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A year into Biden's tenure: What has changed for the Transatlantic Relationship?

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Introduction

The year of 2020 was for the transatlantic community a period of great anticipation regarding the US presidential elections with many observers and policymakers in Europe trying to gauge how the results would affect the transatlantic relationship. Potential changes in US foreign policy, geopolitical rivalries, and approaches to multilateralism and isolationism were the subject of heated debate and many wondered the extent to which a Biden administration would bring real change to US policy on Europe.

Fast forward to November, 2020, and the EU rejoiced with the election of Joe Biden and with the prospect of a transatlantic reset after 4 years of an inward and divisive America that had caused what many, on the European side of the Atlantic, perceived to be an irreparable rift in the US-EU relationship. Following the inauguration of President Joe Biden, a flurry of reciprocal diplomatic activity ensued, with both sides rushing to demonstrate their goodwill and openness to engage on a wide range of issues. The buzzword became “transatlantic reset” and the focus was on repairing the damage done.

But many on the European side of the ocean still wondered how long the honeymoon would last and whether the initial diplomatic furriness would translate into actual tangible policy results.

A year into Biden's tenure, what can we make of this “new transatlantic reset”? Have European anxieties of an irreparable transatlantic split been proven right? Can we restore the old transatlantic alliance with Biden or are we growing apart for good? Are

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recent transatlantic tensions a reflection of deeper long-term trends and structural divide as many have cautioned?

When we look back at the first year of Joe Biden’s presidency, we see a mix of tangible breakthroughs but also hiccups and setbacks. We see a clear rhetorical departure from the grueling years of Donald Trump’s presidency and a genuine willingness to engage with partners and allies. We learned that style matters and that the power of having a constructive and willing partner ready to engage and work through divisive issues should not be underestimated. At the same time, we also see old differences resurface again and clearer indicators of where the limitations and bottlenecks to achieving the full potential of the relationship may lie.

A new US-EU agenda for global change – the honeymoon phase

Following the US election, the call of the day was for the EU to act fast and seize the moment of the Biden presidency to lead the effort of rebuilding the transatlantic relationship. It was in this context of collective European relief and renewed enthusiasm, that in December of 2020, the EU came up with the Joint Communication “a new EU-US agenda for global change”² which came to be known as the EU’s offer to the United States – a proposal to reset transatlantic relations and take this “once in a generation opportunity” to forge a new global alliance that would join forces to address the world’s most pressing challenges.

This communication was an opportunity for the EU to set the tone of the conversation and advance bold and detailed proposals in a wide range of fields from the health response, to climate change, to digital regulation, to trade and technology issues and to foreign and security policy. To a large extent, this document was perceived as a gesture of goodwill toward the Biden administration, an attempt to meet half-way on the many divisive issues that had opposed the EU and US in recent years: from the defense of multilateralism and the rules-based international order, to the need to address the irritating factors of bilateral trade and regulate Big Tech, to the topic of strategic autonomy and the rise of China. In the communication, the EU toughened its language on China explicitly referring, for the first time, to “the strategic challenge posed by China’s growing international assertiveness”³ and sought to reassure the administration that “a capable and self-reliant EU is good for Europe and good for the transatlantic partnership”⁴.

² [joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)



The Biden administration on the other hand, went above and beyond to reassure Europeans that it was very much “back” and committed to breaking the stalemate of the previous years, not just rhetorically but diplomatically as well. Exchanges between EU and US senior officials took place at various levels over the course of the year: US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken participated in the Foreign Affairs Council in March, 2021, followed by the US special envoy for climate, John Kerry, a few months later; There were several bilateral contacts and phone calls between EU leaders and the Biden administration, including between Ursula Von der Leyen and President Biden, and finally, after weeks of intense behind the scene negotiations, the much anticipated EU-US summit took place at the end of June bearing tangible breakthroughs.

Concrete progress achieved

The first six months of the Biden administration were hence rightly coined the honeymoon phase in the transatlantic context – one where both sides understood that semantics, tone, and diplomacy mattered and that the priority was not to quarrel on the differences but rather focus on what brought allies together. And while differences resurfaced on a number of issues, the “honeymoon” did yield concrete results in the digital, trade, climate and foreign and security policy fields.

