

Session 6

The Trans-Atlantic Relationship and the Future of the 'West'

Europe-US relations have been through their ups and downs over the last few decades, particularly since the end of the Cold War and the accompanying convergence of strategic interests. More recently, the Brexit saga and the turbulence of the Donald Trump era has led to questions about the future of the relationship. While the Biden administration has raised hopes that a re-set in transatlantic relations is on the agenda, including increasing strategic cooperation to counter China, today's global dynamics arguably ensure that the nature of the relationship will be different than in decades past. From scepticism towards the continuing relevance of NATO, the rhetoric in Brussels regarding strategic autonomy for the EU and the renewed US focus on the Asia-Pacific to the issue of 'Westlessness', questions continue to be raised by decision makers on both sides of the Atlantic about the future of trans-Atlantic relations and the meaning the West. Moreover, the prospects of EU expansion or contraction in the wake of Brexit and the role to be played by a post-European UK in trans-Atlantic relations remain open questions.

At the same time, issues including the continued rise of China, a resurgent Russia, the emergence of powerful regional blocs in SE Asia and the increasing global relevance of emerging powers provide numerous potential avenues for the maintenance of a strategically coherent Western community.

Discussion Themes

- **How is multipolarity redefining the traditional relationship between Western powers? How is it impacting their respective strategic outlooks towards each other?**
- **What are the common strategic interests between Europe and the United States in particular? Are they sufficiently important to maintain a sense of strategic unity among Western powers?**
- **How does the China and Russia question factor into the strategic outlooks of the United States and the EU respectively?**
- **How will increased regional integration in Europe and North America impact the dynamics of trans-Atlantic relations?**
- **How will Europe's quest for strategic autonomy impact trans-Atlantic relations?**