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Dear friends,

In this essay collection, you will find short, thought-provoking framing papers put together by ECFR experts to underpin the discussions at the 2016 ECFR Annual Council Meeting. Each paper matches a session of this year’s agenda.

We encourage you to have a look at this essay collection in advance, and look forward to stimulating discussions!

The ECFR team
How to achieve solidarity in Europe on refugee flows

By Susi Dennison

The refugee crisis and its political fallout has become over the last year a direct threat to EU cohesion. And it is not over: another summer of massive inflows, tragedies, and European confusion could break the European Union.

Yet despite the threat, solidarity between member states has proved elusive. European-level solutions are necessary both to address the urgent refugee issue and to demonstrate that the EU can serve its member states and its public in a crisis. But such solutions have not been forthcoming. National responses to what is essentially a European crisis are becoming more and more attractive.

What divides us

The most divisive issues currently involve how to process and integrate the refugees who are already in Europe, and what to do with those who do not qualify for asylum. The EU-Turkey deal, intended to go some way towards answering that question, is now foundering over whether visa liberalisation is a price Europeans are willing to pay for Turkish support. Goodwill is running out on both sides of the Aegean Sea, but also in EU capitals.

The EU needs two things to respond to this situation:

• A strategy for unblocking the impasse over refugees already arrived in the EU. As argued in the recent ECFR paper, “Bear any burden”, this means a new system of responsibility sharing for asylum decisions and implementation.

• More political attention to a sustainable longer-term vision for dealing with future refugee flows, in which foreign policy tools and resettlement should play a part.

Both parts of this broader concept of the response to the refugee crisis are important, but cooperation between member states on the second will be important for generating goodwill on the first. It may be time to look to the long-term strategy to resolve the immediate political impasse within the EU. There is an upcoming opportunity on the international stage for the EU to work towards, in the form of the UN pledging conference to be hosted by US President Barack Obama in September.

The role of resettlement

Creating new legal pathways to the EU will have to be a part of any strategy to reduce spontaneous migrant journeys to the EU. It represents a crucial corollary to efforts to increase external border security. Within the spectrum of legal pathways available – which includes family reunion, and other types of visas to work or study in the EU – resettlement (scaling up the number of refugees taken directly from camps outside the EU) is the easiest way to reach the most vulnerable, to reduce the incentive to make the dangerous journey to Europe, and to facilitate screening for security.
For these reasons, many of the member states that have been reluctant to participate in relocation of migrants within the EU find resettlement a far easier subject to discuss. However, the political climate around the refugee crisis has so far limited actual commitments and implementation of promises on resettlement.

As of May 2016, the European Council reported that actual resettlement within the framework of the July 2015 European Council conclusions on the issue (including from Turkey) was 6,321, against a target of 22,504.

**The case for “internationalising” resettlement**

The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) has called for a global initiative to resettle 10 percent of the five million Syrian refugees – around 500,000 people. The ambition of the Obama-hosted UN pledging conference in September is to double the number of resettlement (or other forms of legal admission) places pledged for refugees worldwide. Against these targets, the EU’s current commitments are insufficient.

Simply calling for more help from the international community for the EU in handling the refugee crisis, as European Council President Donald Tusk did at the G7 in May, is unlikely to bear fruit. In fact, the EU is not bearing the brunt of refugee challenge in terms of numbers. UNHCR estimates that developing countries host 86 percent of the world’s refugees. Consequently, other countries and regions are likely to want to see that the EU is doing its maximum before signing up to a global initiative.

The EU has always been a central humanitarian force at the UN. In the wake of disappointing European engagement at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, half-hearted participation in the September pledging conference would underline a disturbing trend in EU commitments on this front. The EU’s current buck-passing approach both internally and with neighbouring countries such as Turkey is already having an impact globally. Kenya’s announcement in May that it plans to close the Dadaab camp, and send over 300,000 refugees back to their – often conflict-ridden – countries of origin, is perhaps the first example.

The risk of a race to the bottom in terms of international support is real.

**How to get there: The road to the September summit**

To avoid this outcome and to make the UN pledging conference effective as a means of decreasing EU arrivals, the EU needs a large and credible proposal of what it is willing to give on resettlement.

A group of EU member states comprising France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom could agree and negotiate with partner member states an EU contribution to this goal, leading by example in making increased national commitments themselves. Groundwork within the EU ahead of the summer break would enable EU diplomats at the UN to enter the pre-Summit discussions in September in an influential way with a solid, worked-up deal on the table, showing that the EU is pulling its weight on what is essentially a neighbourhood issue.

It is far better in the current environment for the EU to be on the front foot. If the September relocation quotas “imposed” by Brussels and Berlin were rejected by member states, what chance would there be of implementing pledges made in a deal brokered by the US, even further from the national contexts?
Brexit: The foreign policy implications

By Mark Leonard

The people have spoken. But yesterday’s vote to leave the European Union is only the beginning of what will be a long and uncertain process of divorce. David Cameron’s statement made it clear that the UK is unlikely to be in a position to start negotiations before his successor is in place in October.

There are many decisions in the coming days that will have major implications for the future of both the United Kingdom and the European Union.

For the UK, there is an immediate risk to the British economy and a long-term threat to British influence. Today’s financial turmoil reflects a fear of loss of access to the EU market that could scare off investors and potentially do critical damage to strategic sectors like financial services. In the longer term, a failure to create an effective economic and political relationship with the EU will doom the UK to relative poverty and international obscurity.

For the EU, Britain’s exist risks reinforcing a cycle of disintegration. Member states like Poland and Hungary, as well as opposition parties like Marine Le Pen’s Front National, could launch copy-cat moves. Others such as Ireland could be economically destabilised. Internationally, the loss of the EU’s second-biggest economy will be a serious blow to the EU’s standing and reputation. If other crises – a euro crisis, a Schengen crisis, a Trump presidency – get layered on top of Brexit, there is a real danger of collapse.

Europeans and British policymakers need to move quickly to contain these risks.

In the EU:

- **EU leaders need to keep the rest of the EU together.** They should lay out a vision for an inclusive Europe that can reform itself and that can combine integration on key areas with a sensible balance of powers and a greater role for practical projects among different sub-groups of nation states. This could also help Europeans create a framework to engage other non-EU states such as Turkey on priorities like the refugee crisis.

