



FURTHER READING

DAY 2

European Commission (March 2024) 'EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement annual report 2023': https://commission.europa.eu/publications/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement-annual-report-2023_en

UK in a Changing Europe (June 2024) 'UK-EU relations 2024':
<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/reports/uk-eu-relations-2024/>

DAY 3

Steven Everts, '[How to reboot EU foreign policy](#)'

Alastair MacDonald, 'Union rules: Can Europe speak with one voice?'
<https://typworld.com/84626182/union-rules-can-europe-speak-with-one-voice>

Nicole Koenig and Leonard Schütte, 'A Perfect Polar Storm: European Union'
<https://securityconference.org/en/publications/munich-security-report-2025/chapter-4-european-union-a-perfect-polar-storm/>

The Economist, '[Which European should face off against Trump and Putin?](#)'

Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)

- The full text of the TCA agreement itself can be found [here](#).
- A [summary explainer](#) published on gov.uk
- The **Institute for Government** think tank [explainer](#), with a handy table on the main provisions and brief commentary
- The **UK in a Changing Europe** think tank comprehensive report entitled [Brexit and Beyond](#), with contributions from leading experts on different aspects of the agreement.
- A series of short blogposts is also available, including by [Prof Anand Menon](#), [Prof Tim Bale \(UK politics of the deal\)](#), [Jill Rutter \(governance and domestic architecture\)](#), [Prof Sarah Hall \(financial services\)](#), [Dr Bryce Stewart \(fisheries\)](#)

POST-COURSE READING

Briefing – Single-use plastics and fishing gear. Reducing marine litter (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019):
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625115/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)625115_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625115/EPRS_BRI(2018)625115_EN.pdf)

Opinion **EU foreign policy**

How to reboot EU foreign policy

The bloc urgently needs new ways of working and must change how it conceives of key partnerships

STEVEN EVERTS



The EU's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, left, greets Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president. The EU must move beyond its one-size-fits-all approach to its neighbours © Julien Warnand/EPA-EFE

Steven Everts

Published SEP 12 2024

Unlock the Editor's Digest for free

Roula Khalaf, Editor of the FT, selects her favourite stories in this weekly newsletter.

Enter your email address

Sign up

The writer is director of the EU Institute for Security Studies and a former senior adviser to the EU High Representative. He is the co-editor of a new EUISS report, [‘10 Ideas for the New Team’](#)

EU foreign policy is in trouble. Every day, evidence grows that the bloc is struggling to be relevant. Too often, it is reduced to a role of bystander and commentator. There is a lot of activity in Brussels but not enough impact.

Part of this stems from a failure to adapt. EU foreign policy was designed for a world at peace, where multilateralism was strong and global rules and norms were upheld. But that world is now gone. We live in an age of [contestation](#), where territorial conflicts proliferate, Russia and China promote an anti-western narrative and basic international institutions are in crisis.

In many strategic theatres around the world, people are watching the ups and downs of the US presidential campaign closely — they know the stakes, both for them and for the world. The same, however, is not true for the upcoming transition in Brussels, as Ursula von der Leyen begins her second five-year term as president of the European Commission.

So the EU needs to shape up. The arrival of a new leadership team gives it a chance to change the way it engages with the world. The transition is the moment in EU politics when new ideas stand a chance, before the concrete sets again. Here are some to consider.

First, the EU should rethink how it conceives of partnerships and how it labels them. This begins with ditching outdated policy frameworks. The EU must move beyond the European Neighbourhood Policy and its one-size-fits-all approach.

By its name and design, the ENP is too Eurocentric. Instead, the EU should forge partnerships tailored to partners' specific needs. A new commissioner for the Mediterranean sounds like a good idea. But only if the policy substance changes too will the EU be able to start shaping events instead of commenting on them or complaining about the actions of others.

Similarly, the EU must be more clear-eyed about the relationship between China and Russia. There is a growing convergence at the global level and Beijing has not been willing to deny Moscow the high-tech, dual-use goods it needs to continue its aggression against Ukraine. The EU should be realistic about the degree of influence it is able to exercise over Chinese choices in this area. This does not mean there can be no co-operation with China. But it does mean that the systemic competition element will increasingly define relations.

Second, the EU needs new ways of working. This starts at the very top. Security is everything these days and everything is security: energy, migration, tech, cyber and defence are all connected but still treated as separate by the EU “system”. The EU needs a “council for the defence of Europe”, composed of leaders who are able to see the whole board and can do policy arbitrage. The first day of every EU summit should be set aside for dealing with security issues; not in crisis mode as now, but to set a direction. The high representative/vice-president should play the role that national security advisers play in capitals, briefing leaders and presenting policy packages. The EU also needs regular meetings of national security advisers, to Europeanise officials who are currently focused on their own countries.

Another area ripe for reform is how the EU deals with rising powers. The commission should establish a new directorate-general for handling relations with key emerging powers. To win the battle of “offers”, the EU needs a dedicated team and a new way of approaching partners that transcends the established categories of developing or neighbouring countries.

