ratified, in practice its track record is not good and is in fact deteriorating.** Especially since the declared state of emergency after the failed 2016 coup, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has pointed to ‘a constantly deteriorating human rights situation, exacerbated by the erosion of the rule of law’. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe stated, following a visit in 2019, ‘that the measures that the authorities took in the aftermath of the state of emergency had devastating consequences on judicial independence and impartiality and threaten the rule of law and human rights in Turkey’.

Comparing the political values of all countries, we can see a clear West-East spectrum from liberal democracy in the US and most EU countries towards electoral or closed autocracy in Russia, Turkey and China.

**Figure 15:** Comparative table of political values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value: Political</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- system: V-dem/IDEA</td>
<td>lib. democracy/mid-range democracy 0.7</td>
<td>17 lib. democracy 9 elec. democracy 1 elec. autocracy 0.40–0.86</td>
<td>elec. autocracy/hybrid regime 0.101</td>
<td>elec. autocracy/hybrid regime 0.099</td>
<td>closed autocracy/authoritarian 0.05 More authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2020 LDI score</td>
<td>Less liberal</td>
<td>Less liberal</td>
<td>Less democracy</td>
<td>Less democracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- trend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *V-dem 2020 report* and *IDEA 2019 report*. Note: 17 EU liberal democracies AU, BE, DK, FI, DE, IRL, LUX, NL, ESP, SWE, CY, EST, FR, IT, LAT, POR, SLOV have LDI scores from 0.72 to 0.86; only BU, HU, RO and PL score ≤0.5.
4.2.2 Socio-economic rights

In this section, we will look specifically at socio-economic rights, as countries’ attitudes towards, and fulfillment of, these rights sometimes deviates from civil and political rights. We will examine a right of a more social nature – the right to health – and one of a more economic nature – the right to work.\footnote{We have based our comparison on the \textit{Human Rights Measurement Initiative (HRMI)} which uses the Index of Social and Economic Rights Fulfillment (SERF) developed by the \textit{Economic and Social Rights Empowerment Initiative} of the University of Connecticut. HRMI scores measure the fulfillment of these rights in relation to the income potential of the country concerned, using different assessment methods for low-/middle-income and high-income countries. In order to compare the four selected countries, of which only the US falls in the category ‘high-income’, on an equal footing, we use the ‘low-middle-income scores’ for all four countries.}

\textbf{Figure 16:} US, China, Russia and Turkey HRMI scores for two socio-economic rights in 2007 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Right to health</th>
<th>Right to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>US</strong></td>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007: 84.6</td>
<td>2007: 94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018: 82.2</td>
<td>2018: 95.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Source: HRMI 2021 rightstracker.org} \textit{Note: to obtain the 2007 scores, click on the year 2007 in the table and then change the year from 2018 down to 2007 on the website. All scores are percentages of an ideal of 100 \% achievement}

In 2018, all four countries had a good score (above 90 \%) on the right to work. It should be noted, however, that if the US’s performance is measured according to the assessment method for high-income countries, it scores considerably lower (52.4 \%), which means that the US could do much better on the right to work given its income potential. One of the main reasons for its not doing better is the fact that a market economy does not guarantee a right to work. Unemployment, at least when temporary in nature, is accepted as part of the market economy concept. The plausibility of this explanation is underpinned by the similarly low scores of high-income EU countries, for example 55.0 \% for France or 47.7 \% for Germany. However, as regards the right to health, the US punches below its economic weight. Consistently more than 10 percentage points below China, well behind EU countries Germany (94.1 \% in 2018) and France (90.3 \% in 2018) and with the same level as Turkey, a score of just above 80 \% is fairly poor for its economic potential. \textbf{The relatively low score on the right to health is an indication of a relatively low acceptance of social rights in general in the US.} This is legally underpinned by the fact that whereas the US has signed the 1966 UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it has never ratified it, \textit{thereby denying it legal status}. The UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Philip Alston, drew harsh conclusions in this respect in 2017. He \textit{stated} that the US ‘has refused to accord domestic recognition to the economic and social rights’ and the US ‘is alone among developed countries in insisting that, while human rights are of fundamental importance, they do not include rights that guard against dying of hunger, dying from a lack of access to affordable health care or growing up in a context of total deprivation’. He also noted that the US ‘has one of the highest poverty and inequality levels among the OECD countries’, while at the same time hosting more than 25 \% of the world’s billionaires. Whereas HRMI researchers have come to \textit{similar conclusions}, it should be noted that low appreciation of socio-economic rights exists mostly in the Republican Party, in particular under President Trump, and less in the Democratic Party.

\textbf{China, on the other hand, did sign (in 1997) and ratify (in 2001) the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but did not ratify the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We can see that the attitudes towards socio-economic and civil-political rights of China and the US are each other’s polar opposite.} Philip Alston, the aforementioned UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, gave China credit in 2016 for ratifying the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights and for its consistent action to lift ‘hundreds of millions of people out of poverty’. The figures show a steep increase
in China’s HRMI score for the right to work, from 56.8 % in 2007 to 93.7 % in 2018, which can be traced back to the introduction of labour laws in the 2000s, such as the Labour Contract Law of 2008 and the Social Insurance Law of 2011. The actual decrease in unemployment is less spectacular: unemployment fell from 4.3 % in 2009 to 3.8 % in 2018. China is doing equally well in relation to the right to health, ranking first of our four reference countries in 2018. Although healthcare in China has undergone several phases of reform, and while the system includes private clinics and its quality varies across areas, the state has been consistent in trying to guarantee affordable health care for all citizens. **Although China’s HRMI scores for the right to health and work are good, it does not automatically mean that socio-economic rights are recognised and granted across the board.** China has, for instance, been criticised for the lack of implementation of its labour laws, which are not applied consistently. Furthermore, as noted above and confirmed in the [2020 EU annual report](https://www.europarl.europa.eu) on human rights and democracy, there are still forced labour camps in China, for the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang, as well as in Tibet, turning the ‘right to work’ into an ‘obligation to work’ for certain groups. Furthermore, UN Rapporteur Alston criticises China for the lack of references in domestic law to the UN Covenant as the source of the socio-economic rights, for not creating a single human rights institution overseeing their implementation and for not providing sufficient means for citizens to hold the state accountable for either not implementing these rights or for implementing them incorrectly.

**Russia** ratified the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Soviet era in 1973, but its economy and socio-economic situation have changed profoundly since then. Income and social inequality have grown substantially, owing to low taxes for the rich and high levels of corruption, as the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concluded in a [2017 report](https://www.unhchr.ch). It has been pointed out that since the transition from communism to capitalism, Russia has developed into a country with the second highest income inequality among the most developed countries after the United States, and has more billionaires relative to the size of its economy than the US. The share of the population living below the poverty line grew from 10.8 % in 2013 to 13.8 % in 2016. This may be reflected in the fairly mediocre score of 76.5 % on the right to health. Even though it has slightly improved since 2007, public healthcare is underfunded and often of low quality, as press reports suggest. Those who can afford it tend to prefer private healthcare. Social inequality is not reflected in the very high score of 99.3 % for the right to work. A probable explanation is the drop in unemployment rates resulting from the economic growth experienced since 1999, which have gone down from 11 % in 2000 to 5.2 % in 2014. Another explanation is that in times of recession, employers have preferred to cut wages rather than to let employees go, which is illustrated by falling wage averages.

**The situation in Turkey is somewhat comparable to that of Russia, with it having ratified the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2003 and showing a high score on the right to work (97.6 %), without having high socio-economic standards for all.** The World Bank has stressed the impressive economic and social development of Turkey in the period 2002–2015, when reforms and government programmes halved poverty and increased employment and incomes. However, in recent years, these reforms have slowed down and sometimes been reversed. It should also be noted that women’s participation in the labour market remains very low, and, as the [2020 EU-Turkey accession report](https://www.europarl.europa.eu) shows, enforcement and implementation of labour law is often lacking. Scores on the right to health also increased from 75.5 % in 2007 to 80.1 % in 2018, which might be attributable to the introduction of universal healthcare in 2003. However, Turkey’s healthcare expenditure of 4.1 % of GDP in 2018 is among the lowest in the OECD (where the average is 9.9 %) and access to healthcare and employment is poor for minorities such as Kurds and Armenians, as the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted as early as in [2011](https://www.unhchr.ch).
4.3 Economic: between market and state

Trade and economic cooperation will be easiest for the EU with countries which share its economic values. The EU has a social market economy. We have seen in section 3.3 that there is no global consensus on economic values, although a functioning market economy seems to be at least implicitly a standard pursued by the Bretton Woods institutions, in particular the World Trade Organization. The social component of the market economy remains largely a national competence and is partly covered by the socio-economic rights mentioned in the previous section. Of our four reference countries, all except China classify nominally as a market economy. Looking for indicators to further specify the nature of the economic system and thereby the economic values adhered to, we can turn to three complementary methodologies. Firstly, the annual Doing Business report of the World Bank investigates national regulations that enhance or constrain business activity and presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights. Secondly, a somewhat wider perspective on the notion of economic freedom is provided by the Index of Economic Freedom developed by the Heritage Foundation. This indicator should be used with some caution because it is based on a particular vision of market freedom and limited government. Thirdly, the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum is probably the broadest of the three, looking at many factors that determine productivity, including certain social aspects such as health, skills and the labour market. All systems attribute a score and a ranking to the countries concerned.

Figure 17: World map for the Index of Economic Freedom

The US adheres to the market economy and sees little role for government to guarantee social rights, although this depends on party political views. It is therefore not surprising that the US scores high in all three indices. However, Heritage ranks the US lowest of the three indices (at place 20 in 2021 and place 25 in 2022). Heritage criticises what it considers high government debt and high government spending. While government spending is indeed rising under President Biden, the OECD gives a more positive assessment of this spending, stating that it would ‘likely boost economic growth in the short-term and make growth more inclusive and less carbon intensive in the medium-term’. The Global

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38 The Heritage Foundation states that its mission is to ‘formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense’.
Competitiveness Index is also more positive about the state of the US economy, ranking it second in the world after Singapore.

China represents a special case, with a relatively well-performing emerging economy, which is based, however, on very different economic values and can be characterised as a ‘state-capitalist economy’. Article 6 of the Chinese Constitution is clear on the nature of China’s economic system: ‘the foundation of the socialist economic system of the People’s Republic of China is socialist public ownership of the means of production’. Although the next paragraph suggests that in the primary stage of socialism ‘diverse forms of ownership develop together’, Article 7 leaves no doubt about the focus: ‘The state sector of the economy […] shall be the leading force in the economy’. This is expressed by a high share of state-owned enterprises and state influence on trade and foreign investment, and by State aid and subsidies. Therefore, in its 2021 Trade Policy Review, the European Commission calls China a ‘state-capitalist economy’. The preamble to the Chinese Constitution says that the Chinese people will ‘develop the socialist market economy’. Although this may sound similar to the EU’s ‘social market economy’, it is a fundamentally different system.

In spite of its predominantly state-oriented outlook, the Chinese economy is booming, especially since elements of capitalism have been permitted, starting in the 1980s. The relatively high scores attributed by the World Bank and the World Economic Forum reflect the fact that it is relatively easy to do business and the economy as a whole is competitive. The low score from Heritage reflects the amount of state influence and the limited freedom of investment. There have been expectations in the West that China would converge towards a real market economy, based on its economic development and its WTO accession in 2001. Article 15 of China’s WTO accession protocol allowed other countries to treat China only for a maximum of 15 years as a ‘non market economy’ in anti-dumping cases. Many Western observers assumed this to mean that China would have transformed into a real market economy in 15 years. However, the article does not indicate any such obligation for China, but it does oblige other countries to stop using different anti-dumping calculations for China after 2016. Some countries granted China the desired ‘Market Economy Status (MES)’ before the deadline, such as Russia in 2002 and Australia in 2005. When it turned out that China was still a ‘state-capitalist economy’ in 2016, the EU had to revise its trade defence instruments in order to allow continued strict application of the rules to China, while abolishing the category of ‘non market economies’ under which it had classified the country. By 2022, most Western countries have realised that the Chinese economic system and values will continue to differ from those of a real market economy for a long time to come.

In contrast to China, Russia has experienced the full transition from a communist state-led economy to free market capitalism in just a few decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought economic upheaval and an abrupt transition to a market economy without a social dimension. Whereas Soviet society had been relatively egalitarian, free markets brought wealth to some, while impoverishing the rest of society. By the end of the 1990s, Russia’s economy had shrunk by nearly half, and one third of the country was living below the poverty line. However, this did not lead to any rethink of capitalist economic values, as the economic tide has turned for the better since 2000 when rising oil prices raised income. The Russian economy has followed the ups and downs of oil prices ever since, with low prices in 2008–2009, 2014–2016 and 2020. Since 2014, Western sanctions have had a negative effect on the Russian economy, in particular since the strong sanctions introduced since February 2022. Although the roller coaster of economic growth and recession has hit groups in society unequally, no credible alternative to the market economy is available. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia has diversified its international trade. In spite of sanctions, in 2021, the EU was still its main trade partner. Russia joined the WTO in 2012 after 18 years of negotiations.

The abrupt transition has led to an imperfect market economy with structural weaknesses, such as an excessive reliance on natural resources, high levels of corruption in a poor business environment.
and a high share of state ownership. Natural resources, including oil, gas and metals, contributed 13% to Russia’s GDP in 2019 and the government relies on taxing these for much of its revenue. The uncontrolled and rapid privatisation of former state companies in the 1990s led to the spread of corruption, preventing the establishment of a level economic playing field and a social market economy. According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, Russia ranked 137th out of 180 countries in 2019. In an attempt to rebalance the economy, President Vladimir Putin has tried to fight corruption, while bringing strategic industries back under state control. This has led to mixed results. On the one hand, regulatory reforms have improved the business environment, reflected in a good score in the World Bank’s Doing Business index. On the other hand, increased state ownership of strategic sectors, such as energy, finance and defence, has led to new forms of corruption. In 2019, the IMF estimated the state’s share of the economy at around 33%, which is quite high for a market economy. Business people may face obstacles, depending on their relations with the regime, as illustrated by the case against former oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The downsides of the system are reflected in the lower scores of the Economic Freedom Index and of the Competitiveness Index. Although social inequality risks translating into political opposition, as public discontent about pension reforms in 2019 demonstrated, it seems that a certain equilibrium in the ‘imperfect market economy’ has been achieved.

