



COVID-19 and No One's World: What Impact for the European Union?

Ralf Roloff¹

George C. Marshall European Center for International Security Studies,
<https://www.marshallcenter.org>

Universität der Bundeswehr München, <https://www.unibw.de/home-en>

Abstract: This article analyzes the EU's response to COVID-19 against the backdrop of a changing international environment, which is characterized by globalization and a global shift of power. It raises the question of the implications of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic changes in the international system for the EU's internal and external development. The article argues that the EU can seize the opportunity and gain more influence on the global level if it uses its strength as a manager of interdependencies by rulemaking and rule shaping as well as exercising its influence as a central node in transnational networks. Internal cohesion, the support of human rights and democracy, and a strong role in global governance are prerequisites for this particular normative and transformative power of the EU.

Keywords: COVID-19, EU solidarity, globalization, climate policy, trade policy, development policy European Defence Union, EU-US strategic dialogue

...to simply say what we learn from the plagues, that there are more things in men to admire than things to despise.

– Albert Camus, *The Plague*

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Introduction

A lot is at stake for the European Union. Germany takes over the EU Presidency from Croatia on July 1st, 2020. How Germany manages the EU Presidency will be of utmost importance for the future of the European Union.² The challenge for the German EU Presidency is versatile as COVID-19 puts the European Union under pressure from an internal and external perspective. It affects the internal performance of the EU to solve the economic, social, political, and public health ramifications of COVID-19 as well as the EU's ability to act globally and contribute significantly to global crisis management of the pandemic. The German EU presidency will have to strengthen 1) the internal cohesion of the EU, 2) civil and human rights and democracy within and around the EU, and 3) the global role of the EU.³ Each of these tasks would represent a tough program for a six month EU presidency, and altogether they are a herculean task.

This article will analyze the EU's response to COVID-19 against the backdrop of a dramatically changing international environment, which is characterized by globalization and a global shift of power. It raises the question of the implications of the current COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic changes in the international system for the EU's internal and external development. The article argues that the EU can seize the opportunity and gain more influence on the global level if it uses its strength as a manager of interdependencies by rulemaking and rule shaping⁴ as well as exercising its influence as a central node in transnational networks. Internal cohesion, the support of human rights and democracy, and a strong role in global governance are prerequisites for this particular normative and transformative power of the EU.

COVID-19 and No One's World

The international system is in a period of transition from a western dominated liberal world order to a new bi-, multi- or even poly-centric world.⁵ The power transition is a period of uncertainty, instability, and conflict. Within the last three decades, the international system has been transformed into a highly intercon-

² Sebastian Groth, "Drei Fragen an ... Sebastian Groth," *Internationale Politik* 3 (May/June 2020), p. 6, https://internationalepolitik.de/system/files/article_pdfs/IP_03-2020_Drei-Fragen.pdf.

³ Daniela Schwarzer, "Die Bewährungsprobe," *Internationale Politik* 3 (May/June 2020): 26-29.

⁴ Nathalie Tocci, "On European Power," *IAI Papers* 19 (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, December 2019), <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip1925.pdf>.

⁵ Richard Haass, "How a World Order Ends: And What Comes in Its Wake," *Foreign Affairs* (January/ February 2019), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-12-11/how-world-order-ends>; G. John Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal World Order?" *International Affairs* 1 (2018): 7-23; European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), *Global Trends 2030 – Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, 2012), https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/espas_files/about/espas_report_ii_01_en.pdf.

nected, interdependent, and complex network of international and transnational relationships driven by the digital revolution that requires the ability to manage and shape interdependencies.⁶

Throughout the last at least four years, we have seen in international relations a dramatic shift from the postmodern paradigm of globalization and interdependencies and a focus on human security, democracy, and the rule of law and human development towards a realist paradigm.⁷ Foreign and security policies and strategies have been developed that can be described as “stone age realism” (Stephen Walt) with the return of the nation-state as a predominant actor, the devaluation of globalization and the resurrection of mercantilism, an increase in nationalistic populism and authoritarian politics, thinking in terms of national security as well as great power competition and a global shift of power. Integration, cooperation, and global governance as a prevailing pattern of international and regional politics had been under strain long before the Chinese government announced the existence of a new Coronavirus on December 31, 2019.⁸