- **The EU should avoid big integration initiatives.** There will be a temptation to aim for a leap forward in integration once Britain has left. But launching a big initiative could trigger a counter-reaction from member states that have Eurosceptic parties, and those, such as Poland, that are worried the EU may become unbalanced towards a protectionist, integrationist French-German position.

- **The EU should work to keep its link with Britain alive** – by distinguishing between areas where all will benefit and those where being too accommodating to the UK could fuel contagion. It is clear that the single market cannot survive if countries are allowed to opt out of large elements of the acquis. At the same time, all member states have links to Britain, but some are more exposed than others. Trade with Britain represents the equivalent of 12 percent of Ireland’s GDP, while the fragile peace settlement...
in Northern Ireland will be jolted by new border controls. Poland has 700,000 citizens living in the UK and fears negative consequences for its currency if there is a devaluation of the pound and turbulence on the financial market. Cyprus and the Netherlands have extensive links to the UK financial sector. The member states with the closest links to Britain will try to keep these alive and the EU should seek to accommodate them in ways that do not undermine the fabric of the rest of the EU.

- **The EU should focus on practical integration projects.** The remaining member states should aim to advance a range of projects at the same time, allowing groups of member states and those outside the EU to work together on areas such as defence, border control, and security. By pursuing difference projects, driven by various groupings of member and non-member states, the concerns of every state can be taken care of without blocking advances in other areas. The goal is to differentiate between those areas in which unity is crucial and EU membership is necessary, and those where opt-outs are acceptable.

In the UK:

- **The British government and the Bank of England should seek to reassure the markets** to mitigate the immediate economic impact

- **The British government should avoid unilateral moves** that could further destabilise the EU or damage other member states. The government should be as constructive as possible. Taking an aggressive stance or making threats would disadvantage everyone.

- **The British government should pursue an existing partnership model,** rather than trying to carve out a completely new relationship. A “Norway-plus” arrangement appears most sensible. It is unlikely that there will be appetite among the remaining member states to diverge from existing models. By trying to come up with a completely new model, the UK would end up paying a much higher price and negotiations could drag on, meaning years of instability. All 27 member states have to agree on the deal and there would be risk that it could be rejected in a member state referendum.
How to defend Europe from Russia

By Gustav Gressel

Today’s Russia is not the Soviet Union, but it still wants to ensure its pre-eminence in the post-Soviet space, to break down the EU/NATO-centric European order, and to be prepared for a new global conflict. To achieve these goals, it is prepared to use military force where necessary. In response, Europe must prepare itself to meet the conventional and unconventional threat from Russia.

Policymakers who claim that NATO would be in no danger in a conflict with Russia miss some important facts. First, when NATO forces are considered as a whole, the assessment usually includes the United States. The US is and will continue to be strong enough to counterbalance Russia militarily in the foreseeable future. But, while Russian military planners have no illusions about their ability to defeat the US, they calculate that they would have some chance in a war that the US is unwilling or unable to join.

Even if Russia’s military strength is compared only to European NATO members, a first look might be misleading. Budgets are of little use in comparing military forces. Europe finances a huge bureaucratic overhead in various defence ministries, which Russia does not. And bureaucrats – even those wearing uniforms – are no fighting force. Even comparing troops may be problematic, since 50 percent of NATO’s European land forces are actually Turkish. For better or worse, Turkey is for the time being concerned with its own neighbourhood.

There is a rough numerical parity in land forces, while Europe has some numerical superiority in air forces. Though the readiness of the Russian armed forces remains below its goal, and much of their equipment is old, the same is true for Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, expeditionary warfare has been the norm for much of Europe. As a result, only a few formations were kept combat ready, while others were put into standby mode. Most heavy equipment and fighter planes date from the Cold War, and need to be replaced. In some capabilities, such as air defence, combat engineering, electronic warfare, and artillery, most European armies have seriously diminished their capabilities. Hence, the Russian assessment – that Europe would be beatable if stripped of US support – is backed by some evidence.

Russian adventurism may be further increased by the fact that NATO has to defend a larger territory with fewer troops than it did during the Cold War. If Russia took the initiative, it could dictate time and space to its liking. It would face little military resistance, especially in limited incursions on the periphery.

However, both the capability gaps and Russia’s operative advantages could be diminished if Europe were serious about it. With the exception of the nuclear dimension, Europe could become self-sufficient in defence by pursuing the following recommendations.

1. Support the post-Soviet space: The post-Soviet space is the most likely theatre of Russia’s next military operations. The more capable and the more self-reliant these states are, the less likely it is that Russia will escalate a crisis to total war. In Donbas, Russia escalates when Ukraine is weak and de-escalates when Ukraine inflicts casualties. This is an argument for supporting the post-Soviet states that have
aligned with Europe. This support should involve weapons transfers, training, and reform of the defence and security sectors. The border guard, police, and judiciary should be strengthened, as they would be the first responders in any “hybrid” war, and the initial narrative will be key in Russian attempts to legitimise its aggression.

2. Build up a flexible presence in Eastern Europe: A new deterrence will differ considerably from that used during the Cold War, as there are fewer forces available, more territory to be defended, and different likely scenarios. In a hybrid scenario, NATO would need to get boots on the ground and project firepower across large distances fast. Establishing multinational air-power assets and air-mobile troops in Eastern Europe, accompanied by assault helicopters, would be a good rapid-reaction tool.

3. Exercise defence and roll-back operations: The readiness benchmark for deploying Russian combat troops in the “near abroad” calls for one corps-sized operation within a week, expanding to a three corps-sized mission within a month. NATO will prevail in conventional deterrence if it can deploy sufficient heavy forces within a few days to defend a given territory before the one-month timeframe kicks in. Manoeuvres in Eastern Europe to this end would give a clear signal to Russia that the risk is not worth taking. Some will claim that this would provoke further Russian militarisation, but, unlike the Soviet Union, Russia has very limited economic, financial, and manpower resources compared to a united Europe. Only if Europe is weak can Russia pretend to be strong.