After intense bilateral negotiations, during the EU/US summit, both sides agreed to put an end to the 17 year long aircraft dispute by suspending all retaliatory tariffs. On the same occasion, both sides also committed to resolve the transatlantic steel and aluminum trade dispute, inherited by the Trump administration, an agreement that would later materialize during the G20 summit in October 2021. The US administration agreed to suspend tariffs on steel and aluminum in exchange for the EU to lift retaliatory tariffs on American goods. On the tech front, another major source of transatlantic tension, the Biden administration had called, in multiple fora, for a unified minimum corporate tax rate of 15% before an historic agreement was finally reached by 136 nations at the OECD in October 2021.

A tangible achievement was also the decision to follow through with perhaps the most relevant and innovative EU idea that resulted from the December communication: the decision to establish and Trade and Technology Council (TTC), a forum designed to align and coordinate approaches on key global technology economic and trade issues - following years of transatlantic tensions on tech policy - formally launched in Pittsburgh on September 29th.

There was also a coordinated effort to align on foreign policy matters, namely on China, Iran, Russia and sanction coordination and to increase dialogue on security and defense issues.

Reality bites

But as it was to be expected, the months of diplomatic courtship did eventually come to an end. After months spent fixing what had been broken, the events of the summer of 2021 hit a raw nerve in Europe anxieties.

Living up to its promise of ending the forever wars in the Middle East, the Biden administration decided to proceed with the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, all the while leaving a chaotic scene behind with the Taliban back in power and a humanitarian crisis unfolding as a result. The lack of US consultation with NATO allies and perceived dismissiveness of European concerns, raised red flags across Europe as debate intensified over the EU's capacity to do the heavy lifting in its eastern neighborhood. It also came as a reality check that the Biden administration was ready to walk the talk when it came to its announced strategic shift to the east and its plan of reallocating assets and resources to regions where it considered that its vital interests were at stake.

In much the same way, the announcement of a new security partnership deal between the United States, United Kingdom and Australia (AUKUS) took Europeans by surprise. With this new security partnership, widely perceived as an effort to counter China's influence in the Indo-Pacific, Australia was set to acquire nuclear-powered submarines from the US and/or the UK, while pulling out of a major contract with France in the process. This deal has understandably provoked outrage in France with the French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian describing it as a "stab in the back" and an "unacceptable behavior between allies and partners"⁵. The decision to exclude France, the first EU country to embrace the concept of the Indo-Pacific and one of the few EU Member States to develop an Indo-Pacific strategy also suggested a certain US's reluctance to include France and the EU's approach on matters of geopolitical positioning in the Indo-pacific. The announcement of the AUKUS also came at a time of intense EU debate over its profile and activity in the region and its most recently adopted Indo-Pacific strategy⁶, which signaled to the Europeans that if didn't fall in line, they would get left behind⁷.

⁵ [‘Stab in the back’: France accuses US of sinking Australia submarine deal – video | World news | The Guardian](#)

⁶ [jointcommunication 2021_24_1_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁷ Also as argued by Michael Schuman in politico's article [Biden's submarine message: Time for Europe to fall in line – POLITICO](#)



Despite the EU's early activism in engaging the new administration, the internal discussion on how to handle the administration was not without its perils. Whether it was negotiating Council Conclusions, preparing Foreign Affairs Councils with the participation of administration officials, or negotiating summit statements, old discussions resurfaced, exposing latent divisions and diverging national interests among the Member States. At each of these EU-led meetings with American counterparts, Member States seemed more preoccupied with rehashing their own national positions and foreign policy concerns than acting in the name of the greater EU good. Not surprisingly, the internal discussion process also saw differences resurface on the meaning of strategic autonomy, EU-NATO cooperation, Russia, China and depending on the Member State a different set of regional threats and concerns were consistently articulated.

These internal exercises didn't paralyze the processes nor did they prevent EU discussions with American counterparts from delivering concrete results but they do raise the question of how to best handle EU bilateral meetings with the US counterparts. Experience tells us that American presidents have little patience for prolonged meetings with 27 Member States – we don't need to go as far as recalling the lack of enthusiasm Obama had for EU-US summits, which he often regarded as “lacking real substance”⁸. For far too long, American administration officials have understood the value of meeting with Member States bilaterally but they have often wondered what the EU's added value really is. This is an old discussion that has less to do with the EU-US relationship, per say, and is more of a reflection of Europe's quest to assert itself as capable and cohesive global actor. The EU-US summit was hailed as a success precisely because, among other reasons, it was held bilaterally between EU and US counterparts and because it delivered on matters where the EU has earned global respect, the trade and technology fields. While this has not been a fundamental issue during the first year of Joe Biden's presidency, who deliberately made it a priority to repair the transatlantic relationship, it should serve as cautionary tale for the years ahead, especially as domestic and other foreign policy priorities are likely to take precedent.

