European Union and the United States of America – common and conflicting interests

The wavering of transatlantic ties and the rise of the EU’s global role during the Trump administration

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Introduction

Ever since the end of the second World War, like any other mutually beneficial friendship based on shared interests, the relationship between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean had its ups and downs. It was clear from the start of the European integration process that despite the friendly relations and close ties with the United States (US) there were going to be common and conflicting interests. Beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community through the European Communities and ever since the formation of the European Union (EU), the influence of the United States has been ever-present and unwavering. This mutually beneficial relationship brought profits to both sides, possibly more to one than to the other. The recent presence and assertion of interests by the United States of America (USA) in the 21st century have never been stronger and transatlantic relations more conflicting and wavering. On 20th January 2017 at 6:00 CET time the world witnessed the inauguration of the 45th President of the United States. What the world was not prepared for was that the new administration in the White House began a wave of policies which brought an unprecedented change both to global and transatlantic relations. The campaign slogan of “America First” became a policy of a controversial administration and crushing reality for the European Union. Thus, began a slow development of the divergence of interests on several policy fields between the United States and the European Union marked by a series of treaty withdrawals, trade wars and critical remarks across popular social network platforms.

The areas of interests between the two actors are both large in number and diverse in nature, ranging from trade, foreign policy, security and defence to cybersecurity, climate change, and terrorism. Therefore, it is important to narrow down the focus of this paper into key common and conflict areas of interest, which I plan to reflect on, namely: foreign policy goals, defence and security interests. These three, by a reasonable assumption, will have an impact not just on the global role of the European Union but will perhaps define its future as a global military and foreign policy actor. It is undeniable that the economic relation between the two sides of the Atlantic is indispensable and is under constant

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1 Historical aspects and antecedents will be touched upon in several chapters since a basic historical introduction would not fit the scope of this paper.

2 When it comes to the analysis of the transatlantic relationship Marta Dassù and Roberto Menotti (2009, p.209) emphasize the importance of economic decisions and issues rather than security, but do not deny the central feature which the latter can play. Essentially for them the economic decisions will bring further reaching consequences that would result in the introduction of new international deals.
dispute on who are the main beneficiaries of it. However, the structural limitations and focus of this paper on the trade policy area of interests, however recent they may be in their relevance, would not allow the integration of other fields due to their complexity and size. I do not claim that politico-military are far more important relative to economic policies, but nowadays they remain just one element of the EU’s foreign policy. Furthermore, one must also accept that due to the volatile and rapid nature of developments this academic paper will only focus on major events up until April 2019 of the Trump administration.

The hypothesis, which the paper will revolve around and aims to prove is the following: *Trump's version of “America First” policy is bringing about a new phase of US-EU relations passively forcing the European Union to become a more proactive influential global actor, not exclusively economically speaking.* To verify my hypothesis, the outline of this thesis will be a theoretical stool based on three legs.

The first part/leg of the paper will focus on the theory of international relations called realism. Firstly, inspecting how “America First” is in line with theoretical ideas and works of influential realists such as Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. Secondly, observing how realism helps us identify and understand the conflicting interests continuously arising between the European Union and the United States of America due to this supposedly “new” foreign and domestic policy initiative of the latter party. Furthermore, I will concentrate on how the power and the security dilemma are defined within the context of alliance-based relationships and understand the focus of each player. I will also take a look at whether it is possible to attribute state-like characteristics to the EU. The chapter will also touch upon the meaning of “America First” in a foreign policy context. Thus, helping the reader gain a basic understanding that the idea of “America First” is not something new and that the defining principles of the phrase are dependent on circumstances and the people behind it.

The second part/leg of the academic paper will aim to compare and contrast important primary and secondary sources highlighting the strategic and foreign interests of the two actors. This part of the paper is divided into two main chapters. The first part, Chapter 2, will examine documents like the National Security Strategy (NSS), the European Security Strategy of 2003, and the EU Global Strategy to gain a deeper understanding into the hidden nature of both conflicting and common interests, including what global aspirations
the Union could have. The second part, Chapter 3, will examine the cyclical nature of divergence and convergence in the transatlantic relations comparing the differences and similarities between Obama-EU and Trump-EU relations. Furthermore, the paper will also touch upon the Integrated Country Strategy regarding the US Mission to the EU. Under this chapter I will also attempt to interpret the case of the diplomatic relations between the two sides and explain how the 2018 diplomatic demotion and later restoration of the EU’s Mission of the US shows a rift in the transatlantic alliance.

The final part and last chapter of my theoretical stool will stand on the examination of two major events showing the visible cases of common and conflicting interests of the European Union and the United States. The first case will examine the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the collision of basic security and defence interests between the European Union and the United States, including how the relationship is resembled within the Atlantic alliance. The second case study will be the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, focusing on the diplomatic role of the European Union and the complications resulting from the US withdrawal and the renewal of sanctions. I will attempt to answer questions such as: How would the divergence under these umbrellas of cooperation essentially create a path for the EU’s increasing global role?

The thesis will contain ideas and definitions from various primary and secondary sources. Primary sources will include speeches of prominent players in the international field such as Donald J. Trump, Federica Mogherini and Mike Pompeo. It will be coupled with founding treaties, legislations, strategic documents, and agreements between both sides to help analyse the conflictual relationship. With regard to the concept of both classical and neoclassical realism, the academic paper will cover prominent books and academic articles of realists such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, Glenn Snyder, Robert Jervis, and Robert Gilpin.
The guiding principle of American foreign policy today

For someone to understand the actions of the Trump administration, one would usually search for an ideology that supposedly guides the political action of a country. However, Trump’s version of “America First” is not an ideology, as it was made clear in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America, stating that an America First National Security Strategy is “a strategy of principled realism that is guided by outcomes, not ideology” (United States of America, Department of State, 2017, p.1). The world has witnessed that time and time again Trump is following through this foreign policy initiative. Beginning with the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement slowly working his way through the JCPOA, criticism of NATO funding, threatening and dismantling trade deals between the USA and the European Union. The actions of continuously turning over the table and setting it the way he likes it is trying to represent that the US is still a great power that is not ready to go down just yet. Yet, the question remains: what is the reason behind this strong and harsh rhetoric by the United States and why now?

One of the most well-known diplomats of our time and a realist Henry Kissinger anticipated the following future for the USA: “As the twenty-first-century approaches, vast global forces are at work that, over the course of time will render the United States less exceptional. (...) The United States will face an economic competition of a kind it never experienced during the Cold War” (Kissinger, 1994, p.809). This prediction has never been more accurate and can be underlined by two factors. First, although the US might still be the top military power, economically speaking China is now openly challenging the United States and their so-called exceptionalism is diminishing coupled with oppositions by the European Union regarding recent US actions. Secondly, the feeling of becoming less exceptional is forcing the hand of the United States to act in a manner which would restore its position, and this is true for the European Union as well. From one perspective the current chain of events can be defined by Newton’s third law of physics, which dictates that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The notion itself has its merits when it comes to the realm of foreign policy filled by actions and reactions dictating that, a rise in the power of one state will be an existential threat to another state in which case they will respond in kind. This concept might be

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3 According to a report by International Monetary Fund (2018), by 2030 China is projected to overtake the United States as the world’s largest economy.
familiar to students of international relations as the so-called security-dilemma first developed by John H. Herz, Herbert Butterfield and Robert Jervis (Tang, 2009, p.587). However, we are just scratching the surface of what could be a possible explanation for the actions of individuals.

To better understand or comprehend the meaning behind principled realism, based in the content of “America First” or to be able to make predictions the following subchapters will attempt to follow a line of questioning set out by a theory of international relations called realism and find answers to questions such as: What is the underlying nature behind this so-called principled realism? Is Trump’s policy something new or is it from a pre-existing intellectual tradition? How can one examine the foreign policy actions of an administration full of backtracking statements, misdirection and misconceptions? Why is the US so quick to condemn their European allies and give them a cold shoulder? How can the European Union as a unitary actor be examined through a realist theory?

1.1. Through the lens of realism

Before going into a deeper analysis of how one can understand the international politics between the United States and the European Union, we must make two clarifications. First one is regarding a distinction between two concepts of our theory: international politics and foreign policy. Kenneth Waltz in his article of International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy (1996, p.1-2) identifies the theory of international politics as an explanation of a state’s behaviour at the international level opposed to a theory of foreign policy which is a product of governments and explain why states behave differently in a similarly placed system4. Therefore, by virtue, a theory of international politics will help us identify the key elements of certain behaviours when analysing the interaction between two actors of international relations. This brings us to the second part of our clarification pertaining to the nature of the European Union under a realist vision.

Efforts to apply realist approach to explain, analyse, and predict events of the European integration or the creation of the European Union have seldom been used or critically dismissed by neorealists (Pollack, 2001, p.222). Smith (2016, p.30) writes that within the field of European studies liberal and constructivist analysis were more

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4 Gideon Rose in his review article titled Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy (1998, p.145) reflects on the distinction between a theory of international politics and foreign policy by Kenneth Waltz (1996) and adding that a theory of foreign policy seeks to explain the what and when states are trying to achieve their goals in the external realm.
favoured to the realist thought and we are witnessing a strong refocus of classical and structural realism. Based on the realist assumption, states are unitary actors within an anarchic international system with the aim of preserving their power and sovereignty. The nature of a supranational European Union poses quite a challenge for the analysis of its foreign policy actions and its behaviour in international politics. It is apparent that the EU is not a state and debating the nature of its existence or integration process would not fit into the scope of this paper. However, it is important to define how it can be viewed through a lens of realism.

