

# EMERGING TIES

ESSAYS ON  
TRANSATLANTIC  
ENGAGEMENT IN  
THE DEVELOPING  
WORLD



## About the Bertelsmann Foundation

The Bertelsmann Foundation (North America), Inc., established in 2008, was created to promote and strengthen the transatlantic relationship. Through research, analysis, forums, and audiovisual and multimedia content, we seek to educate and engage our audience on the most pressing economic, political, and social challenges facing the United States and Europe. We are the U.S. office of the Germany-based Bertelsmann Stiftung.

At a time when many are asking what people from all parts of the U.S. and Europe think about global issues, our aim is to bring our work to audiences outside Washington and Brussels. Through discussion forums, documentary film screenings, and other events, we present our materials to diverse audiences of students, educators, community organizers, journalists, and policymakers. Our goal is learning together how the transatlantic relationship affects us all, and how we can shape it in the future.

## About the Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship

The Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship (BFF), formerly known as the Congressional European Parliamentary Initiative (CEPI), is a transatlantic fellowship now in its fourteenth year. BFF is a hybrid experience that convenes over a period of five months. Fellows are provided with two in-person exchanges, one on each side of the Atlantic. The exchanges are supplemented with a two-month virtual program in which the fellows meet once a week with experts related to the year's topic. A final publication is written by the fellows themselves and published at the end of the BFF program.

The BFF Class of 2022 met on the topic of A Transatlantic Approach to the Developing World. Over the course of several months, BFF participants engaged with diverse, high-level stakeholders across a variety of sectors to discuss transatlantic cooperation with actors in the developing world. The goal of these combined experiences was to provide participants with tools to enhance policy formulation, deepen participants' understanding of transatlantic legislative processes, and build bridges to safeguard the long-standing friendship between the European Union and the United States.



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# The Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship Class of 2022 A Transatlantic Approach to the Developing World

By Chloe Laird

Maps. They're universally recognized and yet many don't accurately portray the world. One may wonder why Greenland, a country of 836,300 square miles, appears to be the same size as Africa, which is roughly 14 times larger. The work of Hajime Narukawa, who won the 2016 Japanese Good Design Grand Award for the most accurate world map, challenges such traditional perceptions. His creation, known as the AuthaGraph World Map, comprises 96 triangles that can "be tiled in any direction." Its goal is to "provide a new viewpoint to perceive the world."<sup>1</sup>

The Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship Class of 2022 received the AuthaGraph at the beginning of their program. The gift set the tone for the year's theme: A Transatlantic Approach to the Developing World. The map was a reminder that perspectives shift, and that new ways of thinking about accepted norms are critical for constructing a more inclusive future.

In this regard, a recent shift from providing purely developmental aid to building international partnerships with the developing world has ushered in a new era of transatlantic relations. Fresh initiatives, such as the EU's Team Europe<sup>2</sup> or the Biden administration's decision to host a U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit,<sup>3</sup> indicate a movement towards an equal-partnership approach. This is important: The change from "providing" to "building" signals constructive, mutually beneficial relationships with increased emotional and physical investment. Yet, harmful colonial legacies continue to hinder political progress in some developing countries. The transatlantic relationship must acknowledge this horrific past and work with other nations to build equitable and inclusive futures for all.

The EU and the U.S. find themselves increasingly competing in the developing world with authoritarian powers that are not part of these legacies. But competition cannot be an option. The EU and the U.S. must offer themselves as preferable partners.

The transatlantic partners need to offer developing countries a viable alternative to collaboration with autocracies. At the same time, the EU and the U.S. cannot afford to ignore that the developing world is not uniform: A one-size-fits-all policy will be ineffective. Africa alone comprises 54 countries, only one of which, Mauritius, according to the 2020 Human Development Index, has very high human development.<sup>4</sup> Much like each of the EU's 27 member states and the U.S.'s 50 states, each developing country has its unique history, strength and narrative.

Throughout the Bertelsmann Foundation Fellowship, fellows explored the central theme of development in six cross-cutting sectors: health, sustainability, security, technology, economic development and migration. As speakers and fellows exchanged views on topics ranging from digitization as a development tool to bolstering migration in aging Western societies, myriad avenues for potential cooperation between the transatlantic partners and developing countries emerged.

This publication is a reflection of the conversations and debates that spanned the program's five months. Our nine fellows and one of our guest speakers lay out ways in which the EU and the U.S. can engage with developing countries and encourage positive global change. Readers will note that the pieces vary in substance and style, offering a range of options for engaging with the material.

We start with Africa. **Aisha Booker** writes about the importance of inviting the continent's relevant stakeholders to the transatlantic table (p.7). **Miriam Mona Mukalazi** expands on the EU's Team Europe approach and the future of building Africa-EU relations (p.11). Our guest writer, **Andrea Castagna**, discusses the nexus between digitization and development, and argues that the EU and the U.S. have complementary mechanisms that can benefit Africa as digitization ushers in a new era of opportunity (p.15). Finally,

**Rachel Dunsmoor** notes that the Ebola crisis can inform the transatlantic partners about the benefits of cooperating with Africa (p.19).

Moving on, **Jasmijn Slootjes** provides various approaches to deconstructing debates on migration and implementing better policy (p.23). **Isabel García Támara** and **Neda Noraie-Kia**, respectively, outline ways for the EU and the U.S. to manage migration, which remains a high priority on the transatlantic agenda (p.27 and p.33).

**Kadri Paris** advocates for coordinating transatlantic policy that addresses forced labor (p.37). Finally, **Juan Schinas Alvargonzalez** and **Alex Vatanka** offer insight into two other crises occupying the minds of many on both sides of the Atlantic: war in Ukraine and engagement with Iran (p.41 and p.47).

We hope you enjoy this publication. Our aim, and that of the Bertelsmann Foundation, is to provide an outlet for those who rarely, if ever, have an opportunity to speak out. There is no single solution to the challenges presented here. Conversations, such as the ones found in these pages, however, are key to generating ideas that organizations, policymakers and activists can adopt.

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LEVERAGING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IN THE TRANSATLANTIC: AFRICA'S SEAT AT THE TABLE



# Leveraging the African Diaspora in the Transatlantic: Africa's Seat at the Table

By Aisha Booker

It's no secret that Africa is home to some of the world's fastest growing economies and a burgeoning middle class with massive buying power. The launch of the 2019 African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) will further advance these trends as it lays the foundation for increased business among African nations and continent-wide economic expansion. The EU and the U.S. are strong supporters of the AfCFTA, and both work alongside the African Union (AU) to ensure the agreement's success. However, what has not garnered a lot of attention is the work Africa is doing to reach the African Diaspora community around the globe, the citizens of African descent living outside the African continent. The AU has been intentional in its outreach to the African Diaspora, developing a framework to harness talent and resources for the development of the continent.

The EU and U.S. have already implemented multiple industry and economic development government initiatives to further trade with and investment in Africa. The U.S. initiatives have included Doing Business in Africa, Power Africa and, most recently, Prosper Africa for these purposes. The EU's Team Europe approach targets sub-Saharan Africa through the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative; Invest in Young Businesses in Africa; and Digital for Development (D4D) for Digital Economy and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>5</sup>

There is a growing understanding, particularly in the U.S., that the African Diaspora is key to a long-term presence in the African marketplace and to using trade and investment to achieve development goals in key industry sectors. The Migration Policy Institute noted in 2019 that the sub-Saharan African Diaspora population in the U.S. exceeded 4.5 million. It's a highly diverse group from 51 countries, with a range of ethnic, linguistic and educational backgrounds, and it stands to grow. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the total foreign-born Black population in the country will more than double by 2060, to 9.5 million.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. and EU must leverage such a powerful population to further their own goals and policies towards Africa and to compete against other international players. The Diaspora is poised to contribute to transatlantic discussions. Africa and its Diaspora must have a seat at the table.

## The African Contribution

Africa is uniquely positioned to lead discussions about harnessing the economic power of its Diaspora. The AU's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) promotes the engagement of African citizens and Diaspora in a partnership with governments and civil society.<sup>7</sup> The effort is a recognition of the invaluable perspectives that the Diaspora offers for doing business in Africa, especially through their insights into emerging industries. Research by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency shows that minority-owned American businesses are twice as likely to export, three times as likely to have international operations, and six times as likely to transact business in a foreign language.<sup>8</sup> These businesses include those of the African Diaspora, which are better positioned through personal relationships and local African knowledge to take advantage of trade and investment opportunities on the continent. The African Diaspora can collaborate and partner together to contribute to the policy agendas of the U.S., EU, and Africa while boosting economic growth throughout the transatlantic and increasing U.S.-EU competitiveness in Africa.

The African Union Diaspora Engagement Project<sup>9</sup> is another key AU initiative that establishes and strengthens global African Diaspora networks to support development in AU member states. The program also creates strategic Diaspora engagement initiatives that draw on the African Diaspora's knowledge capital.

Africa can contribute to the transatlantic agenda by using all these frameworks to encourage the EU and the U.S. to implement best practices for reaching and engaging

Diaspora communities. CIDO has already scored successes by linking Diaspora entrepreneurs to business mentorship opportunities and developing the Diaspora Engagement Self-Assessment Tool to identify and address gaps in Diaspora engagement. The EU and the U.S. could build on that momentum.

Two specific steps for linking the transatlantic partners to Africa and its Diaspora are:

### **1. Include the AU in EU-U.S. transatlantic dialogues**

The AU can help develop initiatives to bring in the African Diaspora, including those relevant to key objectives of the transatlantic partnership, such as using trade to fight climate change.<sup>10</sup> The Diaspora itself can contribute to creating opportunities for EU and U.S. investment in Africa.

The framework for such cooperation should include dialogue focused on African Diaspora mapping and research; identifying and addressing gaps in African Diaspora engagement; trade and investment promotion to African Diaspora business communities in the EU and the U.S.; and partnering with the AU on key Diaspora initiatives. Relevant discussions can take place at the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit, the EU-AU Summit, and the EU-U.S. Summit.

### **2. Increase opportunities for African Diaspora-owned companies in the EU and the U.S. to partner on cleantech, renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure projects in Africa**

These partnerships could be launched during a transatlantic trade mission that would match American and European African Diaspora companies with partners in sub-Saharan Africa for business opportunities while also engaging in site tours for industry projects.

Ghana, for example, is ripe for investment from U.S. and European African Diaspora firms and has laid the foundation for their return to spur economic growth with strong support from the Ghanaian government. The Ghanaian Embassy in Washington D.C. promotes the country as stable, prosperous, and the leading place to do business in West Africa. In 2019, Ghanaian president Nana

Akufo-Addo invited the African Diaspora to return home to Ghana as part of the country's Year of Return campaign. To come and experience the Ghanaian economy and to discover potential investment opportunities.<sup>11</sup> The campaign celebrated the resilience of victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade displaced throughout the world in North and South America, the Caribbean, Europe and Asia.<sup>12</sup>

According to Netherlands-based African Diaspora Policy Centre, 14% of Ghanaian Diaspora hometown associations have participated in infrastructure investment projects. These projects include road construction and repair, water provision and electricity, and almost all of them are linked to efforts to improve health and education.<sup>13</sup> The Migration Policy Institute defines migrant hometown associations, also known as HTAs, as organizations that allow immigrants from the same city or region to maintain ties with and materially support their places of origin.<sup>14</sup>

The work of the Ghanaian Diaspora is just one example of communities looking to support their homelands through increased economic growth.