The global COVID-19 pandemic led to the most serious global crisis since the great depression and the second world war. It has already shown that the dramatic lack of international cooperation and leadership by the United States, China, and Russia has proven that the Great Power Paradigm and all related politics are not helpful and even dangerous for solving a pressing vital global crisis. Great power competition was faced with the challenges of globalization – and it dramatically failed. The absence of global leadership by the United States, China, and Russia during the COVID-19 crisis can be portrayed as a kind of “G-Zero Moment.”⁹ G-Zero is a power vacuum in international politics because no country, and no group of countries, has the leverage—neither political nor economic—to promote and drive an international agenda or to provide global public goods. Charles Kupchan prescribed such a scenario as “no one’s world.”¹⁰

The United Nations Security Council is blocked by the Great Powers' incompetence to agree on a resolution for a global call for a ceasefire in wars and conflicts. The US struggle with the WHO is anything but helpful in orchestrating international crisis management. China's disinformation policy at the very beginning of the crisis was a clear sign of the lack of international responsibility and

⁶ Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 1993).

⁷ Carlo Masala, *Weltunordnung. Die globalen Krisen und das Versagen des Westens* (München: C. H. Beck, 2016); ESPAS, *Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World*.

⁸ Peter van Ham, *European Integration and the Postmodern Condition: Governance, Democracy, Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

⁹ Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World* (London: Penguin, 2012).

¹⁰ Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

leadership. Not to mention Russia's continuing efforts in disinformation campaigns in Europe to undermine the credibility of western governments.

The ongoing Great Power competition thus has the potential to overshadow too many pressing global problems from pandemics and public health, climate change, food security, cybersecurity, and global inequality that require a cooperative international response.¹¹

Despite this grim picture of a “no one's world,” we are not living in an era without global governance! Managing complex interdependencies in a cooperative manner through international institutions, regional and inter-regional integration, formal and informal policy networks is taking place and it provides innovative forms of global governance. “Social power” defined as “the ability to set standards, create norms and values that are deemed legitimate and desirable, without resorting to coercion or payment” is relevant.¹² Societies and states with shared values are continuing to gravitate towards each other.¹³

From an interdependence perspective, the world is very much organized as a transnational network with nodes or hubs instead of power poles as building blocks. The number and quality of bi- and multilateral relationships will determine the influence of states and political actors. We have entered a “multi-nodal” world with three major nodes in the network: the US, China, and the EU.¹⁴ Globalization has changed the meaning of power. In addition to the classical material capabilities such as gross domestic product (GDP) and defense expenditure, a key factor is how well an international actor is positioned to influence others through economic trade, military transfers, and membership in regional and global institutions. The so-called Foreign Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Index presents a much more differentiated and nuanced picture of the distribution of global influence: “Globally, influence is concentrated in the hands of the few, with only ten countries in possession of about half of the world's influence. Today the United States possesses 11 percent of global influence. Germany and France follow with about 9 percent and 7 percent respectively. China is ranked fourth and exerts about 6 percent of global influence. Broadly speaking, members of the European Union perform well in the FBIC Index due to their high levels of continental interdependence. Such states account for five of the seven re-

¹¹ Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker and Anders Wijkman, *Come on!: Capitalism, Short-termism, Population and the Destruction of the Planet – A Report to the Club of Rome* (New York, 2019); International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS), *The World Climate and Security Report 2020* (Brussels, February 2020), https://climateandsecurity.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/world-climate-security-report-2020_2_13.pdf.

¹² Peter van Ham, *Social Power in International Politics*, The New International Relations series, 1st Edition (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹³ Florence Gaub, *Global Trends to 2030: Challenges and Choices for Europe* (Brussels: European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, April 2019), www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/ESPAS_Report.pdf.

¹⁴ Jonathan D. Moyer, Tim Sweijts, Mathew J. Burrows, and Hugo van Manen, *Power and Influence in a Globalized World* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, January 2018).

maining top ten countries: Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, and Belgium. Russia rounds out the list and is ranked eighth with 4 percent of world influence.”¹⁵

Given that six member states of the European Union are among the top ten of the “global influencers” accounting for about 30% of the global influence according to the FBIC Index the European Union has the potential to play a much more prominent global role by using its normative and transformative power and setting norms and rules in the globalized world.

How has the European Union navigated through the multiple global crisis of COVID-19 under the conditions of a complex, contested, interconnected, and globalized world?