Realism as a theory of international relations focuses on two major factors influencing international politics, human nature and anarchy. The combination of these two concepts creates a realm of “interests defined in terms of power” (Morgenthau, 1997, p.5) whereby the leaders of nations acted, act and will act in a way to maximize the interests of their own nation. Waltz (1979, p.93) in his neorealist structural view of the international system confirms that states are not and never have been the only significant actors and in order to define a system one must clarify the units compromising them. However, the key element of our conundrum is whether it is possible to attribute characteristics whereby we can assume that the EU, if not in all but in certain cases, acts in a state-like manner. Realism maintains that states, above all, seek to survive and are self-interest seeking both in terms of power and security. Smith (2016, p.30) argues that the European Union in its current form is an international actor with a foreign policy which is far less effective than that of a state’s. However, by having a more or less coherent and effective foreign policy, the European Union, as a unitary actor, by nature is active within the international system which holds that it is susceptible to act in a self-interested and rational manner in certain policy areas. Therefore, by deductive reasoning, if in a system of anarchy states act in a self-interest seeking way and it is possible to attribute such characteristic to the European Union’s several policy areas, we can presume that it has and can take on certain state-like characteristics.

Having confirmed that in a limited scope state-like qualities can be attributed to the European Union in an anarchic realm; it leaves us to account for the human nature factor. Morgenthau (1997, p.5) writes that statesmen act and make decisions to maximize relative power or interests defined as power, meaning that behind every foreign policy decision there are statesmen whose steps we can trace and anticipate but we should not search for clues in their motives exclusively. The human nature element behind the decision-making
of the European Union’s foreign policy is quite complex comprehend due to the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the decision-making and representation. Ultimately, foreign and security decisions need the approval of all EU countries meaning the ultimate decision-making body is the European Council. The Commission represents the EU during negotiations of international agreements and speaks on behalf of all EU countries in international bodies. However, Article 18(2) of the Treaty on European Union (2012, p.C326/26) allows us the personification of the EU’s foreign, defence and security policy5. When it comes to the representation of Europe’s values and interests regarding foreign, security and defence policy it lies within the scope and capabilities of the High Representative/Vice President aided by the European Union External Action Service (EEAS). The current High Representative/Vice President is Federica Mogherini whose role is wide-ranging and involves several aspects such as the coordination the EU’s foreign policy tool: development of trade, neighbourhood policy, humanitarian aid, and crisis response as Vice President of the Commission (Strategic Communication, 2016, High Representative/Vice President). This personification, which is not entirely perfect, allows us to inject the objectivity of human nature behind a supranational organization whose existence and integration process contradicts realists’ theories. Therefore, to a certain extent, it is possible to examine and talk about common and conflicting interests between a traditional actor of international politics, the USA, and the European Union as a unitary actor.

1.2. Power and Security

Power and security, according to realists, are concepts which should be identified and defined as the primary goals of an actor within the international system. In this context the security dilemma serves as a support to recognise the collision of the interests between the EU and the US. Whereby, the repeated imitating of the European Union as a response to the threat of US primacy in the region is inevitably pushing the EU towards greater autonomy and balancing US power. Therefore, every action of the United States regarding the preservation of its power within the region of Europe is resulting in an equal

5 The institutional settings of the EU’s foreign policy can be rather confusing and gives a mix of representation in many cases. For example, the letter of credence of the US Ambassador to the EU is presented to the President of the European Council (Donald Tusk). During the 2018 high-profile meeting, Washington regarding the tariff spat between the US and EU it was the President of the Commission who represented the EU. The meetings with foreign ministers of other countries, on the other hand, are conducted by the High Representative.
and opposite reaction on the side of the EU. Thus, beginning an early stage of balancing and a rise of conflicting interests.

All actors of the system seek survival and maximization of power which in turn breeds an ever-present threat to survival. A political realist when analysing policies of actors must ask: “How does this policy affect the power of the nation” (Morgenthau, 1997, p.14). The definition of power among the school of realists is more or less consistent. Waltz (1979, p.129) attributes the concept to the ability and inability of states to solve problems. Gilpin (1996, p.6) himself regards power as an instrument and a necessity to achieve goals. Morgenthau (1997, p.32) argues that it is a driving force of human nature, a struggle for power, compromised of anything that establishes and maintains control of one man over another, which is commonly known as influence. So how does one measure the power, an actor asserts over another? On the one hand, if we define power as an instrument, consistent with Gilptin’s definition, then it can be measured by basic elements a nation uses to assert its interests and influence other actors. A document published by the Rand National Security Research Division in which Treverton & Jones (2005, p.ix) writes that in an estimate conducted by the Strategic Assessment Group the United States is barely first withholding about 20% of the global power while the European Union holds 14%, same as China. They define national power as the collection of GDPs, population, defence spending, innovation, and technology. In this case, the European Union as a combined actor is not lagging behind the US by much. Clearly, the global power position of the United States is under constant pressure and margin of error is small.

On the other hand, if we define power as a driving force of nations in terms of interests then the concept would resemble the role not of an instrument but of an ultimate aim. According to which the actors within the international system final aim is the accumulation power and its preservation. Defensive realist Snyder (1984, p.461) claims

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6 The definition and measurement of power is contextual. It is without a doubt that there is no ranking number one country in the world from all aspects of power. If we compare power according to GDP per capita Luxemburg is ranked first (Statista, 2017), in case of global firepower strength (GFP, 2018) and in terms of largest economy (Smith, 2018) the United States is on top, while China has the highest population (Worldometers, 2018). In empirical studies these types of approaches are more frequently used to measure power. According to Jeffery Hart (1976) there are three basic approaches to measure power: 1) control over resources (discussed above), 2) control over actors (which essentially translates into influence), and 3) control over events and outcomes. He advocates the third choice claiming it takes into account interdependence and collective action and provides a more general approach to the measurement of power which I agree with.
that the most noticeable way to accumulate power, assuming that security is scarce, are by armament, territorial growth and alliance formation. Collard-Wexler (2006, p.400) highlights that states will use the following three actions to respond to threats of the balance: imitation to balance against the threat, boost their national assets and forming alliances. In the case of the US, we can observe two of the conditions mentioned above. Firstly, the US is applying imitation, stick instead of carrot, to get the European Union back in line which in turn threatens the post-World War Two liberal order and survival of NATO. Secondly, it does everything in its power to increase its own national assets through Trump’s claim of fair burden sharing and revision of several trade deals. The United States as a major power, in line with the defensive realist argument, in the past, has been trying to maintain their security by preserving the balance of power. The recent aggressive and competitive stance of the Trump administration is moving towards the provocation of the security dilemma. Jervis (1978, p.188) writes that the concept of the security dilemma in international politics is that the gain of one actor’s security will threaten another state. In a hope that such provocations would force the EU back in line is having a reverse effect and the opposite can and might be observed. Instead of returning to the pre-conflictual period the EU is only conceding partially to the pressure and instead purses its own agenda.

Whether we talk about the pursuit or maintenance of power and security the end result is bound to be a conflict either between adversaries or allies. Cantalapiedra (2009, p.120-121) writes that after the Cold War the US pre-eminence, which was accepted by their European allies, under the new normative framework started to be challenged as they searched for a new identity. Meaning that the European countries began to be more interested in a rule-based international order and a quest for their own identity and values which was previously hijacked by the values of the United States. The European Union, like all actors, is more interested in a predictable and safer situation.

1.3. A Policy of America First

The inauguration of Donald Trump marked the revival of slogan and rebirth of a foreign policy and domestic policy initiative first coined in the twentieth century. In his inaugural address Trump declared: “From this moment on, it’s going to be America First” (Trump, 2017). However, this catchphrase often used by the President and the notion of principled

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7 The EU’s foreign policy will be examined with more detail in Chapter 2 titled: An EU Foreign Policy.
realism behind it is not something new. Though the phrase itself can be traced back to the 1880s the meaning behind it saw a gradual development until 1915 when it was first used by a President of the United States. Sarah Churchwell in her book called Behold America: A History of America Fist and the American Dream highlights the speech of Woodrow Wilson in which he states: “Let us think of America before we think of Europe, in order that America may be fit to be Europe’s friend when the day of tested friendship comes” (Churchwell, 2018, p.44). Of course, at that time the balance of power within the European continent was in shock and involvement by the United States was inevitable as its predominance in the Western Hemisphere could only be maintained through peace and balance in Europe.