### **Mutual Gains**

The African Diaspora has shown strong interest in having EU and U.S. support for increasing business links with Africa, and the Diaspora is often more willing to tread where others fear to go. Residents of the diaspora conduct business in high-risk markets and have the stamina to play the long game, which Africa sometimes demands.

It's not just Africa and its Diaspora that would benefit from participating in transatlantic policy. The EU and the U.S. could gain jobs at home and allies abroad who would work to secure a transatlantic presence in Africa. It would be a win-win-win situation.

*The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Commerce.*

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# EU-Africa Relations: Towards a Partnership of Equals?

By Miriam Mona Mukalazi

It is no understatement to call the relationship between the EU and Africa complex. One reason above all stands out for this: colonialism. Africans address the issue as often as Europeans avoid it, and everyone knows that it has shaped EU-Africa relations in the past, shapes them in the present and will shape them in the future.<sup>15</sup>

Colonial policies for the Global South were formalized at the Berlin Conference in 1884–85, which gave European colonization and economic exploitation in Africa political legitimacy. European claims to the African continent as a sphere of influence were reinforced as late as 1957 in the Treaty of Rome, which established the European Economic Community, the EU's predecessor.<sup>16</sup> Today, the issue is not whether the legacies of these actions are impacting EU-Africa relations. The focus instead should be on reshaping the relationship in light of the colonial past.

In a promising sign, the EU has recently emphasized a partnership of equals in its relations with Africa. This approach underscores a commitment to jobs, economic growth and commercial investment funneled through the bloc's newly launched Global Gateway initiative, which the EU describes as a “strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the “world.”<sup>17</sup> The effort can also be understood as an attempt to acknowledge Europe's colonial past and to reinvent the EU as a normative power in a century in which Global North actors speak of “Westlessness,” as the Munich Security Conference put it, in a globalized world.<sup>18</sup> Following Amitav Acharya's idea of a world of plural modernity, the EU is confronted with many questions, one of them: How to recalibrate relations with Africa successfully?<sup>19</sup> One solution, presented by Nora Fisher Onar and Kalypso Nicolaidis, is moving towards a decentering agenda to “make sense of our multipolar order and to reconstitute European agency in a non-European world.”<sup>20</sup> To recalibrate relations with Africa successfully, the EU must therefore follow a decentering

agenda that entails four action items to create a partnership of equals:

- Acknowledge the impact of institutionalized colonial continuities on EU-Africa relations
- Stop framing geopolitical reorientation and changing dynamics as new phenomena
- Embrace decentering approaches already in place
- Expand thinking around EU-Africa relations beyond Europe

## EU Politics without Eurocentrism?

Changing power dynamics and strategic reorientations of less powerful political actors are not new geopolitical phenomena. It is, therefore, misleading when the Global North speaks of “Westlessness” or “Africa Rising.”<sup>21</sup> It indicates a misconception that other actors, such as those in Africa, are emerging. But Africa isn't rising. It has always been at the center of global politics. These narratives also dilute the EU's global power, which previously adapted itself to changing power dynamics. Concretely, recalibrating EU-Africa relations did not start with the 2022 African Union-European Union Summit.<sup>22</sup> The 2007 signing of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and the 2018 start of negotiations for a new partnership agreement between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of states are examples of both actors' attempts to forge differentiated partnerships. Therefore, the EU has several entry points to embrace decentering approaches already in place.<sup>23</sup> A prevailing Eurocentric perception of the EU has spawned another misleading narrative that sees the bloc solely as a normative power.<sup>24</sup> This misleading narrative has roots in Europe's Colonial times of bringing civilization by force to the Global South. Applying a decentering approach to this fallacy reveals how not only the EU continues to put itself into the center as a normative power but also how its member states are centering this particular image of the EU as well. In addition, the EU's image as a normative power is reinforced by third parties on the African continent. The EU's presence in the Sahel is an example where this misleading image as

a development-friendly actor, without any military interest vis-à-vis the Global South, is demonstrated. It became clear that not only the EU itself but also its member states, such as France or Germany, pursue military interests. It is a fact that the EU invests a significant amount of money in development policies. Nevertheless, the EU is simultaneously investing in other policies to maintain its power as a political actor.<sup>25</sup> This simultaneity of interests could be clarified by expanding EU-Africa relations beyond the EU. In a particular manner, the EU has already recognized the need for a decentering agenda in EU-Africa relations. It launched a new and equal approach to partnership: Team Europe.<sup>26</sup>

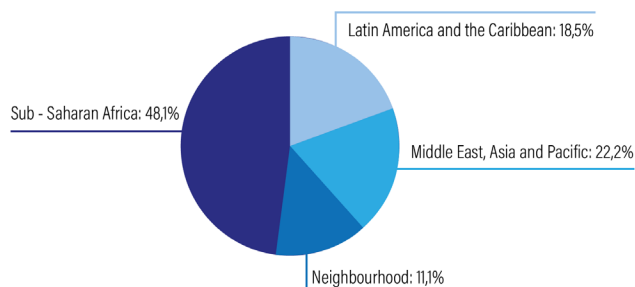
### New Label, Old Product?

Team Europe includes the EU, European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), as well as the EU member states' implementing agencies and public development banks. Started as part of the EU's global response to the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020, Team Europe has already evolved to be the guiding approach of the new European strategy with a €300 billion investment from 2021-2027: The Global Gateway.<sup>27</sup> It is designed to channel spending on global infrastructure development in accordance with six fundamental goals: maintaining democratic values and high standards, furthering good governance and transparency, creating equal partnerships, promoting green and clean technologies, cementing security and attracting private-sector investment. Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) are development cooperation programs and the flagship of the Team Europe approach.

The TEIs are divided into thematic, regional and global clusters.<sup>28</sup> The cluster Sub-Saharan Africa presents nearly half (48.1%) of 13 regional TEIs. In addition to that, Global TEIs also engage Africa.

These include the Global Green Bond Initiative, which promotes the goals of the European Green Deal and creates sustainable growth and jobs – also key issues for EU-Africa relations (see figure above). This strong African focus reflects the EU's prioritization of engagement with the continent. The Global Gateway Investment Package

### Regional Ties



### Sub-Saharan Africa

#### Team Europe Initiatives

Western Mediterranean migration route	Transboundary Water Management in Africa
To Support Africa in Combating Illicit Financial Flows and Transnational Organized Crime	Sustainable Health Security - Africa
Support to the African Continental Free Trade Area	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Sub-Saharan Africa
Opportunity - driven Skills and VET in Africa (OP - VET)	Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and health technology products in Africa
Invest in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA)	Digital Health - Africa
Digital for Development (D4D) for Digital Economy and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa	Central Mediterranean migration route
Africa - EU Green Energy Initiative	

breaking new ground. The package presented at the sixth EU-African Union (AU) Summit in 2022 provides more significant investment for disaster risk reduction (see figure below). It could serve as a harbinger of a TEI partnership of equals within the financial sector. For its funding, the EU member states could bypass traditional national financial institutions to channel funding through EU and African entities. This option, however, is not currently under serious consideration. Instead, the idea of establishing a European Export Credit Facility to complement existing arrangements at the member state level is.<sup>29</sup> But this EU-focused financing raises questions about the intentions of any commitment to equal partnerships.

## Greater investments in disaster risk reduction

- Supporting partners to access existing funding opportunities by preparing investment proposals and mobilizing resources.
- Promoting climate-proof investments and maximizing contribution towards adaptation and disaster risk reduction

### Equal Partnerships for Whom?

The EU claims that Global Gateway projects will be designed, developed and implemented in close cooperation and consultation with partner countries. Infrastructure projects should indeed be based on local needs and opportunities that align with EU strategic interests. As Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships stated in an October 2022 speech at the College of Europe in Bruges, “the futures of Europe and Africa are [bound] together.”<sup>10</sup> But this requires developing partnerships with

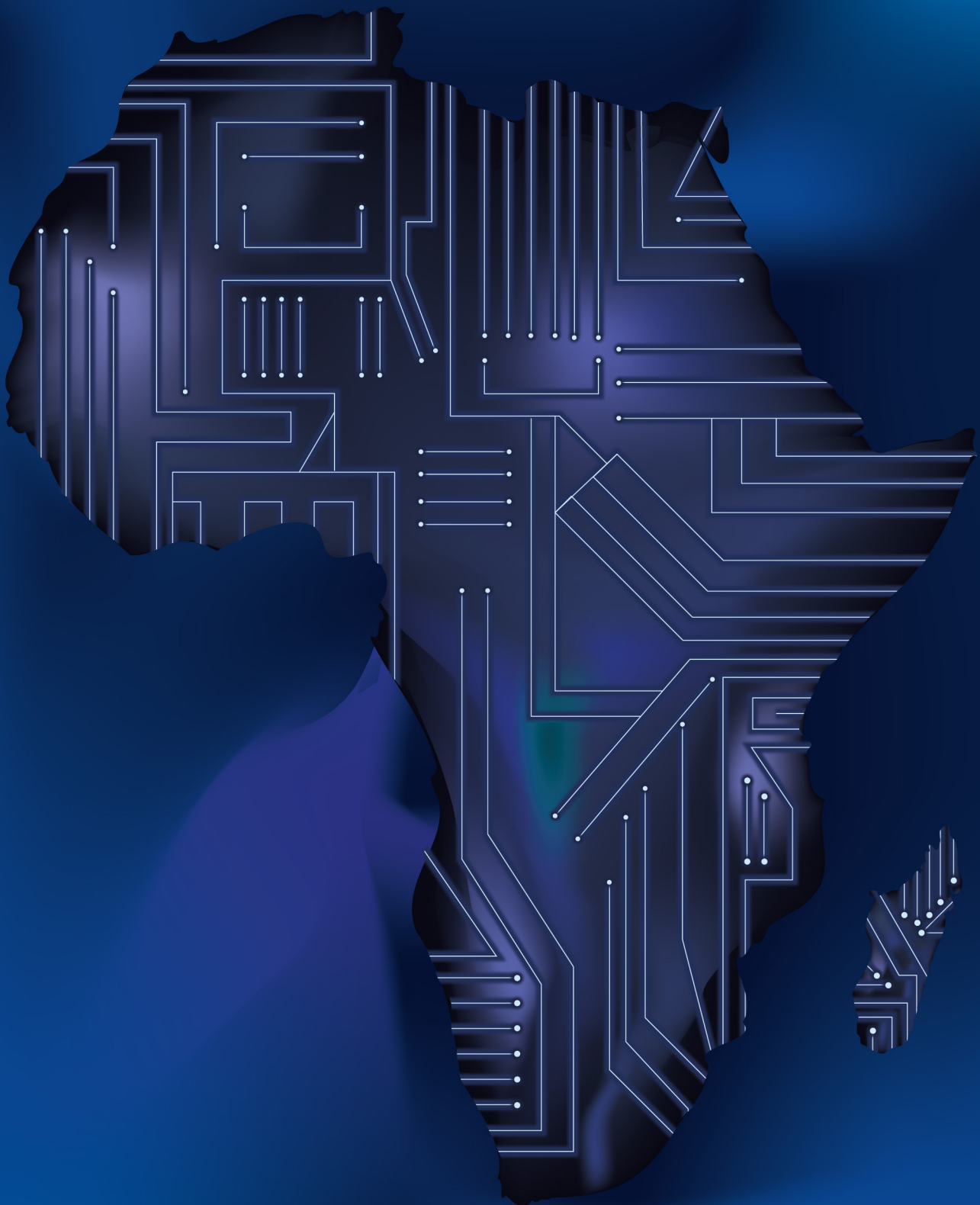
countries and ensuring that project planning considers host countries' capacity to manage and maintain infrastructure after completion. To move towards an equal partnership in EU-Africa relations, it is, therefore critical not to leave civil society organization (CSOs) behind. In particular, the TELs should include not only CSOs on the African continent but also CSOs of the African Diaspora in Europe. Otherwise, Team Europe faces the risk of being simply another label for already influential EU member states and African elites. In brief, despite all the efforts, doubts about the ability of the TELs to forge equal partnerships exist. If the EU is serious about its inclusive approach to equal partnership, it is now the time to prove that with a decentering agenda.