Turkey is a typical economy in transition, combining a free market economy with ad hoc government measures to compensate for imbalances. Like Russia, it may be classified as an imperfect market economy. On the one hand, agriculture still accounts for about 25% of employment, while this sector only contributes around 5–6% of GDP. On the other hand, the Turkish economy is based on a strong service sector, which accounts for more than 50% of its GDP, followed by the industrial sector with close to 30%. The World Bank has commended Turkey’s economic growth since 2000, based on reforms and government programmes. Poverty was more than halved between 2002 and 2015, while employment rates and income increased. However, the downside of government intervention and extensive credit at very low interest rates from state-owned banks has been growing debt and inflation, as the IMF has pointed out. According to Reuters, inflation had reached 19.5% in September 2021 and unemployment rates were increasing. Therefore, all institutions agree that policy and economic uncertainties make it difficult to give a clear outlook for the Turkish economy. This is reinforced by the dwindling prospects of EU membership and uncertainty about the future of the EU-Turkey customs union, as we will see in the next chapter. Another structural problem in Turkey is corruption: according to the Corruption Perceptions Index, Turkey scores 91st out of 180, a decrease of 10 points since 2012. All this is reflected in the mixed figures: a good score in the Doing Business Index, but more modest scores in the Index of Economic Freedom and the Competitiveness Index.

Figure 18: Comparative table of economic values: systems and indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value: Economic</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>Market economy</td>
<td>Social market economy</td>
<td>Imperfect market economy</td>
<td>Imperfect market economy</td>
<td>State-capitalist economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing Business</td>
<td>84 (81.98)</td>
<td>85.3–66.1 (84.2–62.11)</td>
<td>76.8 (68.66)</td>
<td>78.2 (66.66)</td>
<td>77.9 (62.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ. Freedom index</td>
<td>74.8 (77.8)</td>
<td>81.4–60.9 (78.7–60.3)</td>
<td>64.0 (64.2)</td>
<td>61.5 (50.5)</td>
<td>58.4 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021 (2011)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>82.4–61.9</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Doing Business reports, Economic Freedom Indices, Global Competitiveness Index (as linked in table).
It is difficult to say whether economic values have been declining over the years. The scores for doing business and economic freedom have actually been increasing, in particular in Turkey, Russia and China. However, this has not changed their economic systems and underlying values, with continued state influence in China and corruption in Russia and Turkey. Although we can observe some convergence towards a market economy, the deeper economic values of countries seem fairly stable.

4.4 Earth: growing importance but weak implementation

Having noted substantial differences in political values and, to a lesser extent, economic values, the question arises as to whether greater convergence exists on Earth values. The concept of sustainable development originates from the United Nations and seems to be more universally accepted than the political and socio-economic rights formulated by the UN. However, countries have differing interpretations of what is sustainable. Although there is a growing body of academic research comparing different attitudes towards the environment, most of these compare individual preferences and little material can be found on collective characteristics, such as demography, education, political preference or nationality. In the literature, country-based differences are partly covered by the notion of ‘relational values’, meaning that the value of an environment is defined between people – for example in a national context – and under particular circumstances.39

Because of the difficulty of assessing differences in Earth values between countries, the following section will focus on differences in implementing international environmental conventions based on the UN Earth value of sustainable development. Environmental conventions are mostly expressions of the instrumental view of environmental policies. Where we do have information, such as on the Chinese principle of ‘ecological civilisation’, this will be mentioned in the respective country section. However, at the beginning of this chapter we highlight one environmental aspect on which countries do not seem to agree, partly based on different Earth values: the production and use of genetically modified crops or GMO crops. We have already noted that opinions on GMO crops are complex and divided in the EU, that only two Member States cultivate them and that several EU countries import GMO crops, mostly for animal feed. Most of those imports come from our first comparison country: the United States. The US and China were among the first countries to start growing GMO crops in 1996. The US is the largest producer of GMO crops, accounting for 38% of global production. Although China produces smaller quantities of GMO crops, investment in research and production are part of its economic development policy. GMOs are increasingly being used in developing countries, including Brazil and India.40 From the values perspective, arguments have been made for and against GMO crops. Arguments against GMOs range from the rejection in principle for ethical reasons of the modification of genes, through concerns about fertility and seed reproduction, to the monopolisation of patents and growing socio-economic inequality. Values-based arguments in favour of GMOs point to their supposed necessity in order to feed a growing world population41 or the fact that large-scale GMO farming can replace inefficient and unsustainable ‘slash and burn agriculture’, in particular in developing countries.42 Interesting questions for further research into the values aspects of GMOs could be whether the acceptance and use of GMOs is linked to particular socio-cultural or economic values. One hypothesis to test could be whether low uncertainty avoidance and an entrepreneurial attitude, prevalent in both the US and China, might explain the growth in and use of GMOs in those countries. Similar hypotheses could be tested in relation to climate change, resource use or mobility.

40 Information from gmoanswers.com
41 See for instance Azadi, H., D’Haese, M. and Taheri, F., “A World without Hunger: Organic or GM Crops?”, Sustainability, Vol. 9, No 4, 2017, concluding that organic farming could be a viable option in developed countries with high productivity and a mix of organic and GMO crops a more realistic option in developing countries.
42 See for instance this dw.com article on resistance in African countries to increased use of GMOs in agriculture.
patterns and socio-cultural or economic values. For reasons of data availability and scope, we will not explore these questions further and will focus instead on the acceptance and implementation of instrumental Earth values based on the principle of sustainability and laid down in international environmental conventions.

**Measured by the yardstick of signing and ratifying international environmental agreements, there appears to be a high degree of consensus across the globe on upholding or improving Earth values.** Environmental agreements have been signed by large numbers of states with very different political values. The 1992 Convention on Biodiversity and the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement have, for example, been signed by 196 and 195 states respectively. By contrast, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has only been signed by 74 countries. Another indicator of broad support for Earth values is the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 contain many Earth values. Although the SDGs do not explicitly distinguish Earth values, we may classify approximately eight out of the 17 SDGs as Earth values.43

**Given the apparent consensus on the Earth value of sustainability, more specific indicators are needed to measure how well countries are implementing their declared intentions in concrete policies.** These can also give guidance for potential EU cooperation with those countries on these values. We will use three sets of indicators to do so. As climate change is currently the most prominent environmental issue, the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) is our first indicator. It rates Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), 2020 pledges and long-term targets for achieving the Paris Agreement goals. Countries are rated on a six-step scale, ranging from ‘critically insufficient’, through ‘two degrees compatible’, to ‘role model’. This indicator allows for a comparison with the EU as a whole, which is rated with the score ‘insufficient’. That is not good, but still better than all four comparison countries, as we will see. Secondly, the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) developed by Yale University indicates country performance on environmental policy from both a health and an ecosystem perspective.

**Figure 19:** World map indicating rankings in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index

![World map indicating rankings in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index](https://example.com)

**Source:** Wendling, Z. A., Emerson, J. W., de Sherbinin, A., Esty, D. C., et al., 2020 Environmental Performance Index, New Haven, CT, Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy, 2020, epi.yale.edu

43 Namely Goals 3 Good Health and Well-Being; 6 Clean Water and Sanitation; 7 Affordable and Clean Energy; 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities; 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; 13 Climate Action; 14 Life Below Water; and 15 Life on Land.
Scores are based on 32 indicators, 40% of which refer to environmental health (such as air quality or access to sanitation or drinking water) and 60% to ecosystem vitality (such as biodiversity or climate change). The index ranks 180 countries, from Denmark as first (82.5 points) to Liberia last (22.6 points). EU Member States score between 82.5 and 57. Thirdly, the SDG Index shows how well countries are advancing in implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As an indicator for performance on all goals, it may not be completely accurate for measuring Earth values alone. Nevertheless, it can be a good backup to the EPI. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2021, Finland ranks first with a score of 85.9 and the Central African Republic ranks last with a score of 38.3. EU Member States score between 85.9 and 73.8.

To assess the climate and environment policies of our four reference countries, we kick off with an overview of the signing and ratification of a selection of international environmental agreements. Our selection comprises, at global level, the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and its Montreal Protocol of 1985 and 1987 (OZO), the Convention on Biological Diversity of 1993 (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, in particular its Kyoto Protocol of 1997 (Kyoto) and its Paris Agreement on Climate Change of 2016 (Paris). Although the overall result in the form of a table seems quite good at first glance, the years of the ratifications and the stories of how they came about in the country sections which follow shed more light on the importance countries really attach to Earth values. These sections will also mention some agreements of a more regional nature, where applicable.

**Figure 20**: Comparison of accession to international environmental agreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBD 1993</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>not ratified</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: table created by the author on the basis of the publicly available data under the links of the treaty abbreviations.

The United States has not been spared from climate change and its effects are expected to become more intense, varying by region from rising sea levels in the coastal areas to heatwaves in most parts of the country, as well as wildfires, flooding and decreasing water availability. This is likely to cause damage to ecosystems, agriculture and fisheries. However, the US has not been stable in its engagement towards climate action, for the most part depending on the differing views of the Democratic and Republican Parties. The US signed the UNFCCC in 1992 and the Kyoto Protocol in 1998, but did not ratify the latter because the Senate did not approve it, possibly due to a political miscalculation by Democratic President Bill Clinton. However, US policies reversed completely under Republican President Bush, who even annulled the signature. History more or less repeated itself with the Paris Agreement, which the US signed and ratified under Democratic President Obama, whereas his Republican successor Trump withdrew from it. The US re-joined in January 2021 on President Biden’s first day in office. National climate policy shows a similar zigzag pattern. The Obama Administration presented a Climate Action Plan in 2008, reducing carbon dioxide emissions, preserving forests and encouraging the use of alternative fuels. The 2013 industry regulations and Clean Power Plan were nullified by President Trump. The Biden Administration reversed climate policies again, for example through executive orders on Public Health, Environment, Science and Climate and on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad in January 2021. The current administration aims to decarbonise the energy sector by 2035, phasing out coal and increasing gas and renewables. In April 2021, symbolically on ‘Earth Day’, President Biden convened 40 world leaders in a virtual Leaders Summit on Climate to reinstate American leadership in climate policy and boost the chances for meaningful outcomes of the November 2021 Glasgow climate conference (COP26). He called for an international Climate Finance Plan to assist developing countries and announced a stronger NDC target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by 50–52% below 2005 levels in 2030. The new US climate...
and energy policy has also been formulated in the context of US-China competition, in July 2021, just after the EU proposed its **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, Democratic lawmakers proposed a tax on imports from China and other countries that are allegedly not doing enough to reduce planet warming. Although not explicitly endorsed by the White House, the mechanism fits in with the new US climate policy. The Climate Action Tracker (CAT) **commends** the new US climate policy and improved NDC target. However, 5–10% additional reductions in emissions would be needed in order to meet the 1.5 °C target. CAT assessments confirm that climate policy in the US varies strongly according to the political party in power, attributing the label ‘critically insufficient’ to the policies of the Trump Administration in 2020, upgrading this by two steps to ‘insufficient’ for the Biden Administration.

On other environmental policies, the US has generally signed and ratified international agreements, but not the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. The US has signed up to the global ozone protection agreements, the 1979 UN **Convention on Air Pollution** and to regional agreements, such as on oil pollution in the Caribbean and Arctic regions, and environmental protection in the Antarctic region. Whereas the US was among the first countries in the world to recognise the importance of the conservation of nature through the establishment of national parks, the non-ratification of the CBD may seem surprising at first glance. Upon closer inspection, this appears to be another illustration of different views on Earth values between the Democratic and Republican Parties. President George H.W. Bush did not sign the CBD in 1992, whereas President Clinton signed it after taking office in 1993, after which the CBD once again failed to be ratified in the Senate. Under President Obama, it was not ratified, perhaps because of changing majorities in House and Senate, combined with scant political attention to biodiversity. The Trump Administration did not identify with Earth values and **rolled back more than 100 environmental rules**. Democratic President Biden reversed course once again. He repealed restrictions on the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** regarding air pollution and **increased the funding** of the Agency by USD 50 million. He furthermore created a White House office of environmental justice and committed to protecting 30% of US land and coastal seas by 2030. **In spite of the political zigzag course between Democrats and Republicans, the Environmental Performance Index 2020 ranks the US 24th out of 180 countries, with an overall score of 69.3, which is fairly good.** The US ranks 15th on Climate Change and 16th on Air Quality, but only 67th on Biodiversity and Habitat, probably reflecting the CBD non-ratification. The **SDG Index** ranks the US 32nd out of 165 countries, but signals remaining challenges on SDGs 13 on Climate Change, 14 on Life below Water and 15 on Life on Land.

Until the mid-20th century, China was a rural society. Only in the 1950s did it begin to industrialise according to Soviet-style economic plans. This also caused a number of environmental problems, including contributing to climate change. **China has been active from the outset in the international fight against climate change.** In 1993, China ratified the UNFCCC and it signed and ratified the 1998 Kyoto Protocol. Whereas at the 2009 Copenhagen Climate conference, China was perceived as obstructing progress, it finally struck a last-minute deal with the US. Since then, cooperation with the US has become central to Chinese climate diplomacy, leading to an agreement on emission goals and energy and research cooperation in 2014. This appeared to be an important step towards the success of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, which China signed and ratified. When US President Trump announced the US withdrawal from the Agreement in 2017, China reaffirmed its commitment, thereby presenting itself as a global leader on climate. In line with this, China is setting ambitious goals for itself. In its **NDCs**, it pledged to peak its carbon dioxide emissions around 2030, lowering these by 60–65% per unit of GDP compared to the 2005 level. China intends to increase the share of non-fossil fuels to around 20% and increase forest volume by around 4.5 billion cubic meters compared to its 2005 level. At the 2020 UN General Assembly, President Xi

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44 https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-the-united-states-should-compete-with-china-on-global-clean-energy-finance/

45 Between the opening of Yellowstone park in 1872 and the establishment of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916, the US established around 35 national parks; today the NPS oversees more than 400 park sites; see nationalparks.org
raised expectations, announcing the new objective to peak CO₂ emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

**However, China’s declared leading role on climate change has only developed slowly and still needs to be subject to a reality check.**⁴⁶ China has long been advocating ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’, meaning that responsibilities vary according to the level of economic development. It was only in 2018 that China reached a compromise with the EU and other developed countries on common standards and some flexibility for developing countries. However, it is not clear how China would be able to turn its ambitious vision into reality without major policy changes. China’s 14th Five Year Plan from March 2021 – the main guiding document for government policies – outlines a continuation of existing trends, rather than an acceleration of climate action. Despite the fact that China has emerged as a leader in clean energy technologies, including solar panels and wind turbines, coal consumption has begun to rise again in recent years. Moreover, through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has been promoting coal power plants around the world. In response to criticism and in line with its 2017 Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road, President Xi Jinping stated at the 2021 UN General Assembly that China would stop promoting coal in BRI countries. Because China remains too committed to carbon-intensive production and coal, the CAT rates its efforts as ‘Highly insufficient’, although the announced update of its NDCs is moving in the right direction.