4. Get serious about nuclear deterrence: On paper, NATO still sees nuclear weapons as the core of its security, but this is less clear in practice. Strategic deterrence between the US and Russia works well, but not every use of non-strategic nuclear weapons by Russia would be immediately answered by an all-out US nuclear strike. NATO adopted “flexible response” (instead of “massive retaliation”) in 1967. However, the means for such flexible response are now lacking, and the American B-61 is outdated. Europe could play a role here, by offering air-launched non-GPS-reliant cruise missiles for the US warhead. More importantly, practising nuclear counter-strikes would signal to Russia that escalation would not be a risk-free tool of blackmail.

5. Rebuild conventional capabilities: Europe would not need huge re-armament to counter Russia: the troops that exist on paper are enough, if they were readily deployable. But European armies need to reverse decisions taken in previous years to abandon (or radically reduce) military capabilities that are essential for conventional mechanised warfare. It needs to develop next generations of various systems, and the EU would be the ideal facilitator to ensure that Europe creates competitive solutions to these challenges, instead of a series of parallel small-scale programmes.

The main aim of these measures is to deny Russia easy opportunities to gain from any circumstance that occupies the US elsewhere. Even though Russia would likely lose any world war it started, the dramatic losses of the last world war and the existence of nuclear weapons remind us that it is better to stay on the safe side of deterrence.
Challengers and insurgents: Who are the new forces shaping foreign policy across the EU?

By Susi Dennison

The European Union’s political elites are being challenged more than ever before on their foreign policies. Digital developments are changing the ways that the public can hold them to account for their stance in stuffy negotiating rooms on agreeing a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), or question them on the legality of the EU-Turkey deal on managing refugee flows. Newer, smaller, and leaner political organisations are playing mainstream political parties at their own game, standing for – and winning – seats in local, regional, national, and European parliaments to challenge establishment views on how policymaking should be conducted. Alternative forces are using media, popular pressure, and new legislation to force national referendums on issues previously the preserve of governments and civil servants.

To understand how these developments are likely to influence EU foreign policy, ECFR’s network of researchers in the 28 member states conducted a survey of “challenger and insurgent” political groups across the EU, interviewing them on their views on foreign policy. For each member state we aimed to focus on the most influential non-mainstream groups. The only member state in which we found no relevant party was Luxembourg.

The parties we have included are not exclusively of the right or the left; they range from the Communist Party in France and the socialist Die Linke in Germany, to far-right groups such as Golden Dawn in Greece, Lega Nord in Italy, and Jobbik in Hungary. Some are anti-establishment; some, such as Law and Justice in Poland and Syriza and the Independent Greeks in Greece, are serving in coalition governments. They are broadly sceptical about the EU in its current state, but with a huge range, from the Front National in France and UKIP in the United Kingdom, founded with the objective of taking the UK out of the EU, through to Portugal’s Left Bloc and Podemos in Spain, which are pro-EU reform. Almost all see a need to “re-democratise” policymaking. They conceive of their role as speaking truth to elites on behalf of the people.

The youngest, ALFA, was formed in Germany in July 2015 as a breakaway from Alternative für Deutschland, while the oldest, Sinn Féin in Ireland, was founded in 1905.

In our interviews with foreign policy representatives from each party and analysis of their public pronouncements on the issues, we explored their positions on the EU’s key challenges, including the refugee crisis and the EU’s relationship with Turkey; security and terrorist threats to Europe; the Ukraine crisis and the EU’s relationship with Russia; EU-United States relations including on Middle East policy and trade; and the Brexit referendum.

A flash scorecard, setting out the results in full, with analysis on the implications for forthcoming foreign policy challenges, will be shared at the ACM. However, the headline findings of this study were:
For 34 out of the 46 parties covered, the refugee crisis or the threat of terrorism and radical Islamism should be the top two priorities of the EU. This position was not solely the preserve of the right: Die Linke in Germany, the French Communist Party, Podemos in Spain, and the Lithuanian Labour Party all voted this way too.

On the causes of the refugee crisis, Merkel’s “refugees welcome” policy does not attract the universal blame that might have been expected: only seven parties named it in their top two explanations for the crisis. US strategy in the Middle East was the most popular answer, with President Bashar al-Assad’s regime-sponsored violence in Syria taking second place.

There is a widespread scepticism around future European or US interventionism generally, particularly in the Middle East, from Sinn Féin in Ireland, to UKIP in the UK, to the Front National and the Communist Party in France, to AFD and Die Linke in Germany, to Jobbik in Hungary and the Five Star Movement in Italy.

This is linked to a general anti-Americanism and distaste for the EU toeing the US line, particularly on foreign policy in the Middle East. As is well documented, for many challenger parties, spurning Transatlanticism is also linked to strong suspicions of TTIP, with 27 of the parties answering that the EU should not conclude the deal with the US.

There is a general consensus that more enlargement would be a bad thing. However, there is slightly more openness and understanding for countries to the East (notably Ukraine) than those to the South (notably Turkey, where serious fears were expressed about the possibility of Turkish accession). Still, only ten parties unequivocally supported Ukraine’s path to EU accession, and of these, two would not support NATO membership for Ukraine.

Although there is general sympathy for Russian foreign policy (30 parties agreed with at least some recent Russian positions, including particularly Russia’s intervention in Syria in the absence of other actors playing a decisive role in conflict resolution), views on specific policies such as EU sanctions against Russia were much more mixed. Twenty-four parties argued that sanctions should not stay in place beyond July. Views on Russia policy tend more towards national perspectives than towards right-left divisions – for example, in Germany, both Die Linke and AFD believe that the sanctions on Russia should be lifted, and in Greece, both Syriza and Golden Dawn thought the same. On Ukraine’s accession, slightly more of a split between left and right was evident, with leftist parties generally more supportive of Ukraine’s path to EU membership.

Views on whether to cooperate with Russia on current EU crises (the refugee crisis, terrorism, Ukraine, Syria) were fairly evenly split, but on the eurozone crisis particularly, there was a generally negative view of the need to engage Russia, or any other outsiders.

