

# NEU's Voices



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# **Imagining a United Europe**

Same old questions, brand-new answers

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# **Imagining a united Europe. Same old questions, brand new answers**

EU has always been subjected to critics and to evolutionary process since its birth. However, an unprecedented era of turmoils due to phenomena related to globalization and uncertain outcomes of global and regional powers' competitions has augmented the need to address and adjust the analysis of many aspects in most of the fields where either the EU is involved or as to play an active role as a unified actor. That is why, our first issue is willing to use the same old questions but to provide some new answers for a better policy making.

# 1. The daily life of the EU and its geopolitical frenemies.

## Assessing the impact on and perceptions from the population

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*Samuele Abrami*

**A**ccording to the well-known idea that “geography is about power”, the EU should be characterized by strong, effective and long-term foreign policy objectives. However, despite its privileged location and richness of resources, a significant issue which has been constantly debated is the incapacity of European institutions and states to create a common consensus in terms of external projection, defense and operations.



## ***Oh, what's the problem EU?***

On the one hand, when analyzing its primordial causes, some main elements should receive particular prominence: the national interests of each state, the EU's lack of recognition as a “one voice”-international actor, the volatility of geopolitical scenarios involving the European space. On the other hand, the clear consequences of an inconstant and inconsistent foreign policy have not only affected European geopolitics itself but have also impacted on the way the whole foreign policymaking is conducted and legitimized both at the inter- and intra- state level.

Therefore, these discrepancies have recently led to an endless pendulum swinging from a firm and unchallenged alliance under the “US umbrella” to some singular marriages of convenience with geopolitical powers that would have usually been demonized as enemies - such as China and Russia - or as unlawful countries - such as Iran and Gulf States. More specifically, with conscience of the multifaceted and multilevel components of this issue, the present article is focused on how all this features and their combinations with EU's unique decision-making process have impacted on the daily lives of its citizens.

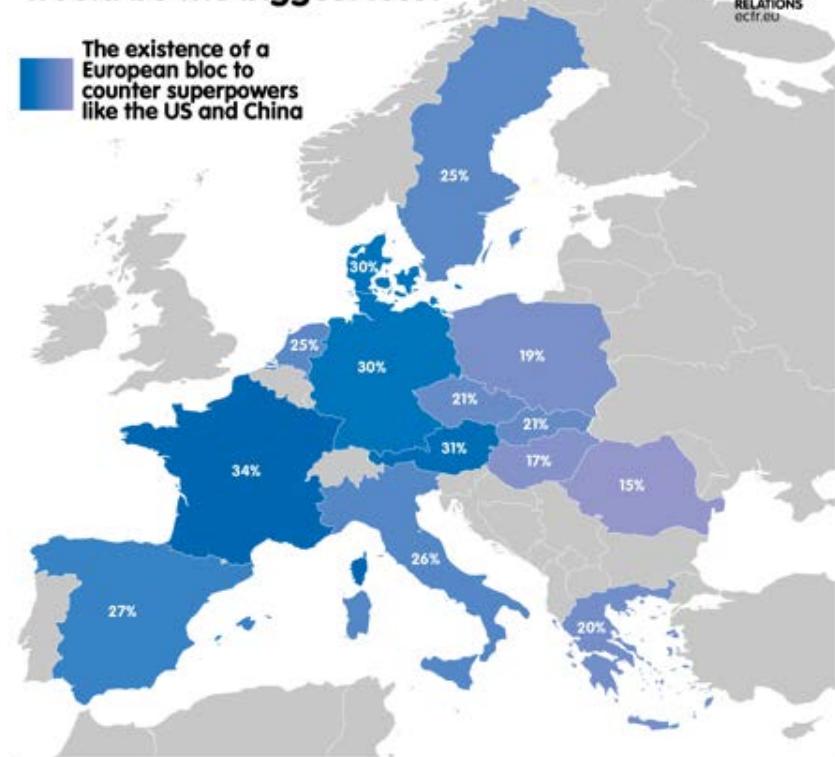
### **Back to the origins of a (non-)geopolitical spirit**