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DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION WITH THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERS WOULD BE A BOON FOR ALL





# Digital Development Coordination with the Transatlantic Partners Would Be a Boon for All

By Andrea Castagna

Digitalization is increasingly becoming the core of global cooperation and development. Defined as the integration of digital technologies with digitized data across an economy and a society,<sup>31</sup> digitalization is widely recognized as one of the most powerful tools for unlocking the full potential of African economic and social development.

The digital revolution and associated technological innovations have certainly shaped African societies in recent decades. Today, 80% of Africans have a mobile subscription,<sup>32</sup> and they have more than 480 million mobile digital money accounts.<sup>33</sup> Growth is likely to continue. The European Commission estimates that a 10% increase in digital coverage in the next decade could increase Africa's GDP by more than 1%.<sup>34</sup> Key issues nevertheless remain unsolved. Vulnerable groups, such as rural communities and marginalized people, have yet to enjoy the benefits of digitalization, and there is great disparity in digital infrastructure and investment across the continent. Only 6% of rural areas have some form of digital connectivity.<sup>35</sup>

The EU and U.S. emphasize digital cooperation with Africa, and bridging African digital divides offers them a unique opportunity. Both have the resources and commitment to cooperate with African partners in the digital field, particularly within the framework of existing pan-African initiatives such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and its Digital Transformation Strategy. Moreover, the American approach to using digitalization for development, based on investment and markets, combined with the European emphasis on policy regulation and legislative frameworks, could create effective, inclusive and open digital ecosystems in Africa.

As the leading nation in the global digital economy, the U.S. is the main actor in this area. Its international development agency, USAID, is pursuing a digital strategy for 2020-2024 that outlines various global targets to "meet the challenges

and seize the opportunities of the digital age".<sup>36</sup> USAID uses various financial and humanitarian instruments to achieve, in particular, two strategic, digital development goals. These are improving measurable development and humanitarian-assistance outcomes through the responsible use of digital technology in agency programming, and strengthening the openness, security and inclusiveness of national digital ecosystems. In April 2022, USAID launched Digital Invest, a \$335 million program to provide developing countries with technical assistance and investment. The initiative also aims to empower technology entrepreneurs, expand digital services and develop market economies.<sup>37</sup> Digital Invest represents a scaling up of Washington's global Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership, a whole-of-government effort to promote the American approach to information and communications technology (ICT) while expanding connectivity and digital access.<sup>38</sup>

Two important factors comprise effective U.S.-African digital cooperation. First, the American government works with its domestic private sector and multiple levels of society in partner countries, from grassroots to local political authorities, to take advantage of the public and private sectors' mutual interest in research and development investment. Second, USAID's digital strategy and other American initiatives focus strongly on promoting digitally resilient communities by, for example, addressing local digital divides.<sup>39</sup> This often results in micro-entrepreneurial opportunities for vulnerable groups such as women, rural communities and national minorities.

For the EU and its member states, however, digital cooperation remains a new area. The bloc has only recently started to frame development and cooperation policies around digital issues. This change follows rising political interest in digital development in countries, such as Germany, France and Estonia, that have pushed the EU to foster new development and cooperation instruments. The

European Commission, for its part, now offers many digital development opportunities through its Global Gateway,<sup>40</sup> a €300 billion investment initiative to promote, particularly in Africa, smart, clean and secure projects in the digital, energy and transport spheres. Notably, Global Gateway, unlike past European development initiatives that focused on humanitarian aid and financial assistance, is essentially policy-driven.<sup>41</sup> The Commission's goal is to support third countries' policy frameworks, especially in areas in which the EU has expertise. A focus on harmonizing African digital markets is based on the creation of the European digital single market. Another focus on data protection stems from the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Another important feature of the EU strategy is its Team Europe approach, which incorporates a coordination mechanism to improve programming among the EU, its member states and other stakeholders, including national development agencies, public investment banks and the European Investment Bank.<sup>42</sup> This innovative approach led to establishing the African Union–European Union (AU-EU) Digital for Development (D4D) Hub, which aims to create technical assistance and project opportunities in African countries.<sup>43</sup> The D4D is complemented by other policy-driven initiatives, such as the Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA),<sup>44</sup> a €10 million program launched in 2018 by the EU, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the AU to improve internet regulation and governance in Africa. The EU promoted the achievements of its strategy during the European Development Days 2022, the bloc's primary, annual gathering on development, which this year devoted itself entirely to the Global Gateway.<sup>45</sup>

Despite their aforementioned minor differences, the EU and U.S. approaches to digital development have many similarities and ultimately complement each other. Both, for instance, aim to offer an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>46</sup> As Beijing considers its digital development strategy for partner countries a crucial factor for its own economic development, it has launched another initiative, the Digital Silk Road (DSR).<sup>47</sup> This is an ambitious plan to implant Chinese data infrastructure, including

digital surveillance tools and AI technologies, in partner countries. DSR also provides aid and political support through massive loans and cooperation with Chinese technology companies. Such loans, however, are made on terms favorable to China and can lead to significant financial pressures when governments are unable to repay their debt. Forty African states have nevertheless ignored this “debt-trap diplomacy” and joined BRI initiatives.<sup>48</sup> The EU and the U.S. face a systematic challenge as these states adopt Chinese technologies and move towards China's closed internet model.

The EU and U.S. approaches are also similar in their placement of human rights and rule of law at the core of development policies and investment. They favor the creation of regulatory frameworks, infrastructure and initiatives based on human-centric technologies, and they acknowledge the need to promote and reinforce democracy through digital human rights and e-government. The two models' proximity is reflected in key transatlantic documents, such as the new EU-US Agenda for Global Change<sup>49</sup> and the statement issued after the EU-U.S. 2021 summit, “Towards a Renewed Transatlantic Partnership.”<sup>50</sup>

Still, the EU and U.S. lack mechanisms to coordinate their digital development efforts in Africa. The EU-U.S. Trade and Technology Council (TTC) is the only joint body to cover topics related to those efforts, but it does not have a clear mandate to act in those areas.

This leaves considerable scope for coordination, which, given the relevance of digital development for Africa's future, is in the interest of the transatlantic partners. The first step should be creating mechanisms for tracking the implementation of each other's digital development projects to ensure complementarity. Establishing an EU-U.S. Digital Development Council (DDC), an annual high-level meeting for mobilizing joint investment and partnerships, should follow. The DDC could be co-organized by the USAID Administrator and the European Commissioner for International Partnerships and include high-level African stakeholders, such as AU commissioners. The gathering would also bring to the attention of wider audiences the

need for investment in Africa, especially to counter the BRI. Lastly, by reinforcing an international system based on democratic multilateralism and rule of law, the DDC, with a clear mandate to further African development, would complement the work of the TTC.

Stronger digital partnerships among the EU, U.S. and like-minded African countries offer advantages to all involved. They bolster global trust in democratic values and western technologies and policies, all of which are benefits that go beyond the mere digital sphere and improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

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EBOLA AND BEYOND TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD



# Ebola and Beyond Transatlantic Cooperation for a Healthier World

By Rachel Dunsmoor

West Africa's 2014-16 Ebola virus outbreak resulted in more than 28,600 cases and 11,300 deaths. It also taught the international community, including the EU and the U.S., that the spread of infectious disease in the developing world is a global health threat.<sup>51</sup> Though the epidemic was eventually contained, Brussels and Washington began, even if belatedly, to explore options for preventing, preparing for and responding to future global health emergencies. With the world now in the midst of two international health crises – monkeypox has joined COVID-19 – a look back at the lessons learned from Ebola is useful, as is consideration of areas in which the transatlantic partners should enhance cooperation to strengthen health security in West Africa and worldwide.

## Slow Start

The international community's response to Ebola was succinctly summarized by one EU parliamentarian as "too little, too late."<sup>52</sup> The first case was reported in December 2013 in Guinea, from where it spread to other West African countries, primarily Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>53</sup> Though the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sent personnel to help with initial response efforts in March 2014, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) did not begin a full-scale response until August of that year.<sup>54</sup> The U.S. government as a whole started developing an Ebola strategy one month after that, coincident with the launch of substantial and coordinated EU actions.<sup>55</sup> The European Council did not appoint an EU Ebola coordinator until November 2014.<sup>56</sup>

A variety of reasons explain the delays. Among them is, simply, that transatlantic leaders did not prioritize the unfolding crisis. USAID's response procedures could be triggered only by disaster declarations from the U.S. Ambassador or Chargé d'Affaires in each of the Ebola-affected countries, and they did not come until August 2014. Across the Atlantic, the absence of EU institutional structures to coordinate outbreak response also impeded action.<sup>57</sup>

Washington and Brussels also did not commit significant resources until months after response activities had begun. U.S. agencies, including USAID, did not receive dedicated funding until December 2014, when Congress appropriated \$5.4 billion. The agency, however, used previously appropriated funds to launch its earlier response.<sup>58</sup> The EU contributed €11.9 million early on in the crisis and by mid-September, the EU's development assistance to West Africa had increased to €150 million.<sup>59</sup> In October 2014, the EU finally committed €1 billion.<sup>60</sup>

Another alarming aspect of the crisis was the lack of disease surveillance capacity in West Africa, which contributed to the international community's inability to understand the extent of the disease's spread. That, too, stymied a response. A subsequent evaluation of USAID's Ebola projects recommended that the agency support the creation of a West African disease surveillance system to improve the capabilities of regional health crisis response systems.<sup>61</sup> Researchers at Johns Hopkins University also found that few international actors are focused on the detection phase of outbreaks, which creates an opportunity for transatlantic partners to strengthen disease detection capabilities in West African countries.<sup>62</sup>

Progress has indeed been made in this area since the Ebola outbreak. According to the CDC, Guinea's response time for detecting the first Ebola case in 2014 was four months. That improved to 15 days in 2021.<sup>63</sup> Susana Malcorra, the U.N. secretary-general's chief of staff during the outbreak, has noted that West African countries were better equipped to respond to COVID-19 as a result of capabilities gained from dealing with Ebola.<sup>64</sup>

However, there is still far to go. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone remain among 19 countries that the U.S. government has targeted for its highest level of disease detection and response support.<sup>65</sup> The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is also stepping in. It began a project in January 2021 to harmonize African disease

surveillance systems and to increase outbreak response capacities of the Africa CDC, an organization established in the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak.<sup>66</sup> Greater progress is possible if the U.S. CDC and ECDC would coordinate their efforts to further enhance the disease surveillance and detection capabilities of West African countries.

