

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Athens  
and the Institute of International Relations (I.I.R.) of Panteion University  
invite you to the

[Online Debate](#)

**CHOOSING SIDES? A NEW REALITY FOR THE EU**

**Tuesday, 7 July 2020, 18.00 – 20.00 EEST (Greek time)**

The pandemic requires not only bold decisions from the EU on the cohesion front and supporting the Union's shrinking economies, it also faces the challenges of a new international setup – a different global reality – to be dealt with.

US-President Trump is since long rejecting multilateralism, turning his country away from NATO, the WHO, the Iran Nuclear Deal, the Paris Agreement on Climate, and other major agreements. A commercial war with China was already underway before the outbreak, with devastating consequences for the global economy and the international system. In May he declared all economic relations with China should be put on hold, a dangerous and at the same time practically impossible escalation.

The Chinese leadership tries to improve its image in the midst of the pandemic showing the world its human face by supporting hard-hit societies, while it stands internationally accused of contributing to the spread of the virus by covering up the extent of the danger in the beginning of the outbreak. In the US, mass lawsuits against China are already being filed and will seek huge settlements, while pro-Trump senators are asking for extended sanctions to be imposed on China if Beijing fails to make a full apology. By targeting China, President Trump seems to have found an external scapegoat suitable for the electoral context.

The political handling of the pandemic threat accelerates the radical restructuring of the post-war international system, along with the destabilization of its institutions. In this antagonistic environment, where the fundamental set of rules for governing international relations is losing its relevance, the EU is faced with mounting challenges. To protect its achievements and its way of life, Europe must build new global alliances to deal with the new reality:

- Relations between EU and the USA are at an all-time low
- President Trump is trying to decouple the US from China at all levels
- Multilateralism is further collapsing
- Europe still is divided and its democracy under threat by authoritarian leaders in several member states
- European Defence and CSDP are facing existing and additional challenges and obstacles
- Russia and the US are walking away from major arms control treaties

These are some components of an environment implying a new reality for the EU. The objective of this online debate is to examine the options, chances, and opportunities for the EU in this new environment. How to respond to these challenges while at the same time safeguarding democracy and multilateralism? Are Washington and Beijing fighting a new Cold War? Will the US and China ask the EU to choose sides? What role can the EU play in amplifying diplomatic efforts to broker agreements? Can the EU strengthen international organizations as a counterbalance to the hegemony of China and the US? Which is Russia's role in the new East-West confrontation?

## **PROGRAM:**

**Moderator:** **Giorgos Skafidas**, Journalist, *Ethnos* Newspaper

**Speakers:**

- 18:00-18:10 **Ulrich Storck**, Director, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Athens  
*Introduction*  
**Harry Papasotiriou**, President of the Governing Board, I.I.R.  
*Introduction*
- 18:10-18:20 **Torrey Taussig**, Research Director, Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship, Harvard Kennedy School; Nonresident Fellow at the Brookings Institution, USA  
*The future of the Transatlantic relationship: friends or foes?*
- 18:20-18:30 **Anna Katharina Stahl**, Policy Fellow for Foreign and Security Policy, Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin  
*China and Europe's geostrategic identity*
- 18:30-18:40 **Constantinos Filis**, Executive Director, I.I.R., Athens  
*Russia in a transforming world*
- 18:40-18:50 **Vassilis Ntousas**, Academy Fellow, Chatham House, London  
*The quest for autonomous EU action in a (geo)political Bermuda triangle*
- 18:50-19:00 **Marilena Koppa**, Associate Professor, Panteion University, Athens  
*New Opportunities for Europe's Security and Defense Policy*
- 19:00-20:00 **Discussion** - active participation of the audience

*There will be simultaneous English-Greek translation.*