The European Union's Response to COVID-19

The political system of the European Union as a multilayer decision-making system with its ability to act supra-nationally, internationally, multilaterally, and transnationally¹⁶ is well suited to manage a transnational, global health crisis that transformed into an existential societal, economic and security crisis. Leadership and solidarity are essential to navigate the European Union successfully through this existential crisis. This hackneyed call for leadership and solidarity has never been more important to save the European project from falling apart and Europe from falling back into the dark times of nationalism. Leadership and solidarity are more important than in any of the many crises since the foundation of the European Union.¹⁷

At the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis in Europe, the EU was not very much present.¹⁸ Of course, this has raised much criticism. Indeed the EU was not prominently present at the beginning of COVID-19 as public health is neither within the EU's exclusive nor shared competences. Public health is a national competence and the EU has only supporting competences according to the Lisbon Treaty: “The Union can carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement Member States actions in the protection and improvement of human health.” Member states initially acted unilaterally according to their respective national contingency regulations. It is telling enough that the underlying assumption of

¹⁵ Jonathan D. Moyer *et al.*, *Power and Influence in a Globalized World*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Ralf Roloff, “Die Außenbeziehungen der Europäischen Union zwischen Globalisierung und Regionalisierung,” *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 11, no. 3 (2001): 1045-1072.

¹⁷ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Heinemann, 2005); Ian Kershaw, *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914-1949 (The Penguin History of Europe)* (London: Penguin Books, 2016); Ian Kershaw, *Roller-Coaster: Europe, 1950-2017* (London: Penguin, 2017).

¹⁸ Florence Gaub and Lotje Boswinkel, “Who's First Wins? International Crisis Response to COVID-19,” *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) Brief 11*, May 20, 2020, www.iss.europa.eu/content/who%E2%80%99s-first-wins-international-crisis-response-covid-19.

most critics has been that the EU, of course, should have a prominent role in public health!

When most borders were closed within the Schengen area as a result of unilateral actions and without further coordination, the EU Commission intervened for the first time reminding the EU member states of their obligations. The negative implication of the uncoordinated closedown of borders between member states was the disruption of supply chains within the EU. This was, of course, an unintended second-order effect of the unilateral actions which caused the EU commission to interfere in protecting the single market.

As a first look on the EU's crisis management seemed to be uncoordinated and showing the irrelevance of the EU, a second look shows that the EU took over much more responsibility and action for crisis management in immediate support for those people and member states most effected by COVID-19, in particular Italy, Spain and France. The active signs of solidarity by the European people, citizens, regions, by the EU member states and by the EU to those most in need in the hardest-hit countries were very impressive: providing help by sending medical material, medical personnel, offering places for most affected patients in hospitals and intensive care, protecting health workers and citizens, and rescuing EU citizens from all over the world in the largest rescue operation ever, more than 60 000 stranded EU citizens have been brought home.¹⁹ "Don't talk it down," warned Stefan Cornelius, one of the leading German columnists already in early April 2020. His warning was directed towards active solidarity and the collective EU response.

COVID-19 represents a stress test for the EU Member states' solidarity, for EU's society(ies) solidarity, for EU's economy with the lockdown of all economies, for EU's institutional resilience and thus for the European project. The COVID-19 response of the European Union after the initial period of national responses and contingency packages was very impressive. The EU's collective response counts for €3 trillion. The EU Coronavirus response²⁰ consists of health measures, border and mobility measures, economic measures, promoting research, including for a vaccine, and fighting disinformation, as the pandemic was accompanied from the very beginning by an 'infodemic.'²¹

The integrated political crisis response (IPCR) mechanism has been launched very early so that coordination, consultation, and information exchange between the EU and its member states could be organized according to well-established procedures. On 13 March 2020, the EU Coronavirus Coordinated Economic Response was presented by the EU Commission with a comprehensive catalog of economic and fiscal instruments and programs. On 9 April 2020, the European Council launched the comprehensive economic policy response, which

¹⁹ EU Commission, "Coronavirus: European Solidarity in Action," https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/coronavirus-european-solidarity-action_en.

²⁰ EU Commission, "Coronavirus Response," <http://www.ec.europa.eu>.