### **In it Together**

EU and U.S. support for helping West African countries recover from the Ebola outbreak has already been substantial. In December 2014, Brussels provided €210 million in development assistance, including for strengthening health care, for Ebola-affected countries.<sup>67</sup> By September 2017, USAID support totaled approximately \$412 million for Ebola recovery projects, including about \$60 million for rebuilding health care systems.<sup>68</sup> The agency funded, for example, the installation of water and sanitation systems, and solar power infrastructure, at more than 300 health facilities in Sierra Leone.<sup>69</sup> Recovery efforts like these, however, take years to produce results and are, therefore, long-term projects.<sup>70</sup>

Though transatlantic partners should stay invested in building the health systems of the Ebola-affected countries, they can move beyond West Africa and strengthen health systems around the globe. Both Washington and Brussels have already increased their investments in this work, but could improve their coordination. Precedents for this exist. They have already used a variety of multilateral mechanisms, including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to strengthen global health security. The U.S. and other nations also launched in 2014 the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa) to accelerate progress towards a world free from the threat of infectious disease. Washington confirmed its commitment to GHSa in 2019 by issuing its global health security strategy and, as of March 2020, USAID and CDC had obligated a combined total of \$1.2 billion to support the health security capacity of 34 countries.<sup>71</sup> In addition, Washington recently made another significant investment in global health security by allocating \$700 million for such programming in fiscal year 2022, an increase of \$500 million from fiscal year 2021.<sup>72</sup> A House of Representatives Appropriations Committee report

for fiscal year 2022 also directs USAID to spend 10% of funding in each of its health program areas on strengthening health systems.<sup>73</sup>

The EU has followed suit with increased investments in health systems strengthening and global health security. Brussels established a partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) between 2019 and 2022 for strengthened health systems and had already allocated \$168 million to the WHO for this effort as of March 2022. The funds are meant to help countries with the design and implementation of their health systems.<sup>74</sup> The EU also established in 2020 an Initiative on Health Security to support partner countries' responses to health threats.<sup>75</sup>

The GHSa provides an additional forum for transatlantic cooperation on health, especially in sustainability. A 2019 U.S. Government Accountability Office analysis of GHSa partner countries underscored that the sustainability of many capacities that were in place prior to COVID-19 to address infectious disease threats was uncertain.<sup>76</sup> This provides an opportunity for joint EU-U.S. action, but only 10 of the bloc's member states were GHSa members as of 2021.<sup>77</sup> The participation of more EU countries would allow for greater progress.

Further transatlantic cooperation on strengthening the WHO would also provide benefits. Both should advocate for WHO reforms that enhance its ability to combat future pandemics. Fortunately, this process may already have begun. The June 2021 EU-U.S. Summit concluded with an announcement of a joint intention to reinforce cooperation on WHO reform, including by advancing sustainable financing for the WHO.<sup>78,79</sup> Such a step is not entirely new in Washington, which has supported reforming the organization for more than a decade, including as part of its Ebola recovery efforts.<sup>80</sup> However, it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that the EU became a more vocal advocate for WHO reform.<sup>81</sup> In November 2020, the EU adopted the European Council's conclusions on strengthening the organization. These included establishing different levels of alerts for public health emergencies of international concern and having a more effective and consistent international system

for reporting such emergencies to the WHO.<sup>82</sup> The U.S. proposed similar measures in May 2022 for developing early warning criteria with risk levels for public health threats, and for providing the WHO with earlier notification of public health emergencies.<sup>83</sup> The transatlantic partners, therefore, agree on needed reforms to the WHO's system for assessing public health risks, as well as on the need to improve countries' reporting of public health emergencies to the WHO. As the U.S. and EU are among the WHO's largest donors,<sup>84</sup> they can now undertake the next step and jointly ensure that these reforms are actually implemented.

Finally, the EU and the U.S. could also commit to combating existing diseases prevalent in developing countries, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Cooperation in this area already exists through their participation on the Board of the Global Fund, to which both announced in September 2022 increased contributions.<sup>85</sup> This support, as Global Fund Executive Director Peter Sands has noted, allows the transatlantic partners to help protect the world from the deadliest infectious diseases now present, and not just from future disease outbreaks. He notes that the capabilities to detect, prevent, and respond to future diseases are also those needed to fight existing ones. Nigeria's response to Ebola, for example, benefitted from contract tracing capabilities developed for fighting polio.<sup>86</sup> Greater

transatlantic cooperation in combatting existing disease threats could be very beneficial for combatting future ones.

### A Unique Power

The 2014-16 Ebola outbreak, spread and death toll demonstrates that the EU and the U.S. cannot afford to delay in responding to outbreaks of disease in the developing world. Though disease detection capabilities have improved in the Ebola-affected countries, transatlantic partners have an opportunity to cooperate on further enhancing such capabilities throughout Africa. They could also now coordinate their efforts to strengthen health systems in West Africa and in developing countries across the globe. They should also further their cooperation in the GHSA, enact WHO reform, and combat existing deadly diseases.

Joint transatlantic action on improving global health security and combatting infectious diseases has helped save lives. It can save even more by creating a healthier world, perhaps as no other coordinated effort can.

*The opinions and views expressed herein are the author's alone and are not intended to reflect the institutional views of the U.S. Government Accountability Office.*

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Migration

Policies





# A Policy Detox: Promoting Effective Migrant Integration Policies in a Context of Crisis and Polarization

By Jasmijn Slootjes

Integrating migrants has long been a policy conundrum. For the West, the issue is linked with a wide range of issues, from aging societies with increasing labor shortages to, most recently, managing millions of refugees fleeing war-torn Ukraine. Whether it is during the 2015 refugee crisis or the current influx of displaced people from Ukraine, integration policies are often forged in the heat of crisis. To make matters worse, conversations about migrant integration are often heavily polarized and politicized narrowing the political space in which policymakers can maneuver.

Such an environment may forge policy, but it often obstructs effective policy. Fortunately, there are promising paths for detoxifying the social climate to permit constructive policymaking.

## Where Have All the Workers Gone?

Demographic decline and the emergence of chronic labor shortages are rising concerns in many Western countries. Europe has six million vacant jobs to fill; the U.S. has 10 million.<sup>87</sup> Widespread vacancies threaten economic growth and the proper functioning of education and health systems, among other social structures. There is now even a dearth of low-skilled labor, especially in the construction, tourism and gastronomy sectors.<sup>88</sup>

This situation is not a result of temporary, pandemic-related circumstances. Aging populations and decreasing fertility rates have been accelerating population declines for decades. This is especially true in Europe, where there are today four working people for each person over 65. By 2050, that will be down to two.<sup>89</sup> But the impact goes well beyond pension financing. Shrinking demographics are predicted to reduce EU GDP by 1.2% between 2031 and 2050. Even in the U.S., the number of workers per pensioner will fall by a third between 2021 and 2050.

Many Western countries have been slow to link demographic decline and labor shortages to migration, despite

demographers' repeated warnings of aging and population decline. The most recent spike in job vacancies may change this. Austria and Portugal are already relaxing visa requirements for migrants.<sup>90</sup> Spain is among countries passing laws to ease entry for skilled workers from non-EU countries.

Still, a divergence is occurring. The political space for migration policy is widening in some countries and diminishing in others. Recent elections in Sweden and Italy have brought victories for populist, anti-immigration parties.<sup>91</sup> The Netherlands is delaying plans for family reunification of refugees and was even considering a temporarily stopping grants of asylum, despite dire labor shortages.<sup>92,93</sup>

## An Unheated Debate

Policymakers' fears of electoral backlash tend to limit policy options. This is especially true for migration policy as the social debate around it is often characterized by a high degree of polarization and politicization that spurs political stalemate and complicates identifying and implementing pragmatic solutions. According to the University of Southern California Annenberg School's Polarization Index, migration has become the most divisive issue in highly polarized American society.<sup>94</sup> It is, therefore, unsurprising that Washington has for decades been unable to pass meaningful reform to its deficient immigration laws.

This is not a helpful context to manage an important issue with significant social repercussions. Fortunately, there are options for overcoming it and creating a more constructive setting for policy development. These include:

- **Breaking down policy silos:** Migrant integration cuts across policy areas, yet most conversations and political debates on the issue overlook its widespread impacts. There is, for example, a strong but multifaceted link between health and migrant integration. Poor health may, for example, prevent

migrants from participating in the labor market and taking integration courses. On the other hand, lengthy migration procedures and limited labor market integration like not having a job, are again risk factors for health. Migrants may get stuck in a vicious cycle, in which their poor health hurts their integration process, and poor integration outcomes further worsen their health. All while migrants face many barriers to access the health care they need, ranging from language barriers to administrative ones. These issues can't be tackled from only a health care or a migrant integration perspective. Acknowledging such linkages brings greater nuance to a policy debate. Governments should work to instill more cross-agency thinking and participation in their policymaking.

• **Expanding participation:** Representatives of political extremes, whether in government or media, often dominate public debate. Diversification is needed, and not only for democracy's sake. A wider forum provides more essential information about stakeholder needs and, consequently, the nuance that is ever important in complex policymaking. One way to do this is to bring local and regional government into discussions that often occur at national and international levels. Employers, which have first-hand experience with labor-market bottlenecks, would also add a valuable voice. Diasporas, migrant and refugee organizations, and other civil society actors are already playing key roles in assisting displaced individuals but are regularly overlooked in migrant and integration policymaking. Their experience and perspectives would offer valuable contributions to policy debates.

• **Relying on facts:** The current fake-news and “post-truth” era can stifle the crucial role that evidence plays in creating effective policy. Understanding what works, under which conditions, and competently applying this knowledge are all crucial for effective migration and integration policy. Evidence-informed policymaking also promotes good governance by improving institutional learning, accountability and cost-effective use of public funds.<sup>95</sup> It can benefit broader society by leading to programs and practices that support economic growth, a thriving labor market and social cohesion. These universal benefits may also temper anti-migrant attitudes and help calm passions around a highly politicized and polarized issue.