In relation to security the parties were fairly evenly divided, with seven parties responding that NATO should build up militarily against the Russian threat, and eight parties arguing that NATO should take in more members from the European neighbourhood, but seven parties arguing conversely for their country to withdraw from the alliance altogether.
Does Russia want to break up the European Union?

By Kadri Liik

Does Russia want to break up the European Union? It is an interesting question, but one that is frankly irrelevant for European policy.

There is no question that Russia is a problematic international actor. It annexed Crimea, it is fuelling a war in eastern Ukraine, and it conducts massive military exercises on the borders of NATO. Russia supports anti-establishment political parties in the West, bribes Western politicians and business executives, and spreads disinformation throughout the West.

Why is Russia doing all this? Broadly, two competing answers are offered. According to the first, Russia is aggressive and expansionist. It wants to restore its sphere of influence, or maybe even to recreate the Soviet Union. It wants to occupy the Baltic States, destroy NATO, and break up the EU. It wants to restore its great power status and do away with the Western-led liberal order.

In the alternative view, Russia is weak, isolationist, and insecure. It thinks of the West as an aggressor. The West is trying to pick off Russia’s last remaining allies and overthrow the regime in Moscow by spreading subversive Western values and funding pro-Western organisations. Thus, Russia is acting defensively.

An accurate description of Moscow’s motivation is more complicated than either of these simplistic narratives. But the more important question for our purposes is: why do we need to know Russia’s motivations? How would knowing them change our policy? The Soviet Union saw the war with Finland, the invasion of Poland, and the occupation of the Baltic States as defensive measures. Moscow’s viewpoint did not lend these actions any legitimacy in Western eyes.

So why should we bother understanding Moscow’s motivations? Don’t we need to resist bad Russian actions regardless of the reasoning behind them?

As far as military matters are concerned, knowing Moscow’s motivation is still important. If Moscow is an expansionist aggressor, countries should prepare for war and invest in troops and weapons, or engage in an arms race to deter Moscow.

If Moscow is weak and insecure, countries should still invest in defence capabilities, but should also invest a lot in communications, arms control, and trust-building measures. A paranoid insecure power can be very dangerous, but this danger stems not so much from expansionist intent as from misreading others’ intentions. So, in the military sphere, reading Moscow’s mind does indeed matter.

However, things look different when non-military matters are considered.
We complain that Russia is trying to break up the EU, and prefers to deal with member states individually. But if we always ask Brussels to deliver bad news to Russia and try to reserve the good news for the member states – is it then surprising that Russia prefers member states?

If we want to prevent this, we should invest more in common policies. We should have more intra-EU discussions on Russia policy that could lead to joint analysis and joint strategy. We should empower the European External Action Service (EEAS) to have a bigger role in the execution of that policy. And if at times we choose to empower certain member states, we should still make sure that they implement shared policies.

We complain that Russia is bribing our companies and buying up politicians. So why do we elect politicians who can be bought? And why does our legislation allow companies to engage in shady deals?

We worry that Russia is trying to spread its propaganda in the West. But trusted quality journalism of our own could easily put Russia’s propaganda channels out of business.

We fear that Russia is financing radical political parties in the West. So maybe something should be done about party financing laws?

Overall, it is the current wobbly state of the Western liberal model that opens up space for all sorts of challengers, be they from the Islamic State (ISIS), Vladimir Putin’s Russia, or the European far right. The only way for Russia to harm the EU is by using the loopholes the Europeans themselves allow to exist.

Thus, instead of investing much energy in discussing Russia’s designs for the EU, the EU should work on putting its own house in order. This will make the EU stronger, better, and more legitimate. Addressing the Russia threat – if there is one – will be a fortunate side effect.
A European Syria initiative: De-escalation and devolution

By Julien Barnes-Dacey

The stakes for Europe in Syria could hardly be higher. Apart from the humanitarian tragedy, the war has precipitated a refugee crisis that divides European societies, threatening the European project itself, while driving a “European War on Terror” of questionable utility.

Despite the enormous stakes, Europeans have largely been bit players in the diplomacy on Syria – contracting the process out to countries such as Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, which have distinct interests, priorities, and often values. Europe’s interests are at times subordinated to the proxy wars being conducted between the main regional players, as well as between Moscow and Washington. The current strategy in some European capitals of simply waiting for a new US president to change the direction of policy is at best an abdication of responsibility, and at worst an error of Trumpian proportions.

It is already past time for a coherent European strategy that seeks a lead role for Europe in managing the Syrian crisis. But it is still possible. Europeans have a compelling interest in the crisis, hold seven of 26 seats in the International Syrian Support Group (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the European Union), and have substantial resources – diplomatic, humanitarian, and military – to bring to the table. But harnessing those resources requires both a strategy that works for key European actors, and a coalition to support that strategy.

The recent ceasefire shows that an external push can deliver results. Despite its clear shortcomings, the ceasefire heralded significant humanitarian and political gains, including a wave of civil activism and unprecedented opposition pressure against Jabhat al-Nusra, as well as moves against the Islamic State (ISIS) from all sides. Even as this track teeters on the brink, it may represent the last chance for any form of negotiated solution that can hold Syria together. Europe, quite simply, cannot afford to let the opportunity slip away.

As such, Europe should get behind an urgent diplomatic effort aimed at salvaging this political effort and ceasefire, focusing on decentralisation as the path around the Assad impasse. Any hope of reviving the ceasefire rests on the existence of a meaningful political horizon that sketches the outlines of an eventual settlement. But the reality is that there is next to no chance of a breakthrough in intra-Syrian talks or a transition away from Assad in the near term given the ongoing commitment of the regime, Iran, and, in all likelihood, Russia to Bashar al-Assad’s preservation. Nor is any actor likely to commit to delivering the significant military measures necessary to have any chance of shifting the trajectory.

Rather than focusing on the unattainable near-term goal of transition, Europe should push for devolution – in the form of decentralisation rather than sectarian federalisation – to incentivise Syrian and regional buy-in to the ceasefire.

Russia has indicated some willingness to test devolution, and Iran might also be open to this approach, given that it would keep Assad in place in Damascus. To win the support of the opposition, the initiative would focus
on moving powers away from Damascus and giving rebels secure control of the areas they currently hold, with the longer-term intention of eroding the capacity of the Assad regime (and the clout of its backers in Iran).