So how can we brand the “America First” of Trump’s administration? Hal Brands (2017, p.74) models it as a “nearly zero-sum approach that would actively roll back the post-war international order and feature heavy doses of unilateralism and latter-day isolationism”. The zero-sum and unilateral view approach of the Trump administration perfectly describes the meaning behind America First and the ardent rejection of internationalism does point towards an isolationist intention. However, it would be a mistake to brand Trump as an isolationist. The return to an inter-war isolationist characteristic would have catastrophic consequences on US foreign policy. Despite the strong rhetorical critic of NATO, Trump continues to reaffirm commitments and is not withdrawing from the security alliance as defence spending among European countries rose and US troop deployment increased on the border of the Baltic States. In comparison to Hal Brands branding Thompson (2017, p.4) sees the foreign policy initiative as an extension of domestic policy marking Trump as an aggressive nationalist, which resembles more of a Jacksonian tradition. Walter R. Mead (2017) in line with the Jacksonian tradition, identifies “America First” as an aim to fulfil the country’s destiny by looking after the security and wellbeing of the American people and not pursue the

8 A report by Niall McCharty (2017) in Statista shows that a total of 4,000 US troops and a US led battalion with heavy armoury including 250 tanks, Bradley Fighting vehicles and Paladin howitzers were deployed in the Baltic States.
9 Walter Russel Mead in his book titled Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World identifies four groups of American Foreign policy schools which has evolved throughout the century: Wilsonian, Jacksonian, Hamiltonian and Jeffersonians. Out of the four the Jacksonian tradition highlights populist values and military strength where the duty of the government is the protection of the well-being of the society at all cost combined with the protection of national honour and reputation (Mead, 2001, p.223-227).
preservation of European interests which clearly does not connect with the ordinary constituency.

As a foreign policy initiative America First, only functions if backed by a strong military, political, and economic power which is capable of deterring global threats to their interests. In 2016, Trump gave a speech on Foreign Policy where he referred to five weaknesses of the current American foreign policy which would be corrected by America First: overextension of resources, inequal burden sharing, reaffirming old friendship, loss of respect and incoherent foreign policy (Trump, 2016). What is the meaning behind these words? By overextension of resources, Trump referred to the various aids, funds, and contributions by the United States to organizations which the US does not directly benefit from or Trump sees an unequal share of burden and a free rider problem. According to Luisa Blanchfield (2018, p.10) in her Congressional Research Report, for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Trump requested $1.095 billion for the entire Contribution to International Organizations (CIO) account, a $372 million (25%) decrease from the enacted FY2018 funding of $1.467 billion. Therefore, Trump views the current international situation as a zero-sum game where the US is paying for the gain of other nations. Believing that the current perception of the US by other nations is the result of the loss of respect which is due to the Obama administration’s incoherent and soft power foreign policy.

Branded by the Trump administration as principled realism, America First holds true how international politics are conducted under the framework of realism. America First clearly resembles the staunch resilience to hierarchy and holds that there is no overarching power above the state that could prevent them from pursuing their self-interests. The

10 The CIO assesses US contribution to all together 45 international organizations including the UN to which they provide 22% of the UN regular budget. The same trend is observable regarding the Contributions for International Peacekeeping where for FY2019 the administration requested 13% decrease compared to the previous fiscal year (Blanchfield, 2018, p.11).

11 The National Security Advisor of Trump, John Bolton, was not afraid to condemn the announcement by the International Criminal Court to investigate US military personnel’s and stating that “The International Criminal Court unacceptably threatens American sovereignty and U.S. national security interests.” (Chapman & Chaudoin, 2018). Thus, clearly denouncing the power of a supranational body over the United States. Secretary of States Michael R. Pompeo delivered in December 2018 a speech titled Restoring the Role of the Nation-State in the Liberal International Order. In his speech Pompeo (2018) criticised the effectiveness of regional organizations, including the EU, as well as international organizations, questioning their representational authority and success. With regard to the US-ICC case the relationship between the two sides is quite rocky. As the US never joined the International Criminal Court, it does not have jurisdiction over it, as US feared their citizens would not be protected by their own constitution. Over time various administrations criticized the ICC and only the Obama administration tried to close the gap. The Bolton speech erupted because of the idea of ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announcing that she would request authorization from ICC judges for an investigation into the situation in Afghanistan. As Afghanistan is a signatory to the Rome Statues the court can claim jurisdiction over it, if there is a request
principled part of the phrase attempts to connect morality to the definition which guides the decision of the administration. Therefore, it forms a combination which states that America is now taking a principled stand against the exploitation of their power and will preserve the wellbeing and power of the nation at all cost. What we are experiencing is neither an extension of American dominance power, but its reassertion, nor the weakening of Transatlantic ties but it’s rearrangement.

2. **An EU Foreign Policy**

We have seen and analysed that the America First of the Trump administration holds true to the theory of realism that the state’s ultimate aim is the maximization of its power. Accordingly, the question arises whether we can talk about a foreign policy initiative branded as Europe First? In order to give an answer to such an idea, it is paramount to define the context and the functioning of the EU regarding foreign affairs. As mentioned before and greatly emphasized, the nature of the EU within the context of state-centric view of realism is peculiar. In the previous chapter, we concluded that due to the presence of a foreign policy interest of the EU we are capable of analysing it, to a limited scope, as a unitary actor. However, we failed to define what we meant and understood as the foreign policy of the European Union. Thus, leading us to one of the central debates of whether we can talk about an EU foreign policy or not.

Why a European Union foreign policy rather than a European foreign policy, as introduced by Brian White (2001, p.36-39)? White simply argues that “the EU is not a state and does not qualify as a foreign policy actor” (White, 2001, p.36). Contradictory to his argument the European Union, within the framework of this paper, is not present for investigation by the country or the UN Security Council, but neither has done (Synovitz, 2018). In contrast with the relationship between the US and International Court of Justice (ICJ), a United Nations main organ, the Nicaragua v. United States of America case of 1986 the Court found breaches of customary international law and humanitarian law. As a decision, the US was to pay reparations which they refused and vetoed any subsequent UN Security Council resolutions ordering them to comply. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick simply dismissed the court as a “semi-legal, semi-juridical, semi-political body, which nations sometimes accept and sometimes don’t.” (Allison, 2016). As we can see the US has a very firm stance on the protection of their sovereignty and their citizens persecutions which connect with the preservation of their image as a “superpower” who is always right.

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12 The phrase is not to be confused with the WWII strategy to subdue Nazi Germany first and after its fall the Allied forces will focus on Japan. The first mention of Europe First in the context of US-EU relations appeared in a Guardian article written by Martin Kettle (2018). Later, German Finance Minister and vice-chancellor Olaf Scholz also delivered a speech warning against following a “Europe First” policy but in this regard, he referred to the Brexit agreement not the transatlantic relations (Sims, 2018).

13 Searching online media and among academic articles as well there are abundant of sources contradicting and denying the existence of an EU foreign policy.
as an EU-as-actor but as a sui generis actor within the international realm with state-like characteristics. The objective of this chapter is to capture the foreign policy dimension of the European Union as present in the post-Lisbon treaty era not the development of Europe since the end of the Cold War, although the history of both goes hand in hand.

Several academics like Federiga Bindi and Hazel Smith attempted to identify and define the nature of the European Union’s foreign policy. The former defined a broader approach in a post-Lisbon era stating that they “understand foreign policy broadly as the strategy or approach chosen by a national government to achieve its goals in relation to external entities.” (Bindi & Shapiro, 2010, p.340). The latter provides a more specific definition of an EU foreign policy in a pre-Lisbon era. Smith found no alarming difficulties\(^\text{14}\) to the idea that the Union can possess a foreign policy similar to a nation-state. He defined foreign policy as the “capacity to make and implement policies abroad which promote the domestic values, interests and policies of the actor in question” (2002, p.7-8). Hazel’s interpretation, therefore, focuses on the effects of the foreign policy outcome itself and is more state-centric. The difference between the two interpretations of the EU’s foreign policy is that Bindi & Shapiro (2010, p.340) deliberately exclude the decision-making capacity of the EU regarding Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) from the definition so as to avoid confusion. Since, the deep examination of the capability and implementation process of the EU’s foreign policy would cause more confusion from the point of view of this paper, for the purpose of this analysis a fusion of both academic definitions will be used. More specifically, focusing on the approaches and strategies chosen by the two actors, which promote the domestic values, interests and policies of the actor in question, and the capacity of the EU to convert their ability to applicable power and influence in the international realm.

In the following parts of this chapter the paper will observe the functioning and the activity of the European Union’s foreign policy in the post-Lisbon realm. In order to better comprehend the strategies of the EU, the next subchapters will be focusing on the global approaches and strategies of the EU. They are trying to answer questions such as: What are the interests of the EU abroad? How did the interests of the EU develop according to

\(^{14}\) It is important to keep in mind that Hazel Smith’s detailed examination of the elements and structure of the European Union’s foreign policy was before the creation of the Lisbon Treaty. His analysis only included at that time the 15-member states of the European Union and the CFSP was in so called development and implementation phase and far from reaching its post-Lisbon interpretation.
strategic documents since 2003? How parts of the document criticize or support the US’s global role?