• **Recognizing successful, innovative practices:** As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in her 2022 State of the Union address, “[o]ur actions towards Ukrainian refugees must not be an exception. They can be our blueprint for going forward.” Whether an influx of refugees from Ukraine or the outbreak of COVID-19, disruption and crisis often spark innovation. The pandemic, for example, triggered an exploration of more cost-effective ways to provide migrant services, one of which was moving integration courses online. Many feared the consequences of this, but the actual result was increased participation and higher completion rates among most migrant groups and especially, within those groups, among women with children and working adults. Other pandemic-era outcomes include new and closer collaboration among stakeholders, which helped prepare them for the human misery that followed the start of the war in Ukraine. Governments should invest in identifying and evaluating such innovation so that best practices can be shared and scaled up.

### **Making Space**

Working on migration-related issues can evoke a feeling of claustrophobia. The political space in which migration policy options can be considered is often limited. It needs to be broadened. The only way to do that is to introduce a more inclusive approach so that a wider range of stakeholders have a say, and to give greater priority to evidence, facts and innovation. This will provide the needed nuance and diversity that regularly produces a more effective policymaking process and, ultimately, better policy.

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*Before joining MPI Europe, Jasmijn was the Executive Director of the Berkeley Interdisciplinary Migration Initiative (BIMI) at the University of California, Berkeley. In this role, she worked on spatial inequality in migrants' access to health and legal services by leading a multistate data-collection project and the development of an interactive mapping tool. She also worked on access to migrant services in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and launched the Migration Research Methods Summer Institute.*

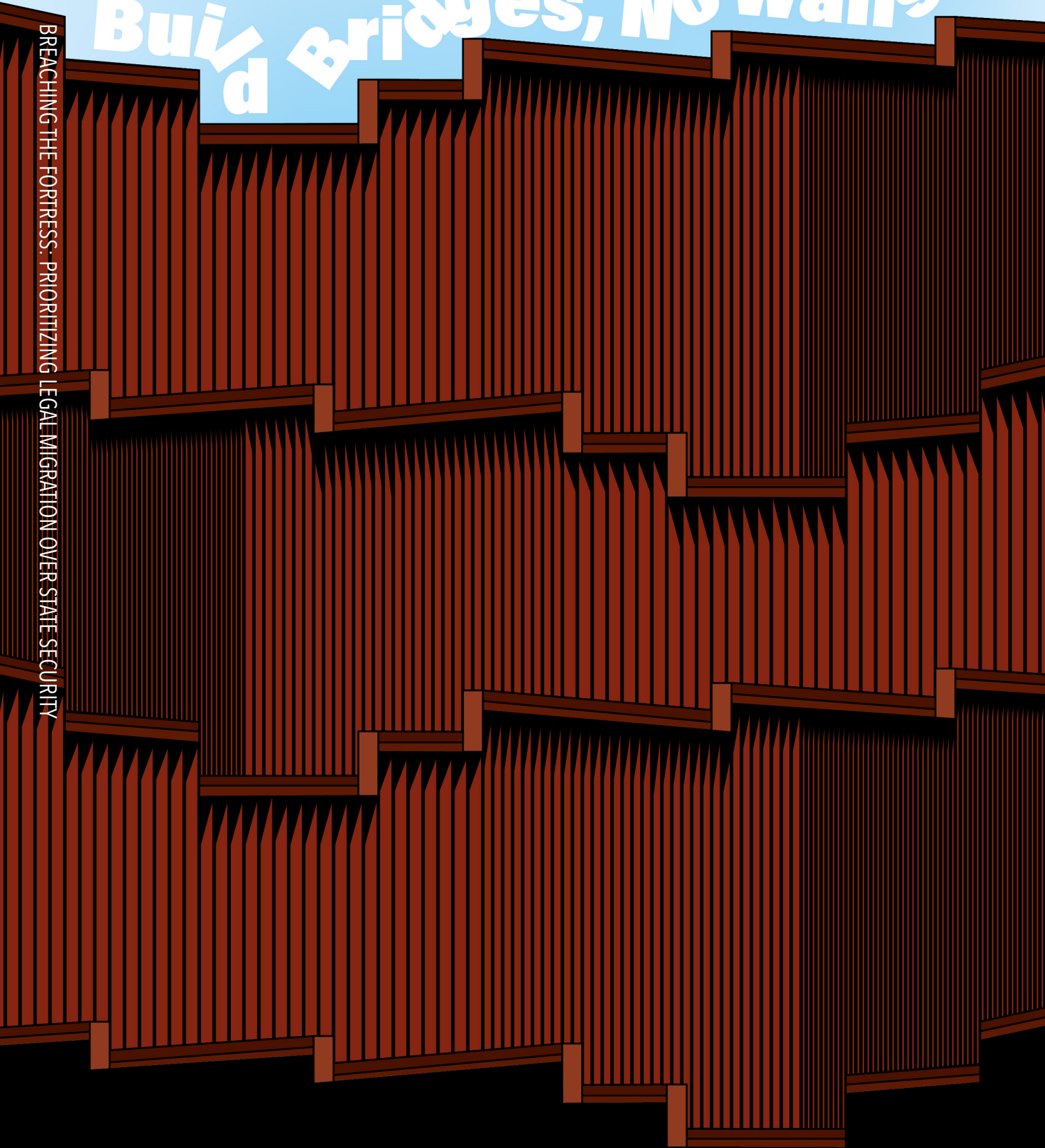
*Before joining BIMI, she completed her PhD research on how migrants overcome health problems as obstacles to labor market integration. During her PhD, she was the coordinator of the Migration Diversity Centre and a Pat Cox Fellow at the Migration Policy Group. Previously, she studied the impact of budget cuts on integration courses and migrant language attainment at the Municipality of Utrecht, the Netherlands and she is a Humanity in Action senior fellow.*



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# Build Bridges, No Walls

BREACHING THE FORTRESS: PRIORITIZING LEGAL MIGRATION OVER STATE SECURITY



# Breaching the Fortress: Prioritizing Legal Migration over State Security

By Isabel García Tamara

Humanity has always been on the move, but in today's age of globalization, migration impacts all societies. Yet there is no global agreement on managing the movement of peoples. The EU's and U.S.'s "fortress" approach has not delivered the expected results, and there is an urgent need for a new approach to migration.

## What Does the Data Show?

Every region of the globe has seen steadily increasing international migration since the end of World War II. The dawn of the 21st century saw approximately 200 million international migrants worldwide. By 2020, there were about 281 million such people, or 3.6% of the global population, on the move.

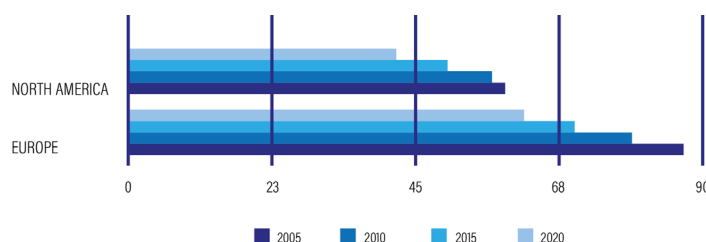
## International migrants, 1970–2020

Year	Absolute number	Percentage of the global population
1970	84,460,125	2.3
1975	90,368,010	2.2
1980	101,983,149	2.3
1985	113,206,691	2.3
1990	152,986,157	2.9
1995	161,289,976	2.8
2000	173,230,585	2.8
2005	191,446,828	2.9
2010	220,983,187	3.2
2015	247,958,644	3.4
2020	280,598,105	3.6

Source: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), 2008; UN DESA, 2021a.

Note: Figures based on data from an increasing number of geographic entities (such as states, territories and administrative regions): 232 in 2020, up from 135 in 1970).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that Europe and North America, respectively, hosted in 2020 about 87 million (16% of the global migrant population) and 59 million international migrants (12%). That represents for Europe an increase of 30 million since 2000. North America saw 18 million more in the same period.



International migrants, by major region of residence, 2005–2020 (millions)

Source: UN DESA, 2021a.

A reversal in the trend is unlikely and research suggests that climate change will cause humans to move in unprecedented numbers.

## Is Migration Good or Bad for the Economy:

### Myths versus Facts

Research also shows that immigration has a positive effect on local and national economies in addition to boosting diversity and cultural richness. New arrivals help drive business creation and fill essential workforce needs. International migrant remittances also account for the largest source of foreign income for many developing economies (\$702 billion in 2020, according to the World Bank).

**Myth:** The U.S. and the EU don't need immigration to increase its population.

**Fact:** Eurostat, the EU statistical agency, predicts that more than two-thirds of the bloc's member states will have by 2050 an old-age dependency ratio above 50%. In other words, their populations will have fewer than two persons of working age for every person aged 65 or more. The U.S. Census Bureau reports a similar trend on the other side of the Atlantic. About 83.7 million Americans will be 65 and over in 2050, almost double the 43.1 million in 2012. The U.S. Social Security Administration predicts 2.1 American workers per Social Security beneficiary in 2040, down from 3.7 in 1970.

**Myth:** Immigrants take jobs from Americans and Europeans and drive wages down.

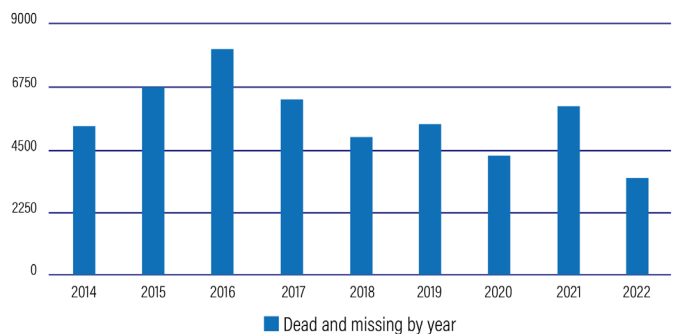
**Fact:** Contrary to the rhetoric from some politicians, there is very little evidence that migrants take jobs away from host populations. An International Monetary Fund study notes that migration is a boon even if immigrants, and their children, earn wages that are 30% lower than those of native Europeans and Americans.

### Keep Out: The Construction of the 'Fortress' approach

Policymakers continue to link immigration and security issues to terror through construction of the "fortress" approach. The origins of this approach harken back to the 1980s, but it became more institutionalized following the destruction of the World Trade Center's twin towers on September 11, 2001 and the Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004.

Since then, European and American governments have increasingly discouraged irregular migration through strict border controls, greater detention of migrants, including refugees, and agreements with "safe" third countries such as Guatemala, Libya, Mexico, and Turkey. Europe alone currently has, or will soon have, 1,125 miles (1,800 kilometers) of border walls and fences. The U.S. had 654 miles (just over 1,000 kilometers) of barriers in place even before Donald Trump became president in 2017.

Some of these security measures seem to have had an impact on the number of detected illegal border crossings on both sides of the Atlantic between 2017 and 2020. But officials have recorded during the same period a significantly higher death toll among migrants. International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Missing Migrants Project has recorded 50,608 migrant deaths globally since 2014. More than 22,000 of them lost their lives, primarily in the Central Mediterranean, trying to reach Europe. More than 6,000 died trying to cross the U.S.–Mexico border since 1998, according to the U.S. Border Patrol.