After the end of the rigid Cold War bipolar system, when the only possible alliance was with the US, two fundamental steps have characterized the attempt to adapt European foreign policy to a more globalized, unpredictable and multipolar world. Firstly, since politicians and people were concerned by the spillover

## Were the EU to fall apart, what would be the biggest loss?



The existence of a European bloc to counter superpowers like the US and China



effects of events such as the Gulf War and the Balkan issue, the signature of Maastricht was welcomed with a sentiment of hope because it was meant to institutionalize the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to give some answers to questions like the fall of the Soviet Union, the democratization of Eastern and Central European countries, of the Balkans, and the German reunification. As stated by Susi Dennison, this "revealed just how much appeal was generated by a forward-thinking Europe". Thought this effort, nowadays the project is still characterized by incompleteness since states have mainly

remained responsive more to their own national interests than to the European one. Secondly, another step was the reformation of the EU system with the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in 2009, through which the EU has pursued initiatives in specific areas of foreign policy, such as security and defense cooperation, to progressively build up the bloc's geopolitical capabilities. If it is undeniable that this new conceptualization have sometimes helped EU almost united responses to some issues - such as the JCPOA with Iran or the sanctions towards "thorny states"-, it is equally factual that it has failed to unanimously address those issues which display more influence on the daily lives of their citizens, namely immigration and migration, external threats from other powers, measures against terrorism, energy policies, conflicts in Middle East and North Africa and "hot questions" in the stormy Mediterranean sea.

### ***Who are the allies and who are the enemies?***

As a starting point to provide a broad picture how people perceive EU's foreign policy, it is of paramount importance to look at one ECFR's analysis and to the European Parliament's report Analysis of The Perception of the EU and EU 's policies abroad, whose results could be summarized in some main points:

- European voters believe that there is a growing case for a more coherent and effective EU foreign policy in a dangerous, competitive world.
- They want to see the European Union come of age as a geopolitical actor and chart its own course.

- But policymakers will have to earn the right to enhance the EU's foreign policy power, by producing tangible results and heeding the messages voters have sent them.

Most EU citizens believe that they are living in an EU in which they can no longer rely on the US security guarantee, and that the enlargement process should be halted.

They believe that it is crucial to address existential challenges - such as climate change and migration - at the European level.

The new leadership of the EU's institutions should allow these political impulses to guide their approach to foreign affairs.

Despite the differences among them, all this inquiries show how, at the same time, many foreign policy issues have become gradually politicized across the continent in a way that serves the objectives of domestic legitimacy against a broader one. Undoubtedly, this has both external and internal reasons. Looking from the outside, the erratic presidency of Donald Trump as US president have led European voters to change their view in respect of global politics. For instance, many surveys exhibit a loss of in what had always been a certainty: the US can no longer unconditionally serve as the guarantor of their security. However, overall, Europeans place more trust in the EU than national governments to defend their interests in a global powers's order, although in numerous member states, many voters do not trust either the US or the EU (in Italy, this was the view of 36 percent of people; in the Czech Republic and Greece, it was the view of more than half of them).