Is the transatlantic relationship facing a deeper structural divide?

The events of the summer of 2021 might seem just another hiccup in the long and bumpy history of the transatlantic relationship, one too often punctuated by highs and lows but they are a direct consequence of the fundamental differences that persist on both sides when framing the global narrative. Regardless of current global power

⁸ [BBC News - Barack Obama is to skip a US-EU summit due in May](#)

shifts, the EU still speaks the language of peace, while the US still speaks the language of power and these postures are likely to overcome time, personalities, geopolitical constellations and political leaderships. This is a deep structural divide but not a new one.

The following provides a closer look at how these differences are likely to manifest themselves on a few selected themes such as China policy, approaches to geopolitical competition, multilateralism, and the debate surrounding the EU's strategic autonomy.

China policy:

Despite multiple reports that the US and EU, and even individual Member States are adopting increasingly convergent views on China evident in the round of meetings that have taken place under the newly established EU-US dialogue on China, the truth is fundamental approaches still differ substantially. While Europe as a whole may be growing increasingly wary of China's growing international assertiveness, Europeans, generally speaking, still don't think of this as "their war" as this ECFR report⁹ recently demonstrated, nor do they perceive the China challenge with the same level of urgency.

EU officials and EU institutions have adopted an increasingly sharper tone in line with the US's approach in official statements. Recently, the EU High Representative, Josep Borrell, in an unprecedented move, spoke of the ideological challenge that China represents. But what do these rhetorical assurances amount to in practical terms? These still won't profoundly change the EU's deeply rooted belief that the key to solving global crisis or confronting adversaries lies in the power of engagement and effective multilateralism and not in a declaration of war. And despite the EU's continuous efforts to reduce dependence on China, this more assertive posture won't change – certainly not overnight – Europe's diverse economic ties with China and China's significant investment and presence across Europe through its Belt and Road initiative. It also won't change the prevailing concern among many Europeans and EU officials that rising US-China tensions may paralyze multilateral diplomacy and it won't change Europeans' resistance to pick sides in a war they don't consider theirs to fight. So, for all the more hawkish statements emanating from Brussels, there are equally as many attempting to temper that approach, evident in this idea - repeatedly emphasized by High Representative Josep Borrell - that Europeans have to do it "my way"¹⁰, the European way, and to act as a force of moderation in the Sino-American rivalry.

⁹ [What Europeans think about the US-China Cold War – European Council on Foreign Relations \(ecfr.eu\)](https://ecfr.eu/what-europeans-think-about-the-us-china-cold-war-european-council-on-foreign-relations)

¹⁰ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/80854/rougher-seas-eu%E2%80%99s-own-interests-and-values-should-be-our-compass_en

The EU High Representative is not alone in conveying this message. The French Finance Minister put it best: The United States wants to confront China. The European Union wants to engage China”¹¹ adding that the key issue for Europe is to become “independent from the United States, able to defend its own interests, whether economic or strategic interests.”¹² These postures reflect, once again, the ever-present European quest to for its rightful place in the world – one that is dictated by European values and interests alone and not driven by the agenda of others.

The contradictory messages emanating from Brussels and individual Member States have frustrated the Biden administration which unequivocally defines China as a threat to American’s national security interests and a force to be reckoned with in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment.

Framing the narrative: democracies vs autocracies

The China policy issue is also directly linked to how both the US and the EU frame the global narrative and their respective roles in it. For all the talk about convergence of views on China or Biden’s return to the multilateral order, there are two very distinctive narratives coming out of Washington and Brussels. The EU – by definition the embodiment of successful multilateralism – rather emphasize the resilience of a rules-based international order and effective multilateralism to address those threats whereas the Biden administration is keen to prioritize ad-hoc coalitions of like-minded allies to confront what it, unequivocally, considers the global and ideological challenge of our time. For the Biden administration the rise of China and authoritarian regimes follows the Cold War and the War on Terror as the leitmotiv of American foreign policy. For Europe and the EU, the Biden administration overemphasized “us versus them” rhetoric is reminiscent of the Bush-era “axis of evil” loaded term. The Manicheism implied in the US approach does not always resonate with EU and European officials who resist coercions to “bipolarize the world”. Instead, Europeans rather rely on the power of effective multilateral diplomacy to engage powers such as Russia, China or Iran, especially on matters that require global action such as nuclear proliferation and climate change to give an example.