By setting the limits of Kurdish territorial autonomy, this initiative could also be used to satisfy Turkey’s concern about the rising power of Syrian Kurds and their relationship with Turkish militant group the PKK. In the end, devolution may be one of the few approaches sellable to all parties – with varying degrees of persuasion, co-option, and coercion.

A strong European consensus around this strategy could be used to help secure agreement from both friends and adversaries. The key to that consensus is a united front among the E6+1 (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK, and the EU high representative). Together they could carry the rest of the EU along with them.

These parties currently disagree on the best way to de-escalate the war. France in particular stands out in its belief that a sustainable end to the conflict is not possible without the swift removal of Assad. The UK broadly supports the French position, while others have focused on the need for a negotiated solution that may involve Assad to a greater degree.

But, given the gains of the ceasefire and the lack of any viable alternative, this option deserves to be fully tested. Germany in particular could help to secure French buy-in, affirming the message that this approach offers a more viable means of locking in urgently-needed humanitarian de-escalation and addressing refugee and terrorism concerns, while its reduction of Assad’s power could be a meaningful step towards his ultimate removal.
Chasing a ghost: China and market economy status

By François Godement

The media and the public tend to treat the question of “market economy status” for China as more important than it is. In fact, market economy status (MES) is an empty shell. The World Trade Organization (WTO) does not even use the term. It is a purely political issue, even if some WTO members have legislated on it, using varying criteria.

What actually matters is whether the European Union will continue to use non-standard criteria to identify and sanction cases of Chinese “dumping” – i.e., when exports are sold at below cost price, or below the domestic price. China’s WTO accession protocol sets out the “surrogate country” method that WTO members can use against China. It allows countries to identify unfairly low prices by comparing export prices to domestic prices in comparable economies, as China’s domestic prices may themselves be artificially low.

The EU faces an impending deadline on 11 December, when this provision expires. It has to decide whether these non-standard criteria can still apply, whether it can legitimately apply other special provisions to Chinese exports, or whether China should join the ranks of the WTO’s market economies and be treated according to the same criteria.

In contrast to most other WTO members, anti-dumping rules are a legislative process in the EU rather than an administrative process. Yet, even for Europe, MES remains a political decision first, with a major media impact. The issue of cheap steel exports in particular is currently causing political and social tension. Although Beijing maintains that only 14 percent of EU steel imports are Chinese, the rise in volume in the last two years has been enormous. China has turned down many opportunities for high-level economic dialogue, instead insisting on sticking to the letter of the WTO agreement, as Beijing understands it. In the words of one EU official, “China has not helped us to help it”.

Europe is torn between the wish to attract Chinese investment and enjoy low Chinese prices, and fear of the job losses that softening its anti-dumping measures would bring. There is debate even within the countries that would likely suffer the highest proportion of job losses. Italy, for instance, is officially opposed to granting MES, but some officials and members of the country’s business community voice different opinions, influenced by the fact that the country was the top European destination of Chinese investment in 2015, with the acquisition of Pirelli.

Because Europe’s trade defences are exceptionally weak, some propose introducing new trade defence instruments (TDIs). But there are also deep divisions between member states on this issue. Some see TDIs as a much-needed defence for European industry, while others see them as outdated protectionism and prefer the path of cheap imports, services, and finance. Ultimately, Germany is likely to play a decisive role. It had cautiously welcomed the granting of MES, but Berlin’s position has undergone a shift in recent months, and there are internal divisions.
Leaving the “surrogate country” method in place after 11 December can only be a short-term option. China will immediately launch a legal challenge. This process could take two to three years, which would offer a breathing space for the industries hardest hit by Chinese exports. However, this course of action – avoiding a decision by relying on ambiguity and delays in the legal process – would not enhance the EU’s reputation for supporting international law. Still, a European failure to abide by the spirit, if not all the terms, of a WTO treaty would be a propaganda gift to China’s government, which would swiftly denounce it as hypocrisy.

The clean way out of the legal entanglement is a general reform of Europe’s TDIs, though this will imply the delegation of more power to the Commission, clashing with the renationalisation of policies in recent years. At stake is “the very survival of EU trade policy”.

In the meantime, a full reform of EU TDIs will clearly not be possible before the December deadline. Dismantling the existing trade defences before revamping the system opens a huge vulnerability, as China constitutes 80 percent of European dumping cases by volume. This means that there will be an uneasy period once the deadline has passed where China may choose to legally challenge the EU or to fuel a trade war. It is therefore essential for Europe to cooperate with other G7 and possibly G20 members to avoid becoming isolated. At the same time, the EU should make a renewed effort to push China to commit to economic dialogue and to voluntary verified export restrictions in some sectors.

The EU should attempt to reach an understanding with China on the following point: that there can be no rescinding of the surrogate country criteria until an alternative is put in place. It should reassure China on its intention to award MES, while working to reform TDIs. A joint Franco-German policy draft, submitted to the European Council in May, outlines a series of key measures that will allow for the defence of European industries while avoiding illegitimate trade discrimination against Chinese exporters. These include using cost estimates of market prices while avoiding the surrogate country method, applying similar criteria to those in force for Russia, with the addition of financial subsidies and land prices, as well as those of energy and raw materials. Finally, the Commission should be able to initiate anti-dumping investigations without a complaint from a third party.

As the deadline approaches, it is worrying that the EU’s position is likely to crystallise only in the final months of 2016, increasing the difficulty of gaining concessions from China. Speed is therefore of the essence, if the EU does not want to be overtaken by events. The outcome of the twin debates – on China’s MES and on the modernisation of the EU’s TDIs – will be a test of Europe’s capacity to stay ahead as a beacon on international law and to pursue the European interest.
Creating European digital champions

By Sebastian Dullien

When it comes to the internet, the European Union lags well behind the United States. Among the top five dominant internet companies globally, not a single one is European. The so-called Big Five (Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft) are all American and all rake in huge profits based on (partial) monopolies. Worse, in a number of key technologies, Europe probably no longer has the capability to develop this kind of business. For the past decade, the US has attracted the most gifted engineers from Europe, leaving the EU with a relative lack of skill.