Third, the EU needs new ways of acting. It should be more selective about setting up new military and civilian missions. Too many are small and understaffed; and too often they struggle to make an impact. In a world where its core security interests are now threatened, the EU should focus more directly on solving crises on and near the European continent.

This brings us to Ukraine. No issue is more consequential for European security. The EU has rightly broken taboos with its military support and decision to start accession negotiations with Kyiv. Yet these days the signs are of Europe stepping back, as supplies of air defence and other equipment slow down and uncertainty over future supplies mount.

This is not cause for fatalism, however. It is within Europe's reach, and in its core interests, to help Ukraine prevail on the battlefield. One concrete way to do so would be through expanding existing training efforts inside Ukraine. It would boost the efficiency of current training efforts, by keeping soldiers closer to the front line. Europeans cannot afford to do otherwise.

Letter in response to this article:

[How the EU can reset foreign policy for the western Balkans](#) / [From Kurt Bassuener, Co-Founder and Senior Associate, Democratization Policy Council, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

[Copyright](#) The Financial Times Limited 2025. All rights reserved.

Follow the topics in this article

Steven Everts

Geopolitics

EU foreign policy

European Union

Weekly edition

The world in brief

War in the Middle East

War in Ukraine

United States

T

Europe | Charlemagne

Which European should face off against Trump and Putin?

Macron, Tusk, Costa: the runners and riders for the job from hell

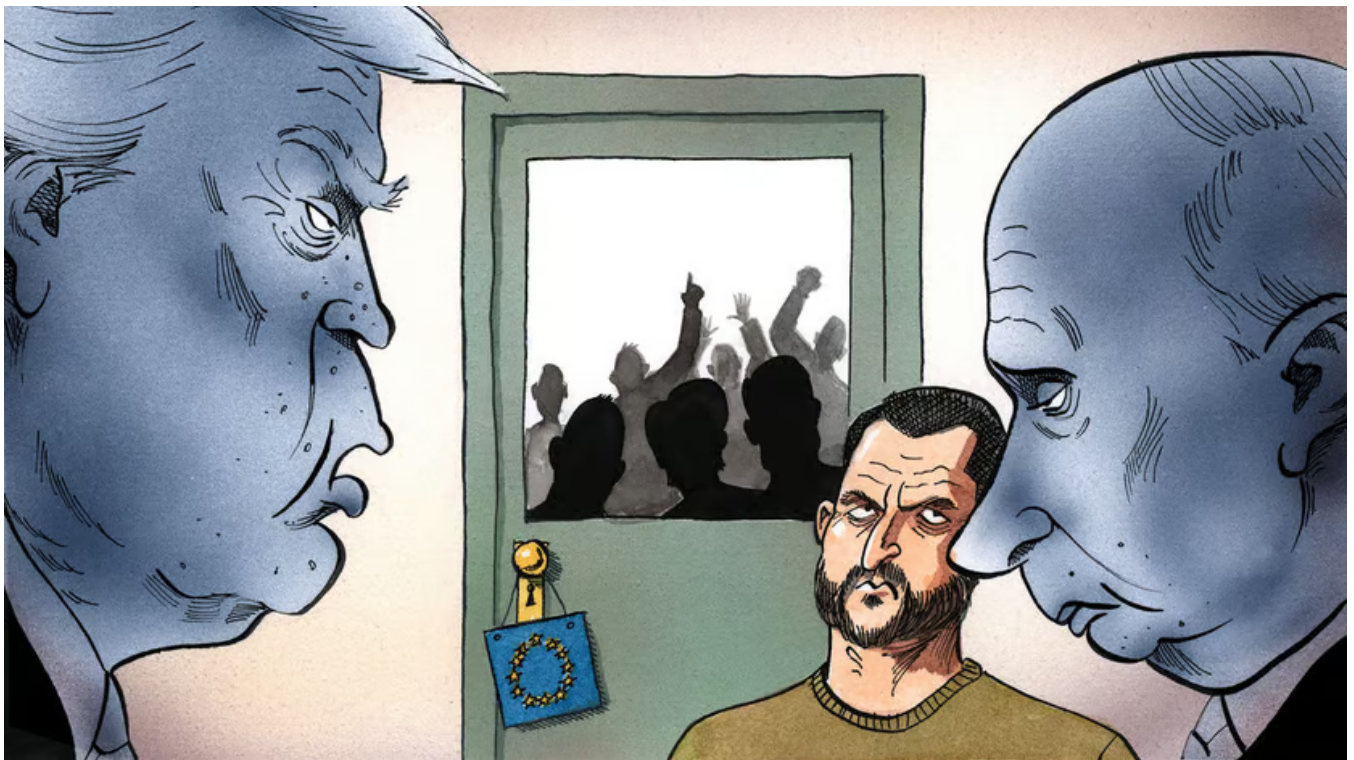


ILLUSTRATION: PETER SCHRANK

Feb 25th 2025

Share

0:00 / 0:00

ASIDE FROM his gravelly baritone and his attempts at rearranging the world like Tetris pieces, Henry Kissinger is perhaps best known for something he probably never said: that he could never figure out who to call to speak to Europe. A question that was first (not) posed in the rotary-phone era remains unanswered in the age of Zoom. The time for Europe to put forward a single interlocutor for the outside world has come. Soon, under as-yet-unclear circumstances, peace talks over the war in Ukraine may take place. Given what is at stake, Europe desperately—and justifiably—wants a seat at the table. But to be included it will have to put someone up who can stand for photo-ops with Vladimir Putin (representing the interests of his despotic Russian regime) and Donald Trump (representing those of Donald Trump), and perhaps Volodymyr Zelensky (Ukraine). Working out who can't sit in the European chair, in the eyes of some faction or other, is easy. Coming up with the name of someone who could is tricky.