China is also facing other environmental challenges, such as biodiversity conservation, air pollution, desertification, soil pollution and nuclear waste. It has signed and ratified the relevant environmental agreements, such as those on protecting the ozone layer and the Convention on Biological Diversity. China has launched an active biodiversity policy, which increased its protected areas by 18 % between 2008 and 2018. According to the Asian Development Bank, most biodiversity targets are on track. China’s policies to protect the ozone layer seem to have been successful as well. The extent of the environmental problems and successes in some areas have led China to accept environmental goals alongside economic development. In 2007, former President Hu Jintao launched the concept of ‘Ecological Civilisation’ as the Chinese version of ‘sustainable development’, which was even enshrined as a constitutional principle in 2018. However, although the concept has been adopted by Chinese scientists, it appears to remain mainly politically driven and its results in several areas are limited. The problem of air pollution remains considerable, although in response to severe air pollution in 2013, China did succeed in lowering concentrations of hazardous particles. Other persistent problems are water scarcity and pollution, ecological damage through hydropower dams and desertification. Although government policies have succeeded in slowing the latter, it has not been stopped. Soil pollution by heavy metals, overuse of pesticides, electronic waste and rare-earth-metal mining are also serious problems. Finally, China’s efforts to increase the use of nuclear power, partly as an effort to lower carbon emissions, comes with new safety and environmental risks. The overall evaluation of China’s environmental efforts tends to be negative. The SDG index, which is only partly about the environment, ranks China 57th out of 165 countries. **However, the Environmental Performance index ranks China only 120th out of 180, with a poor score of 37.3.** The conclusion appears to be that China’s environmental policies reveal a similar gap between high ambitions and limited results to that of its climate policy.

**Russia** is severely affected by climate change, increasingly causing droughts, floods and wildfires on its territory. The country is warming 2.5 times faster than the rest of the world. The thawing of the permafrost, which covers nearly two thirds of Russian territory, is affecting urban infrastructure and poses a risk to oil and gas pipelines. An increase in droughts in Russia’s southern agricultural ‘breadbasket’ could jeopardise food security. Therefore, government officials have replaced initial suggestions that global warming might

be beneficial for Russia by Russia’s acknowledgement of the negative effects of climate change, its contribution to international climate action and its development of national climate policies. Russia has ratified both the 1992 UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, although the latter only in 2004, seven years after its adoption. In September 2003, Russia hosted the World Climate Change Conference in Moscow and President Putin participated in the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. Russia signed the Paris Agreement in 2016 and ratified it in 2019. Russia also emphasises the CO₂ absorption capacity of forests, of which it has many. In parallel to its international engagement, national climate policy developed only incrementally. After a period of hesitation and concerns about economic impact, a Presidential Decree in 2013 set national reduction targets for greenhouse gas emissions and was followed by a 2019 National Action Plan for 2020–2022 and a Strategy for the long-term lowering of greenhouse gas emissions up to 2050. Most recently, a Russian ‘Green Deal’ was adopted to overcome the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and transform Russia into a sustainable, green and modern economy. The programme sets the ambitious goal for Russia to become climate neutral by 2050, and its assessment by Greenpeace is positive.

However, Russia will have great difficulty in greening its economy and, in particular, its energy sector. Energy production, mainly by fossil fuels, accounts for the lion’s share of Russia’s greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions have been going down since the benchmark year 1990, mostly as a result of economic recession and the collapse of old emitting industries. Therefore, compared to the 1990 reference year, Russia needs to make little effort to invest in renewables, while still fulfilling its international commitments. The March 2020 draft energy strategy for the period up to 2035 seeks instead to maximise the contribution of the hydrocarbon industry to the country’s development. In fact, Russia’s support for climate action has come fairly late on and hesitantly, and has shown little innovative action. Even though recent programmes are more ambitious, a transformation towards renewables demands profound change and political will, which still has to be proven. Therefore, the Climate Action Tracker rates Russia’s NDCs to the Paris Agreement as still being ‘critically insufficient’. The CAT concludes that Russia is likely to meet its NDCs to the Paris Agreement, but mainly because they are so weak. Nevertheless, Russia may be forced to change its energy mix if the importers of its fossil fuels, notably the EU, introduce carbon border adjustment measures.

Regarding other environmental policies, Russia has signed the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Convention on Biodiversity and the UN Convention on Air Pollution. At regional level, it has signed and ratified the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution. In addition, Russia has developed national policies, such as Project Ecology, which aims to improve environmental protection by 2024, and the strategy for the Development of Marine Activities 2030. When it comes to evaluating these efforts, the SDG Index 2021 ranks Russia 46th out of 165 countries overall. However, its environmental goals for SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 14 Life below Water and SDG 15 Life on Land, are labelled as ‘stagnating with significant or major challenges remaining’. In the Environmental Performance Index 2020, Russia ranks 58th out of 180 countries, with an overall score of 50.5. This score is much better than China’s but not as good as that of the US. The country has a good rank – 47th – on air quality and a low rank – 111th – on biodiversity and habitat. In sum, although Russia is pursuing environmental policies, efforts to implement them need to be stepped up in order to have a significant impact.

As a Mediterranean country, Turkey will be severely affected by climate change, ranging from increasing summer temperatures and decreasing winter precipitation to droughts and coastal erosion. This will affect agriculture, biodiversity and water scarcity in particular, as well as the industrial sector. In spite of clear threats emanating from climate change, Turkey’s engagement to combat it has been complex and ambiguous. Turkey has postponed its ratification of agreements, is contradictory in its commitments and

47 http://www.newslettereuropean.eu/russias-energy-strategy-2035/
emphasises its development status and need for economic support. Only after 12 years did Turkey become a party to the UNFCCC, after having obtained a transfer to an annex of the agreement involving fewer costs and more benefits.\footnote{At its own request, Turkey was moved from the annex of ‘developed countries’, which are supposed to contribute financially to the efforts of developing countries, to the annex of ‘industrialised countries and economies in transition’, which are more likely to receive financial contributions.} Turkey ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2009, but its ‘non-Annex B status’\footnote{In Annex B, the Kyoto Protocol sets binding emission reduction targets for 37 industrialised countries and economies in transition. Turkey is not included on this list.} exempted it from quantified emission reduction targets. A similar scenario ensued in relation to the Paris Agreement. Turkey signed it in 2016 and committed to a reduction of up to 21% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. However, it did not ratify the agreement, supposedly because it does not recognise that Turkey is a developing country. Turkey’s own 2019 report on the Sustainable Development Goals emphasises SDG 13 Climate Change, while stating that Turkey needs foreign assistance to achieve the mitigation targets. While Turkey receives EU funds and multilateral climate funds from development banks, development agencies, the Clean Technology Fund and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), continued non-ratification of the Paris Agreement might prevent it from benefiting from the Green Climate Fund.

Turkey’s national climate policies are unfortunately not convincing either. There are good intentions, such as the 2011 National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan and the announcement by the environment minister in February 2021 of a climate bill to be sent to parliament. However, these good intentions are not being implemented. In fact, Turkey’s report to the UNFCCC indicates that Turkey’s total emissions increased in the period from 1990 to 2017. In 2017, the energy sector was responsible for more than 70% of emissions, mainly from fossil fuels, followed by industry, mainly steel production, and agriculture. The ambiguity equally exists in the political messaging. At the 2020 Climate Summit hosted by US President Biden, President Erdogan made pledges on reforestation and renewable energy, but also stated that his country ‘has nearly no historical responsibility on the rise of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere’ and ‘will continue to contribute to the global climate action on equal terms with countries of similar economic levels’. In its 2020 report on Turkey, the European Commission concluded that ‘no progress was made in this area over the reporting period. A national strategy consistent with the EU 2030 climate and energy framework was not formulated, and mainstreaming of climate action into other sector policies was still limited’.\footnote{European Commission, Turkey 2020 report, page 101.} The CAT predicts a 40 to 70% increase in emissions by 2030 if Turkey does not further implement mitigation strategies, especially in the area of coal power. It criticises the lack of a long-term strategy and assesses Turkey’s commitment as ‘critically insufficient’.

Turkey has signed and ratified the ozone agreements, the CBD and the UN Convention on Air Pollution, and the regional conventions on the Mediterranean (1976) and Black Sea (1992), hosting the secretariat of the latter. It has adopted national strategies such as the National Biodiversity Action Plan in 2018. Since accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU were opened in 2005, and the environment chapter in 2009, Turkey should be able to adopt all EU legislation regarding sustainability and the environment upon accession or after transitional periods. Therefore, Turkey’s national environmental policies are regularly evaluated by the EU. In its 2020 report on Turkey, the Commission noted some progress in the area of waste management and waste water treatment, mentioning a 2019 ban on the free distribution of lightweight plastics, a by-law on zero waste from the same year and the 2020 law on the protection of drinking water. However, according to the Commission, the enforcement and implementation of environmental legislation remains weak. For its overall environmental performance, including on the climate, the Environmental Performance Index 2020 ranks Turkey 99th out of 180 globally, with a score of 42.6. It notes in particular a poor performance in biodiversity protection, fisheries management and climate change mitigation. The Sustainable Development Report 2021 confirms this, labelling Turkey’s efforts on
SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 14 Life below Water and SDG 15 Life on Land as stagnating, with major challenges remaining.

An overall comparison of Earth values shows that all countries have taken insufficient action to curb climate change, but their plans and efforts vary considerably. The EU and China are the most ambitious in their plans and the US under President Biden is joining them. However, when it comes to implementation, it appears that China cannot live up to its own high expectations and delivers even below the modest efforts of Russia and Turkey. This is also reflected in China’s low EPI score, which includes climate change as a component and awards China low scores for other environmental policies as well. Therefore, the EU and the US are the leading lights on Earth values, although the EU shows considerable differences between countries and the US between political parties. The average EU EPI score is 69.75, comparable to that of the US. However, taking the consistency of EU environmental policy and its basis in the Treaties into account, it would appear reasonable to consider the EU the ultimate leader on Earth values, just ahead of the US.

**Figure 21:** Comparative table of Earth values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value: Earth</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- climate (CAT)</td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>Critically insufficient</td>
<td>Critically insufficient</td>
<td>Highly insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2020 EPI score</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>57–82.5</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: table by the author based on CAT and EPI data; top 5 EU: DK, LU, FR, AU, FI; bottom 5 EU: CR, LI, LV, POL, BUL

The other important question we have to answer is whether the influence of Earth values is declining. The fact that all countries in the comparison are delivering insufficiently on climate change and only some are doing reasonably well on other environmental policies could warrant this conclusion. However, if we analyse the trends over the recent decades, the opposite seems to be the case: Earth values are the only values whose influence is increasing. A comparison of EPI scores shows that all our reference countries have improved their EPI scores in the past decade. Although China’s current score is low, it has also witnessed the biggest increase in EPI over the last 10 years.

**Figure 22:** Trend in Earth values: 2020 EPI scores compared to 2010 EPI scores after applying the 2020 methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>52.8–75.2</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>57–82.5</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.2–7.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2020 Environmental Performance Index

We may therefore conclude that the importance and influence of Earth values is increasing. Not only the EPI data supports this conclusion. It also emerges from the increase in the number of declarations and agreements concerning the climate and the environment since the 1992 Rio Conference on Sustainable Development, the overall high rate of ratification of environmental agreements and the apparent need governments of all political stripes see to justify their environmental performance, although they have to weigh up the implementation efforts against the economic costs. Therefore, we may conclude that although the implementation and the sense of urgency vary (partly depending on economic

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51 Although data sets are not always complete and the methodology for calculating the EPI scores has changed over time, EPI researchers have projected the 2020 methodology back into the past to make both years comparable.
capacities), the importance and influence of Earth values is increasing, irrespective of differences in fundamental political or economic values.

4.5 International order: more pragmatism than principles

We have noted that the EU has based its external action on a combination of interests and values, labelled ‘principled pragmatism’. We have also noted that, according to Article 21 TEU, the EU must be guided in its action on the international scene by the ‘principles which have inspired its own creation’. These are the principles of rules-based cooperation that have been developed on the basis of a long history of wars and conflicts. In order to understand the international order values of our reference countries, we will equally have to examine their historical experiences with conflict or cooperation and the values developed from these.

On the one hand, the US has greatly contributed to the design of an international order at global level. America’s entry into World War I marks the start of a strong US involvement in the international order. President Wilson’s Fourteen Points plan presented to Congress in 1918 starts with outlining five key principles, which can be considered as US values regarding the international order: 1. Open covenants openly arrived at; 2. Freedom of the seas; 3. Free trade; 4. Reduction of armaments; and 5. Adjustment of colonial claims based on the principles of self-determination. The 14th point called for ‘a general association of nations [...] for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike’, which resulted in the foundation of the League of Nations. The US Congress rejected membership of the League of Nations, but the US later joined the United Nations. Three aspects of Wilson’s plan point to political values in the international order: open covenants (the rule of law), reduction of armaments (peace) and association of nations (multilateralism). Self-determination was not only applied to colonies, but equally to the creation of new states in Europe. Unfortunately, redrawing the borders in the mixed cultural landscape of central Europe created new issues regarding ethnic minorities, sowing the seeds of later conflicts. Freedom of navigation at sea and free trade are economic values, based on the principle of the market economy. The US later entrenched these economic values in the international order by promoting the establishment of international economic organisations such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. In Wilson’s time, Earth values focused on nature conservation and not on the international order.

