
EU Foreign Policy Overview

Summary



EU Foreign Policy
Research Group

Dear Readers,

In the past year the world, and the EU in particular, has faced numerous developments that appear a major surprise to many people. BREXIT, the victory of Donald Trump in the US elections, increased Russian influence in Syria, etc., demonstrated that the world is becoming more complex and less predicatable. In such an environment, the work of a political analysts has become more difficult but at the same time more in-demand, as we all need an answer to a question: What is the meaning of the ongoing developments and what changes can we expect in the upcoming future?

EU Foreign Policy Research Group is a team of young researchers and analysts who decided to join forces to find the answer. It was established in the frame of European Student Think Tank, a dynamic pan-European student organisation, in order to increase the interest of young people in the European Union foreign policy, but also to contribute to the knowledge of this topic. We are convinced that even such a specialised field can benefit from young people's engagement and we are eager to share our perspective on the most significant issues emerging in this topic. We decided to divide our work according to the geographical dimension, with each team member responsible for one area of the world. The main activity of the group includes preparing monthly overviews, which constitute a summary of the most significant developments in the relevant region in the last month. Another important product includes articles and analyses on more specific topics.

The overview we present to you now is the first in the series and includes a brief summary of each region that will be subject to analyses of the group. It is an introduction to all following monthly overviews as it presents the context in which numerous world areas are connected with the European Union. Such a glance on the region is provided in order to better understand what can be the impact of the region and why it is important from the perspective of the EU. Hopefully, it represents a solid background that will allow our readers to get a grasp of the EU engagement in the world.

The group aims to produce credible and unbiased content, which is supposed to serve as a good source of information about the EU foreign policy. We truly hope that the presented paper fulfils this goal and will convince you to look forward to the upcoming work of our team.

Kinga Jaromin
Head of EU Foreign Policy
Research Group

The background of the page is the European Union flag, featuring a blue field with twelve five-pointed gold stars arranged in a circle. The flag is shown waving, with some stars appearing slightly blurred due to motion.

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Africa



Balázs Kele

With more than one billion people and the highest number of states, Africa is one of the largest continents in the world. Nonetheless, despite its size and numerous resources Africa remains the least developed of them all, by many considered a loser of globalisation. Numerous factors contributed to this situation including the problems of bad governance, ethnic conflicts, tribal wars or desertification due to climate change. However, after a long-standing stagnation, in the recent years the growth of Africa accelerated. Next to the traditionally large economies, such as Nigeria and South Africa, many others demonstrated a rapid growth, for instance Rwanda, Ethiopia, the DR Congo, Tanzania, Botswana or Ivory Coast. Yet, even the successful countries face serious internal problems, just to mention some of them: the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, high number of HIV infected people in South Africa and Botswana, or a protracted conflict in the DR Congo. Poor areas, for instance the Sahel region suffer more, as internal conflicts are more usual and the shrinking of the cultivable soil results in tribal wars or wars for resources between countries.

The EU has developed close ties with Africa. Combined with the colonial past when European states such as England, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Belgium seized territories and colonized almost the whole continent. Even though colonization resulted in numerous problems, it is undeniable that the common past interconnects Europe and Africa and brings them closer to each other. Enough to mention the large number of people, who migrated from the former colonies to the former colonialists, such as Congolese people in Belgium, Mozambican people in Portugal or Algerian people in France. These bonds also have effects on the bilateral relations between African countries and the EU, in terms of trade, investments or youth exchange programmes, just to mention some examples.

After the number of African states become independent, the EU signed trade and economic agreements with the ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) countries in 1975, within the framework of the Lomé Convention. The cooperation was updated in 2000 in the Cotonou Agreement. The biggest sub-Saharan partners for the EU are clearly South Africa and Nigeria. At the Lisbon Summit in 2007 the European Union and 54 African countries adopted the Joint Africa – EU Strategy. The EU also provides a huge variety of aid programmes, for example European Development Fund, which has an asset of 30,5 billion euros for the 2014-20 financial period. EU member

states also are the largest contributors of ODA (Official Development Assistance). In exchange for the development assistance, the EU usually demands the improvement of the human rights record, democratic values and transparency. Although it is a coherent EU strategy in all the regions of the world it causes a certain disadvantage compared to other powers strongly interested in the Africa, such as China or India. These countries follow their business interests without the prioritization of the aforementioned values, thus they are perceived as more attractive investors. All in all, the trading interest of the EU on the continent is endangered, as Chinese, Indian and Indonesian investors started to take over African markets. Besides the humanitarian programmes and trade, the EU also has ongoing military and civil military operations on the continent, which attempt to stabilize states such as Mali, Chad, Libya, Central African Republic and Somalia.