Underpinning the US’s approach is a vivid notion that today’s multilateral institutions are no longer equipped to handle the challenges of the 21st century. Europeans, on the other hand, seem less inclined to outright dismiss the global international order built on the ashes of WWII.

¹¹ [French Finance Minister Issues Declaration of Independence – from the U.S. - LA Progressive](#)

¹² [French Finance Minister Issues Declaration of Independence – from the U.S. - LA Progressive](#)

Permeating European thought, is also the concern that a world governed by rules-based multilateralism is being replaced by a multipolar world, one where countries compete for influence in the global arena instead of joining forces to address common challenges. As repeatedly emphasized by EU High Representative Josep Borrell “global problems require global responses”¹³ and “the alternative to multilateralism is a world where the strongest prevail”¹⁴. Whereas Europeans speak of the crisis of multilateralism, Americans emphasize the crisis facing democracies. These are very different approaches to framing the global narrative and, as a result, so are the solutions presented. Joe Biden might have campaigned on the return to multilateralism having reversed many of Trump’s decisions to withdraw from multilateral bodies – such as the Paris agreement, the World Health Organization, the UN Human Rights Council, - but that doesn’t mean he relies on multilateral institutions to provide credible deterrence against resurgent authoritarianism, for example, or when issues of US’s national security are at stake. In this regard, Biden has made very clear that his preferred approach to address global threats is based on the guiding principle that the “mission defines the coalition” and not the other way around¹⁵. The ongoing debate over revived multilateralism is likely to further divisions and disagreements between the US and the EU in the years to come, with the US more likely to prioritize cooperation with like-minded allies and the EU more likely to insist on making the international system work also as a way to keep autocratic powers in check.

Russia-Ukraine

While there has been a deliberate effort to maintain a joint front on Russia’s military build-up around Ukraine – namely by expanding the transatlantic sanction toolbox and potentially leveraging the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline project¹⁶ to dissuade Russia’s aggressive behavior - the ongoing escalation of tensions serves as yet another very timely reminder of these different postures. These differences may be overemphasized in the media, with headlines such as “US prepares for war, while the EU seeks to deescalate” but official statements reflect slightly different risk assessments and preferred approaches. Indeed, while the US announces it is prepared to mobilize

¹³ [Navigating a pandemic world: global disorders and Europe’s role - กระทรวงการต่างประเทศแห่งสหภาพยุโรป \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁴ [How to revive multilateralism in a multipolar world? - European External Action Service \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁵ The AUKUS deal, the Quad, officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the United States, Australia, India and Japan, and a format now being called the “Transatlantic Quad” are some examples of that preferred US approach.

¹⁶ [Transatlantic allies ramp up pressure on Russia over Ukraine | World | Breaking news and perspectives from around the globe | DW | 08.12.2021](#)

8,500 military personnel to Eastern Europe¹⁷, over mounting concerns of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, EU officials downplay the imminence of a Russian attack.¹⁸

The end of the 100-year pivot to Europe

One long-term trend worth mentioning, that is indeed new, is what pundits consider the end of the “100 year pivot to Europe” which shaped much of the US foreign policy and the transatlantic relationship of the XX century. The Biden generation, quintessentially Europeanist and driven by the collective memory of the transatlantic legacy of the past century, is being gradually replaced by a younger American generation, one who not only lacks this collective memory but is far more influenced and oriented towards Asia and the Pacific. In fact, this may be the last generation of administration officials and political appointees, who has grown involved and committed to European issues, playing a fundamental role in the definition of American foreign policy. In other words, Europeanists will be less and less prominent among American decision-makers. Some pundits also speak of the end of “Atlanticism”¹⁹ and question if the idea of the transatlantic relationship as the axis of world stability is still around²⁰. How much, and in what ways, will these evolving changes in the American foreign policy establishment and the global landscape continue to shape the nature of the transatlantic relationship in the long run still remains to be seen but they don’t necessarily mean the transatlantic relationship is doomed. Rather, they reinforce the need to re-think the transatlantic relationship against a different paradigm.