Dead and missing by year

Source: IOM UN Migration

Stronger border controls, therefore, have not deterred migrants from these attempts. It has only provoked the use of new, more expensive and more dangerous, cross-border routes. The professionalization of human smuggling is another tragic consequence. In any case, it does not address the causes of migration or the humanitarian needs of migrants, nor does it anticipate solutions to potential future crises.

### Making Migration a Successful Experience: Prioritizing Legal Migration

#### The EU Answer

A new approach to migration is urgently needed, one focused on increasing the options for safe and regular migration, protecting human rights and ensuring decent living conditions for asylum seekers. This approach must also focus on social integration and cohesion for immigrants rather than solely economic integration.

Creating legal pathways for migrants is already known to generate significant economic benefits on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>96</sup> It will have a positive impact on promoting circular migration, in order to combat “brain drain”, as well as address labor shortages. It also undermines the business model behind criminal smugglers, reducing human trafficking and labor exploitation.

Unfortunately, legal migration has barely featured in EU policy in recent years, and there are still a number of shortcomings in the EU legal migration systems that could be addressed with measures ranging from better enforcement to new legislation. The European Commission’s New Pact on Migration and Asylum, proposed in September 2020, offers a “fresh start” for legal migration. Although the pact lacks concrete proposals, it promotes efforts to end the bloc’s patchwork approach to legal migration by merging seven directives adopted between 2003 and 2016 into three new sets of measures launched last April.<sup>97</sup> These proposals respond to an overarching goal of attracting workers of different skill levels to the EU while ensuring harmonized policies that afford equal treatment to applicants. Given the current, limited legal options for migrants who are not refugees or asylum seekers, the EU could be more ambitious. But movement is, at least, in the right direction.

### **The U.S. Answer**

Over the past few years, the U.S. has been submerged in a period of highly contested politics in regard to immigration. Former President Trump, in particular, had a singular focus on restricting immigration. His administration issued more than 400 executive actions to align the American immigration system with that goal. As one might expect, the Biden administration has pursued multilateral engagement to reverse some of the Trump-era restrictions. The current president has, in particular, fulfilled several campaign promises to expand legal pathways for immigrants in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. Many commitments under the declaration deal specifically with boosting temporary worker programs.

Domestically, however, there is little room for major reform. Congress has yet to agree on any new immigration provisions, and a Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in January 2023 means an immigration bill introduced the previous January, which would give a path to citizenship to 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., is likely dead. Still, other immigration proposals, such as those contained in the National Defense Authorization Act, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, and the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act, could gain passage.

### **For the Common Good**

Migration is a global reality that is here to stay. It is an opportunity and a challenge that no country on its own can address completely. Global solutions and responsibility-sharing are required to manage migration in ways that are transparent, non-discriminatory and grounded in human rights.

Border security has thus far been the area of immigration policy in which transatlantic cooperation is most intense. But this approach is insufficient to deal with the issue. Without changes, the political, economic and societal challenges of migration will only continue to fester. The EU and the U.S. must identify and pursue, in cooperation with developing countries, common strategies to support safe and beneficial migration. A fair and orderly immigration system that welcomes immigrants and allows them to contribute more to society would provide greater security and prosperity for all.

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# REFUGEES WELC♥ME

TEAR DOWN THE WALLS: THE EU AND THE U.S. CAN – AND MUST – TOGETHER DEVELOP BETTER MIGRATION POLICIES

# Tear Down the Walls: The EU and the U.S. Can – and Must – Together Develop Better Migration Policies

By Neda Noraie-Kia

Migration and refugee issues have taken center stage in the past decade. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calculates that almost 90 million people remained forcibly displaced at the end of 2021, more than twice the number 10 years ago and a post-World War II high.<sup>98</sup> The need for global action is inevitable as climate change-related disasters threaten to accelerate this trend.

Migration by nature does not stop at borders. Many refugees are internally displaced while others seek safe havens in neighboring countries or, often, further afield as conflicts spread regionally. Today, the EU and the U.S. host increasing numbers of people who have survived long and perilous journeys to escape life-threatening situations. Heated political debate on both sides of the Atlantic about handling this growing challenge has ensued, but there has been little international cooperation or coordination.

That began to change in December 2018, when a UNHCR-led, long multi-stakeholder process concluded with an agreement on a Global Compact on Refugees. The pact provides a framework for governments and other stakeholders to sustainably and equitably share responsibility for those fleeing their homes and gives shape to a global response that benefits refugees and the communities that host them. It was a promising first step towards international cooperation.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, little action has followed.

Securing American and European borders has instead been a central component of migration and asylum policies. EU member states have debated in recent years reform of their Common European Asylum System, but they could agree only on reducing the number of irregular arrivals. The priority was avoiding a repetition of 2015, when more than 1 million refugees, most fleeing war-torn Syria, sought entry into the EU.

The U.S. under President Donald Trump was even more hostile towards refugees. According to the Migration Policy Institute, “[o]ver the course of four years, the Trump administration set an unprecedented pace for executive action on immigration, enacting 472 administrative changes that dismantled and reconstructed many elements of the U.S. immigration system. Humanitarian protections were severely diminished. The U.S.-Mexico border became more closed off.”<sup>100</sup>

These policies, whether European or American, are wrong. Although the specific challenges each side faces differ, the EU and U.S. should instead work together and learn from each other’s experiences to develop better migration policies.

The common foundation for dialogue should be the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, which legally binds signatories to protect refugees. Sadly, the treaty’s stipulations are now threatened. Its non-refoulement principle, which prohibits returning refugees to countries where they may be persecuted, is not consistently respected. Asylum seekers are regularly and collectively expelled, pushed back at sea or prevented by walls from entry into safe territory.

To end these worrying trends, EU and U.S. stakeholders should:

## 1. Create a bilateral EU-U.S. migration commission

The transatlantic community needs to live up to its values and ideals. The U.S., in particular, needs to return to its traditions of offering those seeking protection a safe haven. Xenophobia and racism cannot dominate the discourse, a scourge in the EU, too. Common values and experiences, rooted in the horrors and consequences of World War II, should form the cornerstone of policy. More generosity would be mutually beneficial, as migrants can help tackle the economic challenges facing market economies with declining workforces.

A bilateral commission on migration comprising practitioners, lawmakers and community activists would also allow for quicker decision-making. The brutal seizure of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan and Russia's war against Ukraine show the speed with which migration crises can arise and the need for rapid responses. A commission would provide the forum for national and regional governments, and civil society, to develop innovative and effective approaches that transcend politicized debates and narratives.

## 2. Tighten intergovernmental cooperation

Safe and legal pathways for those in need of protection are not only a necessity from a humanitarian perspective. They also work against smuggling networks and autocratic governments that abuse migrants or wield migration as a political weapon. To date, however, there has been far too little coordination among governments in any of these areas. As the Danish Refugee Council notes, "[e]xisting resettlement targets globally are woefully insufficient, both substantively – to address massive protection needs – and symbolically – as a reasonable demonstration of solidarity and responsibility-sharing with countries that host the majority of refugees, even when accounting for COVID-19 setbacks."<sup>101</sup>

The U.S., under President Joe Biden, has set an ambitious goal of resettling up to 125,000 refugees in 2022.<sup>102</sup> But given the war in Ukraine and the outflows from Venezuela, the EU and U.S. have an opportunity to explore ideas on improved responses to these humanitarian disasters and increase cooperation, especially within a U.N. framework. One quick measure would be increased support for UNHCR and other relevant international agencies.

## 3. Go local

In his pledge to increase the number of refugees the U.S. would accept, President Biden highlighted community and private sponsorship as important elements of a new approach to migration.<sup>103</sup> In this regard, he was drawing on the American "sanctuary cities" movement, which arose in the 1980s to counter national policies hostile to refugees. The movement brings together municipalities and civil

society actors to provide resettlement and employment opportunities, and to influence societal discourse on migration.

Cities in the EU have acted similarly to confront the bloc's failing policies. The Solidarity Cities initiative,<sup>104</sup> which comprises municipalities from Western Europe to Turkey, has four main objectives: information and knowledge exchange; advocating for greater resources for receiving and integrating refugees; city-to-city technical and financial assistance, and capacity building; and securing pledges by cities to accept asylum seekers.

Both campaigns represent powerful examples of solution-oriented approaches to migration. To further the effort, EU and U.S. communities should exchange best practices and cooperate on developing more concrete solutions. This would add critical, local perspectives to transatlantic dialogue on migration. Similar efforts, such as the Welcoming Communities Transatlantic Exchange (WCTE), have been successful, but the full potential of such exchange is far from exhausted.<sup>105</sup>

## Yes, We Can

Greater transatlantic dialogue on migration policy could not be more urgent. The Ukraine war has sent 7.6 million people, most women and children, fleeing from their homeland.<sup>106</sup> Amid this displacement, the largest in Europe since World War II, the EU has shown remarkable unity. The first-ever activation of the two-decades-old Temporary Protection Directive, which allows Ukrainians to move and work within the EU, is evidence of this achievement. Meanwhile, the U.S. offers protection to 97,000 Ukrainians through the Uniting for Ukraine program, and it has welcomed another approximately 100,000 Ukrainians through other means.<sup>107</sup>

The actions show that policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic can act in times of urgent need. The EU alone accepted more refugees in early 2022 than it did in 2015 and 2016 combined. Europe's collapse, as some right-wing EU member-state governments predicted, did not materialize.

Given the extent to which critics of international migration and cooperation are organized, it is imperative that those defending human rights step up their efforts to cooperate and learn from one another. The COVID-19 pandemic, after all, showed that international coordination is needed to tackle global challenges.

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TOOLS OF THE TRADE: THE TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP HAS THE MEANS TO FIGHT FORCED LABOR



# Tools of the Trade: The Transatlantic Partnership has the Means to Fight Forced Labor

By Kadri Paris

The EU and the U.S. have a unique relationship shaped by history and values. They are also economic powerhouses, together accounting for about one-third of global GDP and trade flows. With this strength, and their anchored democratic principles, these transatlantic partners can ensure that continued open rules-based trade becomes a greater force for good.

The benefits of open trade and globalization are shared unevenly between and within countries. The World Inequality Report 2022 estimates that the world's richest 10% earns 52% of global income, whereas the poorest half acquires 8.5%. Wealth inequalities are even more pronounced. The poorest half possesses only 2% of global wealth; the richest 10% has 76%. Better trade and economic policies could lead to a fairer outcome.

The majority of the approximately 700 million people living in extreme poverty are in developing countries. Extreme poverty is a major risk factor for falling into forced labor. (Other factors include social marginalization, discrimination, lack of quality education, being a migrant and operating in the informal economy.) Vulnerable and desperate people often have no option beyond accepting slavery-like working conditions if they are to survive, and they become trapped in desperate situations since they lack bargaining power. The International Labor Organization's (ILO) Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines forced labor as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." The two elements that must be present are involuntariness and coercion. The most common form of coercion is withholding wages, followed by threat of dismissal. More severe forms of coercion, such as forced confinement, and physical and sexual violence, exist but are less common.