Africa is one of the richest continent in a huge variety of raw materials. The African ground hides precious minerals such as diamond, gold, platinum, bauxite, copper, iron ore, coltan and valuable raw materials, for example oil, gas and coal. Lucrative timber business also yields a great profit to many African states. Despite these favours, many African countries could not seize these opportunities. Moreover, in many cases the resource abundance is not a blessing, rather a curse. Africa is a usual scene of coups, civil wars, insurgencies, frozen conflicts, ethnic cleansings and other forms of violence. Conflicts such as the Rwandan, Somalian and Angolan civil wars or the Biafra war in Nigeria left behind exceptionally high number of casualties. According to the Fragile State Indexes, six out of eight countries in the worst, very high alert category are African. In high alert category the index mentions four African countries out of eight in total, while in the alert category it is seventeen out of twenty-two. These figures clearly indicate that African states generally have a problem with state stability.

On the African continent, there are no hegemon powers, rather just regional powers such as Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. Thus, on the international arena African states have weak abilities to enforce their interests. In order to change that, the Organization of African Unity was created shortly after the end of the colonialist era in 1963. It tried to coordinate different interests of the African countries and represented its members on international forums, but with limited success. In 2002 a more efficient organization, the African Union replaced the OAU, which could create stronger ties between the member states, in order to react to the challenges more effectively and unitedly.

Australia and Oceania



**Jakob
McKernan**

Although the European Union has had a longstanding relationship with the Pacific region and in particular with its two largest states, Australia and New Zealand, it would be difficult to argue that the region constitutes a foreign policy priority for the EU. With an increasingly emboldened Russia, a seemingly intractable conflict in Syria and uncertainty surrounding the transatlantic alliance it appears unlikely that the Pacific region will top a list of the most worrisome issues of 2017 from the perspective of EU policy makers. Nonetheless, the Pacific region remains important for the European Union, particularly in terms of international trade, tackling climate change and development assistance. Given the importance the EU places on tackling climate change and the ongoing crisis of confidence in the benefits of large scale international trade deals, the EU's relationship with the region merits both attention and analysis.

When we speak of the Pacific, we generally refer to the 15 island states - Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu – that make up the region. These islands are surrounded by the region's two largest and most powerful states, Australia and New Zealand and naturally the EU's interests in the region are primarily focused on these two countries.

Australia and New Zealand are not just the region's largest states but also share common values and interests with the EU. The increasingly close political and strategic ties between the EU and these countries have largely been built on the strong economic relations, developed over a number of decades. Both countries now constitute important trading partners for the EU.

In 2015, Total trade in goods amounted to €41.21bn in 2015 (EU import €9.57bn, EU exports €31.64bn and total trade in commercial services between EU and Australia in 2014 amounted to €26.43bn (EU Directorate - General for Trade, 2016). With the EU and Australia recently agreeing to start working towards a comprehensive free trade agreement, this economic relationship is set to grow further in the coming years. A similar dynamic – one of growing political ties based on a strong economic relationship – characterises the EU's relationship with NZ. Although the EU already is New Zealand's third largest trading partner, EU-NZ economic ties are only going to grow closer when the proposed free trade agreement is concluded -

negotiations are expected to begin early this year and conclude around mid-2019. Although the EU has signed political agreements with both New Zealand and Australia over the last year, the focus of the relationship with both will firmly be on concluding these FTA's.