A constant factor in the pendulum between an isolationist and an internationalist attitude of the US is a focus on the national interest. Isolationist US leaders, such as President Trump, consider that interests can best be pursued by the US going it alone. The isolationist narrative underplays the benefits of international cooperation and overlays those of nationalism. In the internationalist narrative, the international order is perceived not only as a value in itself, but also as a vehicle to disseminate American values and interests in the world. The US think tank ‘Council on Foreign Relations’ promoted such a narrative in a 2020 report. The internationalist narrative tends to underplay the US interest and overplay altruistic motives, up to the point of framing military interventions as wars against evil (which may be dubbed communism, terrorism or simply the ‘axis of evil’) and for the good, in particular democracy. This narrative runs into problems when military interventions do not lead to the desired democracy, as in Iraq and Afghanistan recently. President Biden has chosen a peaceful internationalist narrative and addressed values during his visit to Europe in 2021. Nevertheless, the Biden Administration shows a continued, if not increased, determination in confronting Russia and China. The creation of AUKUS, a military alliance of Australia, the UK and the US in 2021 not only aims to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines, but also fits into a longer-term development of alliances against growing Chinese influence. While protecting smaller powers such as Australia and Japan, these alliances secure US interests in the Indo-Pacific region, including

52 For instance ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, the US) in the 1950s, the Five Eyes intelligence cooperation between the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada or the Quad, an alliance of the US, Australia, India and Japan.
the freedom of the seas from Wilson’s points. **As for the EU, American international order values are a mix of ‘principled values’ and ‘pragmatic interests’. However, the US has more often used military power to enforce them, for which reason we will characterise them as ‘principled power politics’.**

**China is increasingly extending its geo-economic and geopolitical power in the region and into the wider world.** China’s pride as a regional imperial power was heavily damaged by wars with foreign powers, in particular Britain and Japan, in the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by civil war and communism. After decades of internal turmoil, China regained self-confidence through economic expansion and trade, culminating in 2015 in the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI). Presented as a project to foster international prosperity, regional economic integration and peace, it was initially received fairly positively in the West. China also founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001, together with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and later joined by India and Pakistan. It is aimed at ‘peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order’. This has led to speculations as to whether China is positioning itself as the leader of an alternative international order, possibly with Russia, independent from the West. The SCO could merge with Russia’s Eurasian Economic Union or expand its military activities. However, tensions between China and India make military development unlikely. China has also become more active in multilateral diplomacy, for example in the UN, increasing its influence on human rights, development finance and climate change. **However, China’s assertive international agenda has led to defensive reactions from Japan, India and Australia, which are increasingly seeking support from the US and the UK.** The BRI has increasingly been criticised for creating economic dependencies. India has joined the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with Australia, Japan and the US, which was revived in 2017 in reaction to Chinese activities in the Indo-Pacific region. In 2021, the Quad adopted a pro-Western statement calling for democratic values and a free, open rules-based order. **China and the US are therefore today’s ‘systemic rivals’, defending different value systems and different geopolitical interests in the international order.**

**Chinese expansionism appears to be based on renewed nationalism, which transcends its many regional cultures and provides individuals with an opportunity to combine personal business success with national pride.** The 20th century was highly disruptive for China. The abolition of an imperial system and its centuries-old social values, civil war, the introduction of communism, industrialisation and increasing social inequalities shattered the moral and social consistency of Chinese society. The current regime is communist in name, but has permitted capitalist elements since the 1980s. To keep society together internally, state control over many aspects of life has increased. The new national narrative is complemented by an international one of Chinese greatness. Aspiring to leadership on climate change or creating a Chinese alternative to Western global structures fit this internationalist narrative. Alongside this mix of modernist and communist values, much older Chinese value systems have not completely disappeared. Among these are Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, all of which date back to 300–600 BC. While the relative popularity of these has fluctuated over time, certain concepts appear in all three of them, such as ‘duality’ (Yin-Yang) or ‘harmony’. Some have argued that these have influenced political concepts such as the ‘five principles of peaceful coexistence’, formulated in 1954 by Chinese and Indian Prime Ministers Zhou Enlai and Nehru. They established the ‘movement of non-aligned countries’

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54 See, for example, Zeying Wu, ‘What lies between China’s nationalism and growth?’, on Eastasia-Forum, 2021.
55 See, for example, Heberer and Müller: ‘Entwicklungsstaat China’, 2020.
56 The five principles are: mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.
as an alternative positioned between Soviet communism and Western capitalism. Other authors have struck a more critical note, suggesting that China uses the principles selectively for its own interests, deflecting Western criticism as ‘interference in internal affairs’ or neglecting the issue of territorial integrity in the South China Sea. Some authors have suggested that a Chinese understanding of ‘harmony’ could incorporate both views. Harmony then ‘does not mean shying away from conflict, compromising on principles, or constant neutrality. Rather, harmony stresses that conflicts and struggles should be dealt with properly and legally’. Apparently, the Chinese have their own language for combining values and interests, peaceful coexistence and profitable expansion, which we could potentially call ‘harmonious expansionism’.

Contrary to China, Russia’s sphere of influence has recently been shrinking instead of expanding. This has been a particularly distressing experience for a country that tends to see itself as a great power. Russia’s self-perception of its place in the world is strongly influenced by historical experiences. We will highlight three formative elements of Russia’s international order values: the notion of Slavic unity, the link between politics and Orthodox Christianity, and geographical space. Exceptionalism in the form of a specific ‘Russian soul’ destined to play a leading role in uniting all Slavic peoples has been an undercurrent in Russian history and foreign policy. Geographically, the idea dates back to the foundation of Russia in the year 862, when King Rurik founded the ‘Kievan Rus’, comprising territory between Novgorod in the north and Kyiv in the south. Pan-Slavism as a cultural and political concept was only developed in the 19th century. As regards the link between politics and Christianity, its origin can be found in Prince Vladimir’s conversion to Christianity in 988. Since the Great Schism of 1054, this has meant Orthodox Christianity, which oriented the country towards the Byzantine Empire and Constantinople. When Constantinople fell to the Turks, some viewed Moscow as the ‘third Rome’. The most important factor in terms of Russia’s view on the international order, however, is geography. Russia has suffered invasions from east and west. Russia was only able to resist the Mongolian invasion of around 1240 in part and it brought Asian influences with it. Wars with the Swedes and the Poles determined Russia’s varying sphere of influence to the north-west. The perceived need for a buffer zone around its core territory has led to expansionary wars since the 17th century, in particular under Czars Peter and Catherine, both known as ‘the Great’. In the 19th century, Russian intellectuals were split on the issue of the country’s future course. The ‘Slavophiles’ advocated uniting with the Slavic peoples still under Austrian or Turkish rule in some form of ‘pan-Slavism’. Their opponents, the ‘Westerners’ wanted to forge closer cultural and political links with Western Europe. From the ashes of the First World War and the Russian Revolution something different emerged: a secular communist empire called the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union largely satisfied the need for a geographical buffer zone and, through the Warsaw Pact, it did include most Slavic peoples. However, it severed the connection between politics and religion. Disconnected from the West, the Soviet Union survived for 70 years on the basis of internal ideology and external military power, collapsing in 1991.

57 Ankit Panda, ‘Reflecting on China’s five principles 60 years later’, The Diplomat, 2014.
60 See, for example, Mikhail Suslov, Geographical Metanarratives in Russia and the European East: Contemporary Pan-Slavism, Eurasian Geography and Economics, Vol. 53, No 5, 2012, pp. 575-595.
61 The authors are aware of language sensitivities (see for example this article in The Guardian) and choose to spell ‘Kievan Rus’, because this concept is mostly used from a Russian perspective, but ‘Kyiv’ because this is now the preferred official spelling of Ukraine.
The views of the remaining core state of Russia on the international order have not fundamentally changed, although some concepts had to be reformulated.62 The notion of Slavic unity no longer crops up under that name, but Russian efforts to maintain its influence over Slavic peoples in Belarus and Ukraine show its continued importance. Although the conflict with Ukraine certainly has geopolitical dimensions, the cultural dimension, including common ties to the ‘Kievan Rus’ and the Russian language, cannot be underestimated, at least from the Russian point of view.63 As recent as July 2021, President Putin expressed this view in an article on ‘the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians’. This article appears to allow a certain degree of a national identity to Ukrainians, as long as they stay inside a triple union with their fellow Slavs in Belarus and Russia. In Putin’s address to the nation of 21 February 2022, however, he emphasised the artificiality of Ukraine as an entity, which supposedly emerged from a series of erroneous decisions by Lenin, Stalin and other communists during the Soviet era. Linked to Slavism is the narrower concept of the ‘Russkiy Mir’ (‘Russian world’), aimed at the 25 million Russians who, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, suddenly found themselves living abroad, plus some five million Russians in other countries. Russia endeavours to maintain close ties with this Russian diaspora. The Russkiy Mir Foundation is a cultural institute similar to the British Council or the French Francophonie, but also provides ‘assistance in relocation’ to the Russian community abroad.64 This is said to include issuing Russian passports to people who did not previously have Russian nationality, for example in eastern Ukraine and northern Georgia. Such a practice blurs the line between socio-cultural and political values, creating geopolitical realities.65

As regards religion, Russian politics has reconnected to pre-Soviet times by creating proximity to the Orthodox Church. The church regained its freedom in the 1990s and – with about 80 % of Russians self-identifying as Orthodox – enjoys great popularity. A mutually beneficial alliance between the church and the state has developed, in particular since the presidency of Medvedev and the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill I. The state has allowed the church to recover much of its property, gaining church support for the Russian Government in return. However, attempts by the Moscow Patriarchate to dominate all international branches of the Orthodox Church have failed. In 2014, the Russian Orthodox Church did not support the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine and lost the sympathy of the new Ukrainian Government, which successfully lobbied for the independence of its own Orthodox Church from the Russian one, finally granted by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 2018.66 As for geography, the disintegration of the Soviet Union pushed the Russian borders back to their furthest point east since the 17th century, leading President Putin in 2005 to call the collapse ‘the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century’.67 The remaining core state of Russia has tried to keep as much influence as possible over the now independent former Soviet republics. Regional organisations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)68 have so far only shown limited success in granting Russia a role as regional leader. The CSTO has only been active once in a short intervention in Kazakhstan in 2022,69 but its military significance in a conflict with NATO is unclear. CIS membership has been

62 Suslov points out that the collapse of the Soviet Union ‘heightened spatial anxiety, prompting much mental re-mapping to enable Russia to continue to occupy a central place – be it in the center of the Eurasian landmass, the center of “Orthodox civilization,” or in the center of the “Slavic world”’ (Suslov, p. 576).
64 See the official Russky Mir website: https://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/index.php
66 See also: Oleg Kuznetsov, ‘Orthodoxy and Russian foreign policy: a story of rise and fall’, 2021.
67 See also: Tim Marshall, ‘Russia and the curse of geography’, 2015.
68 Founded in 1991, the CIS currently includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Founded in 1992, the CSTO currently includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.
69 CSTO ‘peace keeping’ troops helped suppress civil unrest, see for example, Amy Mackinnon in Foreign Policy.
fluctuating: Georgia left the organisation in 2009 and Ukraine, although only an associated member, withdrew its representatives in 2018. One of the few successes of the CIS was the signing in 2011 of a free trade agreement. However, since 2015, economic cooperation in the region has been shifting towards the Eurasian Economic Union.\textsuperscript{70} We may therefore conclude that \textit{although Russia has only to a limited extent been successful in creating new alliances, its pursued international order values seem to be best encapsulated by continued attempts at ‘regional influence’}. 

\textbf{Turkish views on the international order are equally influenced by regional exceptionalism, and its alliance with the West has been hesitant and remains volatile.} Russia and Turkey are both Eurasian countries and both have been large empires, creating a sense of cultural exceptionalism. Turkish exceptionalism is rooted in Islam, which, like the Orthodox Church in Russia, was sidelined for decades in a secular state but is increasingly present. Also similarly, ‘pan-Turkism’ in the 19th century saw a missionary role for Turkey to unite Turkic peoples, just like pan-Slavism for Slavic peoples. Turkey also considered itself a regional power that had to balance threats from various directions. This made the country reluctant to choose sides during the World Wars, aligning with the German-Austrian axis in World War I and, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and foundation of the secular Turkish Republic by Atatürk in 1923, trying to stay out of World War II as long as possible. However, towards 1945 Turkey did not really have any option other than joining the Western allies, which led to its integration into the Western security structure of NATO and aspirations for EU membership. Whereas this rapprochement only came about hesitantly, its foundation has perhaps been less solid than many Western observers believed. The 1960 military coup is generally seen as aimed at keeping the country on its Western course and preventing it from drifting towards the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey seems to have been returning more and more to its original Eurasian narratives and exploring the limits of Western integration. \textbf{Tensions with the US} were visible in its decision to buy Russian missile systems and in President Erdogan’s accusations that the US was protecting Fethullah Gülen as the perceived instigator of the 2016 military coup. Relations with the EU are deteriorating as well, and disputes over gas fields in the Mediterranean have taken on an unfriendly tone. \textbf{We may therefore conclude that ‘regional exceptionalism’ is currently a more accurate way of characterising Turkish international order values than further Western integration.}

\section{5 Values as an EU foreign policy driver}

Whereas the previous chapter assessed values and their development in the US, China, Russia and Turkey, this chapter will return to the values of the EU and try to understand the role they play in the EU’s foreign policy. Section 5.1 will begin with an overview of the results of the previous chapter to see how the EU’s values compare to our findings on the other four countries. How can we position the EU in the world, between Western values and the influence of the US and the more Eastern values held by Turkey, Russia and China? We will compare various assessments of the leading principles of the EU’s foreign policy, starting from the concept of the EU as a normative power, continuing with the principled pragmatism of the Global Strategy and arriving at today’s paradigm of strategic autonomy. We will explore what this paradigm could mean in the area of values and whether the EU could develop a certain ‘strategic value autonomy’ between the Western and Eastern poles of the international order. Section 5.2 will then look again at the four comparison countries, but this time through the lens of the EU’s relations with each of them. It will try to determine to what extent the EU could apply some degree of strategic value autonomy in its relations with each of them and also look at the notion of a differentiated approach according to value category in the EU’s external policies.

\textsuperscript{70} See also: Molchanov, ‘Russia’s Leadership of Regional Integration in Eurasia’, 2016.
5.1 Strategic value autonomy between West and East

The table on the following page summarises the findings of Chapter 4 and compares them with the EU’s current values. It gives an aggregated visual overview, taking into account a limited set of indicators. For socio-cultural values, we will limit ourselves to ‘power distance’ according to Hofstede, considering it a socio-cultural value relevant to other values in this study. The wide variety of power distance scores in the EU shows once again how diverse the EU is in its socio-cultural values and that this would merit another study. We will also mention the value group according to the World Values Survey. For political values, we will indicate the political system according to the V-dem and IDEA typologies and the LDI score. Economic values will be summarised by a characterisation of the economic system and the three economic indices used. Earth values will be summarised by the assessment of the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) and the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). International order values, although too complex to be encapsulated in a single term, will be characterised by key words from section 4.5. When there is no common EU score, we will show the range of scores of EU Member States. Otherwise, we will indicate the common EU score (for the Climate Action Tracker), or the common characterisation of the system (for the economic system and the international order).

On the issue of whether the influence of values is on the decline, we may cautiously draw the following conclusions, based on the previous sections:

- **Political values**: the influence of the Western values of human rights, the rule of law and democracy have been **decreasing** over the past decade in all countries in the comparison, including in the EU itself.

- **Economic values**: the Western value of a free market economy is slightly increasing in all countries but has never been fully accepted in China, and does not cover the social aspect important to the EU. Economic systems as such are **mostly stable**, except for Russia, which radically changed its system.

- **Earth values**: their acceptance and influence has been **increasing** in all countries, especially since the 1992 Rio Conference on Sustainable Development. However, implementation of the environmental policies based on these values is lagging behind in all countries, most of all in China and least in the EU. Implementation in the US depends on the political party in power.

- **International order values**: these tend to be **fairly stable** over time. However, there has recently been a decline in the will to look for multilateral solutions in all four comparison countries. This unwillingness has expressed itself for the US and China mostly in the economic sphere, for Russia and Turkey more in the sphere of political and international order values.