The fact that five huge quasi-monopolists are all based in the US matters. We know from economic geography that “clusters” play a very important role in the formation of new firms. Companies are founded where the necessary skills can be found. For core internet firms, this is not in Europe.

Moreover, when a company is sitting on a pile of cash (as Google or Apple is), this company’s chances of remaining ahead increase. All of the Big Five can easily outspend new entrants when it comes to research and development. Google has a competitive edge in running its data centres. After years of experience, it runs these centres much more efficiently than any newcomer could, and hence it can offer cheaper services. To replicate the hardware alone in Google’s data centres, an estimated investment of $30 billion would be necessary – and this does not include the research for creating a match for Google’s superior algorithms and technology. (Just as a comparison: SAP, the biggest EU IT technology firm, has an annual investment budget of about €600 million.) Finally, the Big Five have so much cash that they can (and will) buy any European start-up that really comes up with the next big idea.

All this matters for the EU. The largest share of employment of the Big Five is in the US. The largest share of their wage bill is paid there. The US can use the capabilities of its IT sector for its military developments. And if the Big Five can be induced to pay their fair share of taxes, they will most likely do so in the US.

So, it would clearly be beneficial if Europe had its own digital champions.

Building a champion

Unfortunately, figuring out how to build a digital champion is far more difficult. Creating a single digital market or improving access to venture capital might be good ideas, but they will not create champions.

A single digital market makes doing business easier not only for European companies, but also for the (superior) US digital firms. Access to venture capital might create more start-ups in the EU. But given that the most compelling business model for start-ups is to become attractive enough to be bought up by one of the large US giants, this is also not a sustainable path to competitive digital capabilities.
The best option is to design a European industrial policy for the sector. Of course, such policies are limited by the rules of international agreements such as World Trade Organization (WTO) treaties. However, the agreements leave a number of options for cleverly designed policies.

One possibility here would be to use EU data protection standards as an instrument for industrial policy. For example, the EU could legislate that companies should be fined €500,000 for each case in which they hand over personal data of an EU citizen to foreign law enforcement or secret services without a valid EU court order. Given the US rules on how internet companies have to cooperate with US agencies, this would make any kind of engagement by US companies in the EU highly risky and would most likely lead to a withdrawal of a number of US companies from the EU market. This type of policy arguably violates the spirit of the WTO, but it would hardly be the first time that countries have used such instruments to design industrial policies that would otherwise be illegal under WTO rules.

Given the size of the EU market, such a move would create space for home-grown alternatives to Google, Facebook, and Amazon (potentially founded by current employees of US companies with EU passports). Even so, there would be significant downsides: at least for an interim period, European IT customers (including businesses relying on services such as cloud computing) would be faced with internet services of less quality at a higher price. EU companies that rely on these basic services would be hindered, not promoted.

While there are many cases in economic history where industrial policies have worked, there are also many cases where such policies have failed. On the positive side, South Korea comes to mind. It decided (as a very underdeveloped country) to move into the steel and the shipbuilding sectors. It now has the world’s second-largest shipbuilder and the world’s sixth-largest steel producer. China and Japan used industrial policy successfully to support everything from light industries to car manufacturers. Arguably, China’s internet giants Baidou (a search engine), Alibaba (a retailer plus cloud provider), and Tencent (a social network) could only have grown to their current size because China’s “Great Firewall” kept Google, Amazon, and Facebook out of the Chinese markets.

More problematic are attempts such as that of Brazil to establish its own personal computer industry or Malaysia’s to create a competitive national car industry. And mixed cases include that of Airbus, which on the one hand helped to break Boeing’s dominance, but on the other is not a poster child for efficient management.

These risks, costs, and benefits need to be carefully discussed and evaluated when deciding whether the EU should embark on an explicit industrial policy to grow digital champions. But one thing is clear: without government intervention in the market, there is very little chance that Europe will catch up to the US in the core internet business.
How Turkey and Brussels can prevent a blow-up

By Asli Aydintasbas

To put it mildly, “Europe doesn’t know what to do with Turkey”. Turn the perspective around and translate that phrase into Turkish and it reads: “Turkey hasn’t decided whether it belongs to Europe or not.”

Always difficult, even torturous, the relationship between the European Union and Turkey has hit new highs and new lows in the last year. There was the refugee deal, the summits and photo-ops of a type that had been absent for almost six years. There were steps toward visa liberalisation and the opening of frozen accession chapters. But there were also threats and accusations. In Britain, Prime Minister David Cameron, in an effort to convince British voters to stay in the EU, had to pledge that Turkey would not become an EU member until the year 3000. Meanwhile, in Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made it a part of his routine stump speech to accuse Europe of supporting terrorism.

Confusingly, Turkey and Europe have never been so close, and yet so far apart. In the sorry history of accession negotiations since 2005, Ankara has never come this close to its final destination, and never made so much progress on the visa liberalisation that Turks hold close to their hearts. And yet Ankara has never been more sceptical of European values and intentions. Similarly, Europeans have finally seen the value of Turkey, but they have never seemed so willing to disown their core principles as during this past year’s negotiations.

Something is off, both for Europe and Turkey, and this is the summer to fix it. Turkey and Europe have to step out of this self-defeating cycle before it destroys trust and credibility on both sides.

A new type of bond, a new narrative, and a new framework is needed for an honest Turkish-EU relationship that is durable and produces results. Such a relationship would be mutually rewarding but also legitimate, because it would be based on more than just transactional deals among bureaucrats.

For this to happen, both Turkey and Europe need to engage in a good deal of soul-searching to find the right type of framework. Here are some ideas:

- Both Ankara and Brussels should question whether the linkage between the refugee crisis and Turkey’s accession is a good idea. Initially, both Turkey and Europe seemed tempted by this quick – and arguably dirty – transaction. For Europeans, the deal helped stem the inflow of refugees in 2016. For Turkey, a sudden boost to its dormant accession process eased its isolation in the region. But expectations run high and the public on both sides have not been shown the merits of the handshake. The refugee deal remains extremely unpopular in Turkey and Europe. It should have been love, but it feels like a forced marriage.