The EU's relationships with the 15 island-nations which make up the rest of the region are primarily focused on mitigating and adapting to climate change and development assistance. The low – lying nature of some of the islands mean that they are highly vulnerable to climate change and the EU's efforts in the region are often geared towards addressing this issue. The future of this work will depend on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement which frames the EU's relationship with the ACP (African Caribbean Pacific) countries. Due for renewal in 2020, a number of issues surrounding the agreement – particularly the relationship between trade and development policy and the role of the 2030 agenda in the EU's relationship with the region – will determine the future of EU engagement with the Pacific these nations.

China and East Asia



**Evelyn
Shi**

For decades there have already existed bilateral relations between the EU and East Asian countries. Communications started in 1994 with “*Towards a New Asia Strategy*”, a project launched by the European Commission. The background of this strategy was the idea, that the EU should support the development of East Asia according to a Western model regarding economy and politics. Basically, this strategy implied that Western countries were not just superior, but also preferable for East Asia and this view still has not changed.

However, the situation has changed. Staying competitive in times of globalization has become an important issue in the last years and that is why the EU is compelled to rethink its policies regarding East Asian countries (especially China) in order to promote innovation and openness by being present on the world’s most dynamic markets. Through liberalizing their markets, East Asian countries have experienced a fast economic growth that should not be underestimated. For example, by gradually opening the market in recent years, China have become the second largest economy after the USA (and many are forecasting them to outrun the USA) and also a very important trading partner to the EU. Nevertheless, trading is still restricted by tariffs, regulations and the European affluent neglect, which may be caused by the failure in overseeing the future changes. Instead, the EU still sees the USA as a trustworthy strategic partner. But due to recent events, US politics seem to go towards protectionism rather than openness, and that is why the EU may consider changing its focus to other countries like the ones in East Asia.

The relationship between the EU and Japan or Korea (obviously South Korea, because there are still no relations between the EU and North Korea) has been easier than with China. Both of them have been strategic partners for years already (Japan since 2003, South Korea since 2010), but negotiations were easier because of their mutual interests and values (regarding human rights, democratic values etc). But what seems to be forgotten is the rising status of China, which is actually seeking integration in international politics. Of course, the European values should not be undermined, quite the contrary: very important are efforts to increase mutual understanding and raise the EU profile in China, just as to start taking actions instead of declarations. But agreements also mean compromises, so

when the EU refuses to negotiate about what it considers indispensable, it is reasonable to assume that China will not be willing to yield in cuts in industrial over-capacity, especially in the steel sector.

Increasing market economy on both sides is essential to provide openness and economic growth. For more than 2,000 years, China's commercial ties with the outside world have been symbolized by the ancient Silk Road, which began as a trading network of mountain paths and sea routes that provided a lifeline for the Chinese economy. Now, the government in Beijing is reviving the concept with an ambitious plan to build and upgrade the infrastructure throughout Asia and Europe. Concerning 65 countries and 60 percent of the world's population, it aims to redraw the trade routes for Chinese products. One arm, the Silk Road Economic Belt, goes from China to Europe through Central Asia, and the other, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, links China to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa along sea routes. This connection could provide many jobs and opportunities, and also the exchange of culture and knowledge. In Asia, the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has already led to the interconnection of many states, which have started to reduce barriers and tariffs, even scholarships were established. Of course, there are obstacles like language barriers, ethics and morals. But discussions can lead to higher standards, more international cooperation and more competitive economy. For example, the exchange of knowledge can help China to better their infrastructure (rural poverty and agricultural productivity could for example be reformed through encouragement to the development of local economies) and social policies (e.g. labour standards and human rights), and the EU can profit from increasing the knowledge about the modern Chinese economy, especially regarding technological advantages.

Trade agreements are also linked to political impact. The linking of the economies may lead on to a better understanding, which can bring profit to both sides. One cannot learn more than from another with different interests and views. Anyway, it is time for the EU to start looking to the future instead of the past. Pursuing that objective should although not diminish economic relations with Taiwan (which the EU does not recognize as a sovereign state due to the "One-China-Policy") as they bring significant benefit to the EU and are an indirect mean of supporting democracy in the region which is one of the EU's objectives.



Middle East and North Africa

**Stefan
Pfalzer**

EU foreign relations with the Middle East and North Africa are to a large extent shaped by historical relations. The process of European integration concurred with the disintegration of the colonial order which has shaped the MENA region to this day. Colonial powers of the past have remained entangled in the affairs of their former colonies and maintain economic relations which have often become the driving force behind military interventions in conflict zones.