Two patterns seem to crystallise:

- **West-East spectrum**: power distance, autocracy and state influence over the economy increase incrementally from the US in the West to China in the East. Apparently, there is some truth in the notion that individual freedom, low power distance, liberal democracy and a free market are mainly ‘Western’ values. However, those economic values that go beyond a free market do not fit into the West-East logic: the lowest score for competitiveness goes to Turkey, not China. If we were to take the social market economy as our benchmark, for example by including socio-economic rights from the UN covenant, the EU would be leading on this value.

- **Eurocentric spectrum**: it appears that the EU has taken most engagements towards sustainability, and this value is on the decline both to the west and to the east of Europe. The US position on Earth values depends too much on party preferences the country to be considered as a consistent leader. The EU has been the most consistent over the years and can therefore be considered as leading on Earth values. Leadership on the international order depends on which values are accepted as a benchmark and is
therefore difficult to establish objectively. If we accept the EU’s principled pragmatism, especially its support for multilateralism, as a benchmark, the EU seems to be leading on this value as well, because US leadership again depends on the political party in power.

**Figure 23:** Comparative table of value types for four non-EU countries and the EU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value type</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>EU</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- power distance</td>
<td>Low (40)</td>
<td>Low-high (11–100)</td>
<td>Medium (66)</td>
<td>High (93)</td>
<td>High (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- WVS type</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Protestant-Catholic-Orthodox</td>
<td>Afro-Islamic</td>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>Confucian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- system: V-dem/IDEA</td>
<td>lib. democracy/</td>
<td>17 lib. democracy</td>
<td>elec. autocracy/</td>
<td>closed autocracy/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2020 LDI score</td>
<td>mid-range democracy 0.7</td>
<td>9 elec. democracy</td>
<td>hybrid regime 0.101</td>
<td>authoritarian 0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- trend</td>
<td>Less liberal</td>
<td>1 elec. autocracy 0.40–0.86</td>
<td>Less democracy 0.099</td>
<td>More authoritarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- system</td>
<td>Market economy</td>
<td>Social Market Economy</td>
<td>Market economy</td>
<td>Imperfect Market economy</td>
<td>State-capitalist economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Indices:</td>
<td>84/74.8/83.7</td>
<td>66.1–85.3/60.9–81.4</td>
<td>76.8/64.0/62.1</td>
<td>78.2/61.5/66.7</td>
<td>77.9/58.4/73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- doing bus. 2020/econ.freed. 2021/</td>
<td></td>
<td>/61.9–82.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2020 EPI score</td>
<td>Insufficient 69.3</td>
<td>Insufficient 57–82.5</td>
<td>Critically insufficient 42.6</td>
<td>Critically insufficient 50.5</td>
<td>Highly insufficient 37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- trend</td>
<td>Slight increase</td>
<td>Medium increase</td>
<td>Slight increase</td>
<td>Medium increase</td>
<td>Strong increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lead principle</td>
<td>Principled power politics</td>
<td>Principled pragmatism</td>
<td>Regional exceptionalism</td>
<td>Regional influence</td>
<td>Harmonious expansionism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table by the author based on information from the previous sections

Overall, both from what the EU Treaties say about values and from the EU’s scores on political, economic, Earth and international order values, we can maintain the statement that the EU’s external action has been strongly focused on the promotion of values, both in codified principles and in practical action. This has led some authors to the conclusion that values-based external policies are a specific European approach. In an article in 2002, political scientist Ian Manners developed the notion of the EU as a ‘normative power’. The concept ‘Normative Power Europe’ (NPE) has become widely known since then. Normative power is based on ideas and principles, and is exercised through persuasion rather than military power by trying to socialise others into the same set of norms and principles, for example by partnerships or ultimately accession to the EU. The EU has also been referred to as a ‘soft power’, combining the strength of its economy with its culture of negotiating compromises in a peaceful manner. Not exactly the same, but related to the concept of normative power is the characterisation of the EU as a regulatory power. The importance of the EU economy in the world makes foreign investors willing to follow European legislative and product standards, in order to enter that market.
Box: Two examples of normative power in the EU’s external policy (emphasis added)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example A: Values and EU accession: the Copenhagen criteria (source: EUR-Lex)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion 1:</strong> Stability of institutions guaranteeing <strong>democracy, the rule of law, human rights</strong> and respect for and protection of minorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion 2:</strong> A <strong>functioning market economy</strong> and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion 3:</strong> Ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the ‘acquis’), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three 1993 Copenhagen criteria, which candidate countries for becoming EU members must fulfil, clearly reflect the EU’s political values – democracy, the rule of law and human rights – and economic values – a market economy. Although the Copenhagen criteria did not exist for enlargements prior to 1993, they were already implicitly applied: Greece, Portugal and Spain could only join the EU after they had transformed from autocratic regimes into parliamentary democracies. Whereas Austria, Finland and Sweden easily fulfilled the criteria, central and eastern European members needed more time to change their political, legal and economic systems and were often granted long transition periods. The Copenhagen criteria oblige countries to socialise into the EU’s value system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example B: Values in international trade policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 207 TEU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **The common commercial policy shall be based on uniform principles, particularly with regard to changes in tariff rates, the conclusion of tariff and trade agreements relating to trade in goods and services, and the commercial aspects of intellectual property, foreign direct investment, the achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalisation, export policy and measures to protect trade such as those to be taken in the event of dumping or subsidies.** The common commercial policy shall be conducted in the context of the principles and objectives of the Union’s external action. |

Article 207 TEU refers back to the general principles of the EU’s external action mentioned in Articles 3(5) and 21 TEU. This is expressed in, inter alia, the trade and sustainable development (TSD) chapters that have been part of most trade agreements since the 2011 EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement. These chapters set out rules to ensure adherence to environmental standards and labour rights by the EU and its partners. In most cases, these are existing international standards from international treaties in those areas, such as the International Labour Organization or the Paris Climate Agreement. The Generalised System of Preferences+ (GSP+) constitutes another avenue to ensure the application of internationally accepted values, by making market access in the EU for developing countries contingent on their ratification of certain international agreements. Regarding Earth values, the EU is working with 16 partners in the WTO to liberalise trade in environmental technologies.

The introduction of the normative power concept has led to academic debate about the links between ethical norms, economic values and geopolitical interests. This debate reflects the underlying question of this study: what is the role of values as a driver of the EU’s foreign policy? Values in the EU’s foreign policy have been the subject of scientific publications studying their implementation. Critics of NPE have stated that the concept is too one-sided in its focus on values and ignores the fact that EU interests often lurk behind the EU’s values. Whereas it may be true that some values coincide with interests, perceiving all values as ‘masks’ for interests is also a one-sided view. Article 3(5) TEU states that the EU must uphold and promote values as well as interests. Against the backdrop of the academic debate, the 2016 Global Strategy’s concept of ‘principled pragmatism’ expressed once again the balance the EU is trying to strike between values and interests. Since then, international developments have propelled the EU more towards interests. While the EU as international actor does not have the full toolset (or for that matter the mindset) to pursue a fully ‘realist’ foreign policy in the sense of political theory, other great powers in the world do. In fact, in the past decade, the external policies of many countries have become more interest-oriented and thereby more ‘realist’. The most quoted examples in this respect are Russian aggression in the Eastern neighbourhood, Chinese expansionism through the BRI and the aggressive trade policy of the US under President Trump. The view that increased tensions between the US and China might result in a

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71 For example: Parker, O. and Rosamond, B., ‘Normative power Europe’ meets economic liberalism: Complicating cosmopolitanism inside/outside the EU or Mark Pollack, Living in a Material World: A Critique of ‘Normative Power Europe’. 
new Cold War have been widely discussed in the press. The US Think Tank the Atlantic Council recently presented alternative scenarios for how US-China relations could influence the current world order. Although the Biden Administration has partially returned to the path of multilateralism, for example by re-joining the Paris Climate Agreement, the national interest continues to prevail in its stand-off with China. Europe finds itself caught up in the increasing rivalry between these players. As one EU Prime Minister put it in 2019: ‘the EU, which was built on the power of principles, is increasingly being confronted by the principles of power’.

The 2019 evaluation of the EU Global Strategy recognises the trend towards geopolitical realism while trying to preserve the balance between values and interests. The document, entitled ‘The EU’s Global Strategy three years on, looking forward’ identifies new threats by stating that: ‘Politically, we have seen the emergence of different political narratives, some of which openly contest the values underpinning liberal democracies worldwide, and those of the EU itself’ (page 8). The statement ‘Nowhere is this clearer than in the EU’s surrounding regions, both east and south’ indicates that our reference countries Russia and Turkey are in the zone of identified threats. As regards the consequences for international order values, the evaluation states: ‘All this is equally harming the rules-based global order – an existential interest of our Union – precisely when multilateralism is most acutely needed. In fact, transnational challenges, notably in the areas of climate, demography and digitalization, can only be addressed effectively through multilateral action supporting sustainable development’.

The EU has reacted to the change of tone in international relations by focusing more on its own interests as well, although this concerns mostly its economic interests and, to a lesser degree, its defence interests. The EU has updated its trade defence instruments and reinforced its investment screening. It is working on ways to strengthen its European defence cooperation.

While the general focus is shifting towards interests, the EU seeks to continue supporting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. However, the conditions for doing so successfully have deteriorated. Where the governments of non-EU countries begin attaching less importance to these political values, the EU will have to work more closely with civil society organisations. Unfortunately, the latter are under pressure from the very governments that are attaching less importance to democracy, for example in Russia and Turkey. American democracy expert Larry Diamond argued in January 2020, just before the pandemic, that the wave of democratisation around the world that had started in the 1970s had not only slowed down, but that democracies can also regress and fail. On a more optimistic note, democracy is still the most appreciated political system by most people in the world. However, to get ‘out of the current democratic slump’, Diamond argues, we all as citizens need ‘to rededicate ourselves to the idea that freedom and democracy are transcendent values which require from every citizen a commitment higher than allegiance to any political party or electoral outcome’. This recommendation also seems to have been addressed to the American electorate.

Since 2020, the pandemic has further tested the readiness of countries to cooperate internationally. Moreover, it has led to a further decline in the political values so dear to the EU. The previously mentioned 2021 report of the Varieties of Democracy Institute pays special attention to the effects of the pandemic on the quality of democracy and the rule of law and concludes that ‘autocratisation has turned viral’. It states that most democracies acted responsibly in the face of the pandemic, but nine committed major violations of international norms, and a further 23 moderate ones. In autocracies, no less than 55 countries were involved in major or moderate violations in response to the pandemic, including Turkey, Russia and China. Media freedom was further limited in Turkey, and the US Government was engaged in disinformation about the pandemic. In some EU countries, moderate violations were committed as well. Furthermore, the decline of political values at national level also translates to the international order. A white paper of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on multilateralism from 2019 observes that ‘when the substance of the multilateral system changes and becomes less liberal, the system’s normative role will
also change. It will, for example, be more difficult for the UN to promote human rights internationally if illiberal states succeed in weakening the formulation of such rights in the resolutions adopted by the UN. The white paper also notes: ‘we see that more states are less concerned about receiving criticism than previously and that they can violate established norms and commitments under international law, including in the area of human rights, without political cost’. These Norwegian concerns are shared by the EU.

The pandemic has pushed the EU into taking a further step away from principles and towards pragmatism and has brought the notion of strategic autonomy or strategic sovereignty to the fore. Strategic autonomy was first mentioned in the conclusions of the European Council of December 2013 in relation to strengthening the European defence industry. The 2016 Global Strategy continued to use the expression mainly in relation to defence policy, stating that a ‘sustainable, innovative and competitive European defence industry is essential for Europe’s strategic autonomy and for a credible CSDP’. A 2019 commentary from the International Centre for Defence and Security in Estonia highlights that EU Member States have different views on strategic autonomy, pointing towards France for the origins of the concept. A European Parliament study of September 2020 defines strategic autonomy in a much broader way as ‘the ability to act autonomously as well as to choose when, in which area, and if, to act with like-minded partners’. It states that ‘“Strategic autonomy” is not about self-sufficiency but about means and tools to reduce external dependencies in areas deemed strategic and where dependencies could compromise autonomy, whilst continuing to cooperate with partners in a multilateral setting’. This widens the scope of strategic autonomy to areas such as energy supply, climate action, economic policy and the role of the euro. The pandemic stressed the notion of economic strategic autonomy in particular, meaning that the EU should be able to provide its own essential products and raw materials when international value chains are interrupted in times of crisis. A 2020 study on the potential reshoring of production to Europe after the pandemic notes that ‘Technological sovereignty in high-tech industries, and in particular in digital technologies, is increasingly considered a critical element of strategic autonomy’. To balance autonomy with an open economy, the European Commission’s Trade Policy Review speaks of ‘open strategic autonomy’.

To emphasise that the concept of strategic autonomy does not contradict the notion of values, EU policy papers and EU officials have tried to combine elements of both. One of the first examples is the foreword to the 2016 Global Strategy, which states that ‘the Strategy nurtures the ambition of strategic autonomy for the European Union. This is necessary to promote the common interests of our citizens, as well as our principles and values’ (emphasis added). The Trade Policy Review of February 2020 states that ‘Open strategic autonomy emphasises the EU’s ability to make its own choices and shape the world around it through leadership and engagement, reflecting its strategic interests and values’ (emphasis added). While these statements could still be seen as expressing general support for the EU’s values without being specific, President of the European Council Charles Michel was more concrete in his reaction to the chaotic withdrawal of troops and citizens from Afghanistan. In an interview, he stated that ‘more European strategic autonomy is not only good for Europe, but also for the rest of the world because the values we uphold are the universal values of dignity and human rights. We advocate for a rules-based Order. Strategic autonomy is also good for our allies as it is always better to be in an alliance where all partners are strong and able to act’.

Doubts about the EU’s capacity to implement such a view have been expressed by Richard Youngs of Carnegie Europe, who sees a potential ‘autonomy trap’, stating that ‘the EU’s quest for strategic autonomy could risk undercutting, not driving, the projection of geopolitical power as well as its support for liberal-democratic values’. The assumption is that if the EU makes itself less dependent on other countries (for

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72 Quotes from section 5.3 of the white paper ‘Norway’s role and interests in multilateral cooperation’.
instance by cutting back on certain imports), the mutual dependence between both partners would decline and the EU would also lose influence over those countries, including over their values. It may not come as a surprise that these concerns have been expressed by an organisation with a strong interest in democracy support, which may fear losing out as a result of strategic autonomy. While the analysis may be too negative on the merits of strategic autonomy in general, it correctly identifies a weak spot: the promotion of the EU’s political values in times where these are on the decline. The important question therefore seems to be how and to what extent can the EU combine strategic autonomy with the promotion of its values? If we put this into the context of our findings on the different types of values, the question could also be formulated as: **how can the EU develop a form of strategic autonomy in values, when support for such an approach is volatile to its West and dwindling to its East?**

As regards the West, the EU can hope for a benevolent partner in the White House. President Biden has clearly stepped up efforts to support democracy, for instance by holding a ‘**Summit for Democracy**’ in December 2021 with more than 100 participating countries. While welcomed by the EU, the event also showed, somewhat inconveniently, that the EU is apparently losing its leadership on this value. The EU had taken the lead on many democracy and human rights issues when the US was attaching less importance to these under the Trump Administration. The EU was, for example, active in building coalitions on human rights issues in the UN and creating partnerships, such as on violence against women. However, with the US back as a prominent player on democracy support, strategic value autonomy alongside the US appears to be a challenge for the EU. As regards the East, if the EU were to decrease its economic dependence on Russian gas or Chinese raw materials, for example, its chances to influence their political values – already fairly modest – would most likely further decrease. Turkey may be a different case, if accession prospects or a common will to reform economic ties are strong enough to give the EU more leverage on its political values. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude, that **although the EU may stick to its high political values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the prospects of further promoting these in a world of more autonomously operating regional powers are modest.**

This is also the European Commission’s assessment in its 2021 strategic foresight report ‘**the EU’s capacity and freedom to act**’. It defines ‘pressure on democratic models of governance and values’ as one of four key global trends, noting that ‘zones of instability and conflict close to the EU and beyond are likely to persist and may even grow’.