Worldwide, 27.6 million people are in forced labor, and more than 3.3 million of them are children. No region, including

the EU and the U.S., is free of forced labor; it is a problem in rich and poor countries alike. Private actors account for the 86% of forced labor, and the remainder is state-imposed. The services, manufacturing, construction, agriculture and domestic-work sectors are the most likely to have forced laborers. The ILO's 2022 global estimates of modern slavery show that forced labor, in relative and absolute terms, is, after falling, again on the rise. The reversal is almost entirely due to the private sector and follows multiple, recent crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, transnational conflicts, climate emergencies and, now, higher inflation.

Eradicating forced labor by 2030 is one of the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals and coordinated transatlantic action on trade could provide the leadership to achieve it.

## Trade as a Force for Good

A human-rights based approach to trade must ensure respect for core labor standards, an issue that has increasingly become a priority on both sides of the Atlantic. All recent EU trade agreements include chapters that oblige parties to ratify fundamental ILO labor conventions, including the Forced Labor Convention (No 29) and the Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (No 105). The same holds true for EU unilateral trade preferences, which are subject to withdrawal in cases of serious and systematic violations of forced- and child-labor conventions. The U.S. has put in place an innovative enforcement mechanism in the U.S.-Canada-Mexico Agreement (USMCA) that enables action against individual factories that fail to comply with domestic freedom-of-association and collective-bargaining laws. The mechanism's success, however, depends in part on the willingness of other trading partners to adopt it.

American action actually began far earlier, even if not for the same upstanding reasons. Since 1930, Section 307 of the U.S. Tariff Act has prohibited the importation of any product that was mined, produced or manufactured, in whole or in

part, by forced labor. Humanitarian concerns were originally not the impetus for the provision. It was, rather, to protect domestic producers from having to compete against foreign products made with forced labor. Such products could still be imported if nothing comparable was made in the U.S. or if there were insufficient quantities of it.

Washington has recently made two additional moves to combat forced labor. The U.S. Trade Representative announced in January 2022 that it would develop its first-ever trade strategy targeting forced labor. That was followed four months later, after disturbing reports by international organizations and lobbying by civil society, by the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. Under this law, goods made, in whole or in part, in China's Xinjiang region are banned from entering the U.S. unless importers present clear and convincing evidence to rebut the presumption that forced labor helped produce the goods.

The EU has no ban on products made with forced labor despite trade being one of the bloc's most powerful tools and a unique lever for influencing manufacturing and trading practices. However, after years of repeated calls for action by the European Parliament, a legislative proposal for prohibiting the import and export of products made with forced labor was published in September 2022. The proposal is non-discriminatory and WTO-compatible, but key lawmakers in Brussels have criticized it since it differs in many aspects from what they want. A lengthy legislative process may consequently be ahead, and the final content of any statute remains uncertain. Still, hopefully within a few years, products made with forced labor are unlikely to be able to enter or leave the EU.

That is undoubtedly a positive development, but its real impact will depend in part on who has responsibility for proving that a good is (or is not) made with forced labor. In the U.S., the burden is on the importer, but Section 307 of the Tariff Act also allows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to retain a product when information "reasonably, but not conclusively" indicates that forced labor may have been involved in its production. In that case, the importer has three months to contest the CBP's decision

by showing the source and type of labor used. Failure to do so results in the CBP's seizure and destruction of the merchandise.

The EU proposal follows a different two-step approach. The first, before any official investigation begins, gives manufacturers or importers an opportunity to provide information regarding the absence of forced labor in their operations and supply chains. However, member-state authorities that establish a substantiated concern assume responsibility for proving their suspicion. Unlike the U.S., the EU will also not block entry of goods or force them to be withdrawn from the market if an investigation is underway. Brussels deems doing so too burdensome and costly for business. Such actions are possible only if an investigation concludes that production involved forced labor.

### **One Step Forward, One Step Back?**

The success and effectiveness of forced-labor product exclusions depends on many factors. Among them are market shares of countries participating in a ban, the extent to which a ban is enforced, the ease of circumventing a ban and the availability of alternative markets. The ability to even detect products made with forced labor is a challenge, as no physical attribute can determine this. Promoting responsible business conduct and obliging companies to perform due diligence to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for human- and labor-rights violations can also facilitate identifying forced labor in supply chains. The U.N. and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have undertaken much work in this area.

One sign of success has already appeared. A recent survey of American fashion companies revealed that the vast majority of them expect the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to impact their sourcing through a reduction in Chinese cotton apparel imports.

Strengthening international cooperation and dialogue to fight forced labor is the moral obligation of all countries. Beyond EU and U.S. initiatives, a 2021 G7 ministerial meeting issued a statement on forced labor confirming that there is no place for forced labor in the rules-based



multilateral trading system, as did EU, U.S. and Japanese trade and labor ministers following a trilateral gathering in September 2022. Encouraging signs are emerging that the World Trade Organization will also address the issue. Washington submitted a proposal during recent WTO fisheries subsidies negotiations to tackle forced labor on fishing vessels. The EU and Canada, among others, supported the proposal, but it was excluded from a final agreement.

Resistance may also eventually arise from consumers, who, despite clamoring for more responsible and ethical product sourcing and production, will see higher prices as the fight to end forced labor makes gains. The recent spike in inflation

increases the likelihood of a blowback. Governments must ensure that human rights nevertheless remain the policy objective. Consumers are not the priority. The exploited, abused, overworked, underpaid, forced laborers who suffer daily are.

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# SANCTIONS

TRANSATLANTIC SANCTIONS COOPERATION: HAS RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE LAUNCHED A NEW ERA OF EU-U.S. UNITY?

# Transatlantic Sanctions Cooperation: Has Russia's invasion of Ukraine launched a new era of EU-U.S. unity?

By Juan Schinas Alvargonzalez

In the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, one key transatlantic issue has been the EU and U.S. cooperation on sanctions. Even before the beginning of the war in Ukraine, discussions between Brussels and Washington about the scope of possible sanctions against Russia should Putin decide to invade were already underway. The emphasis on sanctions, also referred to as restrictive measures, is understandable. They are a clear manifestation of the political will to force a change in policy of a targeted country. Both sides of the Atlantic use them regularly to employ economic might and avoid resorting to military power.

Transatlantic cooperation on sanctions has a long and occasionally complex history. At times, the transatlantic partners have even been rivals in sanctions policy. The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and its decision to impose secondary sanctions on European companies still dealing with Iran, are two such examples. The EU and U.S. also had different approaches to measures imposed on Russia in the aftermath of its 2014 invasion of Crimea. The divergence was described as a "growing discrepancy" that "tested the transatlantic partners" and "weakened their common stance."<sup>108</sup>

Nonetheless, coordinated sanctions are at their best a powerful transatlantic diplomatic tool. As Ukraine's invasion illustrated, autocracies are vying for various degrees of influence around the world. The transatlantic partnership must present a united front in this great power competition and use its economic advantage to that end.

But can the current transatlantic dialogue and alignment on sanctions provide a blueprint for their future use, for certain cases in the developing world for example?

## Procedural Differences

Sanctions coordination is notoriously difficult. A former U.S. deputy coordinator for sanctions policy described it as "balancing legal structures and traditions, national

economic needs and capabilities, and complex international relationships."<sup>109</sup> Institutional differences between the EU and the U.S. explain many of the discrepancies in the scope and depth of the policies that each adopts.

EU treaties prohibit non-member states from participating in foreign policy decision-making, including those related to sanctions. More vexing, however, is the EU requirement for unanimity, which gives each member state a veto. Finding agreement among 27 countries is exceptionally hard and makes policy adoption slower than that required in an international crisis.

The EU may make its own sanctions policy, but it still coordinates its actions with international partners since such measures become more effective when others participate in them. The U.S., the United Kingdom, EU accession countries (with the notable exception of Serbia), European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, Japan, Australia, and others have joined the EU in sanctioning Russia.<sup>110,111,112</sup>

The American decision-making process is markedly different. While the executive branch has power over foreign policy and national security decisions, Congress oversees trade regulation. Sanctions policy was historically subject to joint oversight, but in 1977 Congress passed the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). This gave the president power to declare national emergencies and impose economic measures, among them sanctions and embargoes. Most sanctions since then have been adopted by executive order and implemented by the Treasury Department, though the process requires interagency cooperation. The National Security Council drafts the actual executive order and coordinates actions across government offices, including the Justice and State departments, and the Office of Foreign Assets Control.<sup>113</sup>

Compared to the EU's, the American process is swifter and more flexible. U.S. federal agencies oversee sanctions

enforcement, while in the EU member states do, leading to potentially “uneven” implementation. Additionally, the Treasury Department can quickly issue exceptions (also known as “authorizations”) on a case-by-case basis, a degree of flexibility lacking in the EU system.

Despite these differences, the transatlantic partners have shown that they can cooperate and adopt similar sanctions policies. But it is notable that no legal framework governing such cooperation exists. It “is mostly informal, tak[ing] place behind closed doors”<sup>114</sup> and on an ad hoc basis. It occurs bilaterally and within multilateral organizations, such as the U.N. or the G7. Moreover, though in many instances the EU invites other countries to join their sanctions regime, when it comes to major powers, like the U.S., the relationship is less hierarchical. The U.S. does not simply join European sanctions, they work together in order to adopt similar measures.

### **Unprecedented Sanctions Cooperation Following Russia's Invasion**

The latest EU-U.S. cooperation on sanctions against Russia reflects this policy coordination at its best. It has been called “remarkable”,<sup>115</sup> “outstanding and well-coordinated,”<sup>116</sup> “resilient and resolute,”<sup>117</sup> and a possible blueprint for similar future action. European Commission Vice President Maroš Šefčovic is among the many who have argued that “the crisis in Ukraine could signal a new era for closer EU-U.S. cooperation on energy, raw materials and strategic foresight.”<sup>118</sup> Both sides have agreed to ban Russian flights from their airspace, Russian gold imports, and exports to Russia of goods that have military applications, such as certain software and semiconductors. They have sanctioned more than 1,000 Russian individuals and businesses, including oligarchs, and government officials and their families. They have removed Russian banks from the SWIFT international financial payment and settlement system, and, to varying degrees, banned the import of Russian oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and coal. The scope and alignment of these sanctions is unparalleled, as is the speed at which they were proposed and adopted. It is also striking that they remain in force months after the invasion and have expanded with further Russian provocations, despite tensions elsewhere in the transatlantic relationship.

### **Sticking Together**

Whether the allies can replicate such quick joint action will impact their ability to address future conflicts worldwide. Three factors bolster the current cooperation, and they will remain crucial if this alignment is to continue.

#### *Interpersonal relations*

The informal nature of transatlantic cooperation makes interpersonal relations among key policymakers crucial. Multiple officials in the Biden administration, having served under former President Barack Obama, are seasoned European affairs experts. Their familiarity with Europe, coupled with the shared belief that the transatlantic tensions caused by the Trump administration needed to be relieved, meant that the EU-U.S. relationship was on good footing from the beginning. Both parties were able to quickly identify areas where cooperation can be improved. The European Commission as early as 2020 “stressed the need of an enhanced sanctions coordination to pursue shared foreign and security policy objectives.”<sup>119</sup> Washington followed up with a similar call following the 2021 EU-U.S. summit, the first to be held since 2017.