As a result of decades of conflict, the EU is now confronted with a new age of terrorism which — by virtue of a modern-day propaganda network — manages to rally the support of young, disenchanted EU citizens susceptible to radicalisation. The EU has struggled to keep foreign fighters from entering conflicts and returning to EU territory afterwards, partly due to the federal mode of operation of member states' intelligence services.

An important factor currently influencing the EU relations with the region are the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria that have displaced millions of people who consequently sought refuge in neighbouring countries and — as funding of facilities in these host nations was gradually decreased by, among others, European countries — in member states of the EU (Erlanger / De Freytas-Tamura 2015). Critical voices within the EU have raised concerns about the EU-Turkey deal aimed at stemming the influx of refugees. Individual EU member states have also negotiated readmission agreements with North African states as EU readmission agreements have widely been criticised for their ineffectiveness due to the unwillingness of third countries to take back their nationals after they have been recognised as irregular migrants.

The EU's answer to these conflicts is based on attempts to build up support for countries neighbouring on conflict zones such as Jordan and develop strong strategic partners in North Africa such as Morocco and Tunisia (Kausch 2016). Meanwhile the EU is pressing for political transition and post-conflict reconstruction in Syria and continues to hold talks with regional partners as well as Syrian opposition groups (European External Action Service 2016).

The aforementioned conflicts are symptomatic of the MENA region and its underlying tensions. The region remains a playing field of geopolitical conflicts of interests between Russia and the USA as well as of regional actors entangled in a Sunni - Shia power struggle. Armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen challenge the EU and its quest for stability in the region.

Recent EU foreign policy has also aimed at a rapprochement between the West and Iran with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) providing that sanctions against Iran be relieved in return for compliance with the regulations of the JCPOA. This process will be reviewed in January 2017 (European External Action Service 2016).

Current EU-MENA relations are institutionalized within the framework of structures such as the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Middle East Peace Process. The ENP seeks to assist EU neighbours and their commitment to democratic values in manifold ways: by granting financial support; by fostering economic integration with trade deals and market access; by issuing Schengen visas to ENP citizens and by providing policy support (European External Action Service 2016).

The UfM serves as a regional forum to coordinate economic and environmental projects aimed at reducing the pollution of the Mediterranean, supporting small businesses, promote alternative energy sources and improve infrastructure (European External Action Service 2016).

Moreover, the EU remains committed to a two-state solution for Palestine and Israel and utilises structures of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the ENP and UfM in order to propel the Middle East Peace Process.

Russia and Eastern Europe



**Kinga
Jaromin**

Although homogeneous in terms of culture and history, the region of Eastern Europe is diverse in terms of power. Russia, being a global player, pursues its own strategies in international relations while other countries of the region, especially the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine share the identity of the borderland, with hard-to-define long-term direction of their foreign policy (Belarus is an exception, pursuing very close ties with Russia, but in terms of power being comparable to Ukraine and Moldova).

This difference is also observable in the EU relations with these countries. Russia is treated as an equal partner or competitor, while other countries of the region are considered a possible sphere of influence. To demonstrate that, Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine are involved in the Eastern Partnership, and their relations with the EU are regulated in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, while EU – Russia relations are shaped according to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1997 and to the concept of the four common spaces. Despite this discrepancy it is reasonable to consider all these countries as one region as their relations with EU are inter-connected. EU relations with Russia significantly influence EU relations with other countries of the region and *vice versa*.

It is caused by the fact that Russia treats the region as its area of influence whereas any attempts of the EU to tighten relations with respective countries provoke Russian reaction. Such situation requires from the EU a highly considerate foreign policy. Without taking into account ambitions and specifics of the Russian foreign policy and understanding the Russian role in the region, the EU risks a confrontation or a low effectiveness of applied policies, especially as they aim to bring Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine closer to the EU.

The EU considers the region of Eastern Europe as an important subject where it attempts to spread its influence in order to guarantee a stable, democratic neighbourhood, which will increase its own security (European Security Strategy 2003). Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine were offered a chance to develop a close cooperation with the EU, which, in case of latter two, resulted in signing Association Agreements (cooperation with Belarus is limited because of its negative human right record among others).

