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About the Author

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Abstract

This paper tries to determine to what extent EU-US cooperation in the field of international peace and security is impacted by bilateral relations under the New Transatlantic Agenda versus multilateral dialogues. It employs Michael Smith's framework of 'bi-multilateral' negotiations in its analysis. The case studies explored are bilateral dialogues under the New Transatlantic Agenda alongside multilateral dialogues in the framework of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and *ad hoc* fora such as the Middle East Quartet. The main finding is that bilateral and multilateral dialogues are complementary in EU-US cooperation on issues of international peace and security. Bilateral dialogues by themselves are not sufficient to effectively address complex international peace and security issues. Multilateral dialogues can gain useful support, efficiency and a degree of legitimacy from good relations at the bilateral level. Moreover, *ad hoc* fora can be valuable additions which may complement both existing bilateral as well as multilateral EU-US dialogues. Finally, the choice of forum and the potential of EU-US cooperation are often considerably influenced by the nature of the issue under discussion.

Introduction: Bi- or Multilateralism in Transatlantic Cooperation

Today's world is filled with contradictions. On the one hand, it is characterised by a proliferation of complex problems: failed states, asymmetric conflict, climate change, nuclear weapons and interference in sovereign states' affairs. On the other hand, there is a wider-than-ever range of instruments with which to tackle these problems: a revamped United Nations (UN) thanks to the end of Cold War bipolar animosities, willing and able regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), and the information and science revolutions. On the one hand, the realisation that global problems must be addressed through concerted international efforts has gained in unprecedented strength. On the other hand, traditional state actors such as the United States of America (US) or Russia have not shied away from emphasising their sovereign 'right' to deal with threats to their own states and have employed unilateral measures to the great moral discomfort of many. On the one hand, many different frameworks through which to address global issues – and which have proven to be effective individually – do exist, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) aimed at tackling global poverty. On the other hand, they lack in coordination and coherence and have, in absolute terms, often failed to achieve any significant or long-lasting results.

It is fair to argue that the EU and the US possess, to a significant extent, both the means and the willingness to tackle many of the global problems. Indeed, a unified and coherent coalition of both would be a powerful, if not formidable, force which could make a huge leap towards addressing issues such as climate change, international security and poverty. As President Bush has suggested, "when Europe and the US are united, no problem and no enemy can stand against us".[1] Of course, there are many valid reasons why this is frequently not the case; after all both are pragmatic actors who predictably would rank labouring for their own interests above rigid collaboration. In the face of the many pressing international problems, the transatlantic and global debates are repeatedly focused on effectiveness and efficiency. Questions about UN reform, about maximising the potential of the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) bearing in mind EU member disunity, as well as questions about which partners should be engaged and regarding which issues continue to abound. Despite such discussions, global problems are still often tackled on an *ad hoc* basis, as the only truly universal organisation, the UN, frequently remains paralysed by inefficiency, lack of resources and power struggles.

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[1] Quoted in *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States,* An Independent Study Commissioned by the Commission of the European Communities, Final Report, Tender OJ 2004/S 83-070340, p. 8.

For that reason it is particularly interesting, and indeed beneficial, to study the existent frameworks for cooperation which two of the world's most powerful actors, the EU and the US, have at their disposal. Which fora could render the outcomes of transatlantic engagement the most productive? In which format do the EU and US cooperate most willingly? Under what conditions, for example, would bilateral interaction between the two be more effective than multilateral discussions?

This paper approaches such questions through the analytical framework of 'bi-multilateralism' as developed by Michael Smith.[2] 'Bi-multilateralism' is defined as the "coexistence of occasions [to negotiate] both at the bilateral and at the multilateral level".[3] At least regarding the economic aspects of EU-US relations, Smith concludes that it is more useful to approach EU-US relations through this theoretical framework instead of almost artificially separating the two levels into the multilateral and the bilateral.[4] Using case studies, such as the Doha Development Round, Smith finds the element of "co-dependency" among the two levels consistently present, suggesting that "it is a systematic or organic part of the negotiation process".[5] This paper picks up where Smith stopped and tries to apply his theory of bi-multilateralism to EU-US relations in the field of international peace and security negotiations rather than economic relations.