Instead of concluding that the EU should therefore come back from its newly found course towards strategic autonomy, as Youngs does, the EU might acknowledge that a differentiated approach is needed. **The EU could differentiate its actions regarding values in two ways: differentiation by country and by value category.** Differentiation by country involves an assessment of the extent to which a partner country shares the EU’s values and is interested in, or willing to further converge towards these values. Countries in the European neighbourhood, which have historical connections to Europe and its values are more open to EU values-promotion initiatives than countries which are further away and have different traditions in political, and often also socio-cultural, values. The fact that after the fall of communism in 1989 in central European countries, most of them were able to make the transition to democracy and accede to the EU only 15 years later, is probably also linked to the fact that they had some sort of experience with democracy and the rule of law prior to the introduction of communism. Moving eastward towards Ukraine or Belarus, the focus is mostly on the geopolitical constraints of Russian influence in the region as an obstacle to the promotion of the EU’s political values. However, experiences in Ukraine have also revealed the difficulties the country has been experiencing internally in fighting corruption or establishing an independent judiciary. Creating the conditions for the rule of law and democracy to flourish is apparently an arduous task that may take more time than some had wished. Developing democracy and the rule of law is therefore increasingly viewed as a long-term process, rather than a ready-made solution. The further

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73 A particular inconvenience for the EU was that one of its Member States, Hungary, was not invited to the Summit.
east we move, the more true this statement seems to be, taking into account recent experiences with democracy promotion in Iraq or Afghanistan.

**Differentiation by country not only involves an assessment of the extent to which values are shared, but also of the potential leverage the EU can use in convincing partners of its values.** Such leverage can be of a geopolitical or economic nature. The EU can, for example, use its trade policy or its development policy to link market access or financial benefits to the acceptance by the partner country of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU is already pursuing this policy. However, it seems to be more successful in asymmetrical power relations than with powers of similar economic or geopolitical weight. The EU’s relations with Russia, and recently China, have revealed the limits of linking values and interests in dealings with powerful partners. Nevertheless, the 2020 strategic foresight report states that all available tools need to be used, including the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, political and human rights dialogues, strategic partnerships with international and regional organisations, and stronger engagement with the private sector to promote responsible business conduct. However, when the promotion of political values reaches its limits, the focus could switch to differentiation by value.

**Differentiation by value type should acknowledge different opportunities for action in the four value categories and focus on the values which enjoy a high degree of agreement on their content and importance.** When the EU does not share political values with a partner and the chances of pursuing their promotion through leverage are relatively small, rather than giving up on value promotion as such, the EU could focus on economic or Earth values, while steadily continuing efforts on political values in a long-term perspective. Earth values are the only type of value on which global support has been increasing and consensus is relatively high. Economic values are a kind of intermediary category: although the chances of changing economic systems as such are fairly low, further cooperation on trade and investment on a bilateral and multilateral basis has continued potential. Such a differentiated approach to categories of values is not only a scenario for action, but is also a trend that can already be observed. In this respect, it is interesting to have a closer look at one of the few sets of international principles on which it did prove possible to reach a global consensus in the past decade: the UN Sustainable Development Goals of 2015.

**When assigning the 17 sustainable development goals to our four value categories, they appear to cover mostly socio-economic, economic and Earth values.** Political values and international order values are underrepresented. It is highly likely that this is the result of a lack of consensus on the latter two categories.

Digging deeper into the descriptions and substance of each goal reveals different interpretations. For example, we can look at SDG 10’s ‘reduced inequalities’. According to the official UN website it is defined as reducing inequality within and among countries. A longer description is given in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, the official document adopting the SDGs in 2015. This almost exclusively focuses on socio-economic goals, such as income growth, fiscal, wage and social protection policies, the regulation of the global financial markets, the representation of developing countries in international economic and financial institutions, and special and differential treatment for developing countries. Political values are only touched upon, comprising well-managed migration policies and ‘social, economic and political inclusion irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status’. The UN factsheet for SDG 10 equally focuses on economic aspects and migration. However, the European Commission’s website on the SDGs links to a description of SDG 10, which is somewhat different. It defines inequality as a relational concept that refers to differences between individuals or groups and covers economic, social, political and environmental dimensions. By giving additional descriptions of political inequality and environmental inequality, it assigns more importance to these aspects. It seems that by interpreting and implementing the SDGs, the EU is extending their scope to political and environmental values, implicitly expressing a European approach to values.
**Figure 24:** Assignment of SDGs to value categories (author’s choices, maximum two values per SDG)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Civic-Pol</th>
<th>Economic Soc-Econ</th>
<th>Earth</th>
<th>International Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Zero hunger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Good health and well-being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Quality education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gender equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Clean water and sanitation</td>
<td></td>
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The creative interpretation of the SDGs may be an example of ‘EU strategic value autonomy’. Another important avenue of action for the EU is to be creative in differentiating between and interlinking values. Hopes are high for the upcoming Commission legislative proposal on due diligence in the supply chain, which links human rights to business conduct, in other words, political and economic values. The European Parliament and the UN Commissioner for Human Rights have made recommendations for its content. Yet another example is the upcoming EU legislative proposal for a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). Such a mechanism would link economic values (trade aspects such as protection against price dumping) with Earth values (discouraging carbon-intensive production in non-EU countries). Creative interpretations and the active interlinkage of values could be ways to move forward to a kind of ‘strategic value autonomy’. Is this perhaps what the Commission had in mind when it concluded the 2021 strategic foresight report with the following statement of intent: ‘in pursuing global leadership towards 2050, the EU will not turn inwards but will remain firm on its principles and values and agile in its conduct’ (emphasis added)?

5.2 EU relations with the US, China, Russia and Turkey

Before looking into EU relations with each of the four countries more closely, a remark about the notion of perception is useful. As stated in the introduction, this study considers values as ‘principles that influence political beliefs and action’ rather than as a moral yardstick for good or bad behaviour. Nevertheless, as we are all socialised according to a particular set of values, it is almost impossible to have a neutral judgement. While making assessments about other countries, perceptions play an important role. Perceptions tend to be long-held views of the behaviour of another country, partly based on past experience, partly based on narratives, which are in turn influenced by social values. Although we cannot dissociate ourselves from our own values and perceptions, we can compare them with those of others. Viewed optimistically, different perceptions may reveal important information about each other’s values and could, through dialogue, lead to feasible solutions and peaceful co-existence. Perceptions may be regarded as perspectives which have their own legitimacy from a particular point of view. It can therefore be argued that getting to know one another’s perceptions should become an important element of international cooperation.

However, in the real world, perceptions lead to different narratives and possibly misunderstandings, antagonism or creeping conflict. While perceptions are not addressed at international meetings, each country sticks to its own and the different narratives drift further apart. By creating ‘mis-perceptions’ the door is opened to the mutual spread of disinformation, sometimes deliberately as a means of waging a ‘proxy war’. If such a proxy war were to become structural, we would indeed be heading for a ‘clash of civilisations’ as indicated in 1996 by Samuel Huntington. In our times, an increasing number of analysts are predicting such developments, speaking about a ‘new Cold War’, in which China has taken the place of the main adversary of the US, instead of the Soviet Union in the ‘old Cold War’. Huntington was writing in the first decade after the Cold War and predicted potential clashes with the Islamic world and a rising Asia. The former have unfortunately already become reality, the latter could develop if we allowed it to happen. Huntington’s suggestion was that ‘the West’ should stick to its own values and not get lost in too much multiculturalism. This does not appear to diminish values-oriented tensions, but to increase them instead. In 2021, tensions between the US and Russia also increased over Ukraine. Interestingly, both the US and Russia have used values as means of arguing in favour of their respective causes. Russia has pointed towards the socio-cultural ties with Ukraine and the US towards the need to defend Ukrainian independence and democracy. The conclusion of this study is that by differentiating between the value categories, clashes may be avoided or at least reduced. It may not be possible to resolve differences in political values, but this could, for example, be balanced by agreement on certain economic or Earth values.

However, looking at countries or regions as ‘systemic rivals’ challenges this differentiated approach, because both rivals will act homogeneously on all value fronts. Unfortunately, the systemic rival approach has gained ground in recent years, first towards China and now also towards Russia. Nevertheless, understanding perceptions as perspectives will also, in future, be the first step towards building bridges between different values.

We will now look more closely at the EU’s relations with each of the four countries. What kind of interactions regarding the various values have taken place, what perceptions have played a role, and how can relations develop?

5.2.1 EU-US relations

While diplomatic relations between the US and the European (Economic) Community have existed since the 1950s, relations were politically upgraded in the 1990s, following German reunification and the establishment of the European Union. In particular, the New Transatlantic Agenda of 1995 added elements of shared values to the otherwise more economic focus of cooperation. It aimed, among other things, at ‘promoting peace and stability, democracy and development around the world’. Since then, summits between US presidents and those of the European Commission and the Council have taken place regularly. In line with the democratic tradition of both parties, they also initiated a permanent dialogue between members of the US Congress and the European Parliament, known as the Transatlantic Legislators’ Dialogue.

Regardless of the US political party in power, the EU and the US consider each other the closest partners in political values. The EU and the US share the basic political values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Even when the V-dem and IDEA analyses have pointed to recent backsliding in the EU and the US on some of these, the basic notion that these three values are at the core of their political systems and worth defending, continues to exist. However, there are differences in the implementation of these values, which partly go back to socio-cultural traditions. The strongly bipolar nature of the US political system versus the mostly multiparty democracies in the EU is one of these differences. Support for socio-economic rights – a particular political value – follows these swings between the Democratic and Republican Parties.

The EU and the US share the economic value of the market economy, but differ on its social and regulatory aspects. In spite of being major trade partners, they have not been able to conclude an overall trade agreement. Even when the EU might agree with a US Democratic government on, for example, healthcare, the US does not have the same extensive social security system as many EU countries have. The US economy is more business-driven than the EU economy, which is expressed, for example, in the different procedures for standard setting and regulatory influence over the market. This may be one of the reasons why the EU and the US have not been able to conclude an overall trade agreement. Attempts to come to such a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) ran aground over differences about public procurement (where the US is more protectionist) and agriculture (where the EU is more protectionist). A negative public perception in Europe of ‘investor to state dispute settlement’, a mechanism for private companies to demand financial compensation from states for failed investment opportunities, undermined public support for the negotiations, which were suspended in 2016. Different views on regulation and the social dimension of the market economy have led authors to introduce different names for the trade and investment system of both parties: ‘neo-liberalism’ for the US and ‘ordo-liberalism’ for the EU. After the failure of TTIP, the Trump Administration adopted a confrontational approach in trade policy, whereas the Biden Administration has returned to small cooperation projects, such as the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, which held its first meeting in Pittsburgh in 2021.

Agreement on Earth values depends mainly on the political party in power in the US. As the section on Earth values has shown, Democratic administrations attach more importance to environmental and
Values on the retreat? The role of values in the EU’s external policies

climate policy than Republican ones. Therefore, in contrast to the general perception of Earth values as an area of cooperation in times of declining agreement on political values, EU-US cooperation on Earth values follows the same Democrat-Republican swings as socio-economic rights.

The EU and the US have generally cooperated in building a rules-based multilateral order, although disagreements resurface regularly regarding priorities or approaches. Such disagreements can arise when the power politics aspect of the US takes the upper hand, and often has a divisive effect among EU Member States. The US decision in favour of military intervention in Iraq in 2003 was, for example, supported by several EU Member States but opposed by France and Germany. Some US presidents even lost support in a majority of EU Member States, such as for example President George W. Bush (junior) and President Trump. The latter’s criticism of the multilateral order as such met with general EU disagreement. The EU’s criticism of the US putting the national interest above multilateral solutions has in several cases been linked to the US policy of imposing economic sanctions with extraterritorial effects. This was, for example, the case for sanctions against Cuba and Iran. In the latter case, the US withdrew from a multilaterally negotiated ‘Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action’, causing considerable irritation on the EU side. US sanctions also had a divisive effect on EU countries in the case of the Nord Stream II pipeline project. Countries investing in the pipeline, in particular Germany, opposed the sanctions, whereas others supported them. Nord Stream II sanctions were an interesting case of mixing values and interests, justified as upholding the international order against Russian interference in the EU and Ukraine, the broad support they enjoyed in Congress was based on US geopolitical and economic interests, such as the export of US shale gas.

Although EU-US relations are generally good, cooperation on various values and trust in each other fluctuates over time and across EU Member States. Research carried out by the Pew Research Institute shows that incidents or changes in political leadership can temporarily undermine trust. This was the case when whistleblower Edward Snowdon revealed widespread US spying on befriended EU politicians in 2013. Views of the US fell most strongly in Germany, which in general has a more critical attitude towards the US. The years of the Trump Administration were characterised by a steep fall in confidence. However, in 2020, almost 80% of the Polish population had a favourable view of the US. On average, Pew noted a favourable view of the US for 54% of respondents in the 14 European countries surveyed, which is a majority, but not particularly high for nations which claim to be main partners in values.

Figure 25: German view of the US and confidence in its president over time

Source: Pew Research Institute

5.2.2 EU-China relations

In 2013, the EU and China jointly formulated an ambitious EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation. The EU-China strategic outlook of 2019 acknowledged ‘that the balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China has shifted’, while focusing on multilateral cooperation and reciprocity in economic relations. The EU and China have substantially different political systems and values, and this is not likely to change any time soon. European Parliament resolutions of the past few years have almost without exception dealt critically with Chinese violations of human rights, whether pertaining to its actions against the democratic opposition in Hong Kong or to the situation of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province. Principled criticism regarding political values has existed for a long time in parallel to a pragmatic approach in economic EU-China relations. This pragmatism has been inspired by growing EU-China trade flows, up to the point that China took over from the US as the EU’s main trading partner in goods in 2020. The authors of a 2020 study therefore optimistically concluded ‘that China is, and will continue to be, a major trade and investment partner for EU countries’ and that ‘trade continues to be the least problematic aspect of the EU-China economic relationship’. Although economic values differ regarding state influence, China is competing in geo-economic terms and concerns about Chinese investment in critical industry sectors have led to EU action on foreign investment screening, in spite of which an optimistic view on economic cooperation has prevailed. This optimism culminated in the agreement in principle on a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) in December 2020.