Meanwhile, relations with Russia are governed differently and with an understanding of its impact on the EU. Russia, as the successor of the Soviet Union, inherited a part of its ideology including the hegemonic attitude towards the countries of the former soviet state. This poses a danger to countries like Ukraine, which results in the growing instability of the neighbourhood, but also may endanger EU member states like Estonia or Latvia, especially because of a significant Russian minority on their territories. A dependence on the import of energy resources from Russia like gas, is a reality of numerous member states (Russia is the main supplier of gas to the EU with Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, France and Poland being the main receivers) while mutual trade brings significant revenues (EU export to Russia in 2015 was worth €73 920 million, at the peak of relations in 2012 it reached €123 441 million). This impact cannot be ignored and the EU constantly faces a challenge of maintaining proper relations with Russia, while pursuing close relations with other Eastern European states.

Currently, this issue was put in the spotlight as the EU relations with the region were greatly impacted by the Euro-maidan revolution in Ukraine. The overthrow of president Janukovych and the shift of the Ukrainian foreign policy strategy, followed by aggressive Russian actions towards this country, impeded the EU relations with Russia. It resulted in EU sanctions and Russian counter-sanctions that limited trade between both entities (for instance EU agri-food exports to Russia fell by 43%, from €11 billion to €6.3 billion between August 2014 and July 2015 as a result of the Russian ban of a number of agricultural products). A number of other issues, like human rights protection or Russian engagement in the Middle East also contributes to a serious disagreement with the EU. Meanwhile, the EU faces a serious challenge in the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, where so-called pro-European governments are not fully willing to apply required reforms and the population grow disenchanted with their effects.

Another serious problem the EU is facing in relation to the region may have a significant impact on domestic affairs of the union. The disagreement between member states about the foreign policy strategy towards the region (growing number of states proposing to lift the sanctions and improve relations with Russia at the expense of Ukraine) may degenerate into an internal conflict which can further weaken the EU. It would be a strong political gain to President Vladimir Putin who is pursuing the 'divide and rule' policy towards the EU for instance through developing closer ties with far-right parties in multiple European states. The impact of this strategy can be even greater as Donald Trump becomes the president of the USA. His favourable attitude towards Russia may leave Europe alone in its efforts to undermine Russian and increase Western position in Eastern Europe.

Turkey and Caucasus



**Federico
Salvati**

Since its official birth with the Lausanne treaty in 1923, Turkey has been struggling with reconciling its identity contradictions. The country's ultimate inability to find a viable internal equilibrium resulted in a widespread instability that undermined the country both as a democracy and as a national state. This is best depicted by the army repeated interventions in the national political life, every time the country was drifting away from its alleged fundamental principles (Ahmad, 2014).

Today's Turkey also has to face this challenge as its government, despite being democratically elected, demonstrates to be increasingly illiberal (Martin, 2015:83). The progressive strengthening of the presidential figure and the weakening of internal institutional legal guarantees performed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made Turkey drift away from the path of democratization. All this became dramatically clear in 2013 during the protests in Gezi Park. The disproportionate reaction of the authorities to the peaceful protests has been unanimously criticized by the European Union because of its violent and repressive character. Finally, in 2016 the country suffered another military coup attempt whose responsibility has been attributed to Fethullah Gulen. The coup *per se* was a failure but it presented an opportunity to president Erdoğan to assert his supremacy over the military apparatus and the opposition. Because of this attempt, the country is ongoing a period of repression and censorship.

During the year Turkey, because of its peculiar geopolitical characteristics, repeatedly ended up to be a key regional actor in the EU strategic discourse. Ankara has been, and still is, the most advanced NATO position in the Middle-East, a major player in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (with the Cyprus question and the control of the Dardanelles) and a key actor in the Balkans (especially after the Kosovo crisis and the start of the ESDP project).

European decision makers have always been divided about the country. Because of its strategic importance, some have advocated the necessity to give Ankara the EU full membership; this position, though, has always found a huge resistance among those who stressed the inadequacy of Turkey institutional and legal standard for achieving the EU membership.