²¹ EU Commission, "EU versus Disinformation," <http://www.EUVsDisinfo.eu>.

could heavily rely on the mechanisms that had been established following the Euro crisis. All EU institutions supported quickly and in full awareness of the urgency and the responsibility of the EU this huge package: the European Parliament, the EU Commission, the EU Council, the European Central Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the Euro Group. The EU and its member states agreed on packages and measures which were unthinkable before COVID-19 because of internal differences among member states' economic philosophies. The speed and the amount of the comprehensive economic policy response were indeed breathtaking. Even the discussion on the so-called Corona Bonds, which were heavily disputed between France, Spain, and Italy on the one side and Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria on the other side could not bring the collective EU response to a halt. In late May 2020, Germany and France presented a compromise by proposing a one-off €500 billion rescue fund to help the EU's economy recover from the impact of COVID-19. The funds would be given as grants to the hardest-hit sectors and regions in the EU. The 27 member countries of the EU would also borrow together on financial markets to raise the funds. The proposed €500 billion in grants would be in addition to the 2021-2027 EU budget that is close to €1 trillion for this period. The German-French proposal can pave the way for a larger deal within the EU. The proposal by Merkel and Macron can end the dispute on the Corona bonds. The EU Commission made the European multi-year fiscal framework 2021-2027 the "mothership of Europe's recovery." Within the current EU budget, any funds that were not used have been made available for responding to COVID-19.

As a consequence of the uncoordinated unilateral actions at the beginning of the crisis, on 15 April 2020 the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, presented a "Roadmap for Recovery" and, much more importantly, a joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures.

The comprehensive economic response consists of EU budget flexibility, flexibility in EU rules, monetary policy orchestrated by the European Central Bank, emergency support, a Pan-European guarantee fund, lead by the European Investment Bank Group, the European Security Mechanism safety nets, SURE, which is a European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency proposed by the EU Commission that will allow for financial assistance up to €100 billion in the form of loans from the EU to affected member states. A recovery fund, the upcoming multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 and the roadmap for recovery are rounding out this kind of "Marshall Plan" for European recovery from COVID-19.

The EU Commission organized a global pledging marathon in May 2020 with global partners for research on a COVID-19 vaccine. The project collected € 7.4 billion from donors worldwide, including a pledge of €1.4 billion from the EU Commission. In early June 2020, the EU Commission pledged €300 million to the Vaccine Alliance GAVI for the period 2021-2025. The funding will help immunize 300 million children around the world and finance vaccine stockpiles to shield

against outbreaks of infectious diseases. France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands have forged an alliance to speed up the production of a COVID-19 vaccine in Europe in close coordination with various pharmaceutical companies. The aim of the “Inclusive Vaccine Alliance” is to allow for vaccine production on European soil wherever possible and making the vaccine available globally.²²

Critical Issues of EU’s COVID-19 Response

There are critical issues related to the EU’s COVID-19 response as well. Each of them has the potential to spoil the EU’s joint efforts in crisis management.

The most critical aspect of COVID-19 crisis responses by the member states is the authoritarian temptation to restrict civil rights. The Hungarian parliament actually offered to Victor Orban on a silver plate timely unlimited ruling based on a state of emergency which allows the illiberal democracy in Hungary to undermine further civil rights, the freedom of press, speech, and opinion as well as the activities of NGOs and the restrictions to transgender people. Poland is the other EU member country faced with a serious authoritarian temptation. The ruling PIS party tried to seize the COVID-19 crisis to push its agenda. The efforts of pushing the presidential elections through during the countries’ lockdown were a telling example as well as the efforts to rewrite the abortion law to practically make abortion legally impossible in Poland. Radosław Sikorski, former Polish Foreign and Defence minister and now member of the European Parliament, recently warned that Poland could be turned into a catholic Franco type dictatorship. This might be too far of a stretch, but it indicates the seriousness of undermining the rule of law by the PIS government.

Migration and EU solidarity are still one of the most annoying aspects of EU policy, which has not been solved. As the situation of refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos deteriorates literally every day, the lack of solidarity is still striking. Rescuing the refugees from the terrible situation in the refugee camps and thus protect them from being infected with the Coronavirus is not only a fundamental humanitarian act but as well an act of European solidarity. The member states of the European Union, and in particular the central European member states, are still rejecting any compromise on the migration question.