## ***The impact on our daily lives***

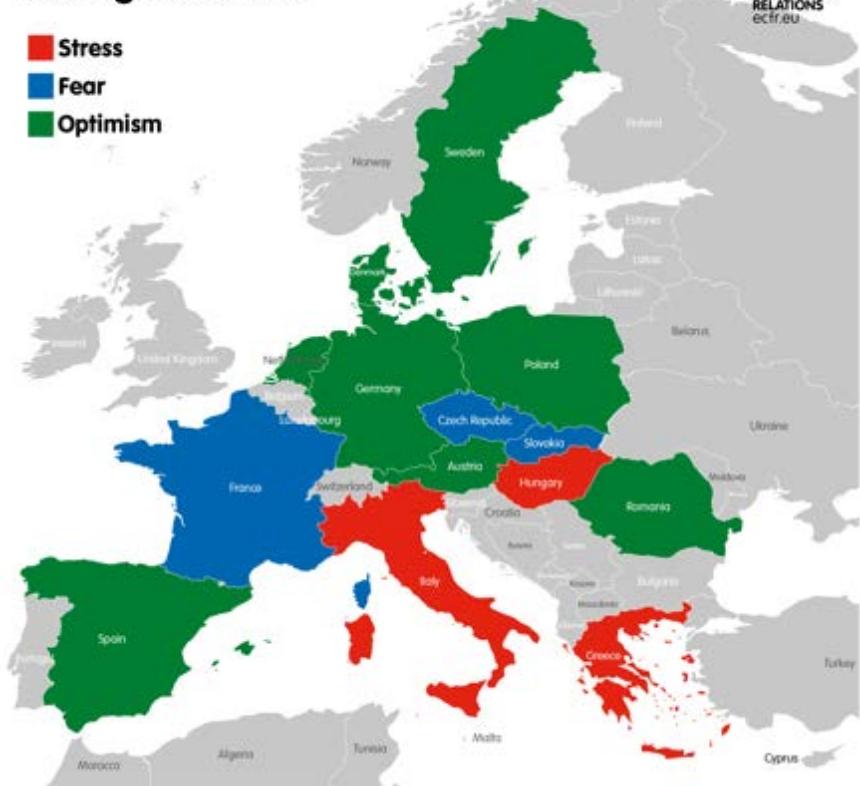
All the above-mentioned issues can be found clearly in some aspects of “our” daily lives. For example, a sense of insecurity has often collapsed into a sense of paranoia in many citizens during those times when terrorist attacks or pressures from migration where at unprecedented levels. In the same way, a loss of trust in the traditional western allies has led many parties to fund their political campaigns with slogans and resources dictated by non-western powers such as China and Russia. Just to mention one specimen, national elections are influenced by fake news, discourses and practices that seems to benefit more those who sustain the idea that Eurasian overtures don’t represent any threat, but an opportunity to find new interests-based and pragmatic alternatives. However, we have all experienced how the whole picture has influenced the perceptions of common citizens in a way that an increasing number of them has experienced less trust towards EU policies.

Geopolitical alliances have also an impact on economic relations. The disunited response given by the EU to the Libyan war - with France allied with Haftar and UAE, Italy with the GNA and lack of responses from countries like Germany - had a spillover effect in many terms. Since Turkey and Egypt have become involved on different sides of the conflict, the questions that were already present in the Mediterranean have become even more polarized. Indeed, the pursue of national interests instead of European ones have increased the lack of coordination in managing the migrants’ crisis but also in devolving new energetic routes. The consequences have actually undertaken the opposite direction since while the

## What is your predominant feeling about life?



- Stress
- Fear
- Optimism



EASTMED project was dismantled, Italy has worked on TANAP from Azerbaijan to decrease its dependence on Gulf and Russian resources while Germany have enlarged the NordStream project with Russia. All of this have failed to create a more homogeneous energy strategies that would have diminished the price of energy on the consumers (us!).

To mention another illustration, during the 2016 political crisis around migration, the leaders of many EU member states and institutions suffered a loss of confidence, that was only partly due to EU citizens' panic in time when as

austerity rocked Europe and put unprecedented pressure on welfare systems to crack under intense pressure. For the most part, it resulted from their sense that EU institutions and governments had lost control of the situation. In response to these perceptions, single governments displayed a preference for a unilateral approach that favored an abandon of their attempts to forge an EU consensus on the way forward.

### ***Policies for the future. In search of an European national interest***

It comes to mind when Joseph Borrell defined the European Union a “valley of tears in which foreign ministers lament multiple crises around the world but remain incapable of decisive collective action”.

Overall, what is clear is a fundamental shift in Europeans’ views of the world. Although an extensive public support remains on the idea of the EU becoming a cohesive global actor, a growing divergence is growing between the citizens and the foreign policy community on numerous crucial issues -from trade and the transatlantic relationship to EU enlargement.

***“A valley of tears in which foreign ministers lament multiple crises around the world but remain incapable of decisive collective action”.***

That is, the risk is that European voters could “withdraw the foreign policy mandate” given to EU through their national elections, since what they want their political leaders to remain in control of the policy areas that are more sensitive for their own daily lives. To make this concrete, as ECFR proposes, “European leaders should convey results in foreign policy using existing forms of coordination between member states, and to respect the messages that voters send them”.