Can the EU do the heavy lifting?

Another related topic of recurrent – even if understated – misunderstanding, that has prevailed with the Biden administration surrounds Europe’s ongoing debate on European Sovereignty and Strategic autonomy. The US’s strategic shift to the east coupled with an increasingly contested geopolitical environment, a deteriorating security environment in Europe’s eastern neighbourhood, have helped make the case for Europe’s need for a more autonomous and resilient Union.

¹⁷ [U.S. puts 8,500 troops on alert as Russia tensions ramp up - POLITICO](#)

¹⁸ [No threat of immediate Russian attack on Ukraine – EU — RT Russia & Former Soviet Union](#)

¹⁹ [The end of Atlanticism: has Trump killed the ideology that won the cold war? | US foreign policy | The Guardian](#)

²⁰ [The end of Atlanticism: has Trump killed the ideology that won the cold war? | US foreign policy | The Guardian](#)

But the debate over how much the EU is ready to the heavy lifting in its vicinity remains immersed in ambivalence and inconsistencies within the EU as the reflection process of the strategic compass of the past year perfectly demonstrated.

On the one hand, there are deep divisions among EU Member States, on what Strategic Autonomy means for Europe in the security and defense realms and the degree to which such strategy should be aligned, subordinated or an alternative to Washington and the Atlantic Alliance. On the other hand, from a transatlantic angle, the Biden administration seems to have evolved from Washington's traditional resistance to Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy by openly supporting Europe's aspirations to develop their own stronger military capabilities and become a more resilient and autonomous actor. But administration officials also express skepticism about the EU's capabilities to take on more responsibilities given the lack of progress in the old burden-sharing discussion on defense spending. If EU Member States are incapable of meeting the NATO's 2% of GDP target, how will they ever manage to become more capable militarily, the thinking goes. State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet's recent statements saying European leaders "needed to stop talking and start doing"²¹ during a recent visit to Brussels perfectly encapsulate American reasoning on these issues. In addition, and in private, US diplomats also cite concerns of duplications with NATO's existing frameworks, insisting that Europe should do a better job convincing the administration that the whole strategic autonomy debate is not intended to undermine NATO.

While the transatlantic debate on Europe's strategic autonomy aspirations has significantly evolved, the lack of EU consensus and clarity on these issues could incentivize further US skepticism. The polarizing views within Europe, with the French championing the strategic autonomy cause and the Eastern European countries leading the pro-NATO camp, make it a harder to persuade US officials that this is not a binary choice and that strategic autonomy and investing in NATO are not two mutually exclusive goals.

Conclusion

A year into Biden's election, what can we make of this "new transatlantic reset"? Have European anxieties of an irreparable transatlantic split been proven right?

While there may be new geopolitical and domestic trends affecting the fate of the transatlantic relationship – a changing global security environment, shifting foreign policy priorities, domestic concerns, the rise of populism and authoritarianism,

²¹ [Biden's team wants EU allies to get real on 'strategic autonomy' – POLITICO](#)

demographic and generational changes, to name a few – this essay argues that there is nothing substantially new and irreversible about the perceived transatlantic split as some observers have argued in the aftermath of the Trump years. In other words, recent transatlantic tensions are not a reflection of a new deep structural divide under way but rather a result of old divisions that have always subsisted whenever global and regional crisis erupted. These have more to do with US and European long-standing perceptions of the international order and their inherently different approaches of managing global problems than with 21 century shifting trends.

When assessing the first year of the Biden’s presidency and the extent to which transatlantic tensions were a reflection of a structural divide or merely the product of political circumstances, during the Trump years, there are a few take-always and lessons learned worth considering, going forward:

First, political leaderships matter: It is important to draw a distinction between bilateral irritants that may be easy to fix and more profound foundational differences that will continue to persist in the US-EU relationship. This first year of Biden shows it is possible to achieve tangible results with a willing/cooperative administration, on the other side, particularly in fields where the EU has earned global respect, such as trade, technology, regulation and even sanction coordination. In other words, having “Biden” instead of “Trump” makes a big difference and long-term trends aside, the argument of compatibility of political leaderships should not be underestimated.

