

THINK TANKS' THOUGHTS

Europe's People's Forum has selected various think tanks' articles focused on themes that we find most current and interesting for the activists, politicians and connoisseurs engaged in the policies of the European Union. The articles were published in August.

EU's Future institutional Structure and Policies

In his article [The reform of the EU Courts \(IV\) \(Egmont Institute\)](#), Franklin Dehousse rejects accusations against the European Court of Justice for exercising judicial activism, but instead finds reasoning in the criticism from national supreme courts and academic commentators that the European Court lacks technical competence in a number of judgments. The author's analysis suggests that the ECJ should focus on fewer issues, use better the Advocate Generals conclusions and undergo a process of reforms that allows it to work with specialised courts, a three layer system and in this way ensure a more flexible and efficient recruitment process.

EU-policies on Social Dimension, Labour Market Protections and Trade Agreements

In his article [At last, a Pan-European Pension Product! \(CEPS\)](#), Karel Lannoo finds the new proposal for a Pan-European Pension Product (PEPP) the most important coming out of the EU Capital Markets Union. In his analysis, he considers whether the PEPP will end up closing the gap in people at national level without sufficient pension savings, but concludes that the product rather will be of interest to mobile EU citizens. However, alternatively the PEPP could also be an opportunity to develop a pension plan for the millions of SME employees across Europe without organised pension savings today.

Democracy, Citizens, Human Rights and Independence of Media

In his commentary [Why are illiberal democrats popular? \(CEPS\)](#), Daniel Gros explains how the current moves towards illiberal democracy in countries like Russia, Turkey, and Hungary ride on the back of a prudent liberal economy with economic growth and support from voters. However with a solid grip on power, those promoting the illiberal democracy also begin increasing their control on the economic actors and thereby will threaten the not only the liberal democracy but also the economic growth.

In his article [Can Macron's Gamble to Save the EU Pay Off? \(Carnegie Europe\)](#), Richard Youngs analyses the risks the democratic conventions deeply wanted by Emmanuel Macron could bring. If the conventions fail to respond to citizen feedback in tangible ways, popular frustration with the EU

may simply intensify. If governments essentially pre-empt their outcomes, the conventions could end up causing more harm than good. There is a widespread view that the EU requires a more genuinely open and widely-cast model of participation. The conventions may provide a laboratory to test these ideas out, but the conventions, in themselves, will not democratise the EU. The public needs far more permanent means to better influence EU decision-making. Little will have been gained if the conventions run for a few months and then the EU returns to its current pattern of opaque bargaining and deal-making, concludes the author.

Piotr Buras, [Reparations and the crisis of Poland's foreign policy \(ECFR\)](#) Piotr Buras explains how the issue of war reparations is a reflection of the Polish ruling PiS government's approach to morality, history and sovereignty. Besides considering the Polish requests as completely against "the ultimate goal of a moral foreign policy - that of peace and reconciliation between nations", Buras believes they Polish stubbornness is the fruit of Poland's inability to accept complexity of history and its will to proceed towards a de-Europeanisation of the Polish society.

Policies on Migrants and Refugees, Schengen and Development Aid

In her column 'Judy asks', this week Judy Dempsey asked 12 different experts and academics: [Why the Delay on an EU Migration Policy? \(Carnegie Europe\)](#) While Erik Brattberg (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) affirms that finally some EU countries acknowledged "that Europe's migration challenges are intimately tied to the social, economic, political, and environmental situations in countries of origin or transit states", Natalie Tocci (Italian Institute of International Affairs) and Jørgen Carling (Peace Research Institute Oslo) argue that the delay is due to internal issues, such as the unwilling to elaborate progressive labour market policies and the diffuse opposition to migrants. Arjan Hehenkamp (Médicin Sans Frontières Holland) affirms instead "Europe's crude deterrence policies are being confused for that of responsible migration", and criticised the EU for having trapped thousands of people in Libya, where the rule of law is inexistent.

If the EU Migration Policy has difficulties in being effectively implemented, there is one country which has alone taken a stand and opened its policies to refugees: Germany. In her article [Two years after opening Germany's doors to refugees, Angela Merkel stands tall. How has she done it? \(CER\)](#), Sophia Besch explains why Angela Merkel has managed to host thousands of thousands of refugees and still keep German voters' trust.

