



## CONCEPT

2024 is a year of political transition for Europe and the United States (US). The European Parliament and US Presidential elections have the potential to shake-up the transatlantic relationship, all at a time when the EU and NATO continue to support Ukraine against Russia's full-scale invasion. The European Parliament elections are of critical importance for the EU, as any new legislature has a vital say in how the Union's budget and financial resources are used. What is more, the selection of a new European Commission will define how the EU approaches the war on Ukraine, US-China rivalry and regional conflicts in the coming years. In the United States, the presidential elections are being framed in terms of America's vital security interests. Some candidates insist on the continued importance of maintaining support for Ukraine and bolstering the NATO alliance, whereas others emphasise the need for a laser focus on China and a rebalancing of US alliances. In short, the next few months can be seen as a pivotal moment in the direction, solidity and unity of the transatlantic relationship.

Seeking to better understand the dynamics at play in the political transition in Europe and the United States, the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS) will dedicate its third "Defence & Statecraft Forum" to bringing together leading experts from across the Euro-Atlantic region for an online discussion. Two panels will each focus on the political transition in Europe and the United States and speakers will address the following questions:

- 1) In what ways will the political transition in Europe and the United States effect the direction and nature of transatlantic relations?
- 2) Can we expect a degree of continuity during this year's transatlantic political transition? If so, what are the benefits and costs of a "business as usual" approach?
- 3) How could the political transitions in the United States and Europe affect the nature of defence policy and economic security across the transatlantic space?
- 4) What more should Europe and the United States do to ensure they are prepared for a potential upheaval during and after the political transition?

## PROGRAMME

### Online event

15:00 – 15:10

#### WELCOME REMARKS

##### **Luis Simón**

Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy - VUB

15:10 – 15:20

#### KEYNOTE SPEECH

##### **Roberta Metsola**

President, European Parliament

15:20 – 16:20

#### PANEL I – POLITICAL TRANSITION IN EUROPE

With the European Parliament elections on the horizon, how will the political transition in Europe likely shape-up? What will be the key themes of the elections from the perspective of security and defence? How could the elections effect Europe's current approach to Ukraine and how might this affect the approach to the war by key EU institutions such as the European Council and European Commission? How could the political transition in Europe affect the EU-NATO partnership?

Moderator

##### **Lotje Boswinkel**

Researcher, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy - VUB

Speakers

##### **Sophia Besch**

Fellow, Europe Programme, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

##### **Anand Menon**

Director, UK in a Changing Europe and Professor, King's College London

##### **Nicolai von Ondarza**

Head of Research Division, EU and Europe, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

##### **Georgina Wright**

Senior Fellow and Deputy Director for International Studies, Institut Montaigne

16:20 – 16:30

#### BREAK

16:30 – 17:30

#### PANEL II – POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE UNITED STATES

With the United States' presidential election on the horizon, what can US allies expect for the overall direction of US strategy over the coming decade? How would the US approach to its European allies differ under a Democrat or Republican president? Should we expect a radical shift in the US' geopolitical posture in the coming years? To what degree is the burden-sharing debate vis-à-vis Europe likely to become a major campaign issue for the presidential candidates?

Moderator

##### **Daniel Fiott**

Professor, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy - VUB

Speakers

##### **Emma Ashford**

Senior Fellow, Reimagining US Grand Strategy Program, The Stimson Center

##### **Max Bergmann**

Director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center, CSIS

##### **Giselle Donnelly**

Senior Fellow, Defense and National Security, American Enterprise Institute

##### **Daniela Schwarzer**

Executive Board Member, Bertelsmann Stiftung

##### **Alex Velez-Green**

Senior Policy Advisor, Allison Center for National Security, Heritage Foundation

17:30

#### END