#### *A credible, transatlantic threat*

Transatlantic dialogue is spurred by a common threat, a foreign policy issue, circumstance, or actor that must be addressed. For that reason, Russian President Vladimir Putin's actions undoubtedly made coordination easier. The EU, U.S., and like-minded partners even warned Russia prior to its invasion of their response. The Kremlin's brazen undermining of Ukraine's sovereignty posed an unprecedented threat to the security of EU countries, thereby providing a strong impetus for transatlantic action and an opportunity for the EU to assume a more influential geopolitical role. The conflict incentivized quicker European action and unity, the lack of which had historically hindered transatlantic cooperation.

### *A leading role for the European Commission*

Although member states usually draft sanctions, the process was markedly different in 2022. The European Commission, spearheaded by the office of President Ursula von der Leyen, led the process this time.<sup>120</sup> Under her leadership, the Commission drafted and proposed comprehensive packages of measures, which ultimately found agreement among the member states. Multiple U.S. officials spoke directly with von der Leyen to coordinate efforts. This centralized process allowed the EU to unify and act swiftly, and gave Washington a single point of contact.

An additional key element was the fact that the invasion of Ukraine allowed the transatlantic partners to build a sanctions program from the beginning. Unlike previous cooperation (for example on sanctions against Iran or the Taliban regime), in the case of Russia there weren't any previous measures or related laws to hinder harmonization.

### **Moving Forward**

Strong cooperation, however, does not guarantee full harmony between the EU and the U.S. Various legal and political obstacles remain, such as their different Magnitsky Acts, a sanctions instrument that targets human rights violations. The U.S. legislation extends to cases of corruption, whereas the EU's does not. This means some individuals sanctioned by Washington are not by Brussels. American extraterritorial sanctions are another impediment. An EU "blocking statute" prevents European companies and economic actors from adhering to U.S. extraterritorial sanctions and, theoretically, protects the firms from American reprisals. The U.S. is the only country that implements secondary sanctions, and the EU refuses to acknowledge their legality.

Full harmony may be impossible to achieve. Differing legal instruments, competencies, and in some cases, interests may always prevent it. But as defenders of a rules-based international world order, rooted in democratic principles, that is currently under attack, the transatlantic partners must strive for greater unity. The power and influence that well-coordinated sanctions have had on developing

countries such as Burma, Haiti, Iraq, Panama and Sudan is evident. Those countries subsequently altered their policies and behavior, which led to a lifting of sanctions against them. Policymakers should build on these successes to build common sanctions regimes for the future. Three elements will be key to their ability to do this.

### *A dedicated forum*

The EU and the U.S. must go beyond talking and institutionalize their cooperation to ensure decisions are made in tandem. A specific political forum for sanctions coordination is needed. The Trade and Technology Council (TTC), established in 2021, could be such a forum, as "dealing with Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also become a major focus of TTC activity, particularly cooperation on sanctions and export controls."<sup>121</sup> But the TTC's focus is trade and forging common approaches to technology and innovation. Burdening the TTC with more policy areas will ultimately affect its effectiveness. And cooperation on sanctions should have no link to other policy discussions and differences. A new, dedicated forum would be beneficial, especially for continuing to apply pressure on Russia and for ensuring sanctions enforcement.

### *A single point of contact*

Apart from established forums for cooperation at a political level, the Ukraine experience shows us that "bureaucrat to bureaucrat" dialogue is essential. The role played by the Commission was decisive in keeping European unity and creating direct lines of communication with Washington. Continuous and established cooperation between White House officials and officials from the European Commission could provide much needed continuity and a culture of cooperation between the transatlantic partners that would be less susceptible to the political winds of the time. Similarly, making the Commission the point of contact for sanctions, as opposed to 27 capitals, would simplify dialogue.

### *Qualified Majority Voting*

A final major, if difficult, reform would be replacing the requirement for EU unanimity with qualified majority voting (QMV). One proposal in this direction is already gaining momentum. It applies the so-called “passerelle clause” to decisions on sanctions in response to human rights violations. The clause, included in EU treaties, permits changes to decision-making procedures without necessitating amendments to those treaties. The proposal, then, is a back-door path to bringing QMV to sanctions policy. Though invoking the clause requires unanimity, it does not need subsequent approval by 27 national parliaments as other measures do. The European Council’s General Affairs Council discussed the proposal at its September

2022 meeting, and only eight countries reportedly voiced concerns.<sup>122</sup> The U.S. should publicly champion this reform to accelerate the EU’s ability to act in times of crisis.

The specific context within which this cooperation occurred may be unique, but if the EU and U.S. build upon the necessary mechanisms, their joint action can ensure that no other authoritarian regime feels so emboldened as to challenge the current security order in Europe.

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COAXING THE PARIKH: TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION ON IRAN





# Coaxing the Pariah: Transatlantic Cooperation on Iran

By Alex Vatanka

The Islamic Republic of Iran is at a crossroads. A positive outcome of the negotiations on its nuclear capabilities could be a catalyst for reform that ends its status as a pariah state. Whether this will happen, however, is a political choice for Iran's leaders to make.

As Europe and the U.S. await that decision and weigh options for influencing Tehran's calculations, they should identify areas in which they can jointly incentivize Tehran with win-win propositions. The transatlantic partners share an interest in starting a dialogue with Iran on two policy priorities, Europe's energy security and combatting climate change. The key will be giving Iran a reason for dialogue on those issues to be in its interest, too.

## Mutual Benefits

Iran, a country of 85 million people and three times the size of France, has an economy that has been ravaged. The World Bank calculates that Iran's GDP decreased from \$600 billion in 2012 to just \$204 billion in 2020. This massive economic contraction overlapped with the imposition of U.S.-led sanctions in response to Iran's controversial nuclear program. Rates of unemployment, inflation and emigration, and capital flight, jumped and continue to rise. Iranian households are transferring funds to more politically stable destinations such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other nearby countries.

The effect of the sanctions on Iranian industry is also evident. Official figures show that Iran's vital oil and gas sectors require \$160 billion in investment just to maintain production.<sup>123</sup> Without the investment, Iran, which holds some of the world's largest oil and gas reserves, could soon become a net importer of energy.<sup>124</sup>

At the same time, Europe faces an energy crisis that may well worsen after a December 2022 ban on Russian oil and gas takes effect. Iran is aware of Europe's energy security anxiety, but it overestimates how badly, and quickly, Europe

will allow its energy needs to dominate bilateral relations. For now, Europe will stay close to the American stance. An understanding between Washington and Tehran, therefore, could open European markets to Iranian oil and gas. This offers Iran great economic and geopolitical potential. It could end Iran's dependence on China, currently the largest consumer of Iranian oil. It could also provide a bulwark against Russian competition. The Kremlin has already turned to China as a customer for the energy that Europe no longer wants.

An Iran that is no longer in conflict with the West could also eye long-term projects for bringing natural gas to European markets. And Europe could provide Iran with funding and technology, such as that related to LNG, that is arguably unavailable from any other source.

Iran is today the world's third-largest natural gas producer (after the U.S. and Russia) and the world's fourth-largest natural gas consumer (after the U.S., Russia and China). In 2020, Iran produced 250 billion cubic meters of gas, 6% of global gas production. Of that, 233 billion cubic meters, or about 93%, was consumed domestically. More oil and gas production would bolster the Iranian economy while Europe boosts its security through a more diversified energy supply.

The West also offers Iran incentives for confronting the impacts of climate change. The country, like all Gulf states, is, on a per capita basis, a major contributor to global carbon emissions. Cooperation with Europe and the U.S. would create a win-win situation concerning a chronic global threat. Iran itself faces increasing drought and water shortages, and air pollution. Unlike other countries, however, Iran struggles with these challenges while under American-led sanctions. It uses obsolete desalination technology to compensate for ground-water losses, which causes more carbon emissions as oil is needed for the desalination plants. The outdated technology also means returning extracted salt to the Persian Gulf, adversely affecting marine life.

Iran's great potential in renewable energies, such as wind and solar, provides another incentive for cooperation with the West. European and American companies have the means to invest in this sector, another source of prosperity that remains out of reach as long as Tehran continues on its current political path.

Success, however, will come only if Iran is part of the conversation on combating climate change. Europe and the U.S. could coordinate policy to kick-start the process if all parties could recognize the benefits of overcoming the current state of competitive geopolitics.

### **Go, but Tread Carefully**

The EU and the U.S. have the potential and interest to assist Iran with tackling the impacts of climate change. By doing so, EU countries can also mitigate security concerns. After all, environmental changes are leading to a rise in food insecurity and economic dislocation for vulnerable populations, which can result in increased migration. Outbreak of regional conflict is also possible.

EU studies recommend a cautious approach to Iran.<sup>125</sup> Since much of the country's environmental degradation is man-made, or the result of political decisions, the EU must focus on offers of environmental cooperation without giving the impression of attempting political interference. Such "environmental diplomacy," if executed well, can help build bridges to the Islamic Republic. Brussels has an advantage here. It has already committed itself to putting environmental diplomacy, especially the fight against climate change, at the heart of its foreign policy.

For all these reasons, the Europeans are seeking ways to engage Tehran in dialogue centered on a "multidimensional and multilevel" approach, as one policy paper describes it.<sup>126</sup> For this process to succeed, the EU must accept that a diktat to Iran to fulfill its carbon emission cutbacks as part of the Paris Climate Agreement will backfire. Other incentives are needed.

European environmental experts in relevant fields, from water conservation to tackling sandstorms to managing

air pollution, should be at the forefront of EU outreach to Iran. The Europeans must also be willing to invest time, energy and funds to collect Iranian environmental data despite current sanctions. This will require close cooperation with Washington so that waivers may be issued. But once collaboration in one area is established, further partnerships may arise. Environmental interests can easily be seen in non-zero-sum terms.

The Iranians, for their part, must accept that data collection is critical for formulating policies to tackle environmental degradation. Powerful interest groups in Tehran, chiefly the Revolutionary Guard, must be prohibited from blocking cooperation due to spurious national security concerns. To be sure, data collection, such as landscape or satellite analysis, will be a sensitive issue for the Iranians. But if cooperation can be secured, other international actors, including U.N. agencies, could join in. Efforts could also involve other Persian Gulf states that deal with the same or similar environmental challenges.

The Europeans are likely to prioritize assistance with water shortages. Other pressing environmental issues, such as dust storms or the impact of desalination on the Persian Gulf, however, are equally ripe for international cooperation.

The U.S. can engage in this effort through its special presidential envoy for climate, John Kerry. He can provide diplomatic muscle for efforts to spur the international community to engage with Iran on environmental matters. During his attendance at the April 2021 UAE Regional Dialogue for Climate Action, Kerry met with representatives of the host country, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Sudan.<sup>127,128</sup> Iran's absence was glaring and should not be repeated. Holistic approaches are needed to confront collective environmental challenges.

As the transatlantic partners probe for ways to work with Iran in a mutually advantageous manner, environmental cooperation and combating climate change offer opportunities for all. That's of significant benefit to the EU and the U.S. They need to become involved.

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