Second, the EU should do its homework: The policy wins and tangible successes of the EU/US summit of July 2021 were also a result of a significant EU investment in rebuilding the transatlantic relationship. Indeed, the December Communication advanced bold and detailed proposals in a wide range of fields from the health response, to climate change, to digital regulation, to trade and technology issues and to foreign and security policy, a significant portion of which would see the light of day in the course of 2021.

Third, it is not about Trump: While understanding domestic trends in US politics can help explain the rise to power of a populist/ far-right leader or the meaning of Biden’s “foreign policy for the middle class”, it does little service to explain structural differences that are likely to continue to affect the transatlantic relationship in the years to come. There is no new irreparable transatlantic split. On the contrary, these differences are old news: they were present in the months leading up to the war in Iraq, in the responses to the War on Terror and nuclear proliferation and have surfaced again in the context of the geopolitical competition and the rise of autocratic regimes. In essence, and to sum it up, the differences lie with how each side chooses to deal with perceived adversaries and to counter the threats faced. In addition, European analysts and policy-makers tend to place too much emphasis on America’s Donald Trump

moment, placing the fate of the transatlantic relationship in the likelihood of a potential Trump-like come back. But this is a global trend that is not limited to the US. In other words, Europe is not immune to the rise of populism and far-right political leadership as the current political landscape in many EU Member States perfectly demonstrates. Indeed as explained by Gideon Rachman “Many of the elements that destabilized the US are also present in Europe — in particular, the spread of conspiracy theories, online radicalization and extremist political movements.”²²

Fourth, **the EU is a regulatory super power but lacks cohesive foreign and defense power capabilities.** And the successes and failures of the US-EU relationship are, partly, a result of EU’s shortfalls and challenges in that regard. With the new gravitas of US’s foreign policy shifting to the pacific, the EU has gone a long way to reflect on how to do the heavy lifting in its neighborhood and how to make strategic autonomy a reality. But doing so requires addressing the painful elephant in the room: that it will be very difficult for the EU to seriously assert itself as global security and defense actor without considering resorting to qualified majority voting in the EU’s foreign policy and security fields.²³ This is far easier said than done as few Member States are willing to subordinate their foreign policy to EU decision-making but could be considered on an ad-hoc basis and in certain CFSP areas or when confronted with the imminent crisis of the day (the ongoing Ukraine-Russia provides a good example). Otherwise, the transatlantic community risks being endlessly caught in the paralysis of EU foreign policy making and settling for the policy of the lowest common denominator. Forging a common strategic culture as recently advocated by the High Representative Josep Borrell, will only become a reality when Member States decide, once and for all, what’s more important: their bilateral national security interests or the EU’s role in global affairs. With the world as it is, we can’t have both.

Fifth, **Washington needs to more vocally embrace Europe’s pursuit of strategic autonomy** and support the voices within Europe that champion that cause. While the prevailing argument that the US’s vital security interests now lie elsewhere and investing in Europe’s security is no longer an option, doing so also requires the realization that they can’t have their cake and it too. It’s not possible to expect Europe to do the heavy lifting in its region and not vocally support its strategic independence aspirations, however complicated that may be.

Finally, the EU, on the other hand, needs to fully embrace Biden’s democracy agenda. While Europe’s desire to act as the “honest broker” and resistance to define geopolitics as clash between democracies and authoritarian blocs, is understandable, it

²² [Europe is not immune from America’s political madness | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#)

²³ As advocated by former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen



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may need to more vocally and assertively align with Biden's agenda against the resurgence of techno-authoritarianism. It should not leave anyone wondering where it stands, especially in the face of rising hybrid threats on Europe's soil and Russia's aggressive behavior in its eastern neighborhood. This is particularly relevant as the EU carves out a global niche as a regulatory superpower and as it seeks to export its "Brussels-effect" model of shaping the rules, norms and standards that will govern the use of emerging technologies in the future.

Adapting to 21st century global politics may take a lot more than promising a Geopolitical Commission and learning the language of power. Doing so also implies a significant shift in the European mindset: from being a security beneficiary to acting as a security provider. As of now EU's strategic autonomy remains more of a reflection of the EU's wishful thinking than a reality on its own. It's far from clear that Member States are ready to walk the talk of the EU institutions. Fortunately for some and unfortunately for others, the EU can only be as powerful and capable as its members allow it to be. While the current geopolitical environment has prompted a more assertive EU discourse, it is precisely in the sum of its parts that lies the EU's achilles hills.

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