Priorities and Values in EU Foreign and Security Policy

On the 17th of August, a white van has driven towards pedestrian in Las Ramblas, killing 13 people. In their detailed publication [Reflections on the Terrorist Attacks in Barcelona: Constructing a principled and trust-based EU approach to countering terrorism \(CEPS\)](#) Sergio Carrera, Elspeth Guild and Valsamis Mitsilegas explains the limits of the present EU counterterrorism policy, such as the so-

called “EU liberal paradox”, which underlines that the counterterrorism policies increase mutual distrust among member states and citizens and can ultimately put into danger the constitutional principles they were supposed to vehemently defend. In order to effectively deal with the EU liberal paradox, the authors affirm the necessity for all EU Member States to develop trust and elaborate together a coherent and effective strategy.

All recent terrorist attacks in Europe were followed by public discussions which often failed to provide a correct overview of the situation. In his extremely interesting report titled [Trends in European Terrorism: 1970-2016](#) (CSIS), Anthony H. Cordesman offers detailed statistical data on terrorism in Western and Eastern Europe in the last 4 decades. Besides challenging the idea that the Western world has never being threatened so much by terrorists, the report also puts things into prospective, showing how the rest of the world suffer far more attacks than our countries (658 in Europe and the Americas vs 28.031 attacks in the rest of the world between January 2015 and July 2016).

Terrorism is not the only preoccupation the EU has in the last years. The Russian influence on certain part of the European society of some EU governments is also a matter of high concerns. In his article [Putin's Budapest Bargain Is Built on Shaky Ground](#), Balázs Jarábik ([Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)) refuses though the “conventional wisdom” that “Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is looking to Vladimir Putin's Russia for inspiration for his illiberal state”, and writes that Putin's visit to Hungary and Budapest's “eastern opening” policy are just driven by Orbán's pragmatism on energy issues, such as the desire to upgrade Paks nuclear power plant and the need to bargain over a long which requires constant interactions for Russian aid for the Paks nuclear power plant and a long-term gas contract with Gazprom, which require constant interactions between the two parties.

In her interesting analysis titled [How the EU Needs to Manage Relations With Its Eastern Neighborhood](#) ([Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)), Kadri Liik states that there were significant differences between the national interests behind the process that brought all Central European countries to ask for and successively obtain the EU membership and the internal and external situation related to the EU's Eastern Partnership countries. With the corrupt elites of these countries the author spells out how there has been no elites with a real interest for reforms in order to enter a rule-based EU, and in this the author finds a significant difference with the situation in the Baltic States and Poland in the 1990'es. With Russia's interest sphere approach and EU's democratic normative approach it is for a long time not realistic to imagine membership of EU but the greyish process as now should continue to build the sovereignty of the Eastern Partnership countries and a dialogue with Russia should be initiated as soon as it is feasible.

Our last selected article for the section leaves the European territory and arrives in the Middle East. In their piece [Policing Palestine](#) ([Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)) Filip Ejdus and Alaa Tartir analyse the function of the EUPOL COPPS in Palestine and the achievements it has reached since its launch in 2006 as part of the EU's CSDP. The two authors argue that despite its technical support provided to the Palestinian Civilian Police, the mission has been gradually perceived by

Palestinians as a way to continue the occupation by proxy.

Brexit Negotiations and National Political Issues

In her article [What are the dynamics between EU heavyweights in the face of Brexit?](#) (ECFR), Christel Zunneberg analyses the Big 3, 4, 5 and 6 among the existing members states of the European Union, based on a survey from 2016. Already now, Poland is one of the Big 4, but is regarded as the least central actor among the six and is more attracted by Germany, UK and France than the other way around. After a Brexit the author foresees this to continue among the remaining Big 5 with Poland remaining in the periphery and the smallest big – Italy and Spain, being more important to Germany and France than Poland.

[What the German elections mean for Brexit](#) (CER) is the question that Christian Odendahl and Sophia Besch ask in their article. The two authors find that none of the German political parties would be willing to soften the stance on Brexit and compromise with UK's demands, because of Germany's and German businesses' long-term interest of a coherent EU, which gives no easy options of leaving. On the contrary smaller parties like the Greens and FDP would be very open to welcome Scotland and Wales if they should apply for membership.