2.1. Global interests of the EU

If we accept the interpretation of the European Union’s foreign policy as a strategy or an approach chosen to promote the domestic values, interests and policies of the actor in question in relation to external entities, then it needs to be linked to the identification and pursuit of EU interests. Probably one of the greatest challenges in the European integration project and the framing of the EU’s foreign policy is defining the interests of those acting. To put it simply, as the European Union is a collection of member states, national foreign interests have the possibility to be ultimately at odds with EU’s foreign interests. These clashes were apparent in the quest for policy-making power between the Council and the Commission (Allan, 1998, p.44). This was gradually tackled step by step through the three pillars of the Single European Act (1985), the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) by identifying a Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) attempting to bridge the Commission and the Council through the position of Mr. CFSP, and finally the Lisbon Treaty (2007) introducing new mechanisms, enhancing cooperation and smoothing decision-making procedures. The Lisbon treaty also expanded the role of the High Representative with the three so called “HATS”. As per the Treaty of Lisbon, Article 18(2)(3)(4) of the TEU (2012, p. C326/26) the High representative presides over the Foreign Affairs Council, he or she is the Vice-President of the Commission and shall conduct the Union's common foreign and security policy.\footnote{According to High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini (2017) “the Lisbon Treaty provisions that give the High Representative three hats and not two, as the Vice-President of the Commission, as the High-Representative and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, and as the Head of the European Defence Agency”. Besides these roles the European External Action Service also reports to the High Representative. Strictly speaking the High Representative has three official functions as assigned by the TEU and also additional duties that come with the position itself.}

The complexity of defining EU interests can be observed through even the development and publications of strategic documents outlining security and defence interests. Starting from the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the development of a European Security and Defence Policy the European Union published only two documents with this regard and had three officeholders since the creation of the High Representative’s office: Javier Solana (1999-2009), Catherine Ashton (2009-2014), and Federica Mogherini (since 2014). Granted that during the term of Catharine Ashton
substantial time of the incumbent was spent implementing the European Union External Action Service and facing the post-Lisbon clashes between the EU institutions and the Member States in a so-called “turf war” (David & Smith, 2011, p.210). Compared to the publications by the United States of America, counting from 1993 which is the around the time of the introduction of the second pillar of the EU (the CFSP), altogether 13 National Security Strategy documents were published. During the time of five US administration\textsuperscript{16} and the length of 14 years, almost every president since 1993 introduced at least two National Security Strategies. This speaks volumes about the EU’s ability to perform as a global influencer. These documents not only serve as a compass of worldwide interests, goals, and objectives but also as indicators of the presence and readiness of the actor. Such evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the power of the EU would support the implementation of a strategy.

The global interests of the EU can be divided into different regions, each having different focus. The policy of the EU towards the North African and Middle Eastern (MENA) countries has two main objectives (Strategic Communication, 2016, Middle East and North Africa). Firstly, to encourage political and economic reform through the European Regional Policy. Secondly, to encourage regional cooperation within the region and with the EU. Due to geographical proximity the MENA region presents both an investment opportunity and a threat. With the migration crisis, the Union experienced that stability in the region is essential to stem the flow of migration into Europe. The relationship between Africa and EU date back to the 1963 Yaoundé Convention. Besides strong trade ties and promotion of development by the EU, stability is becoming a key factor for the EU in Africa. Currently there are five ongoing military and civilian operations in Africa under the framework of the CSDP (European Council, 2018). In Central Asia the Union aims to promote a stable socio-economic development and advocate the Sustainable Development Goals. These are more in line with the civilian power aspect of the EU. Although the enlargement process has been slowed down, it still remains an important part of the EU regional interests especially in the Western Balkans. Besides the political and economic relations with the region, security and stability is also a cornerstone of its Western Balkan policy, as EU missions are deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR/Althea) and Kosovo (EULEX) (Strategic Communication, 2016, 2018).

\textsuperscript{16} However, especially in recent years, this trend is not observable. “According to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986, the President must submit a report on the national security strategy of the United States to Congress each year.” (National Security Strategy Archive, 2019).
Western Balkans). Interests in the Latin America and the Caribbean region are more economic in nature with heavy investment in research and innovation coupled with a political dialogue though sub-regional organizations such as the Andean Community and Mercosur. Anything further than an economic dialogue would not be perceived kindly by the US within the region. The economic and military relations with North America are coupled with a strong push for closer ties in climate change. The EU-Canada Strategic Partnership and the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement are just few of the examples of close ties of the EU with not just the US but Canada as well with whom they can promote the rules-based international order and strengthen the multilateral system (Joint Cooperation Committee, 2018, p.1).

As mentioned in the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy, an “EU foreign policy is not a solo performance: it is an orchestra which plays from the same score.” (Shared Vision, Common…, 2016, p.46). To help us define the melody of the Union’s foreign policy orchestra the paper turns to the interpretation and analysis of two major publications that are created to show and communicate the strategic interests of actors within the international system: the European Security Strategy of 2003 and the most recent strategy publication called the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy introduced in 2016. The following documents can both be regarded as steps to define the identity of the EU or a reaction to global events that pushed for a redefinition of the EU as a political actor combined with internal crisis management (Malksoo, 2016, p.3-5).

2.2. European Security Strategy (ESS)

The publication of the A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy (2003) brought a defining step towards the development of the Union within the global security complex and shaped its involvement within the international system. The document was formulated under the guidance of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. In terms of historical context by December 2003 the invasion of Iraq was already concluded, and the EU was recovering from the shattered image it projected during the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. Therefore, the importance of clearly defining EU political and economic interests abroad was much
needed and lacking, including strengthening the damaged transatlantic relationship due to the Iraq situation\(^\text{17}\) (Balla, 2017, p.4).

The document itself is fairly short, 15 pages total, and gives a general guideline about the stance of the European Union on global affairs and identifying the key dangers the Union faces. The main threats identified, which the paper will refer to as the Big 5, are terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime. These create the cornerstone of the first strategy document of the European Union. However, there are several subcategories which are identified as parts of the global challenge basket, such as the competition for natural resources and the energy dependency and diversification issues\(^\text{18}\). Naturally, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the document had a heavy emphasis on terrorism and terrorists, mentioning the word over 18 times during the 14 pages meaning that the word is mentioned at least on every page. The rest of the Big 5 yield almost similar results with organized crime mentioned 12 times, proliferation 7 times, regional conflict 5 times and state failure only 4 times. Therefore, very much reflecting on which present a greater threat to the Union and stressing a very similar viewpoint of the US administration under Bush. With regard to the EU and US cooperation, the document puts a heavy emphasis on the effectiveness of the two forces for the good of the world. It acknowledges the important role of the US in the European integration process and aiming for a more effective and balanced partnership.

The diplomatic ambitions of the Union as a mediator were already developing through its Middle Eastern policy. Back in 2003 it was very much focused on the Arab/Israel conflict and the promotion of the two-state solution. Surprisingly, what the document missed to reflect on or define was the situation in Iraq and its invasion, 8 months prior to the publication of this document, which very much split the EU inside. The ESS (A Secure Europe…, 2003, p.8) mentions the regional conflict under the chapter 18 Energy dependency and diversification remains a key cornerstone of the EU foreign policy goals and interests (e.g. European Energy Security Strategy) serving as a defining trait in the US-EU-Russia energy debate triangle.  

\(^\text{17}\) The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 resulted in a strain of transatlantic ties and conflicting views within the EU among Member States as well. According to Hoffmann (2003, p.15) the preparation and the prosecution of the war against Iraq that sparked the rift in the Alliance. The US and UK received opposition within NATO from Germany and France and a few others, especially neutral countries unwilling to send troops abroad. He continued to highlight that when the US failed to gain enough support in NATO, they made use of the bilateral agreements between the United States and European countries to form the ad hoc coalition of the willing. The continuous fights within the UN Security Council between the UK, US and France divided the Union even more (Hoffmann, 2003, p.19).  

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titled “Building Security in our Neighbourhood” where it stresses that it is in the European interest that countries on their borders are well-governed and the resolution of the conflict is a strategic priority. Although there is no specific mention of it in the document anywhere what is observable is the development of a policy frequently used by the United States. That is, the security of Europe depends on their willingness of and ability to perform abroad. This marked the rise of European interests and a quest for the promotion for a more effective multilateral world system. Traces of global aspiration by the EU was beginning to emerge pushing for a multilateral and a rule-based world order.

After five years of the implementation of the ESS, a Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy was introduced by Brussels in December 2008. The aim of the report was to assess the changes in global challenges, to reinforce the ESS and improve its implementation (EEAS Strategic Planning, 2008). It can be viewed as addition or expansion of the ESS, pushing the EU to adapt in an ever-changing environment. In what ways did the report expand the ESS? The Big 5 security threats identified in the ESS were being transformed into variables contributing to specific problems happening around the world. While the original document outlines general security threats, the report started emphasizing on not just general challenges the EU could face in the future but specific conflicts endangering European security and interests. In case of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction three countries are mentioned: Libya, North Korea and Iran. Out of the three Libya was acknowledged as the only participant who made progress in dismantling while the other two were identified as threats to the multilateral framework. Pertaining to terrorism and organized crime the term counter appeared within the framework of the document rather than fighting, meaning that the aggressive warlike terms such as the fight against terrorism was gradually being replaced by the term counter. The report also emphasized the energy security paradigm of the EU as well as adding and elaborating on additional challenges. Cybersecurity and climate change were also introduced by the report with special emphasis on climate change as a “threat multiplier” (EEAS Strategic Planning, 2008, p.5).

In connection with the development of an EU foreign policy, the European Security Strategy marked a milestone in the building of the Union’s global political and security identity. The post-Cold War era brought challenges having the same effects on countries as well as on defence organizations, like NATO, which had to redefine their strategic
goals and interests and adapt in a rapidly changing world, where threats became multidirectional and multipolar. It is, therefore, no surprise that such a *sui generis* actor like to EU is prone to suffer from cases of anxiety as a security actor with a substantial global reach (Malksoo, 2016, p.375). Which brings us to the creation of the next strategical document published by the EU in 2016 in the minds of another “anxiety attack” wave.