In 1999 the country has been offered the opportunity to start the negotiations for the EU admission but its multisectoral geopolitics and its home instability have impeded these processes (Martin: 2015). But most recently the country demonstrated again its strategic importance. In March 2016 Ankara and Brussels reached an arrangement that should supposedly contain the migration flux from Syria. In turn, the EU provides Ankara with a number of political and economic incentives. However, today the accession negotiations are at a standstill. Although, the recent Austrian proposal to stop “facade” accession negotiations with Ankara was rejected by the Council of the European Union, the repressive stand taken by the Turkish government makes very unlikely that the country joins the EU anytime soon.

Nevertheless, Turkey remains a constant of the EU geopolitics. However, the tensions between the West and Moscow are raising and it is crucial to analyze how Ankara relates to Russia which might shed some light on the future of EU foreign policy. This has become especially relevant in the wake of the trilateral Russian-Iranian-Turkish dialogue on Syria (Euronews 20/12/2016). When it comes to Ankara-Moscow relations, the first and main topic to focus on, it is always the Transcaucasia.

The South Caucasus is a region made up from three different republics: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The two factors that have constantly influenced South Caucasus geopolitics have always been ethnic rivalry and energy transportation. The region is also impacted by three major “frozen conflicts”: in the Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moscow and Ankara are historical rivals over the control of the region. Their power projecting strategy, though, has been very different during the last years. On one hand, Moscow has tried to maintain its grasp on the region by “tinkering” with the conflicts (Jamestown, 2016:386). On the other, Turkey has been capitalizing on its role as a transit territory from the energy resources coming from Azerbaijan (Jamestown, 2016). Ankara policy during the years has been supported both by the USA and the EU. The first in order to contrast Russian hegemony in the territory and the latter to reduce its dependency on Russian energy export (Brzezinski, 1998:56).

Because of the Karabakh war though, the only available route to transport energy resource from Azerbaijan rests in Georgia. Georgia today is one of the success stories of the European Eastern Partnership and a staunching herald of the European values in the region (CCR:2015). Azerbaijan on the contrary (especially after the sign of the TAP agreement) faced a growing totalitarian drift. This resulted in a slow-down of the relations with Europe and a consolidation of corruption and clientelism in the Azerbaijani society (McGuinn, in Piel Simao 2016:97).

Armenia, finally, after the 2013 Vilnius summit admittedly drifted away from the EU, strengthening its partnership with Moscow. The progressive economic dependency of Yerevan from Moscow preoccupies both Brussels and a big portion of the Armenia liberal elite (Jamestown, 2016:306). During last year Yerevan restarted consultation with Brussels for future dialogue but the country remains still the foothold of Moscow in the region.

United States of America



Jakub Zientala

The United States of America is the most important partner of the European Union on the international arena. The USA and the EU share common values based on the liberal democracy, human rights, and widely understood liberty. The dynamics of international relationships over the Atlantic have shaped international and global system, as we currently know. The same dynamics shaped the 20th century at large with two World Wars, and Cold War, which dominated political discourse in the second half of the last century.

The USA remains the most important partner of the European Union both in term of politics and the trade. The USA is the biggest trade partner, with over 680 bln USD worth trade in goods. Transatlantic trade constitutes closely 1/3 of the global trade exchange with a balance favouring the EU-28 block.

Many members of the EU belong to NATO, which is the most formidable military alliance up to date. The members remain committed to the idea of the collective security highly valuing the transatlantic cooperation in this and multiple other fields. Thus said, the EU and the USA share a lot of common goals and remain close allies. Relations between these two have a lot of influence on the state of international affairs and global order.

Currently however, these close and friendly relations may face a turmoil as a result of the recent elections in the USA and the victory of Donald Trump. President-elect Trump had expressed in his speeches numerous times, that he wants to focus his efforts on internal affairs of the USA and redefine relations of the USA with its partners. Mr. Trump stated that EU countries will have to meet NATO spending requirements of 2.0% GDP. Currently about 70% of all cost of NATO are covered by the US, while European input of upkeep of NATO decreased dramatically over the years. Election of Mr. Trump might bring a change to this trend and increase the contribution of European allies towards NATO. On the other hand, such statements by some are perceived as questioning obligations of the USA and its commitment to ensuring safety in Europe.

