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EU external actions in the contested global order –
(in)coherence, (dis)continuity, resilience

The EU's strategic partners – political relations with the United States

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Introduction

- The European Union has a long history of cooperation with the United States of America (USA/US).
- In 1947, following the Second World War, the European Recovery Programme (the Marshall Plan) was announced by US Secretary of State, George Marshall.
- It distributed \$13 billion of US aid to 16 European countries, and encouraged European cooperation.



Political relations – the roots

- Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the European Community were initiated in 1953 when the first U.S. observers were sent to the European Coal and Steel Community.
- The U.S. Mission to the ECSC formally opened in Luxembourg in 1956.
- The Delegation of the European Commission to the United States in Washington, D.C. was established in 1954, and the United States Mission to the European Communities, now the United States Mission to the European Union, was established in 1961 in Brussels.



Political relations

- U.S. Mission to the European Union is the direct link between the U.S. Government and the European Union in Brussels, Belgium.
 - Once focused primarily on the trade and economic aspects of the transatlantic relationship, the Mission has evolved the EU as it has taken on new political, judicial, foreign policy, and defense responsibilities.
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- See: <https://useu.usmission.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/>



Institutional cooperation

- U.S. cooperation with the EU is based on the Transatlantic Declaration of 1990 and the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA), adopted in 1995.
- This cooperation, which has been gradually deepened and broadened, takes place on many levels and includes summit meetings at the level of heads of state and government between the U.S., the European Commission and the country holding the EU Presidency.



Transatlantic Declaration

- The “Transatlantic Declaration” set the stage for deepened relations between the EU and the US and created a regular transatlantic dialogue on issues from economic cooperation to strategies for addressing transnational challenges.

- Source: The EU-US Development Dialogue: Past, Present and Future, Alexander Gaus & Wade Hoxtell, GPPI Working Paper, July 2013



New Transatlantic Agenda

- In 1995, the “New Transatlantic Agenda” outlined a new framework for this relationship, including four specific areas for joint action:
 - promoting peace, stability, democracy and development;
 - responding to global challenges;
 - contributing to the liberalization and expansion of world trade;
 - and improving communication and ensuring a long-term commitment to this partnership



Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (TLD)

- Relations between Parliament and the US Congress date back to 1972.
 - In 1999, their relationship was upgraded and institutionalised with the establishment of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue (TLD).
 - The TLD brings together Members of the European Parliament and members of the US House of Representatives at twice-yearly interparliamentary meetings (IPMs) that alternate between the US and Europe.
- See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/174/transatlantic-relations-the-usa-and-canada>



Summit meetings

- Following the gradual expansion of EU-US mutual cooperation, an institutionalized system of communication was established, with summit meetings as its principal element.
- Summit meetings are held annually in a format comprising the US President, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission.
- They are usually also attended by the US Secretary of State and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
- Decisions made on this level shape transatlantic relations and set the course for further cooperation.



Summit - problems

- At the political level, the annual EU-US summit is important on paper, yet disappoints in reality.
- The EU-US relationship suffered a blow when President Obama cancelled the summit in 2010.
- The relationship does not achieve its full potential because the United States sees the EU mainly as a trade bloc, not as a credible political actor.



Summit - problems

- The summit also fails to deliver due to a steadfast desire from EU countries to maintain exclusive bilateral relations with Washington, instead of working through Brussels.
- It also results from an unclear division of labour between the European Council and the Commission on transatlantic affairs



Summit problems

- The EU-US summits have generally focused on trade and economic policy.
 - While foreign policy issues are discussed – such as the Middle East Peace Process and the ‘Arab Spring’ – they receive less attention.
 - Nevertheless, the EU and Washington do co-operate on global issues, formulating common approaches on transnational issues such as human rights, internet freedom, non-proliferation and strengthening of international regimes
- For more please see: https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2013/bal_comp_rk_eu_trans_15march13-7087



International cooperation

- The EU and the USA are also bound up in several other international organizations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), founded in 1949, which consists of the USA and Canada plus 27 European countries (mainly, but not exclusively EU states).
- A key feature of NATO is a 'mutual defence' clause: if one country is attacked, the others will come to its defence.



Current issues

- Following the US presidential election of 8 November 2016, many questions and concerns have arisen as regards EU-US foreign policy relations.
- The EU and the US still cooperate on a number of issues and in several geographical contexts; nevertheless, there has been a change in the US's attitude towards the EU and the transatlantic alliance since President Donald Trump took office.
- See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/174/transatlantic-relations-the-usa-and-canada>



Current issues

- Transatlantic relations continue to adapt to new realities under the 'America First' foreign policy.
- Its implications have touched several areas, such as climate, defence, sanctions and cooperation within multilateral institutions.
- The implementation of the America First foreign policy has resulted in US criticism of, and withdrawal from, a number of multilateral initiatives, and is recalibrating the US's relations with traditional allies, including the EU.



Current issues

- Major areas of tension in bilateral relations have included:
 - the Iran nuclear deal, trade,
 - burden-sharing within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
 - differing perceptions of the multilateral order.
- Since the election of Donald Trump, tensions over NATO, and particularly on the issue of defence spending, have increased between the US and EU NATO members.
- The US has always insisted that NATO allies spend more on defence and live up to the pledge to spend 2 % of GDP on defence by 2024.
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Multilateralism

- Under President Trump, the US has withdrawn from a number of multilateral bodies and agreements, including:
 - the Paris Agreement on climate change,
 - the nascent Trans-Pacific Partnership,
 - the UN Human Rights Council (based on its accusation of 'chronic bias' against Israel)
 - Unesco.



Multilateralism

- Along with its blockage of the WTO's Appellate Body, this has raised questions about US commitment to the principle of multilateralism (in trade, security and global governance more widely), a cornerstone of EU external action and of cooperation between the two partners.
- Clashes between Trump and other leaders at the G7 and G20 summits over trade and climate change reinforced these concerns, although he supported both communiqués in the end.



Referenes

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