

## Fault Lines: Foreign and Security Policy in an Age of Friction

For much of the post–Cold War era, foreign and security policy was often framed through the language of liberalism. Economic integration, institutional cooperation, and technological connectivity were expected to gradually soften geopolitical divides and lead to democratic convergence. Traditional fault lines had been overcome. These lines have reappeared and forced states to rethink security and influence. This issue of the *EPIS Magazine*, titled “Fault Lines – Foreign and Security Policy in an Age of Friction,” examines how contemporary geopolitics is increasingly defined by such fault lines.

In this issue, Sonja Grünbauer zooms an important, underexplored region and examines how climate change is transforming the Arctic from a remote periphery into a strategic frontier where environmental disruption increasingly intersects with military planning and geopolitical competition. It asks the question how new operational realities and infrastructure pressures reshaping security thinking in the High North are. Gidi Brandes argues that the Eastern Mediterranean should be understood as a single geopolitical system rather than a series of isolated crises. By analysing the interaction between energy politics, migration, maritime disputes, and regional wars, the Brandes offers a framework for understanding why developments in the region carry growing strategic relevance for Europe. Mariami Modebadze traces the evolution of EU–China relations over the past five decades, from diplomatic opening and economic engagement to growing rivalry and strategic distrust. By combining historical perspective with contemporary policy debates, she shows how Europe’s China policy is being recalibrated. Julian Stöckle explores how the European Parliament has sought to shape the European Union’s response to Russia’s war against Ukraine. The article demonstrates how parliamentary actors can influence political priorities and public legitimacy even in policy areas traditionally dominated by member states. Krisztina Galos investigates how sanctions pressure interacts with industrial fragility and wartime production through the case of Russia’s United Aircraft Corporation. Stefan Noël Hageman examines the potential role of the Syrian diaspora in post-war reconstruction efforts. The article highlights both the expertise that diaspora communities can offer and the political and institutional barriers that determine whether such potential can be effectively mobilised.

This issue is further enriched by crucial insights from industry and security sector experts. Retired four-star general Markus Laubenthal Badia talks about the development of strategic thinking throughout a long military career. In a frank a senior representative of Thales reflects on the growing importance of technological innovation in European defence, highlighting the role of industry in strengthening cyber capabilities, and supporting Europe’s ambition for greater strategic autonomy. Finally, Nicholas Dungan, Fellow of the EPIS Advisory Board, contributes an essay on “360° Resilience, and suggests that Europe’s next generation can strengthen societal preparedness, reinforce democratic values, and assume greater responsibility for the continent’s future security.

Geopolitical fault lines rarely emerge in isolation. They develop gradually, intersect across domains, and reshape how states and institutions perceive risk and opportunity. Understanding them therefore requires analytical approaches that move beyond short-term crises and toward the deeper structures that define today’s international environment. In an age of growing geopolitical friction, the task of foreign and security policy is no longer simply to manage conflict—but to navigate the fault lines that make it increasingly likely.

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