### 2.3. European Union Global Strategy (EUGS)

When the new High Representative, Federica Mogherini, took office in 2014 the EU was just at the end of recovering from a eurozone crisis. In the early months, it was facing a conflict with Russia regarding the illegal annexation of Crimea, and a wave of nationalism was spreading across Europe coupled with a migration crisis starting and slowly escalating in 2013. The publication of the EUGS in June 2016 coincided with the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the EU. Forging unity and preserving security within the EU became a priority and is very much reflected in the tone of the document calling for a stronger European Union like never before.

The document opens with a foreword by the High Representative herself addressing that the partners of the European Union expect them to play a major role as a global security provider. This sets the EU’s Global Strategy at direct collision with the US influence and interests both within the European continent and as we will see in the Middle East as well. The term strategic autonomy coined in the text marks another milestone in the transformation of the EU’s economic power to political influence. To understand the phrase itself, it is important to define what autonomy is. The Oxford dictionary defines autonomy as “*the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else*” (Hey & Holloway, 2015, p.89). Therefore, the phrase strategic autonomy, tries to suggest that the Union and its Member States are ready to define their own security identity and interests outside of the United States interests. However, at the same time, the document also highlights the relationship and cooperation between the US and the EU through the Atlantic Alliance, specifically NATO, in terms of defence. Thus, the EUGS does not wish its alienation from the US support and relations but finding a middle ground between autonomy and dependence. According to Biscop’s (2016, p.94) interpretation, this position is the construction of a European pillar that enables “*Members States to act with the US where possible and without US assets when necessary*”. Coupled
with strategic autonomy, the EUGS continues to promote a rule-based and multilateral world order by taking cheap shots at the US global position with hidden criticism such as “This is no time for global policemen and lone warriors.” (Shared Vision, Common…, 2016, p.4).

The EU itself pursues a unique approach to tackle challenges in a complex, connected and contested world today. In contrast to the US NSS of 2017 which rests on principled realism, the values which guide the external actions of the EU are defined as principled pragmatism. This views the global environment from a realist perspective and pursues idealistic values for a better world. The idiom used by the text to better describe it is “between the Scylla of isolationism and the Charybdis of rash interventionism” (Shared Vision, Common…, 2016, p.16) which derives from the ancient Greek mythology of choosing between two monsters or in modern terms to choose between two evils. Thus, aiming for a more cautious approach to handle international conflicts. The debate whether the EU is a normative, civilian, hard or soft power is rather split between academics. The EUGS rejects the civilian power exclusiveness of the Union and rather suggest a combination of both soft and hard power. Joseph S. Nye (2007, p.62) defines soft power as the way to get others to want what you want through the attraction by a set of ideas or ideology. Hard power, on the other hand, is the complete opposite which relies on the so-called game of carrot (inducements) and sticks (threats). The application of hard power practice by the EU is not something of a new phenomenon since, as an economic power it frequently applied and applies sanctions (e.g. Russia and Iran before the JCPOA). The US applied the same method of combination of hard and soft power during the Cold War as the idea of democracy was very attractive, but the military might of the US was always developing.

In terms of content, compared to the 2003 ESS, the EUGS covers universal problems in a global world through 60 pages which, if compared to a US NSS, almost the same size and can truly be regarded as a strategic document. The EU took the implementation of the strategy a step further compared to the ESS. The Big 5 threats outlined in the ESS were either expanded or transformed in the EUGS. Under the Global Strategy the list of threats is almost inexhaustible, which includes terrorism, hybrid threats, climate change, energy and cyber security, economic volatility, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fragility of governments in the surrounding areas, migration, and the Ukrainian conflict. All these challenges and threats represent an obstacle to the shared
interest of the Union. The previous Big 5 are still present with terrorism, organized crime and stability of neighbouring countries taking much of the spotlight. However, the others are still existing and continue to symbolise a threat to the unity of the Union and its interests abroad. In line with the continuation of these shared interest and common values since the publication of the strategy, the European Union External Action Service, to-date, has issued two annual reports with regard to the implementation the EU Global Strategy. The reports provide a comprehensive summary of the actions of the EU and its institutions under the global strategy. Thus, these can be interpreted as a progress and continued commitment to increase the potential of the Union and transforming the vision of the EUGS into action and applicable power.

3. **Divergence and converge in the transatlantic relations**

When students of International Relations hear the term transatlantic, they usually associate it with US and EU relations and the Atlantic Alliance. The basic dictionary definition of term transatlantic in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is defined as “relating to or involving countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and especially the U.S. and Great Britain” (Merriam-Webster, 2019). In comparison, the academic definition introduced by John Peterson and Mark A. Pollack (2003, p.1) define the term “transatlantic” not as the European-American (or British) relations but rather a reference to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which is the primary channel for information exchange between the two sides of the Atlantic. However, exclusively under this chapter the term transatlantic will be used to describe the economic, political and security relations between the United States and the European Union with its current 28 member states.

At the centre of the divergence and convergence of interests between the two actors lies the important concept of perception of each actor by the other. In the previous chapter I have highlighted that, on the one hand, under the vision of the European Union’s Global Strategy the US is perceived as both a partner and an exploiter of European dependence. The US is seen as a partner with regard to security and defence of the continent, but the EU also recognizes the need for greater autonomy for its Member States from US influence. To simply put it the EU wants to be less dependent on the US but does not want

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19 As per the rapid change and development, including the uncertainty of the Brexit process the UK will be considered as part of the European Union.
to weaken the relationship. On the other hand, the United States and especially the Trump administration makes a clear distinction in which categories they address the EU or the European states. The National Security Strategy (2017, p.48-49) regarding regional context defines four different threats Europe is facing. Firstly, identifying Russia as the menace that threatens transatlantic unity by undermining the credibility of American commitment. Secondly, the strategy highlights China as the economic usurper investing in key economies and expanding its influence. The third and fourth threats are identified as terrorism, namely ISIS, and migration from the Middle East and Africa. Both the EU, as the paper covered previously, and the US sees NATO as a mutually beneficial friendship. From the point of view of the NSS, Europe is perceived as a partner that “increase our strategic reach and provide access to forward basing and overflight rights for global operations.” (United States of America, Department of State, 2017, p.48).

There is a dependency that could be read between the lines, which assumes the benefit Europe receives from this partnership but also recognizes the global reach and power of the US is dependent on the partnership and capabilities the European states provide. The only instance when the document addresses the EU as an institution is when it comes to economic relations in all other cases, military and political, the subjects of the matter are the European states. Thus, showing that the US does not perceive the EU as a unitary global actor in terms of security and defence yet.

The following part of the chapter will take a look at the stability of the transatlantic framework and the factors contributing to the cyclical nature of conflicts between the two sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, it seeks to find answers to questions about: What specific interests’ conflict on a regular basis? Is there a danger of collapsing transatlantic relations? What interests push for the enhancement of cooperation between the two sides?

3.1. Cycles of divergence

Xenia Wickett (2018, p.v) writes in her report that the divergent factors in the transatlantic relations such as capabilities, political polarization, leadership personalities and economics are all cyclical in nature. Meaning that they can both be real or superficial fears and are always reoccurring with the possibility to reverse them with concrete steps. The aim of this chapter is to highlight that the Trump administration is not bringing in

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20 This viewpoint changes in 2018 when according to the Integrated Country Strategy on the US Mission to the European Union the alignment of foreign policy should be done with the EU not European states.
new grievances into the alliance but rather takes a strong stance on old grievances. The real question is whether we reached a point in the history of transatlantic relations that leads to both sides rethinking their allegiances.

These recent divergences and conflicts with regard to the transatlantic alliance are not something new. They were already highlighted in the 1960s by Stanley Hoffmann in his article titled the European Process at Atlantic Cross Purposes. Hoffmann (1964, p.86) stated that back then, and even today, the international system is one of competition for power where persists a hierarchy of strong and weak. By nature, weak states have a motivation to rise, consequently, within the Transatlantic framework, we are bound to observe divergence and convergence of interests. He envisaged the evolution of a united Europe as a rise of an iceberg. Hoffmann’s (1964, p.87) metaphor describes the Western European experiment as an iceberg evolving from the depths of the ocean which the US is trying to control and tame aware of the challenges it would post for them in the future. The same iceberg metaphor can be observed today and can be explained by the security dilemma and the desire of actors within the international system to control and influence others. However, the rise of the European iceberg is a linear increase with little stagnations, resulting from internal crises within the European Union. The role of the US is one of a mitigator that wishes to preserve the world order it created after the Second World War and continued to preserve after the Cold War. The multilateral rule-based order pursuit of the European Union poses a nuisance in this case as such an order would benefit the EU more than the US as a global influencer. The debate around whether such a world order can be kept and preserved is highly controversial. From a realist perspective such a vision is doomed to fail due to the individual interests of states continuously colliding. The institutions under such a framework (UN, WTO, JCPOA, NATO, etc...) can only function efficiently if the willingness of global influencers to interact within such a system is high. The moment it becomes less efficient or profitable for such global influencers to maintain their position under this framework they will withdraw, which would possibly result in the weakening or collapse of the institutions.

