

## **ACELG Annual Conference 2024**

28/29 November 2024

Amsterdam Law School

### **Threats and Awakening? How Geopolitics and Security Change the EU and its Law**

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered notions that the EU could prosper unconcerned by issues of security and geopolitics, along with the illusion that it could remain untouched by the possibility of war. This accelerated the rise of security concerns as drivers of EU law and policy – what has been dubbed in the scholarship as Europe’s geopolitical awakening.

The 2024 ACELG conference offers a multi-disciplinary reflection upon the nature of the security threats that Europe faces and the meanings and merits of Europe’s ‘geopolitical awakening’. It wishes to better understand what the awakening entails, how it is reflected in various sub-fields of EU law and policy, what the costs of it are, and what must change in the EU if we deem the said awakening desirable. The conference also welcomes the questioning of the notions of threats and awakening as useful frames to understand the current state of EU affairs.

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The motivation for the conference is rooted in the observation that the study of EU law has in the last decades been predominantly inward-looking. Even though European integration, as the post-war project aimed at maintaining peace in Europe, has always had a distinctive geopolitical pedigree, questions about Europe’s geopolitics, its role in the world, its security in the face of external/global threats, have stayed at the periphery of the study of EU law. EU Law was produced for and around problems largely internal to the EU – most notably to deal with nationalist impulses of various form and their legal manifestations as obstacles to free movement. As much as it may be a trite expression, European integration has been indeed a peace project – unconcerned by the possibility of war and more generally unwilling to make geopolitical rivalry a driver of its action. In this context, a sentiment about the self-sufficiency of the EU also prevailed in popular debates and the everyday experience of EU citizens. All this, to be sure, in sharp contrast with Europe’s well documented dependencies - military on the US, energy on Russia.

No matter what its faults and merits, the above self-conception of the EU was shattered by the brutal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The war is reversing the relationship between core and periphery in the concerns that animate the EU and its law. Considerations about security, external threats, and Europe’s power become central to the study of the EU and its law. The shifts above are in line with what Luuk van Middelaar has called Europe’s

‘geopolitical awakening’, by observing traces of it, even before the war in Ukraine, in the Union’s posture during the pandemics and its dealing with growing Chinese assertiveness.

The said ‘awakening’ is visible in many fields of EU law and policy, as they are in the process of re-articulating their concerns, goals, instruments, and language for what may emerge as a new historical phase in which Europe puts security vis a vis external threats at the center of its agenda. ‘European sovereignty’, ‘security’, ‘resilience’, ‘competitiveness’, ‘power’ gain space in the policy language of Europe, which may anticipate more profound shifts and ruptures. Traces of ‘awakening’ are also visible in European societies. European citizens, albeit not without swaths of reluctance, start to understand their destinies to be tied to those of the Ukrainians. In the Baltics and Poland, but possibly more broadly, active involvement of Europeans in the war may not be seen any longer as a pure theoretical possibility.

There are, to be sure, wide empirical and normative disagreements about the scope of Europe’s geopolitical awakening, about what it means, whether it is sufficient, or desirable at all. Many object that the EU’s engagement with questions of security and geopolitics is still too hesitant – Europe has either no structures or not the political will or language required to truly awaken. Others question the novelty of the threats the EU faces: in Europe’s periphery, in the western Balkans, for example, war has been for a long time a very tangible reality; and for some within Europe, questions of survival have been everyday concerns, irrespective of geopolitics. Others still warn against the dangers of framing most policy issues as issues of security.

## Conference Program

### Thursday November 28, Room A3.15

13:00 – 13:30: Coffee and Welcome

13:30 – 13:40 Introduction, Giacomo Tagiuri (UvA)

13:40 – 14:15: Framing Remarks

#### **Geopolitics and the EU: Ruptures and Continuities**

Dana Allin (IISS - International Institute of Strategic Studies, Editor of Survival)

14:15 – 16:00 Roundtable One

#### **Inseparable Futures: Ukrainian Security as European Security**

Nicole Scicluna (Hong Kong Baptist University); Tinatin Akhvedliani (Center for European Policy Studies); Viktoriia Lapa (Bocconi University); Kostiantyn Gorobets (University of Groningen); Dana Allin (IISS)

Moderator: Giacomo Tagiuri (UvA)

16:00 – 16:15: Coffee Break

16:15 – 18:00 Roundtable Two

**EU Law in an Age of Global Rivalry**

Alessandro Petti (University of Oslo); Ties Dams (Clingendael Institute); Joris Larik (University of Leiden); Pola Cebulak (Vrije Universiteit); Federico Fabbrini (Dublin City University)

Moderator: Maria Weimer (UvA)

18:00 – 18:30: Drinks

**Friday November 29, Room A3.01**

8:50 – 9:20 Coffee and Breakfast

9:20 – 10:40 Roundtable Three

**Economic Security: a New Paradigm for EU Economic Law and Regulation**

Max von Thun (Open Markets Institute); Anna Marhold (University of Leiden); Nathan Meershoek (Utrecht University)

Moderator: Jan Broulík (UvA)

10:40 – 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 Roundtable Four

**The Rule of Law and EU Values to the Test of Security**

Jakub Jaraczewski (Democracy Reporting International); Kati Cseres (UvA); Nicole Scicluna (Hong Kong Baptist University); Maciej Krogel (UvA)

Moderator: Wiebe Hommes (UvA)

12:30 – 12:40: Concluding Remarks

12:40 – 13:30: Lunch