It needs to be seen whether the EU has learned the lessons from the Euro crisis and is able to practice solidarity with the most affected countries and support them fully in their economic recovery. This proof of solidarity with the most affected member states is key for a full recovery of the European Union as well. In particular, Spain and Italy are suffering from COVID-19. The difference between the COVID-19 and the Euro crisis is that COVID-19 is a symmetrical crisis that affects all member countries and that the impact of COVID-19 is not based on bad governance, which is a big difference to the Euro crisis. Italy and Spain do

²² “Dutch, French, Germans and Italians Form Virus Vaccine Alliance,” *MedicalXpress*, June 3, 2020, <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-dutch-french-germans-italians-virus.html>.

suffer not only terribly from COVID-19 but from nationalist-populist movements that cannot wait to see the current governments tumbling. They are nurturing the anti-European sentiments in their countries, which puts the EU and its member states in the situation to regain and re-establish the trust that has been lost during the Euro crisis, the migration crisis, and now during the COVID-19 crisis.²³

Rethinking globalization and the EU's global role in the international political economy is another critical issue for the European Union. The vision of a more green and more digital Europe depends very much on the shape of globalization in the coming years. The European Union has established a well casted and functioning net of inter-regional and bilateral comprehensive trade agreements and it commands over a well functioning network of inter-regional relations with almost all important economies and regions of the world.²⁴ During the tenure of the Juncker Commission, 2014-2019, which was globally characterized by a period of trade wars and protectionism, the EU concluded trade agreements with Canada, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, and the MERCOSUR countries Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

The lack of support for key international organizations such as the World Trade Organizations by key players undermines the EU's potential to reshape globalization, but it does not stop it. The EU has succeeded, for example, to make the General Data Protection Regulation the dominant global standard even under the highly contested and conflictual cyber domain with the US and China as dominating actors. The EU might have a hard time setting the standard for its vision of a carbon-neutral continent by 2050. The EU's ambitions are dependent not so much on its energy dependence from Russia but on the internal discussions with carbon producing countries like Poland that certainly will slow down the EU's ambitions. The EU's green deal will depend much more on its ability to keep the Paris Agreement alive and in the best of all worlds to manage to bring the United States back in. Otherwise, the EU will have a tough time keeping an alliance of medium-sized powers together or built a lasting ad hoc coalition of the willing together – that means keeping China and Russia committed to the Paris Agreement.

²³ Aureliana Sorrento (2020), "Der Dritte Dämpfer," *Internationale Politik* 3 (May/June 2020): 30-33.

²⁴ Heiner Hänggi, Ralf Roloff, and Jürgen Rüländ, eds., *Interregionalism and International Relations: A Stepping Stone to Global Governance?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); EU Commission, *2019 Report on Implementation of EU Free Trade Agreements: 1 January 2018 – 31 December 2018* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2019), https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2019/october/tradoc_158387.pdf.

COVID-19 and the EU's Global Role

In the context of the global leadership vacuum and the shortcomings that we have seen in the fight against COVID-19, three main issues will matter for the EU that already mattered in the pre-COVID-19 world:²⁵

- The defense of democracy in the EU, as well as beyond the EU. The contest of political systems will continue. The EU needs to change its policy of resilience regarding third countries and, in particular, regarding neighboring countries. The EU needs to come back towards a policy of supporting democracy and the rule of law. The pragmatic approach to resilience has failed. Therefore, the return of positive conditionality as a vital instrument of the EU needs to be re-considered.

- Closer cooperation on climate change and progress on the low emission transition is not only deeply requested by a vast majority within the EU, but it is a precondition for the ambitious goal of a carbon-neutral continent by 2050. What the EU needs to do here is linking its climate policy very closely with its development and trade policy. Managing the Paris Agenda and a carbon-neutral continent will only work if the EU is able to launch a development policy that takes the challenge of climate change for most of the developing countries seriously and that enables them to build sufficient capacity to counter the challenges of food security, public health, water scarcity, and desertification, just to name a few. The EU, as a trading power, must link its trade policy with its climate and development policy goals. This will require a serious rethinking in many regards as the current trade policy has the tendency to undermine climate and development goals. The trade agreement with the Mercosur is a point in case here as it links the deforestation of the rain forest to trade with the EU. Making sure that climate goals are not negatively impacted by its own trade policy is, therefore, of utmost importance.

