

Europe, the EU and the ‘rest of the world’ in the Trump era: order making or (dis)order taking?

London, Thursday 5 June 2025

Kings College London / London School of Economics

The aim of this one-day workshop is to have a comprehensive, in-depth assessment of Europe’s role in a quickly changing international environment, by presenting ongoing research and engaging in a conversation with invited practitioners. The workshop will take place over four panels with academic papers, with a closed-doors meeting with practitioners at lunch time and a public event in the evening on “EU-UK relations: from a reset to a new reality?”. The workshop will build on the KCL-LSE seminar series on European foreign affairs that run during 2024-25.

The rationale for the workshop stems from the profound changes in international affairs brought by Russia’s ongoing military and hybrid aggression in Europe, and more recently, the Trump administration’s use of shakedown diplomacy against friends and allies.: how they are impacting on European affairs, particularly on security, defence and external relations. European policy makers are confronted with a forever shifting landscape and stark choices. As the solidity of the Transatlantic Alliance is put in question, trade relations, NATO commitments and in relations with other countries (to name but a few aspects) are deeply affected. Widespread politicisation and polarisation are testing the European commitment in old and new domains, from the environment and digital technologies to economic external relations and defence cooperation. Consensus-based decision-making rules in both NATO and the EU creak under the urgent problem pressures, especially given the illiberal or authoritarian turn of some of their members. At the same time, new forms of cooperation across Europe, the EU and beyond are explored and new initiatives are considered, bringing new opportunities to (re)imagine the future of Europe and of its relations with the rest of the world.

At this juncture, it is therefore important that, as scholars of European affairs, we take a moment to reflect on ongoing developments and Europe’s role therein. To what extent are European countries (as individual states, as coalition of the willing, within the EU...) able to shape the agenda in Europe and elsewhere, as opposed to respond to current events and be fixed in a reactive approach to a never ending polycrisis? Is Europe able to bring order to its most important external relations, or is it confined to “take” the disorder brought by Putin and the Trump Administration and any order that might emerge as a consequence?

Possible topics presenters might address:

- Security and defence: What architectures and strategies are emerging that can deliver a just and lasting peace on the European continent? How quickly can Europe fill the capability-credibility gap left by the transatlantic crisis of trust and threat of Russia? To what extent are relations between France, the UK and Germany developing towards

a coherent security framework? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the new ReARM Europe Plan?

- Foreign policy: How relevant an influence mechanism is the “Brussels effect”? Are normative concerns, such as e.g. Feminist Foreign Policy, Responsibility to Protect (R2P) or Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), still viable or suited to European foreign affairs in the Trump era? What process is likely to deliver the new round of EU enlargement?
- Trade and aid: What instruments can the EU wield to thrive in a world increasingly dominated by tariffs? What consequences do EU external relations face if aid is less central to foreign affairs? How useful is the ‘Brussels effect’ in a forever changing world?

Papers presented at the workshop, which must be based on original research, will be considered for publication as Working Papers in the refereed series of the LSE European Foreign Policy Unit and, depending on interest, as a special issue in a relevant journal.

Scholars interested in participating should apply by Friday 18 April by sending an email to Federica Bicchi (f.c.bicchi@lse.ac.uk), Karen Smith (k.e.smith@lse.ac.uk) and Benedetta Voltolini (benedetta.voltolini@kcl.ac.uk). Please feel free to get in contact also re information or to discuss your proposed topic.

There are limited bursaries for travel and accommodation expenses. Please apply and state your case by email by Friday 18 April to Benedetta Morari (b.morari@lse.ac.uk).

Timeline:

18 April: deadline for paper applications and for bursaries applications

24 April: communication of results to participants

29 May: circulation of draft papers

5 June: workshop

September onwards: submission of papers to the LSE EFPU Working Paper Series