

Editors' word

“We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union”. At least, that is how world now looks from the point of view of the EU. This sombre assessment expressed in the recently adopted EU Global Strategy stands in stark contrast to the optimism that glared through the EU Security Strategy from 2003. Its opening line about Europe that “has never been so prosperous, secure nor so free” echoed well the early post-cold war optimism, but fell badly short of anticipating what was to come. In recent years, the old continent has been hit hard by a series of internal and external shocks which have put unity and resolve in the Union to the test. More fundamentally, one after another these events have undermined everything that the EU used to stand for in world politics. This has created, as Asle Toje put in the opening essay to this issue of JRS, “the crisis of liberal internationalism” that has characterised EU foreign policy for more than two decades. Like many times before, the EU has responded by calling for a stronger and more united common foreign and security policy. Translating this into credible action, however, has proven to be an increasingly difficult task. Today, even more so than in the past, most member states seem to be reluctant to transfer further foreign policy competences to Brussels as Monika Sus amply demonstrates in her analysis of the European External Action Service. More worryingly, European peoples are increasingly growing sceptical of supranational governance. In addition to this, until recently, the EU prided itself for being a civilian power capable of attracting and transforming its neighbourhood. Events in Ukraine have tragically exposed the limits of such an approach in the face of *Machtropolitik*. In his contribution to this issue of JRS Cristian Nitoiu demonstrates how Russia's actions in Ukraine have resulted in the EU's increasingly geopolitical approach to the post-Soviet sphere. On the south-eastern flanks of the continent, the EU's divergence with Turkey, as Oya Dursun-Ozkanca argues in her article, seriously threatens to turn the two actors into competitors for influence in the still volatile Western Balkans. It remains to be seen whether the Union will be able to reinvent itself or European states will fall into an eternally recurring Hobbesian world. If the latter transpires to be the case, the key challenge for European states will be to re-learn the rules of the game of their own making in order to prevail over their external competitors without undermining the fundamental premise which brought them together in the first place.

Filip Ejdus
Nemanja Džuverović
Co-Editors in Chief