If we observe transatlantic relations during the Obama administration, we can generally state that it resulted in a quality improvement in terms of perception compared to that of the Bush administration. According to Hanhimäki et al. (2012, p.170) the popularity of Obama saw increased the positive perception of American leadership
among the Europeans (see Figure 1). While during both the Bush and Trump administration we can observe a drastic drop and a very low level among key Western European allies and European partners (see Figure 2). This is partly due to the policy pursued by the Obama administration to apply soft power rather than hard power and follow multilateral approach instead of unilateral one. The foreign policy initiatives, such as nuclear non-proliferation and climate change policies followed by Obama were much more in line with European interests and values. However, this does not mean that both sides agreed on everything. Even today, the Russian-EU relations remain soft spot of the transatlantic relations. When in 2014, Russian annexed Crimea the united front presented by the EU-US on the stance of sanctions was not so united. It is important to highlight that the European Union, even today, and many of its Members States largely depend on Russian supply of energy. Although energy diversification is at the top of the agenda of the EU the problem is that market forces and prices do not give any other affordable alternative for its Member States. The only reason that sanctions remained in place from the European side was due to the fact that countries such as Poland and the Baltic states feared Russian expansionism more than the economic losses (Wicket, 2018, p.17). If we look at policies to battle global warming, the withdrawal of the US from the Paris agreement is not a surprising step from their part as the Bush administration also decided to reject the Kyoto Protocol in 2001.

The unilateral approach of the Trump administration has clear negative consequences on the relationship and the cohesion of the alliance. After the inauguration of Donald Trump, the European Political Strategy Centre (2017, p.7-8) issued a brief on the Trump presidency and initiative about how to deal with possible actions taken by the US administration. Based on the report, the most important part was how should the EU should respond to any immediate challenge posed by the United States. In case of a possible lifting of sanctions on Russia the EU should maintain its stance and keep the sanctions. In case of a US-China trade war the EU has no need to sympathise with the US administration’s trade offense and should take steps to ensure the preservation of the multilateral framework established by the World Trade Organization. With regards to the

21 See Figure 1 and 2 on page 39.
22 On 12 March 2019, the European Commission issued a press release where it refers to and acknowledges China as an economic competitor and a systemic rival. However, this does not mean the EU aligns itself with the US offensive policy but rather aims to address issues. The joint communication issued aims to reaffirm commitments of both sides ranging from the JCPOA, security of digital infrastructures, economic development and investment, and climate change (European Commission, 2019).
Paris climate agreement it suggest that, again, it should maintain its position regarding its preservation. Finally, and probably the most important from an EU perspective is the deceleration and willingness to preserve the JCPOA while seeking allies within the Trump administration to mitate the effects of the decision. Over the past two years the EU still stands firmly on preserving the world order it developed together with the US during the Obama administration, clearly signalling the readiness to promote its own interests with or without US backing.

It must be highlighted again that the current rifts in the transatlantic alliance are not something of a new phenomenon. Since 1945 both economic and political crises emerged, for example the Suez Crisis (1956), invasion of Iraq (2003) or issues regarding steel tariffs (2002), yet the partnership survived. However, since 1945 the global economic structure and the security environment has dramatically changed. The economic dependence of the EU on the US transformed into more of a partnership. In the security realm there is still dependence but in terms of defence expenditure and share of equipment the EU as a united front is improving. Therefore, political polarization and leadership personality are becoming increasingly important variables in terms of transatlantic ties. The political party alignment of the president has a clear effect on transatlantic ties. During a Democratic Party presidency (Bill Clinton and Barack Obama) we can observe a friendlier approach while in cases of Republican presidents (George W. Bush and Donald J. Trump) the Atlantic alliance goes through a crisis contributing to the cyclical nature of divergence.

3.2. A Diplomatic rift

An interesting case that highlights the difference between Obama’s and Trump’s attitude towards the EU and represent a good case for the cyclical divergence then convergence is the EU’s rank within the US Diplomatic Corps Order of Precedence.

Originally the diplomatic representation of the European Union in the US began in 1954 with a small two-person information office for the European Coal and Steel Community. Today the Delegation of the European Union consists of around 90 staff members, 30 of whom are EU diplomats working in close coordination with the Embassies and Consulates of the 28 EU Member States (Press delegation and information…, 2017). The task of the Delegation is to represent the EU in matters where the Member States have agreed that their interests will be represented collectively. From
2014 the EU was represented by David O’Sullivan until March 2019 when he was replaced by Stavros Lambrinidis who previously served as the European Union Special Representative for Human Rights (Press delegation and information…, 2017). The circumstance under which the replacement happened and how it is connected to the diplomatic rank of the EU is a very peculiar situation that resulted in a public outcry from the side of the European Union.

On 8th January 2019 German broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW), reported that the US State Department downgraded the EU delegation's diplomatic status in Washington from member state to international organization (Knigge, 2019). Originally the diplomatic rank of the European Union to the US was one of an international organization meaning that according to the US Diplomatic Corps Order of Precedence the EU Ambassador came after the heads of state representatives. Therefore, the EU was at the same level as the African Union. The position was upgraded during the Obama administration in 2016 where the head of the EU delegation is listed as an ambassador, or head of diplomatic mission (Smith, 2019). The situation is peculiar since the nature of the EU is still debated even within the European Union. Such a promotion signals more of a “statehood” interpretation of the Union as well as, according to my interpretation, a recognition of a unique role as a global influencer and actor. The recent demotion by the Trump administration was a move that could not have been predicted even if the signs were clear regarding the position of Trump and Mike Pompeo on multilateral institutions and the EU. What is certain that the demotion of the EU mission back to the original position was unwelcome and was not communicated through any official channels sparking a huge outcry from the side of the EU.

Nature of why the Trump administration decided on such a symbolic move is still foggy. The first signal regarding the demotion of the EU’s Ambassador was during the funeral of George HW Bush when O’Sullivan was only called up after all heads of diplomatic missions. It was unusual since under normal circumstances the EU representative is placed among the first few ambassadors to be called up after its 2016 promotion. On the one hand, such unprecedented signalling could be connected with the recent divergence and rift in the transatlantic alliance regarding the nuclear proliferation, trade or burden sharing. Serving as a sign that the current US administration holds a sharply different view from the previous administration and showing their displeasure through diplomatic moves. On the other hand, the altercation between the two sides might
be because of David O’Sullivan, who has been faithfully serving the EU interests though thick and thin for five years. It is possible that his style of negotiation was not favoured by Washington and Trump wanted a fresh face behind the Union’s interest. This would explain why after the presentation of credentials of Stavros Lambrinidis on 1st March 2019 was met with a move by the United States just three days later restoring the position of the EU delegation equivalent of bilateral mission. Following the restoration Ambassador Sondland stated that, “The European Union is a uniquely important organization, and one of America’s most valuable partners in ensuring global security and prosperity. (...) this level of engagement and cooperation should be recognized appropriately in all settings.” (USEU Mission, 2019). Whatever the reasons may be, political, protocol, or confusion within the White House, it was a clear first sign that Washington will not tolerate the EU’s divergence from the interests of the US.

Hence, these cyclical factors that contribute to the divergence will always be present and debated under each US presidency and the only difference would be the approach they take to handle disagreements. The critical factors that could lead to long term structural divergences within the transatlantic relationship can derive form three main factors: demographics, resources and international institutions (Xenia, 2018, p.v.). From the point of view of this paper the most important critical factor is international institutions which is comprised of institutions, treaties and norms, such as NATO, JCPOA. On the one hand, NATO plays the role of a traditional institution and has a significant impact on the defence, security, development of EU enlargement, and transatlantic ties. On the other hand, the JCPOA is something of a unique and new agreement which does not necessarily resemble the cohesion between the sides but the differences in terms of their regional interests.

4. Cases of common and conflicting interests

Since the inauguration of Donald Trump, the US Mission to the European Union headed by Ambassador Gordon D. Sondland, from June 2018 prioritized on four mission objectives: transatlantic economy, enhancement of European security, defence and resilience, alignment of foreign policy approaches, and set conditions for advancing US priorities. (United States of America, Department of State, 2018, p.6). The core of the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for the US Mission to the European Union is based on “Mission Goal 2: European partner enhance US security defence and resilience”, and
“Mission Goal 3: US and EU foreign policy approaches are aligned, and the EU supports U.S. foreign policy priorities” (United States of America, Department of State, 2018, p.6). These core elements resemble the dependence of US on Europe as an indispensable ally. Consequently, it is in the best interest of US foreign policy to prevent the rise of an EU “iceberg” that can lead to the development of a global actor that is not 100% in line with US interests. While at the same time, the US wants to decrease the vulnerabilities of the EU to other global actors such as China and Russia.

The following subchapter will look at two cases encompassing specific mission areas of the US towards the European Union, namely enhancement of European security and alignment of foreign policy approaches. The first subchapter will take a closer look at the cooperation of EU-NATO and whether the EU is an international security actor. Reiterating how the Atlantic Alliance serves as a preferential platform for individual EU member states’ defence policies. Aiming to answer question such as: Is the Atlantic Alliance coming to its inevitable demise? Can the US suspend its membership? Does the Trump administration have the right to ask for bigger burden sharing? The second subchapter will take a look at the Iran nuclear deal and the reasons why the European Union did not withdraw together with the US. Can the deal be maintained without the US for a longer period? Will the EU eventually yield to US pressure? Is the JCPOA a signal that the EU is ready to take a bigger geopolitical role? Who gains more from the Iran nuclear deal?