However, EU sanctions against China for human rights violations were reciprocated by unexpectedly strong Chinese countersanctions in 2021, marking an end to the separate treatment of political and economic values. Whereas the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council sanctioned four Chinese officials, China sanctioned 10 individuals, including five Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). In particular, the sanctions against MEPs blocked the ratification process of the CAI on the European side. Although some have argued that the economic consequences of not adopting the CAI are limited, others have pointed to missed economic benefits and investment security. The diplomatic damage to the EU-China relationship appears to have been more severe, and analysts have focused on possible causes and solutions which would not involve losing face. It has been argued that China expected that strong statements and mutual sanctions would lead to a negotiated solution along similar lines to how the escalating US-China trade conflict was pacified by a mutual agreement. However, the difference is that sanctions against elected politicians cross a red line in the EU’s political values, which it cannot simply negotiate away in a compromise. China has possibly underestimated this aspect of the EU’s reaction, showing once again the difference in political values. On the other hand, the EU may have underestimated the sensitivity of China to the EU imposing sanctions just after shaking hands on the investment agreement. The EU was surprised that China did not see its human rights sanctions as ‘just another criticism’, while China may have experienced these sanctions as particularly badly timed and inappropriate. The perceptions of the other party may have led to miscalculations and diplomatic stalemate. This case also shows that the effectiveness of linking economic and human rights issues by the EU depends on the size and strength of the partner country.

Whereas EU-China relations are in a deadlock as regards political and economic values, relations are still in good shape and even open for further cooperation as regards Earth values. Even though the implementation of environmental policies in China may be lagging behind, the EU and China seem to agree on the growing importance of Earth values as such. Since 2003, the EU has held a regular policy dialogue on environmental issues with China, and concrete initiatives have been taken in the fields of forestry and water management. Recently, cooperation on biodiversity was stepped up ahead of the October 2021 international conference on biodiversity in Kunming, China. Whether this is the fruitful start

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76 The Council prolonged its sanctions in December 2021 for the duration of one year.
of further cooperation, or whether criticism and irritants will also spoil relations in this area, will depend on how the common environmental challenges are managed. The EU’s intention to introduce a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) could, for example, lead to a trade dispute if China perceives the measures as unjustified. However, if introduced in a positive dialogue, they may help China in its energy transition. Similarly, if the EU succeeds in regaining a share in the production of solar panels, this may lead to trade irritants, but not necessarily if the global demand for such technologies grows substantially, allowing all producers to make sufficient profit.

5.2.3 EU-Russia relations

In the 1990s, EU-Russia relations were constructive, resulting in the 1997 EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. However, relations have gradually deteriorated and, since 2014, EU-Russia relations have reached the stage of structural gridlock, mostly over international order values. The EU responded to Russia’s annexation of Crimea with a series of sanctions, which have since been regularly prolonged and sometimes extended in scope. In 2016, the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers adopted five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations: 1. full implementation of the Minsk agreements; 2. closer relations with the former Soviet Republics, including Ukraine; 3. resilience as regards energy dependence, hybrid threats and disinformation; 4. selective engagement, for example on counter terrorism or climate change; and 5. promoting people-to-people contacts. However, EU-Russia relations have further deteriorated since then and they hit rock bottom in 2021, when Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov called the EU an ‘unreliable partner’ and the Czech Republic and Latvia ‘unfriendly states’. The European Council responded by condemning the ‘illegal, provocative and disruptive Russian activities against the EU’.

Differences in political values are playing a role in deteriorating EU-Russia relations. These pertain to, for example, the assessment of free and fair elections and the possibilities for alternative political views to be represented. Russia has resented Western criticism of the human rights situation in Russia, in particular since the political protests in 2011 and 2012, as undue interference. The conflicts over international order and political values came together in Russia’s relationship with the Council of Europe. In 2014, the Council suspended Russia’s voting rights in its Parliamentary Assembly, because of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. In response, Russia stopped its membership payments, only to resume paying them in 2019 in return for its voting rights. On 25 February 2022, the Council suspended Russia’s rights of representation in its Council of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In response, Russia left the organisation completely. Relations with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), also based in Strasbourg, deteriorated when Russia’s Constitutional Court ruled in 2015 that the Russian Constitution took precedence over ECtHR judgments, and the Duma wrote this into law in 2015 and finally into the 2020 Constitution. This may also have been due to ECtHR rulings in favour of Alexey Navalny against his conviction in Russia for embezzlement. The recognition of Alexey Navalny’s battle for a more democratic Russia by awarding him the European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought marks the continued importance Parliament attaches to human rights. However, the Russian Government saw it as another provocation by the EU.

In 2014, Russia briefly tried to frame the conflict over Ukraine as a difference in economic values. Russia suggested that the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, the main aim of which was to establish more intensive economic relations, was incompatible with Ukraine’s other international economic obligations. However, no substantial issue could be proven. Differences in economic values between the EU and Russia may exist regarding the level of regulation needed or corruption accepted, but this is equally the case for Ukraine. With EU-Russia relations in such a parlous state, the question as to whether a positive engagement

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77 For more information on the implementation of the five principles in the period 2016–2018, see ‘The EU’s Russia policy – five guiding principles’, EPRS briefing, 2018.
on Earth values is possible as a means of mitigating tensions became urgent. Russia’s effectiveness in combating climate change is closely related to its dependence on and export of fossil fuels. Some authors have been critical about the feasibility of a positive EU-Russia environmental agenda, while others have tried to map out areas of cooperation, such as carbon pricing of fossil fuels. However, since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, efforts to build bridges on environmental values have been replaced by the EU moving towards greater energy independence from Russia. The EU principle of resilience now outweighs that of engagement.

Analysing the gradually cooling relationship between the EU and Russia from the vantage point of values puts the focus on differing perceptions of the values defining the international order above all other considerations. We have emphasised two formative elements of Russia’s international order values: history and culture on the one hand, and geography and security on the other. History and culture play a major role in President Putin’s view of Russia and its relationship with Ukraine and the EU. Both his article of July 2021 and his address to the nation of 2022 are a mix of historical facts, interpretation and conclusions drawn by Putin. Although in the current tense situation even historical facts have become sources of dispute between Russia and Ukraine, it seems fair to say that the people of present-day Russia and Ukraine share a lot of common history, and the close relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian languages is hard to deny. It seems equally justified to say that the Ukrainian people have lived under many different foreign rulers and have therefore only developed relatively late on as a nation and a state. President Putin interprets these facts as reasons to deny the Ukrainian people a national identity. However, Putin’s reasoning denies the notion of development in the formation of nations and thereby forces them to become a prisoner of their recent past. Even if we were to follow Putin’s reasoning of Western influence driving Ukraine and Russia apart, we cannot deny the fact that a genuine Ukrainian national identity has been developing since 1991, and increasingly so since 2014. Many Russian speakers in Ukraine now self-identify as Ukrainians. Although some Ukrainians might want to live in some sort of Slavic community with Russia and Belarus, based on common history and brotherhood, war is the worst means to achieve this. As the overall reaction of the Ukrainian people shows, the war is only reinforcing Ukrainian national identity. Furthermore, contrary to the narrative of a common Russian-Ukrainian identity, the acts of war are only serving to separate the two nations from each other. In fact, many foreigners see Russia already as a unique civilisation in its own right. Nevertheless, Putin’s narrative resonates with certain parts of the Russian population who share his feeling of Russian exceptionalism. This includes a peculiar link between religious sentiments and geopolitics, which may be hard for the secular reader to grasp. In this view, Orthodox Christianity not only unites all nations sharing that religion, it also justifies narratives in which suffering in battle acquires a religious meaning. The Russian narratives on history, culture and religion – and in particular President Putin’s version of these – differ fundamentally from the EU narrative, which is based on acceptance of historical borders and cultural and religious freedom.
within those borders. While language is a sensitive issue in some EU countries, the EU does not accept it as a reason for changing borders by force.

Assessing EU-Russia relations in terms of geography and international security should start with the acknowledgement that the EU has left security relations with Russia mostly up to NATO and – to a lesser extent – the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Mikhail Gorbachev’s ‘concept of the common European home’ and German reunification date from before the 1991 Maastricht summit that created the EU as a political actor. In 1990, the focus was on German reunification and the inclusion of its eastern part into NATO. The fact that this process was not accompanied by the negotiation of a pan-European peace and security agreement turned out later on to be a source of resentment on the Russian side. Oral assurances from Western leaders that NATO would not enlarge further eastward were never formalised on paper. When NATO therefore emphasises that these were not binding commitments, this is legally correct. Politically, central and eastern European states considered these as undue limitations to their sovereign freedom to accede to NATO, which they did as soon as they could. Initially, this did not seem to be a problem and the 1990s were dominated by positive security cooperation between Russia and the West. Under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan gave up their nuclear weapons in return for security assurances. In 1997, NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act, in which they even declared that they would no longer see each other as adversaries and expressed a shared commitment to build a peaceful and undivided Europe. However, since 1999, several ‘chill factors’ have cooled the relationship and led to Russia’s perception of NATO as a hostile power encircling the country. Key events in this cooling of relations were the 1999 NATO intervention against Serbia in the Kosovo war, NATO’s enlargement to central European states and the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008, after Ukraine and Georgia had been given a perspective to join NATO. Ukraine’s gradually increasing independence, developing from the 2004 Orange Revolution to the 2014 Maidan Revolution, led to the crucial break between Russia and the West.

Although the EU has developed a common security and defence policy (CSDP) of its own, it has been hard to formulate a common security approach to Russia. Only 21 of the 27 EU Member States are also members of NATO, while six are not. Even among the EU countries which are members of NATO, there have been differing perceptions of the threat posed by Russia: the countries bordering Russia or Belarus have a higher threat perception, often more similar to that of the US than to that of other EU countries. The common denominator of the EU’s condemnation of Russia’s involvement in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea was therefore its character as a violation of the ‘rules-based multilateral order’, quite apart from its potential threat to EU territory. Russia, from its vantage point, has always seen NATO and the US as its main negotiation partners or main adversaries. France and Germany have unfortunately failed to convince Russia and Ukraine to fully implement the Minsk agreements and were not able to stop Russia from invading Ukraine either. Several authors have questioned whether a stronger pan-European security order could have done so. Perhaps the opportunity was missed in the 1990s to build the ‘common European House’ by reinforcing the role of the OSCE as a pan-European peace and security organisation.

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82 Although long time unknown, these oral assurances have in the meantime become public through declassified US, Soviet, German, British and French documents.
83 To Ukraine’s great frustration, Russia, the US and the UK did not honour these assurances in 2014 and 2022.
84 Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden are not members of NATO.
85 In December 2021, many thought that Putin was only threatening an invasion of Ukraine to stop it from joining NATO. See for example: Dmitri Trenin, ‘What Putin really wants in Ukraine’, Foreign Affairs, 28 December 2021.
86 NATO and the US received Russia’s draft agreements for a diplomatic solution to the situation in Ukraine in late 2021. They were not sent to the EU. NATO rejected Russia’s demands with the response that ‘Russia does not have a veto over NATO membership’. The text and a critical analysis of the draft agreements can be found on the website of Chatham House.
However, this would have diminished the role of NATO, a path which neither the US, nor its old and new NATO allies were willing to go down at that time. The idea of reinforcing a pan-European security structure, through the OSCE or renewed arms control agreements, was nevertheless reiterated right up to the outbreak of war in 2022. Unfortunately, many such valuable thoughts have now become obsolete. While keeping a pan-European security structure in mind as a long-term perspective, the war has accelerated defence initiatives in individual EU countries and has shifted the focus onto greater EU strategic autonomy in defence matters, preparing for a more antagonistic relationship with Russia.

5.2.4 EU-Turkey relations

EU-Turkey relations have historically been characterised by Turkish wishes for political integration, which in practice have not developed further than a certain degree of economic integration. Turkey joined the Council of Europe in 1950 and NATO in 1952. Already in 1959, Turkey applied for membership of the six-member European Economic Community, which led to the signing of an Association Agreement in 1963. Similarly, Turkey applied in 1987 to join the 12-member European Community, but in the first instance only achieved a customs union agreement in 1995. Four years later, the EU granted Turkey the official status of candidate country and accession negotiations were opened in 2005. However, accession negotiations on the 35 chapters of EU legislation have progressed slowly and by 2016, 16 chapters had been opened but only one of these closed. Ultimately, negotiations were put on ice because the EU considered national actions by the Turkish Government not to be in line with the EU’s political values. Negotiations were paused in 2013 after Turkish police actions against peaceful demonstrations in Istanbul. They came to a complete standstill after the government’s crackdown on people suspected of having been involved in the 2016 coup attempt, including mass lay-offs and arrests.

Like EU-China relations, EU-Turkey relations have run into a similar stalemate of the EU’s insistence on its political values leading to a blockade of further economic integration. Since 2018, EU statements on EU-Turkey relations have all conveyed this message in similar wording. The 2020 EU-Turkey accession report states that ‘the Turkish government’s repeated commitment to the objective of EU accession has not been matched by corresponding measures and reforms, and the EU’s serious concerns on continued deterioration of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary have not been addressed with further backsliding in many areas’. Apparently, the normative power approach of gradually integrating Turkey into the EU by fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria has not worked. Turkey has been classified by V-dem as an electoral autocracy. Just as criticism on the autocratic political system of Russia focuses on President Putin, criticism of autocracy in Turkey focuses on President Erdogan. A peculiarity of the Turkish case is the fact that many Turkish immigrants living inside the EU have kept their voting rights in Turkish elections. Frictions about political values between Turkey and the EU culminated in banning Turkish politicians – including President Erdogan – from speaking at election campaign meetings in 2017 and 2018 organised for Turkish immigrants in Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.