The main objective of this paper is to determine how the EU-US relations under the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA) compare and correspond to EU-US relations in multilateral fora, in particular to what extent EU-US cooperation in the field of international peace and security is impacted by bilateral versus multilateral dialogues. The preliminary hypothesis based on Smith's approach is that bilateral and multilateral dialogues are complementary in EU-US cooperation in the field of international peace and security and that both are necessary for effective cooperation. However, they seem to exist in a parallel rather than interwoven fashion and are thus also capable of running separately.

The New Transatlantic Agenda serves as a document which explicitly sets out the most important areas of cooperation between the EU and the US. It was signed at the EU-US Summit in Madrid on the 3 December 1995[6] and followed the signing of the Transatlantic Declaration (TD) in November 1990 between the European

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[2] M. Smith, "The European Union and the United States of America: The Politics of 'Bi-multilateral' Negotiations," in O. Elgström & C. Jönsson (eds.), *European Union Negotiations: Processes, Networks and Institutions,* London, Routledge, 2005, p. 171.

[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 171-172.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 179.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 180.

[6] Commission of the European Communities, *The New Transatlantic Agenda,* 3 December 1995, p. 1.

Community (EC) and the US.[7] The NTA was both a step towards a further formal bilateral dialogue and institutionalization of EU-US relations,[8] and a broad blueprint of common goals and common channels of cooperation for the future. It was accompanied by a Joint Action Plan (JAP) which outlined specific priorities for transatlantic cooperation.[9] This was particularly important in the face of the disappearance of the Cold War bipolarities and the common enemy, namely the Soviet Union, which had arguably acted as the 'glue' that kept the two sides together.[10]

The focus of this paper is the first NTA goal – "promoting peace and stability, democracy and development around the world"[11] – and in particular EU-US cooperation in the realm of international peace and security. Since the issue areas which fall under the first NTA goal are very wide-ranging and complex, three particular examples were chosen with which to analyse the case studies, namely the Iraq War in 2003, the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and the war in Kosovo in 1999 and its aftermath. The specific fora which are looked at as cases of bilateral cooperation are dialogues under the NTA. The multilateral dialogues are exemplified by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and General Assembly (UNGA), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and *ad hoc* fora, such as the Middle East Quartet. These are the primary frameworks through which the EU and the US approach issues of international peace and security and they represent influential fora in which the transatlantic allies have a strong voice.

The analysis of EU-US cooperation is based on an evaluation of four explanatory variables.[12] Firstly, the power of the EU versus the US and the extent to which it can encourage or hinder cooperation are considered in each forum. The second variable is the convergence, or lack thereof, of the interests and values of the transatlantic allies. In the war in Kosovo in 1999, for instance, the convergence was evident, whereas it was highly disputed and almost non-existent in the run up to the

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[7] Commission of the European Communities, *Transatlantic Declaration on EC-US Relations*, 22 November 1990, p. 1.

[8] R. Steffenson, *Managing EU-US Relations: Actors, Institutions and the New Transatlantic Agenda*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 25.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 37.

[10] A. Gardner, "From the Transatlantic Declaration to the New Transatlantic Agenda: The Shaping of Institutional Mechanisms and Policy Objectives by National and Supranational Actors", in E. Philippart & P. Winand (eds.), *Ever Closer Partnership: Policy-Making in US-EU Relations,* Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2001, pp. 96-97.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] A longer qualitative evaluation of the importance and significance of each variable is available elsewhere; due to the short nature of this paper, only the most noteworthy findings are highlighted and discussed. See S. Lipstaite, *The Impact of Bilateral versus Multilateral Dialogues on EU-US Cooperation in the Field of International Peace and Security*, Master's thesis, Bruges, College of Europe, 2009.

Iraq War. Thirdly, the unity of the EU is considered, meaning the ability of the EU to present a unified and coherent position in a forum, backed by all of its member states. Finally, the changes in US administration since 1995 are evaluated as a potentially significant factor.