- Further progress on EU defense integration needs to be made. This is not only necessary because of the strategic autonomy and the building of a European Defence Union, but also as a back up to the EU role as a trading power, a normative and transformative power. The geopolitical reality of the G-Zero world will require the EU to become more strategically autonomous to be able to protect and defend its citizens and the European Union. PESCO, CARD, and the European Defence Fund (EDF) are initiatives that have the potential to be the nucleus for EU's capacity building and thus provide the basis for a real European Defence Union. The initiatives of President Macron on a European Intervention Initiative (EI2) should be taken seriously, as well as his recent offer to include the French nuclear forces into the European Defence Union. Of course, NATO will continue

²⁵ Susi Dennison, Mark Leonard, and Pawel Zerka, *How to Govern a Fragmented EU: What Europeans Said at the Ballot Box*, Report ECFR/287 (European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2019), https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/how_to_govern_a_fragmented_eu_what_europeans_said_at_the_ballot_box.

to play an important role in the collective defense of the European Union, but strengthening the European pillar in NATO will give the EU greater leverage in transatlantic relations. With the US even more preoccupied with the Chinese-US strategic rivalry, the European Union needs to take even more responsibility for its own security. An EU-US strategic dialogue on security and defense is long overdue. It might be put into the context of a triangle of strategic transatlantic dialogues: EU-US, EU-NATO, NATO-US.

Conclusion

So far the EU has shown its capability to react adequately to the existential crisis posed by COVID-19. The coordination among the member states is very dense and of course, there is a vivid discussion about the best way of recovery. Internal cohesion, support for human rights and democracy, and a strong EU role in global governance are prerequisites for a full recovery of the EU from the COVID-19 crisis, as well as for raising the EU's full potential as a normative and transformative power in a globalized, contested and complex world. Five elements are important:

1. The EU needs to act more rigorously on defending democracy within the EU and take a zero-tolerance policy towards any temptation of autocratic ruling within any member state of the EU. Linking economic support out of the COVID-19 package to democratic values and the protection of civil and human rights and the rule of law needs to be a key feature. The credibility of the European Union depends enormously on the fight against the illiberal democracies and any tendency towards restricting fundamental rights beyond a limited timeframe of the contingency of COVID-19. The governments in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic as well, need to be closely monitored and, in case of continued non-compliance with the EU treaties and EU legislation, sanctioned.

2. Closer cooperation on climate change and progress on the low emission transition – Europe's green deal needs to be put at the very heart of the economic recovery programs. The economic recovery should not take place at the expense of the green deal – exactly the opposite needs to take place. The recovery programs should seize the opportunity to restructure the European industry towards a green economy. The same is true for the restructuring of the energy market. The digitalization has been pushed throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The EU needs to seize the dynamic to push European societies and economies even more into digitalization.

3. A stronger role for the EU in public health should be considered as a lesson from COVID-19. The privatization of large parts of the public health sector in many member states should be reconsidered and checked against the aim of health protection.

4. A larger and broader debate within the EU about the social aspects of the market economy and of capitalism should be part of the recovery as well. The European model of a social welfare state combined with the market econ-

omy needs to be reconsidered and adapted to the requirements of a post-neoliberal era. Digitalization, climate change, re-globalization, and a better integrated international system more focused on human security than national security require adaptations from the European Union, as well as from its member states. If the EU, its member states, and the European people are able to adapt the EU to the Post COVID-19 environment, the sacrifices throughout the crisis were not in vain.

5. Further progress on EU defense integration is necessary to prepare the European Union for taking over more responsibility in the G-Zero world. Strategic autonomy of the European Union should be the ultimate goal. The ongoing initiatives PESCO, CARD, and EDF, the French initiative about the E12 and Macron's offer to use the French nuclear arsenal for European defense should be condensed into a European Defence Union that actually is able to protect the European Union.

Cooperation with NATO is undoubtedly crucial. Further developing EU-NATO cooperation, in particular in capability development, capacity building, hybrid threats, cybersecurity, and training and exercises is important to successfully built on the achievements of both institutions and use their competitive advantages. A new transatlantic bargain is necessary after COVID-19. The European Union and the US need to engage in a strategic dialogue, a strategic dialogue that might be part of a broader strategic dialogue within the transatlantic community: EU-US and EU-NATO and NATO-US.

The German EU Presidency in the months to come has to manage these elements of the EU's COVID-19 crisis management and recovery. It will be not only a real practice test for the EU but for Germany as well.

Disclaimer

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About the Author

Prof. Dr. **Ralf Roloff** is Deputy Dean for Academics at the George C. Marshall Center and Adjunct Professor at the Universität der Bundeswehr München. He has taught at the University of Trier, University of Cologne, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, and Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg. He was a Robert Schuman Fellow at the European Parliament and a Fulbright Fellow at New York University. He holds a Master's degree and a doctorate from the University Trier and a state doctorate from the University of Cologne and the Universität der Bundeswehr München. He is widely published in German, English, and French.

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