- Ankara should decide whether or not it really wants to be a member of the EU. To help Ankara make this decision, European leaders need to get very specific about their benchmarks and have an honest discussion with Turkish leaders. Right now, there is a sense in Ankara that almost everything is negotiable.
• Europe should not disown its core principles on democracy and human rights in discussions with Turkish leaders and in negotiating a refugee deal. If the EU is – as is often claimed – a union of values, then the free pass that Turkey is being given at the moment is problematic for Europe’s core identity. This type of “flexibility” is also confusing to Turkey. For decades, European leaders told the Turkish public that the European order is based on principles of liberal democracy. But the refugee deal more closely reflects the nineteenth-century European order, in which various powers made cynical deals for the sake of stability. Are we dealing with states and their specific interests, or with a union that has fixed membership criteria?

• With polls on Brexit showing a close race, the future shape of the EU is on everybody’s mind. Why should we shy away from discussing alternative frameworks for the future of the EU-Turkish relationship, which has remained a taboo in accession talks? Turkey should not see “privileged partnership” or “multi-tier partnerships” as insults, but should continue to question and if necessary redefine its interaction with Europe. Currently, the situation on the ground is dynamic, but the definitions are not.

• With all the energy invested in the Turkish-European dialogue, it is quite remarkable how little conversation there is beyond the accession process itself. In particular, Turkish-European dialogue on Syria could be useful for both sides. That Europe is investing so much in the refugee issue but not in a resolution to the Syrian war remains puzzling. Europeans seem to have outsourced the Syrian issue to the United States and Russia. Meanwhile, Turkey is offering solutions – such as creating safe or ISIS-free zones, building new satellite towns on its borders, or supporting the divided Sunni opposition to topple the Assad regime – that are beyond its means. Turkey and Europe should talk about Syria. There is room not just for dialogue but for joint action to stabilise Syria and bring about an orderly transition. The Geneva process, the creation of safe zones, humanitarian aid inside Syria, engaging with opposition forces that control swathes of territory, the fight against Islamic State (ISIS), and the delicate military balance in Aleppo are all aspects of the Syrian crisis that would benefit from Turkish-European discussions.

• Europe can play a role in easing Turkey out of its regional isolation by providing a platform to facilitate Turkish-Russian, Turkish-Israeli, or even Turkish-Egyptian normalisation processes. Similarly, Turkey can be a bridge, bolstering Europe’s economic and political ties with Iran, Iraq, and in particular Iraqi Kurdistan.

• Turkey’s Kurdish issue threatens the immediate and long-term stability of the country. It is intimately related to the refugee and Syria issues. As it stands, the Kurdish issue directly impacts Europe’s security and Turkey’s democracy, yet Europe does not seem to have a “Kurdish policy”. Neither side should shy away from this highly sensitive subject in the framework of Turkish-European dialogue.
How a European diplomatic offensive can unite Libyans against ISIS

By Mattia Toaldo

In December 2015, Libya’s rival factions signed a deal to set up a unity government. The Libyan Political Agreement was the product of a long process of mediation, led by the United Nations mission in Libya (UNSMIL) with European support. The new Government of National Accord was established in Tripoli on 30 March.

The unity government is the best chance for stability in Libya, but it is currently suffering from two sets of problems:

1. **Domestic**: Forces loyal to military strongman General Khalifa Heftar, who has refused to recognise the unity government or work under it, are building parallel state institutions in eastern Libya. These include an army; a “Central Bank”, which has printed its own banknotes; a “National Oil Company”, which has tried to sell oil through an intermediary based in the United Arab Emirates; and a rival government, led by Abdullah al-Thinni.

2. **External**: Some of Europe’s allies in the region, particularly Egypt and the UAE, are supporting these parallel forces, both politically and by delivering weapons in violation of the UN arms embargo. Russia’s attitude towards the unity government is ambivalent at best, as demonstrated by its printing of banknotes for the rival “Central Bank”.

The House of Representatives – the parliament based in eastern Libya – is responsible for implementing the deal through a vote of confidence for the unity government. But because of these domestic and external problems, the House has stalled. A minority of MPs, influenced by General Heftar and with political and practical support both from Egypt and the UAE, are effectively blocking the body from operating.

Meanwhile, General Heftar has refused to pledge loyalty to the unity government, and has publicly rejected an invitation to meet with UN Special Representative Martin Kobler. The general had stated that he would move independently against the Islamic State (ISIS) in Sirte, but it is the forces loyal to the unity government that have conquered most of the territory lost by ISIS in Libya in the last month.

Despite the rout of ISIS from Sirte in early June, it will become increasingly difficult to rule the country and maintain its territorial integrity without coordination between Heftar’s forces and unity government troops. The anarchy and violence that has fed ISIS could help it regain ground or lead to the rise of new violent actors who are just as dangerous for Libya and for Europe. Ultimately, Europe should focus on the patient (Libya) and not just on the disease (ISIS).
Europe’s role so far

Political unity among Libyans is essential for a successful fight against ISIS in the country. To this end, Europe should launch a diplomatic offensive that is just as intense – if not more so – as the one that led to the political agreement.

In 2015, European Union High Representative Federica Mogherini, along with several EU member states (the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and Malta) joined several initiatives that coordinated United States and European pressure on Libyan factions and on relevant regional powers. This was decisive in pushing moderates from different camps to sign the agreement.

A few days before the deal was finalised, these countries, along with the EU, the US, and regional powers, gathered in Rome to sign a declaration in support of the unity government, under the name of the International Support Group for Libya. They vowed to deal exclusively with the unity government, and to end all contact with rival institutions. The group met again in Vienna in May 2016 and approved a more detailed statement. They invited the unity government to request an exemption to the UN Security Council arms embargo on Libya, in order to fight ISIS; they pushed for the creation of a joint military command that would include all the country’s armed groups; they committed to blocking any attempts to establish parallel economic institutions; and they offered training for the Libyan coastguard.

On this point, the EU Foreign Affairs Council has offered to upgrade Operation Sophia to include enforcement of the UN arms embargo, a crucial contribution to de-escalating the conflict in Libya.

What next?