Moreover, the victory of Mr. Trump might constitute a complete reversal of American foreign policy. His allegedly close ties to Russia and favourable

attitude to Vladimir Putin are interpreted as a sign of future closer between two countries which could bring the ease on Russian sanctions, thus leaving Europeans alone in the support for Ukraine. It would most probably have an impact also on the decreasing presence of the US military in Europe.

US foreign policy will probably change in other areas, very important from the perspective of the EU, for instance climate change. Mr. Trump, as a known climate change denier will rather try to undermine Paris agreement's provisions, which may cause additional frictions between the USA and EU, since the latter is dedicated to combating this challenge. A lot of EU climate change policies are included in its 2020 agenda.

Finally, a great unknown remains the future of widely criticized Free Trade Agreement between US and EU, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership aka TTIP. Free trade deal has been negotiated between European Communities and the USA for past 30 years, with little to no effect. The negotiations of TTIP started 6 years ago. The agreement, with accompanying TiSA, would create the biggest free trade zone in the world. Transatlantic Partnership had been criticized by multiple parties on both sides of the Atlantic and currently it is difficult to assess the willingness of continue negotiations by both parties. What is known for now, Mr. Trump expressed the need to renegotiate both TTP and TTIP and as well create new trade barriers in order to protect US homeland.

The future of transatlantic relations remains unclear. It is although very likely that we are at the moment of the reshaping of the whole concept of the EU - USA cooperation and the Mr. Trump will have a significant role in this process. The change we may envisage has been demonstrated by numerous decisions of yet president-elect. For instance, Mr. Trump and his transition team ordered that all ambassadors appointed by President Obama, must leave their posts before 20th January 2017.

The possible pick for the ambassador to the EU, Tom Malloch, admitted he was in favour of Brexit, which may greatly impact not only EU - USA relations, but also internal EU affairs.

Western Balkans



**Aleksandra
Stankovic**

Western Balkans region currently represents some former states of Yugoslavia: Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo and a non-Yugoslavian state Albania. Due to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the following wars in the 90s, countries of the region have become vulnerable, further experiencing economic crisis and instability. The historical ties of Western Balkans with some of the EU member states, as well as a crucial location, in the closest proximity of the EU determined the decision about the need of stability, economic progress, reforms and democracy in the region which led to the creation of EU policy foreseeing Western Balkans within the European Union. A significant number of citizens of these countries that live between borders of the EU could also have had an impact on this decision.

Thus, because of numerous reasons, a strong belief that Western Balkans represent an important part of the united Europe, persists in the EU. In the time of the internal crisis and growing doubts about the EU capacity for enlargement, the Western Balkans region is the only one that may foresee its close future in the EU. However, the history of conflicts and the actual economic and political situation of each country in the Balkans may hinder any further progress. Not only has the economic situation constituted a burning issue, but also combating corruption, ethnic violence, poverty and social exclusion. Further problems, connected with the political status also persist in the region. Such an example is Kosovo which declared independence from Serbia in February 2008, but it is still unrecognised by five EU member states. The questions of the legality of the accession of a country unrecognised by some of the EU members appears to be a serious problem.

As a European crossroad, the Western Balkans have an important geopolitical impact and could make a great contribution to the EU in the fields of trade, transport, agriculture and tourism. As a very specific and unique ethnicity, the Western Balkans could contribute to the European multicultural diversity and multilingualism with an extraordinary tradition and culture. At the same time, the Balkan countries' mutual relations could improve, which represents one of the most important policies of the EU.

The current state of affairs in the region demonstrates a various pace and capacity of different states in terms of building cooperation with the EU. Serbia and Montenegro are two countries that are already engaged in membership negotiations. Concerning FYROM, the Commission has recommended starting negotiations. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are registered as potential applicants, and for Albania the Council had approved Albania's application - which makes Albania a "candidate country".

The EU membership represents an important goal for every Western Balkan country. Due to the above mentioned facts the union also has an interest in the EU enlargement in this region. That's why it's probable that after prolonged negotiations with the countries of Western Balkans region, in the end, they will become member states of the EU.

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