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68 See for example: Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier: ‘Europe strong and safe – to deter Russia, America must help revive the region’s security architecture’, Foreign Affairs, 2022.
69 Although the French position on a more autonomous role for European defence in complementarity with NATO has been viewed with suspicion in central and eastern EU countries, it could fall on more fertile ground in 2022. Germany has radically changed its security doctrine on delivering weapons and increased its defence spending. The rapprochement between Finland and Sweden and NATO has intensified, and even Ireland intends to start a debate about its neutrality.
90 For an overview of EU-Turkey relations see the EPRS briefings of 2018 and 2021.
91 See, for example, a 2018 article of the Stockholm Centre for Freedom.
The deterioration in EU-Turkey relations has also had an impact on the areas of Earth values and the international order. Doubts about Turkey’s sincerity in fighting climate change and tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean led to a low point in relations in 2020. However, since then, both sides have attempted to improve relations again, albeit cautiously. In the academic world, options for future economic relations, even without EU accession, have been explored. The European Council of March 2021 saw prospects for the modernisation of the customs union, high-level dialogues on health, the climate and counter-terrorism, and people-to-people contacts. After the meeting, EU High Representative Josep Borrell spoke about ‘building bridges’ and a ‘possible new chapter in EU-Turkey relations’. Nevertheless, all projects are linked to conditions for Turkey to return to a path of dialogue, democracy and reforms – in other words, to moving closer towards the EU’s core values. This conditionality is also highlighted in the European Parliament resolution on EU-Turkey relations of May 2021. Its first paragraph ‘notes with serious concern that in recent years, although Turkey is a candidate country, its government has pursued a continuous and growing distancing from EU values and standards’. The values-based approach runs throughout the resolution, for example in the statement that ‘no incentive that the EU could offer can ever replace the much-needed political will in Turkey to ensure respect for democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights’. Parliament ‘regrets that the backsliding of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in Turkey was not sufficiently addressed in the European Council conclusions of March 2021; underlines that the rule of law and human rights dimension should be at the core of the assessment of our policy towards Turkey’. Possible constituents of a new positive agenda appear scarce, although, more positively, the resolution also ‘stresses that a modernisation of the customs union would be beneficial for both parties and would keep Turkey economically and normatively anchored to the EU’.

Whereas improvement on political values depends greatly on internal political developments in Turkey, the EU might bridge the gap towards a positive political agenda with a new focus on Earth values. This view is at least taken by a study of June 2021 of the European Council on Foreign Relations, which calls for close cooperation with Turkey on the European Green Deal, which ‘would not resolve broader disputes over issues such as human rights – but it could start rules-based engagement and change the mood music enough to improve other areas of the relationship’.

6 Conclusions

Now that we have defined five categories of values, assessed how the EU and four partner countries of the EU work with these and explored how the EU has integrated the notion of values into its external policies, we will try to draw some general conclusions from the previous chapters. In doing so, we will follow the lead questions from the introduction: ‘what is meant by values and to what extent is their importance declining’ and ‘how can the EU respond to such trends in its external policies’?

6.1 Values and the presumed decline in their importance

Socio-cultural values

- Socio-cultural values exist as group characteristics within a country; across countries, diversity prevails.
- For some values, patterns of variation can be identified across countries: the predominance of individualism and power distance follows an East-West spectrum; other values, such as religion or uncertainty avoidance, have a different geographical variation.
- Socio-cultural values can be drivers of other values, such as political or international order values.

92 See, for example, Paikin and Rose: Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean, 2021.
93 See, for example, Yalcin and Felbrmayr: The EU-Turkey Customs Union and trade relations: what options for the future?, 2021.
Living with diversity may have influenced the EU’s principled approach in external policies, shown in support for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and for rules-based multilateralism.

It is not appropriate to speak of a decline in socio-cultural values: they are relatively constant over time and no objective ranking method exists; gradual change or development may take place.

While socio-cultural values tend to be linked to individuals or small groups, researchers have found that it is possible to define certain common values per country. However, defining common socio-cultural values for the EU as a whole is not possible. In both the Hofstede Insights cultural dimensions and the World Values Survey, EU countries show a great variety of socio-cultural values. Also globally, diversity prevails. We nevertheless noted by means of examples that some socio-cultural values show patterns across countries. Moving from the US in the West to China in the East, individualism decreases and power distance increases. This overlaps with the observation that liberal democracy decreases and autocracy increases across the West-East spectrum. It therefore seems plausible to posit a relationship between the socio-cultural values of individualism and power distance and the political value of democracy. However, the East-West axis cannot explain all socio-cultural differences. The US and China share low uncertainty avoidance, for example, which manifests itself in an entrepreneurial attitude in business. Socio-cultural values can play a role as underlying drivers of concepts of the international order. Without analysing this relationship systematically, we can observe that some guiding principles of American foreign policy, such as promoting democracy and free trade, could be linked to its high score on individualism and its low score on uncertainty avoidance. We have noted that Russian foreign policy is rooted in the idea of cultural unity with countries in the region on the basis of Slavic culture and Orthodox Christianity. Because of the diversity of socio-cultural values in the EU, they do not appear to be a basis for the EU’s foreign policy. With all its socio-cultural variety, the EU seems more of a miniature version of the world as a whole. However, we could argue that living with so much diversity in a relatively small geographical space has taught European countries the uselessness of solving conflicts by wars and in that sense has contributed to the ‘principled’ element of its principled pragmatism. This could explain the high importance that the EU attaches to the political values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and to finding negotiated multilateral solutions in the international order. Finally, it does not seem appropriate to speak of decline in relation to socio-cultural values. These values mostly develop over long periods of time without showing great variation. Moreover, there is no objective method for ranking them. Therefore, it seems better to speak of change or development.

**Political values**

- Since the American and French Revolutions of the 18th century, a coherent set of political values has been developed, resulting in UN conventions and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

- These values are considered universal by the UN, but not all countries in the world have subscribed to the complete set of values; China has not ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the US has not ratified the Covenant on Social and Economic Rights.

- The Lisbon Treaty enshrines the complete set of values in the EU Treaty and they can be summarised by the triad of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

- Researchers have noted a decline in adherence to these values over the past decade in many countries; apart from non-Western countries, this has also happened in the US and some EU countries.

- EU foreign policy includes support for these political values in cooperation with governments seeking to improve them or with civil society if their governments do not subscribe to these values.

We have noted a development from the slogan of the French Revolution calling for freedom, equality and brotherhood to international agreements codifying individual freedoms, political and socio-economic
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rights and some aspects of solidarity. Although the full potential of the French slogan has not been realised in today’s world – the principle of solidarity in particular appears to be lacking, with the gap between rich and poor continuing to increase – a lot has been achieved in giving legal value to these principles. However, implementation in practice lags behind the legal texts. This is partly because not all countries fully subscribe to these fundamental values. In spite of signing global conventions, China’s more collective understanding of government is not compatible with the unlimited application of certain freedoms, or America’s understanding of a competitive free market is not compatible with organised solidarity through social insurance. Apart from these underlying differences, there has been a decline in the application of fundamental political values in recent decades. The freedom of expression has declined in many non-Western and some Western countries, and the stability of democracy is being eroded in many countries. Although these phenomena have also affected some EU countries, the EU as a whole seems to be consistently adhering to its political values. However, supporting these values abroad has become more difficult for the EU, because partner governments are less willing to accept EU influence and civil society and the media are increasingly under pressure in many countries.

Economic values

- The UN has defined a set of socio-economic rights applying to individuals, but no economic values applying to the economy as a whole; the UN Sustainable Development Goals mostly reflect this.
- The WTO does not require adherence to a particular economic system either; however, many of its guiding principles overlap with those of a free market economy; the membership of states with a high degree of state influence over the economy, such as China, may therefore pose challenges.
- The influence of the state over the economy increases on a West-East spectrum from the US to China; however, the overall freedom to do business has increased globally in the past decade.
- The EU adheres to the principle of a social market economy, combining a free market with elements of public service and social security.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has increased awareness in the EU of the risks of economic dependence and the need for strategic autonomy; the concept of ‘open strategic autonomy’ is intended to square the circle between an open economy and a sufficient degree of autonomy.

Most European countries have implemented basic socio-economic rights to avoid the abuse of workers and guarantee a better work-life balance. However, in many parts of the world these socio-economic rights are not enforced. Many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals call on countries to do so. The deeper causes of socio-economic deprivation are, however, linked to the economic system as such. Global capitalism has increased market freedom, opportunities to do business and free trade all over the world, as the various indices show. However, social and economic inequality has likewise increased, and countries have not developed a common view on the best way to manage national economies or the world economy. Differences continue to exist on the role of the government in the economy. These follow a similar West-East spectrum as the socio-cultural value of individualism and the political value of democracy. The economic value of a market economy seems to combine well with Western individualism and freedom. However, the EU – although it rarely says so out loud – has some fundamental differences with US economic values in this respect, because its concept of the ‘social market economy’ allows considerable government influence to guarantee public services or social security. In this view, the EU takes a middle position between West and East. Another fact that is little discussed but quite remarkable is that the WTO does not require any particular economic system of its members. Many people may think that the WTO is an advocate of free trade and therefore of a market economy. This is not the case – at least on paper – although many of its guiding principles are easier to implement in a market economy than in a state-led economy. The EU, with its middle position, is somehow stuck between the extremes. Its reliance on imports requires an open economy, which is also a vulnerability if – as during the pandemic – global value chains
are interrupted. Before the pandemic, US trade policy under the Trump Administration and its confrontational course vis-à-vis China, led many observers to conclude that the paradigm of an open global economy was under threat. The pandemic reinforced this trend. However, in spite of delays and shortages, the overall principle of free trade seems to have been less affected than some had expected. Industries cannot easily be ‘reshored’ to Europe or the US and global value chains continue to play an essential role. While the EU is getting to grips with these new realities under its concept of ‘open strategic autonomy’, a real convergence of economic values leading to a common view on the global economic system seems to continue to be remote.

**Earth values**

- The acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of nature – for example through nature conservation – dates back to the 19th century.
- The modern view of the natural environment as an instrumental value for human development – coined in the term ‘sustainable development’ – dates back to the 1987 report ‘Our common future’.
- Sustainable development became the leading Earth value of the UN – as voluntary engagements in the sustainable development goals – and of the EU – as binding legislation.
- The EU is a world leader on sustainable development, followed by the US, whose engagement varies over time depending on the political party in power.
- Although the level of implementation of Earth values varies across the world, acknowledgement of the importance of this category of values has increased worldwide, independently of political system; this gives Earth values unique potential for global cooperation, even when other values are on the decline.

Consciousness of the importance of nature first led to the conservation of natural areas as parks and reserves. When human pollution of the natural environment in the 20th century started to cause negative effects for humanity in the form of land, water and air pollution, the instrumental value of nature and a healthy planet Earth for human survival was recognised. The reports ‘Limits to growth’ and ‘Our common future’ led to the establishment of environmental authorities and government legislation. The principle of sustainable development was enshrined in the EU Treaty and a human right to the environment is currently under discussion. Whereas Western countries were the first to cause serious environmental pollution, they were also the first to recognise the need to reduce pollution and regulate human activity. Countries with a lower level of economic development lag behind in the implementation of environmental policies, although they generally acknowledge the importance of environmental values. When the difference in the level of implementation can be resolved over time – partly through more economic convergence – Earth values have a unique potential for global cooperation because of their wide recognition. Climate change is currently experienced as the most pressing environmental issue and therefore holds the biggest potential for cooperation. However, the strong focus on greenhouse gas reduction also reveals differences in the choices of the means to achieve the goals. These differences – such as whether nuclear energy can count as green – might be an expression of underlying differences in Earth values. This reveals that a broader global debate on the best way to implement Earth values needs to be held. A more integrated view of nature conservation, climate change, pollution and sustainable development is partly developing in programmes such as the EU Green Deal, but deserves to be further developed conceptually and implemented politically in the coming years.

When we visualise the development of these four value categories in a similar way to Chapter 2, we can show continuity in socio-cultural and economic values by using a horizontal arrow and the decline or increase in the importance of political and Earth values with an arrow pointing downwards and upwards respectively.
6.2 The EU’s response to shifting trends in the international order

International order values

- Interests and values are both drivers of the international order; interests belong to a country or group of countries – values can belong to groups but can also be of a universal nature.
- International order values are a complex combination of the other value categories: socio-cultural and historical, political, economic and environmental or Earth values.
- The EU has acknowledged the mix of realist and idealist drivers of foreign policy in its concept of ‘principled pragmatism’; the EU’s focus on ‘normative power’ has been replaced by ‘strategic autonomy’.  
- The global balance of power is shifting: a more assertive China is demanding recognition of its achievements, an increasingly irritated Russia is using military force to obtain its security claims, a hardening US position is seeking to oppose the Chinese and Russian claims, a more assertive Turkey is looking for a role as regional leader and an improvising EU is trying to master complexity through ‘strategic autonomy’.
- In times of the general decline in political values, the EU could continue its values-based foreign policy by differentiating according to value category and country; Earth values still offer an opportunity for cooperation with many international partners, whereas political values currently do not.
- Understanding for the perceptions of other countries can transform these into different perspectives on the same situation as a basis for the de-escalation of international tensions; insistence on one’s own perspective can lead to a conflict of narratives that might further escalate to diplomatic and military conflict.

Although classical realist political theory acknowledges only (national) interests as the driver of foreign policy and the international order, we argue that values are equally a driver of the international order. The EU has codified this in its founding Treaty and expressed it in its leading value for the international order as ‘principled pragmatism’. The emphasis on one of these aspects – principles or pragmatism – has changed over time. Whereas principles prevailed in the 1990s and 2000s, the hardening of the international political climate in the second decade of the millennium led to more emphasis on pragmatism and attention for the EU’s interests. This tendency increased during the pandemic, which reinforced the decline
in democratic values in many countries and showed up the economic vulnerabilities of the open EU economy. This led to the rise of the concept of EU strategic autonomy. Although strategic autonomy was initially used in relation to security and defence policy, and later to the economy, it has increasingly been associated with the role of the EU as a community of values. However, the EU has lost visibility as the global leader in democracy support, as President Biden has assumed leadership on the topic since he took office in 2021. Whenever the EU has prioritised its political values in its relations with, for example, China, Russia or Turkey, this has in all cases had negative consequences for its economic relations with these countries. Although trade with these countries has continued, steps towards international economic agreements were halted. The EU has little leverage over China, Russia and even Turkey, if the latter chooses to no longer pursue EU accession. Room for a differentiated approach is therefore limited. However, two avenues are still open. The first is increased cooperation on Earth values. The EU has positive cooperation on environmental issues with all partner countries mentioned in this study. This, sometimes modest, potential could be further developed and might lead to better relations in other areas as well. The second is increased dialogue and understanding for the perceptions of other countries, including their values. This could break the negative spiral of sanctions, counter-sanctions and economic and political tension.

Unfortunately, dialogue has proven futile in the case of EU-Russia relations. EU-Russia relations have been deteriorating for about two decades and have reached a dangerous low in 2022. The war in Ukraine has led to fundamental changes in German defence policy and to an unprecedented unity among EU countries in imposing new sanctions on Russia. While European security interests now appear dominant, values still matter in the present conflict. By supporting Ukraine and rejecting Russia’s actions, the EU is acting in accordance with its own ‘international order values’. Although options are limited in times of conflict, the EU should develop plans for a new pan-European security order – or at least a balance of power – for the future.