4.1. NATO: anchor or support?

Dubbed as one of the most successful security organizations ever created, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded in 1949, has been around for 70 years. It has now 29 member states, out of which 22 are members of the European Union. The traditionally neutral countries like Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and since 2008, Malta also participate in NATO-EU meetings as they are the members of the NATO’s

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23 One of the mission objectives under Mission Objective 3.3 of the ICS (2018, p.16) is to “maintain transatlantic unity on Northern Asia policy to uphold current rules and institution-based international order”. The justification for this is to prevent China from becoming increasingly assertive on the global stage attempting to undermine, re-write international rules and norms for its own political agenda. This stance is quite interesting since the US, who for the past three years, have withdrawn from the JCPOA and the Paris climate agreement, reformed NAFTA and is assertively engaging in trade disputes. The real question is of course why, and one could speculate whether this for the reason of countering China and Russia or to increase US assertiveness on the global stage.

24 This number will soon change with the accession of the Republic of North Macedonia following the historical name change in 2018.
One of the challenges of analysing the common and conflicting interests of the EU and the US within the framework of NATO has many layers. Firstly, as outlined before, not all members of the Union are members of the Alliance. Secondly, every Member State of the EU within NATO primarily promotes their individual interests not of the Union’s\(^{26}\). Collective defence is still a problematic integration area of the EU as NATO remains the primary framework for it (Shared Vision, Common…, 2016, p.20). Evaluating individual assertion of interests of members within NATO would be unfit regarding the scope of the paper and should deserve a more detailed and deeper-level analysis, which is further limited by the structural limitations of this paper. From the perspective of this paper the topics of European defence capability development and NATO burden sharing would be more suitable to highlight any underlying cases of common and conflicting interests. Therefore, providing a more productive framework under which US and EU interests can be analysed.

Morgenthau (1997, p.203) attributes a separate section to the nature of alliances, whereby he distinguishes five ways, how an interest of a state could be expressed through an alliance: their basic nature and relationship, distribution of benefits and power, contribution to the total interest, contribution in terms of time, and effectiveness. He continues to remark that as a consequence we can distinguish alliances such as general and limited, temporary and permanent, serving identical or divergent ideological interests or policies. Thus, concluding that we can attribute three functions to an alliance. Firstly, an alliance can be a tool for the accumulation of power. Secondly, it can function as a response to an outside threat. Last but not least, it can serve as a balancing power which in return can limit national power. Under which category NATO falls depends on the perception of its individual member states and their individual interests. For example, in the case of the United States it is twofold. Primarily, it serves as an extension and accumulation of power though the member states of the alliance. Secondly, its traditional function is to deter any aggressiveness of the Russian Federation or China in the future.

\(^{25}\) Cyprus is not a PfP member and does not have a security agreement with NATO. Based on the exchange of classified documents, Cyprus cannot participate in official NATO-EU meetings. This is a consequence of decisions taken by NATO in December 2002. Informal meetings including Cyprus take place occasionally at different levels. (NATO, 2019)

\(^{26}\) Even differing views can arise within the Alliance among EU member states as we have seen regarding the Iraq invasion of 2003 and the uneven support the US received from its European counterparts.
For European member states it again differs based on their relative power position within the international system.

If we follow Morgenthau’s line of thought, then the current US interest are expressed through the criticism of contribution to the total interest and distribution of the benefits. During the 2016 US presidential campaign and after taking office Trump has been a very vocal critic of burden sharing and urging the European states to contribute more to NATO. Again, it must be highlighted that this demand from Washington is not new as it has been repeated again and again by Presidents since 1953 such as Dwight Eisenhower, Kennedy and Nixon (S.R. 570, 2018, p.2) and even Obama. The only way the approach of Trump is different is that he is more aggressive and very vocal through various spectrums of social media platforms. Trump’s claims rotate around Europe not pulling their weight when it comes to NATO spending and contributions (Sullivan & Qiu, 2018). From a strictly fiscal point of view NATO budget and contributions can be rather confusing. To put it simply, NATO Allies contribute to the annually agreed civilian and military budget based on already agreed cost-sharing formula based on Gross National Income (GNI). Based on this formula Figure 3 clearly shows that the US contributes a little over 22% of the total budget which is clearly not even close to the claimed 90%. The EU22 contribution is around 65% which is almost double the amount non-EU countries contribute including the US. Meaning that two-thirds of the costs under the principle of common contribution of NATO are bore by EU members. For FY2019 the Alliance agreed on a civilian and military budget of total €1.645 billion (NATO, 2018, NATO agrees 2019…, ) out of which €1.069 billion is from the European Union members. It seems that as a common actor the EU does carry its weight within the Alliance. Whether it is fair to ask for higher contribution especially from smaller states is certainly not just a security but rather an economical question as well. The 2% guideline does seem as a reasonable request as it resembles commitment not just through membership but through actual tangible resources. Since much of the capabilities of NATO derive form the contribution of equipment of member states having compatible, up-to-date, technology and equipment is essential for joint operations.

This leaves us with the question of necessity. If we have a successfully functioning security alliance based on collective defence, in which EU substantially contributes to,

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27 See Figure 3 on page 40. The V4 countries are represented in order to show the unevenness of distribution within the European Union in terms of NATO contributions based on the principle of common funding.
should the EU really be pursuing further integration under the framework of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)? The nature of NATO basically answers the question itself. NATO without a doubt is a project highly dependent on and influenced by the US, without which there would not be much incentive to maintain it unless the EU decides to step up and take over the leading role. To-day under the framework of the EU and its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) there are numerous projects and agencies contributing to capability development and defence modernization. I argue that if the EU wishes to evolve into a truly independent international security and defence actor it needs balance out the strength projected by the US. According to Trady (2018, p.123) one of the issues is that “CSDP military operations have tended to be more about projecting security outside of the EU area than about “defending” EU member states or citizens, let alone balancing the US”. As long as the EU cannot balance out the US it is unable project any kind of strength that shows it can defend its Member States. Furthermore, shaping of the military realm of the EU is marked by a long and demanding fight within the Union. How to and under what conditions or institutions could the EU project a military power deeply divides the community. In short, as noted by Biscop (2017, p.4), “The problem is that Member States have been unwilling to seriously discuss the military level of ambition. Moreover, the structures make it very difficult to discuss the overall European rather than a separate EU and NATO level of ambition”. However, recently one of the success of the CSDP was the creation of a treaty-based framework named Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) that enables the deepening of defence cooperation within the EU. Launched in 2017, PESCO’s most important component is binding commitments of its participants and accountability creating a unique form of cooperation (Tardy, 2018, p.128). What the future holds for PESCO is still uncertain, but it shows development, however cautious it may be, towards defining a military level integration and a path towards a global military actor. Therefore, the US standpoint on the EU’s “military power”, like a coin, has two sides. One side criticizes the EU for not pulling their weight in global military burden sharing while the other side reacts strongly to any military plans that might threaten US pre-eminence (Sinkin, 2004, p.96).

Pertaining to the stability of NATO and possible dissolution it is important to mention that the Atlantic Alliance is an important channel that brings the EU and the US together on specific fields of cooperation and serves identical ideological interests. Due
to the fact, that it is increasingly being perceived as an organization unable to meet today’s challenges, it inherently weakens the cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic. Although there are speculations about the future of NATO with regard to US commitment and possible US withdrawal there are actions being taken within the US Congress to prevent such a mistake. On 25th June 2018, Congress legislature H.R. 6530 was introduced to the US House of Representatives. The legislative initiative titled as NO NATO Withdrawal Act states that the President cannot unilaterally withdraw from NATO and “to reject any efforts to withdraw the United States from NATO, either directly or through condemnation of the organization” (H.R. 6530, 2018, p.4). Subsequently, the Bill was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services where it is debated before sending it to the House of Representatives28 (Congress.gov, 2018). Although the bill never became a law it shows that while Trump may have a different view on NATO, domestic American support is still present making it unlikely that US will withdraw or leave NATO any time soon.

4.2. JCPOA: clear collision of US-EU interests

As stated by Sinkin (2004, p. 98), the Middle East is an excellent example of US-EU divergence. When analysing the European Security Strategy of 2003, it was evident that the Middle East, especially the question of Palestine and Israel29, plays a unique role in the EU’s foreign policy. The invasion of Iraq showed a small fraction of the collision of the EU and US in the region. Although there are shared interests, for example stability in the region, prevention of nuclear Iran, halting its long-range missile capability, and promotion of human rights (Brustlein et al., 2018, p.2), the methods do differ. The history and development of the JCPOA from its turbulent beginning to its signing is important and interesting from both US and EU perspective. However, it does not play an essential role in this paper. What is important is the central role played by the EU, even after the withdrawal of the US and the reason why the Union is more invested in maintaining it.

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28 A bill must be passed by both the House and Senate before it can be signed by the President to become law. This bill was introduced in the 115th Congress, which met from Jan 3, 2017 to Jan 3, 2019 but was never voted on.