ADVERTISEMENT

[i](#) [x](#)

With 40-odd countries that seldom agree on much, the usual answer is for Europe to send multiple people to represent its interests. That will not be an option this time. For better or for worse (mostly for worse), Mr Trump is the guiding force of the talks, the early throes of which have started—without any input or representation from Ukraine and Europe—in Saudi Arabia. If he

saying who it might be.

The least contentious answer might be to turn to the top brass of the European Union. One of its “presidents” (there are many), that of the European Council, is meant to represent the EU at head-of-state level. But nominating António Costa, the newish incumbent, would isolate Britain, a major source of Ukrainian support whose views could hardly be represented by an EU grandee. A former Portuguese prime minister, Mr Costa is a backroom operator by nature. Taking on the envoy job would hinder his day-job chairing meetings of EU leaders, an emergency one of which is planned for March 6th. It does not help that Trumpians hold the EU institutions in contempt, thinking them a supranational deep-state blob ripe for DOGE. This also rules out Ursula von der Leyen, another EU president (of the European Commission).

An obvious candidate for the Euro-mantle would be one of its national leaders. Once the job would have fallen to Angela Merkel, chancellor of Europe’s richest country and broker of its thorniest compromises for over a decade. But it will take months for her probable successor, Friedrich Merz, to cobble together a coalition after elections on February 23rd, and he has lots on his plate.

ADVERTISEMENT

[i](#) [x](#)

ECONOMIST
IMPACT

Europe’s next-biggest country is France. Emmanuel Macron has a strong claim to the Mr Europe job. He dealt with Mr Trump during his first term and, in a meeting with him at the White House on February 24th, showed there was a

Europe needs “strategic autonomy”, ie, from America, looks prescient given recent events. Political chaos at home paradoxically gives Mr Macron more time to focus on foreign affairs. His major flaw is that hawks in northern and central Europe do not trust him much, least of all on Russia, with which he wanted to open a “strategic dialogue” on security before 2022. Mr Macron has made efforts to engage those countries, and has at times sounded just as hawkish as them—for example by being among the first to suggest that European troops should be sent to Ukraine.

Those who oppose Mr Macron might plump for Donald Tusk, Poland’s prime minister and former president of the European Council. His country grasps the Russian threat acutely; it spends the most (as a share of GDP) on defence of any NATO country, which plays well with Trumpians. But Poland has ruled out sending troops to Ukraine, and has a sometimes tetchy relationship with its leadership. Mr Tusk unwisely disparaged Mr Trump while he was out of office. He shares foreign-policy oversight with the Polish president, who will be replaced in June and might not share Mr Tusk’s views. The Pole has the opposite problem to Mr Macron’s: western Europeans do not want to give their most hawkish member carte blanche to act on their behalf.

What of other big-country leaders? Spain is far from Ukraine and its prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, is not among its most vocal supporters. Sir Keir Starmer thinks Britain can be a “bridge” with America, but Brexit has left it isolated in Europe. Giorgia Meloni is an ideological ally of the American president. But she has yet to resolve how to be both pro-Ukraine and pro-Trump. Sending a respected leader from a smaller country, like Petr Pavel, a retired general turned Czech president, would once have been a typical Euro-compromise. Mr Trump would no doubt start proceedings by belittling the consensus pick. (“Who is this guy anyway?”)

Arise, Mr Europe

Mr Macron appears the sensible choice. He wants the job, and has convened groups of European leaders in Paris already. He made a point of consulting his fellow bigwigs widely ahead of his three-hour chat with Mr Trump this week. Those unsure of his geopolitical instincts could suggest underlings to balance them out. Kaja Kallas, the hawkish Estonian who heads the EU’s foreign-policy arm, would make a fine representative facing the American secretary of state in

comes from being primarily a soft power, and these are hard-power times. Europeans must understand that having a single envoy at the negotiating table who flusters some is better than squabbling far away from it. ■

Subscribers to The Economist can sign up to our new [Opinion newsletter](#), which brings together the best of our leaders, columns, guest essays and reader correspondence.

Explore more

Charlemagne

Europe

Ukraine at war

This article appeared in the Europe section of the print edition under the headline “Who you gonna call?”

Europe

March 1st 2025

- Merz wins a messy election then calls for independence from America
- John Parker, one of The Economist's finest correspondents, was a polymath journalist
- Europe will need to pull all the levers to up its defence spending
- Ukraine has fended off Donald Trump, for the moment
- Ukraine is scrambling to find fresh fighters
- Swedish businesses are being bombed
- Which European should face off against Trump and Putin?