



The future of transatlantic relations

European View
1–3

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Transatlantic relations stand at a critical juncture which demands of the EU clear vision and resolute action. The path ahead is being shaped by shifting global dynamics and evolving priorities. It requires careful navigation. In charting our course, the EU must resolutely resist two temptations and steadfastly avoid one perilous trap.

The first temptation is to retaliate reflexively. Defending our trade interests is paramount and adopting appropriate measures justifiable. But these actions must remain fundamentally defensive, calibrated to protect our economic sovereignty without leading to escalation. In the current intricate global marketplace, an eye for an eye risks leaving both sides blinded—restraint and strategic foresight must guide our actions.

The second temptation lies in an overzealous engagement with China. The illusion of decoupling Russia from China must be dispelled. Their alignment is a natural consequence of shared strategic interests and geopolitical realities. Basing our foreign policy on the hope of fracturing this axis is to build on shifting sands and to divert crucial attention from more pressing challenges.

The trap we must unequivocally avoid is to allow a preoccupation with tariffs to eclipse the unfolding tragedy in Ukraine. This nation has become the central arena in a global contest that will determine not only its own future but also the destiny of Europe and the very architecture of the next global order.

Europe is experiencing an awakening, born of the awareness that we cannot rely so extensively on the US security umbrella forever. The paramount challenge for Europeans

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is to stand firmly on our own feet, particularly in the security arena. However, the role played by the US remains pivotal in forging a resilient security architecture for Ukraine. Simultaneously, the EU must evolve from a security consumer into a decisive provider, strategically investing in its own defence capabilities. Recognising that the US is our foremost strategic ally, we must engage with it even more vigorously in the awareness that the transatlantic alliance is irreplaceable. Indeed, a stronger, more capable Europe promises to be a valuable partner for the US, contributing to shared security through a revitalised European defence and acting as an honest broker in global trade.

While transatlantic relations may not be as warm as they were in the past, and we acknowledge existing turbulences, the fundamental strategic alignment endures. As Finland's President Alex Stubb has astutely observed, alliances are not static entities: they navigate periods of challenge and even crisis while maintaining their underlying stability. Even amidst the present complexities, the transatlantic alliance possesses this inherent resilience.

The recent article by Senator Eric Schmitt (2025) in *The American Conservative*, titled 'Europe needs Trump's new realism', offers a compelling perspective. The notion of a 'new realism' focused on defence and security resonates, but how this idea is defined is critical. If it implies appeasing aggressors such as Putin or taking unilateral actions that disregard international norms and the will of sovereign nations, then we must firmly disagree. Unpredictable rhetoric that breeds global uncertainty serves no one's long-term interests. Despite the potentially disruptive rhetoric, European leaders must remain anchored to our core priorities, with Ukraine at the forefront. Current US policy raises concerns that the ultimate resolution of the conflict in Ukraine might be viewed through a transactional lens, prioritising a swift end and resource deals, and potentially leaving the burden of long-term security guarantees primarily on Europe's shoulders.

The West faces a multifaceted challenge, not only from Russia but also from an emerging axis of authoritarian powers. Navigating this complex landscape demands strategic clarity, unwavering resolve and a renewed commitment to transatlantic unity. Despite all the difficulties and uncertainties, we cannot resign ourselves to weakened transatlantic relations. European history teaches us that while leaders and governments change, nations and peoples endure. The vast majority of our nations and peoples share the same values, such as the freedom of the individual, human dignity, solidarity and the rule of law. This is the bedrock upon which we can maintain our relationships and keep cooperation alive.

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Author biography

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