29 On 25 March 2019, Trump issued a Presidential Proclamation on Recognizing the Golan Heights as Part of the State of Israel. The following day on behalf of the current EU Members of the Security Council (Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom) the Belgian ambassador stated that they do not recognize Golan Heights to be part of the territory of the State of Israel and that the EU’s status on Golan Heights has not changed despite the unprecedent step by the US that would raise strong concerns over recognizing illegal annexation (EU Members on…, 2019).
The 20th July 2015 marked a historical progress and a milestone in a 12-year long negotiation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the representatives of the international community (permanent members of the UN Security Council + Germany) with the EU serving as a mediator. Resolution 2231 was adopted by the UN Security Council endorsing the JCPOA and calling upon all Member States, regional organizations and international organizations to support its implementation (United Nations Security Council, 2015, p.2). Following the conclusion of the agreement, it was evident that the success of the deal viewed differently from both sides of the Atlantic. While the Obama administration lacked domestic and political support, with Iran suffering from the same diagnosis, that he could only outmanoeuvre with an executive order the EU and its member states celebrated the historical progress (Adebahr, 2017, p.3). The Union did deserve this celebration, as it demonstrated its diplomatic power as well as the ability to coordinate and convince its Member States to show a united front during negotiations. From the side of the EU incentives were not lacking to achieve and maintain the deal. The US perspective however was something different, viewing the JCPOA as inherently flawed and a bad deal. Therefore, it was not a surprise that in May 2018 Trump announced that the US withdraws from the JCPOA and will restore various sanctions. The decision in Washington was challenged by both Iran and the EU stressing that each will continue to remain committed in maintaining the nuclear deal. The declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU following US President Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal stated that, “the EU will remain committed to the continued full and effective implementation of the nuclear deal” and “The EU is determined to work with the international community to preserve it.” (European Council, 2018). It is clear now that the EU is unwilling to give up 12 years of work and has different interests in the region in an intra- and post-JCPOA realm.

The interests of the EU in Iran revolve around two main areas: security and economics. Despite sanctions and deterioration of relationships, Iran still remains a key regional actor within the Middle East which cannot be ignored. Based on its geographic location it provides an alternative trade route between the east and the west, with access to Europe and Asia (Parsi & Esfandiary, 2016, p.9). In terms of EU-Iran economic relations two major interests’ categories the EU’s loyalty to JCPOA. Iran can be a source of energy and also an export market (Nejad, 2018, p.2). Since Iran is among one of the top five countries having the largest oil and natural gas reserves it could serve as an
alternative source of energy for the European Union. Thus, contributing to the energy diversification strategy of the EU. However, due to the country’s turbulent relationship with the US and Washington’s push in Europe to purchase liquified natural gas (LNG) from the US provides quite a challenge and a competitor. Due to reinstated sanctions EU companies and investments are hitting roadblocks, unable to take advantage of investment opportunities in the country (Immenkamp & Garces, 2018, p.5). At the same time the country can be a source of energy import and it could also be a potential export market for the European Union, providing further access to markets in Iraq, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

In terms of security, stability is a cornerstone of the EU’s Middle Eastern policy. As a close geographic neighbour of the European Union, any destabilizing events will have a direct consequence on the European Union and its Member States. In line with the European Union’s Global strategy stability in near abroad is a perquisite for prosperity in the Union. This was witnessed from first hand when the Arab Spring lead to a massive flow of migration towards Europe resulting in one of the biggest refugee crises in the history of the EU. Rapprochement with Iran could result in promoting both economic and political stability within the country. Due to its geopolitical importance Iran could pave the way to a more secure and stable Middle East if the Union continues to foster peaceful resolution of conflict instead of following the maximum pressure strategy that is applied by Washington. However, the geopolitical struggle in the Middle East involves more players than just the US, EU and Iran and currently what the EU could do is to try maintaining the economic relations amid constant US pressure and aggressive rhetoric.

It has been almost a year since the withdrawal of the US and the agreement is still holding. At a meeting of the EU/E3 (EU plus Germany, France and the UK) together with Iran on 15 May 2018 in Brussels reaffirmed their commitment “to continue to implement the deal in all its parts, in good faith and in a constructive atmosphere” (Mogherini, 2018). Despite the fact that the agreement has numerous critics, US, Saudi Arabia and Israel, coupled with the lack of workable alternatives, all things considered it created an environment that mitigates Iran’s confrontation with the international community (Alcaro, 2018, p.2). The concerns of the US are understandable about the sunset clauses and ballistic missile programmes, which is basically about what prevents Iran from starting again when various restrictions expire. It is true that the agreement is not perfect, but it does not mean it should remain so. What is clear is that the EU/E3 is more invested
in Iran both in terms of commerce and politics and for them the collapse of the agreement would have lasting consequences and years of work wasted. The economic and geopolitical potential that is provided under a fruitful relationship with Iran cannot be left alone or else it would create a power vacuum in the region that would be filled by Russia or China.

The JCPOA still stands and Iran is fulfilling its obligations under the agreement despite daily rhetorical attacks from Washington. So far, the EU have not yet yielded to the pressure of the US, showing and faith commitment towards Iran. The JCPOA shows a unprecedent involvement of the EU in the realm of security and defence. As remarked by Alacro (2018, p.14) “The Iran case tested the Union’s resolve to be a proactive international player bearing special responsibilities for the security of its neighbourhood and the endurance of a rules-based international system.” Therefore, the JCPOA could be considered a global success and an international project but the two pillars that keep the deal together is Iran and the European Union.

Conclusion

The paper set out to highlight how the current administration in the White House and its current foreign policy doctrine is passively or possibly actively contributing to the rise of the European Union as a proactive international security actor and geopolitical influencer. This assumption was based on two main aspects. Primarily, that the EU is a self-interest seeking sui-generis entity, meaning it would eventually lead to more collision and competition with the US. Secondly, that the current divergence in transatlantic ties is resulting in various forms of power projection from the EU signalling a new era of cooperation between both sides of the Atlantic.

Therefore, to prove my hypothesis each part had a designated role and provided a unique perspective to construct my theoretical stool. The first part (Chapter 1) aimed to show how a unique organization, like the EU, can function within the theoretical realm of realism and anarchy. The goal was, to illustrate that the European Union in international politics has interests, which collide with the interests of other actors whether they may be economic, political, defence or security in their nature. Based on this, by deductive reasoning, I was able to conclude that, in a strictly limited sense, the EU can be attributed with state-like characteristic. Therefore, enabling us to analyse and study this sui generis actor through the lens of realism. With this, the paper created the
foundation to explain why there are common and conflicting interests between the US and the EU. The second part of this paper (Chapters 2 and 3) endeavoured to highlight what are these interests of the EU, defined in the first part, and in what way the collision of interests occur between the two actors. For this purpose, in Chapter 2, I analysed and compared two key strategic documents published by the Union. These publications reflect the developing and expanding scope of the EU’s interests and increasingly diverging path from US interests. While strategic documents highlight key goals, they do not explain the divergence or convergence of interests but can serve as a guideline for defining them. In Chapter 3, I took a closer look at factors and events that show the cyclical divergence and convergence in the relationship. This led to the conclusion that the majority of events, disputes and spats in transatlantic relations are cyclical in nature with a wave of convergence under a Democratic President and divergence under a Republic President. If there are cyclical factors, then there must be elements that could contribute to the real collision of interest. Therefore, the last part’s aim was to provide a unique perspective of these collisions under the framework of NATO and JCPOA. On the one hand, in NATO there is an observable sign of closer ties as it functions as an alternative security provider. However, it would enter into an existential crisis if the EU balances out the US and begins pursuing its own security agenda. On the other hand, the JCPOA is a perfect example of conflicting interests between the two actors in regional terms and that the stability of the agreement revolves not around the US but the EU.

Kissinger (1994, p.19) writes that the age-old pursuit of self-interest seeking and competition by nations compared to high-minded principles and cooperation is unlikely to change. The events suggest that with the rise of the European “iceberg” coupled with the inability of the US to suppress it will eventually lead to a creation of an actor within the international system that was never seen before. As the European Union grows and becomes more integrated so will the activity of their interests widen, and its capabilities will grow. The obstacles that hinder its development are mainly internal issues and it is possible that we will never experience a fully integrated United States of Europe. However, the push to achieve this remains and there is a slow and gradual development. What we are observing currently is a trickling transformation of economic power to political influence that presents a competition for the US. The leading rather than following approach of the EU is becoming more frequent on the international level. Nevertheless, hypothetically speaking we are only in the first stage of this growth.
It is without a doubt that in a closely-knit relationship there are bound to be common and conflicting interest. As shown by various examples and cases the more the EU tries to identify itself in the global environment when it comes to geopolitics or security it inevitably enters onto a collision course with the United States. These divergences, whether cyclical or long term in nature, have become increasingly frequent since 2017. Much of it is contributed to the political polarization of the current White House leadership where there is an observable pattern under Democratic and Republican presidency. The current foreign policy approach of rethinking the US global role is both actively and passively increases the EU’s international political role. US strategic shifts are passively resulting in power vacuums that provide an opportunity for the European Union. However, at the same time, it actively pushes the Union to increase its share in the maintenance in the world order. With US withdrawals and decreasing assistance, not abandonment, the EU has to step up and take a more proactive role. The only question which remains is; if in a world where the European Union is becoming an increasingly influential actor will it be perceived by the US as a partner or as a competitor in international politics.

Although the analysis covers various avenues of international politics with regard to US-EU relations due to certain restrictions their large spectrum of interactions had to be limited. With the rising importance of the European Union as a geopolitical influencer in the Middle East, research and analysis based on it remain uncharted territory. Its economic influence in other regions could provide further avenues to analyse the EU’s importance as a *sui generis* actor and how it is perceived by other great influencers such as Russia or China.
Appendices

Figure 1 – US leadership desirability


Figure 2 – Confidence in Trump among key EU countries

Figure 3 – NATO Cost Share

Bibliography

Primary sources


Secondary Sources

Books


**Chapters**


**Academic Articles**


Other