Now, Europe should step up its efforts to overcome the challenges to the unity government’s authority, which are essentially political, and which have been exacerbated by some EU allies in the Middle East and North Africa. This European initiative should tackle the domestic and external drivers of disunity on several fronts, in close coordination with the UN mission in Libya.

- **Fight parallel institutions**: Extend EU sanctions to individuals who are aiding the rival economic institutions in eastern Libya, or selling oil for them, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions to protect Libya’s economic institutions.

- **Promote decentralisation**: Pressure Prime Minister Faiez Serraj to offer decentralisation to disloyal forces in eastern Libya. This should include the economic institutions, which, while still remaining under the control of the unity government in Tripoli, could set up additional headquarters in the east.

- **Push for a military joint command**: Offer logistical and strategic assistance for the formation of a military joint command to fight ISIS, under the control of the Defence Ministry.

- **Enforce the arms embargo**: Continue to enforce the arms embargo as set out at the Vienna summit, either through Operation Sophia (as stated in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions) or by extending the mandate of NATO’s naval counter-terrorism operations. At the same time, consider the unity government’s request for an exemption to the embargo.
• **Support the creation of an inclusive Shura council**: Offer political and logistical support to UN efforts to broaden political representation in Libya by setting up a grand Shura council. This would provide a political forum including MPs, mayors, and other local representatives, in support of national reconciliation.
What President Clinton – or Trump – means for Europe

By Jeremy Shapiro

Transatlantic relationships have long been predictable, even boring. Even their dysfunctions and disputes have become ritualised and repetitive. While pundits failed in recent years to predict the future course of Arab governance or the Chinese economy, they have always known that the transatlantic partners would fight about burden-sharing, struggle with NATO-European Union relations, and above all wonder aloud whether the alliance needed a fresh approach to some new geopolitical reality or other. The alliance has been a rock of stability in an ever-changing world.

This type of ritualised dispute is a problem for journalists looking for new and exciting material. But it has served the interests of the transatlantic partners fairly well. In geopolitics, restricting disagreements to minor disputes at summit meetings is in fact an amazing and historically rare achievement.

For the United States, its European allies remain the partners of first choice – in Afghanistan, Libya, and the war against the Islamic State (ISIS). For Europe, the alliance has served to keep the Americans at least somewhat involved in European issues, even as the Middle East bursts into flames and Asia grows in geopolitical weight and danger. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the transatlantic partners once again managed to forge a collective response despite serious differences.

But now, for the first time in generations, the very concept of the alliance is being called into question by a major US party’s presidential candidate. This is good news for bored experts on transatlantic relations and maybe for defence contractors, but very bad news for the rest of the world.

The presumptive Republican nominee, Donald Trump, has been clear that he views the alliance in purely instrumentalist terms. He believes that issues such as Russia and refugees are Europe’s problems, and that US assistance will require direct compensation. Without a radical reshaping of the purposes and burdens of the alliance, Trump’s America may simply walk away, leaving Europeans to deal with their problems on their own.

The presumptive Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, presents less of a fundamental challenge, but her purported hawkishness as well as the growing US demand for Europeans to take greater responsibility for their own security will require a European recalibration.

Of course, these are just campaign promises. But research shows that over 75 percent of presidential campaign promises are kept. Europeans have a tendency to rationalise US campaign rhetoric as exaggerated and to assume that the structure of US government can contain any excesses. That is a particularly dangerous assumption this year. Europeans should take the candidates, including Trump, at their word, and prepare for the types of president they say they will be.
Clinton or Trump: A European response

Clinton

Though Clinton’s foreign policy will not depart dramatically from Obama’s, she will be looking in the early days of her presidency for a few signature initiatives. In particular, she will likely seek to publicly reassert the US’s commitment to its allies. This presents an opportunity and a danger for Europe.

The danger is that Europeans will believe that this commitment reverses the US’s re-prioritisation of other regions. Even under President Clinton, Europeans cannot assume that the US will continue to support European defence at current levels, or that it will adequately represent European interests on issues such as Syria. Relative US decline and more urgent priorities elsewhere mean that burden-sharing debates within the alliance will become ever more bad-tempered.

But this is also the opportunity. EU states should be prepared to offer Clinton more than just pleas for American solutions to European problems. They should greet Clinton with plans for action which Europeans can lead and to which the US can contribute. Rather than wait for Clinton’s solution on Syria, for example, Europeans should formulate their own approach, with a greater focus on managing refugee flows than the US is likely to provide. To the extent that Clinton’s approach differs from Obama’s, it will likely escalate the war and increase refugee flows, which is not in Europe’s interests.

Russia presents a similar dilemma. Clinton is far more hawkish on Russia than is commonly understood, and her policy may depart from the consensus established between Obama and Merkel, threatening transatlantic unity. And no Russia policy will be effective in the absence of transatlantic unity.

It makes sense therefore to demonstrate that, while the EU continues to need US assistance on Russia, it does not need US leadership. This will require a stronger EU consensus on Russia, particularly between Germany and Poland.

Trump

Trump presents an existential dilemma for Europeans. It will certainly make sense, in the early days, to demand continued US adherence to international law and its alliance commitments. But EU member states also need to take Trump’s “America First” rhetoric seriously, and think about what Europe would do in a world where the alliance was no longer its security anchor. President Trump’s foreign policy would scramble geopolitics, and Europe will need a similarly creative response.

Member states should collectively seek other geopolitical partners, particularly China. If Trump is the master of the deal, Europeans will need to show him that they have other options. China, which will have its own problems with Trump’s America, is the most viable candidate. In the event of a Trump victory, Europeans should build their security relationship with China, including initiating the end of the arms embargo.

Under Trump, the US would either lose interest in working with European partners on Russia, or even be positively disposed toward Moscow’s goals in Eastern Europe. Member states should therefore prepare for a stepped-up campaign of Russian intimidation. They would at that point face a choice: accept a degree of “Finlandisation”, or formulate a unified confrontational policy toward Russia. It is unlikely that the EU can build consensus for the latter, so the former is more likely.

But default is not destiny. Europeans have the strength to resist Finlandisation. They should start making plans to build an internal coalition to avoid being crushed between Putin’s Russia and Trump’s America.
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