In sum, what people want is the EU to be recognized a responsible actor in a polarized and multipolar world that is constantly under unpredictable evolutions. That is why, EU foreign policy should refuse the vicious circles of European cooperation or integration for “its own power sake” in favor of a concept closer to the idea of Europe’s collective interest.



## 2. Benefits of being part of the EU

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By *Erik Fábián*

**T**he EU is great because it provides a lot of benefits for its citizens. It helps protect our basic political, social and economic rights.

### ***Peace & Security***

Central and western Europe has never known so long a period without war. Europeans are closely linked economically and culturally, and through the democratic values we share.

### ***Single Market***

The single market is the world's most highly developed and open marketplace. It is based on the EU's 4 key freedoms, which enable you and other citizens to:

- live or work in any EU country
- move your money
- sell goods without restrictions
- provide services on the same basis.

### ***Consumer benefits***

Shoppers can now feel safe in the knowledge that they will get their money back if they return products. Travellers can buy train or plane tickets, knowing they can get a refund if their journey is delayed or cancelled. And the standards which goods in EU shops are required to meet are among the world's most stringent, in terms of both quality and safety.

*“The EU is great because it provides a lot of benefits for its citizens”*



## ***Human Rights***

The EU protects all minorities and vulnerable groups, and stands up for the oppressed. Regardless of a person's nationality, gender, language group, culture, profession, disability or sexuality, the EU insists on equal treatment for all.

## ***Looking at the future***

The above mentioned are just a few examples. The EU has a lot more to offer. The European Union is far from being perfect, but i believe its benefits outweigh its negatives.

### 3. Fiscal union for a united Europe

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*Riccardo Cuccaro*

**A**s an economic union, Europe presents atypical characteristics because while the fiscal policy is mostly a matter of single member states, monetary policy is decided at European level.



The logic behind fiscal union is that in the absence of constraints, there is a bias towards excessive debt financing in a monetary union. This is because financial difficulties of one of the member countries may threaten the stability of financial markets, create pressures to public debt and interfere with monetary policy. A fiscal union is necessary to avoid divergent fiscal policies and we identify five conditions crucial for it to function effectively: a credible commitment to a no-bailout rule; a degree of revenue and expenditure independence reflecting the preferences of the voters; a well-functioning European system of transfers in times of distress; the creation of a euro bond market serviced by taxes collected by the EU government; the ability to learn from and adapt to changing economic and political circumstances.

*“A fiscal union is necessary to avoid divergent fiscal policies and we identify five conditions crucial for it to function effectively”*

If the EU will be able to adopt a fiscal union as mentioned above, then it will be ready to take the next step towards a more unified Europe.

# A game for “true” Europeans



**My country is the best because...**





## Rules:

1. Throw your nut and, according to the number you get, you can move to the respective box
2. Answer the question:
  - a. if you answer correctly you can stay there and wait for your next turn
  - b. if you fail you get back of 2 boxes
3. The one who reaches the last box will win!



## My country is the best because...

1. **Greece**:...we are the birthplace of the man who invented democracy, and he is: a) Plato b) Pericles c) Aristoteles
2. **Armenia**:...who likes this should thank us. What is it?: a) yogurt b) wine c) bread
3. **Romania**: it has Europe's largest: a) mammal b) bird c) fish
4. **Spain**:.... is legal a) cannabis b) nudity c) smoking inside places
5. **France**: the world's ....: a) most winning football national team in Word Cup b) first producer of wine c) most visited country
6. **Hungary**:...of its famous alcoholic that is: a) palinka b) vodka c) asztal
7. **Italy**:...of the amount of its UNESCO sites that are: 1] 43 2]55 3] 67
8. **Germany**: we published the first: a) magazine b) porn video c) complete list of beers
9. **Ukraine**:...it is a] the largest country in Europe b] the first exporter of wood c) the second producer of vodka
10. **Lithuania**: we have the oldest tree in the world which is....years old: a] 1500 b) 3000 c] 2200



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