Bilateral Dialogues: New Transatlantic Agenda

Bilateral dialogues under the NTA take place at several levels. The most visible level is the annual summit between the US President on the one hand and the EU Presidency and the Commission President on the other.[13] Secondly, ministerial-level meetings between the EU troika and the US Secretary of State take place at least once per EU Presidency, and although they are not technically part of the NTA, they nevertheless constitute an important channel for communication and they influence the agenda of lower-level working groups.[14] These are the Senior Level Group, the NTA Task Force and the Political Directors meetings, alongside several 'expert' or working group meetings per year.[15] Although political decisions are, naturally, taken at the top level, the continuous exchange of information and efforts towards cooperation at all levels constitute the main advantages and added value of the NTA. How do the four variables play out in the bilateral setting?

(1) Power Balance

As the Commission has argued, a "partnership of equals" has not been achieved because of the different institutional structures and administrative practices in the EU and US systems and the lack of political cohesion in the EU.[16] For instance, the EU in the NTA summits possesses a much narrower scope for bargaining than does the US President due to the intricate pre-summit deliberations at EU level in Brussels.[17] Furthermore, "the American tendency to see relations with Europe through the prism

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[13] T. Frellesen, "Processes and Procedures in EU-US Foreign Policy Cooperation: From the Transatlantic Declaration to the New Transatlantic Agenda", in E. Philippart & P. Winand (eds.), *Ever Closer Partnership: Policy-Making in US-EU Relations,* Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2001, p. 322.

[14] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit..,* p. 38.

[15] Frellesen, *op.cit.*

[16] Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council, *Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship: Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results*, COM(2001) 154 final, Brussels, 20 March 2001, p. 7.

[17] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.,* p. 37.

of NATO/security, rather than in EU-US terms" has also proven to be a hindrance to transatlantic cooperation.[18]

On the other hand, the NTA framework often acts as a helpful forum in which the two sides can pursue dialogues, in principle, as equals who are interested in sharing their concerns and eliciting support from their chief partners; this is particularly the case between leaders at the highest level. As an official at the Commission argues, the annual EU-US summits are solemn events which, nevertheless, do possess an intimate and personal quality and an open and flexible nature.[19] Their substantial agenda can produce efficient outcomes because they often facilitate and clean up the agenda of multilateral cooperation.[20]

As another Commission official argues, the less controversial issues are largely agreed upon, or at least discussed, unless one of the sides has an exceptionally strong objection to a particular item being placed on the agenda.[21] On the more controversial issues, such as Iraq, painful divergences between the EU and the US are tolerated, even if this means that the summit conclusions are often watered down to an extent that they do not fundamentally contradict the position of either partner.[22] The issue of power, then, is a rather changeable variable under the NTA regarding international peace and security negotiations: even though the two partners in theory, though not wholly in practice, meet as equals, the outcomes tend to represent the preferences of one side more than the other, although this seems to happen more or less in turns.

(2) Convergence of Interests

The central proposition of this subsection is that if there is a convergence of interests regarding a specific issue area in the bilateral dialogues, the EU and the US are more willing to cooperate and are more effective in achieving constructive outcomes. Such a tendency could be demonstrated by the arguable 'success stories' in transatlantic relations, for example, "the effective co-ordination of policy and action in the Western Balkans".[23]

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[18] Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council, *Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship: Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results*, *op.cit.*

[19] Interview with an official (c), DG RELEX, European Commission, Brussels, 17 February 2009.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Interview with an official (a), DG RELEX, European Commission, Brussels, 17 February 2009.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission to the Council; Reinforcing the Transatlantic Relationship: Focusing on Strategy and Delivering Results, op.cit.*

Indeed, the two transatlantic allies have acted through bilateral fora with a high degree of success. Issues important to both partners, such as Kosovo, are always on the agenda of EU-US summits. The two sides have post-1999 indeed succeeded in preventing further wars on European soil, in achieving a significant level of institutional and economic reconstruction in the area, and in engaging the Balkan countries in political programmes, for instance, by enticing several of them with the prospect of EU membership. This division of labour and the delegation of responsibilities of leadership to the EU with full US support suggest that, when the two work together, they can undeniably achieve considerable positive results in bringing about security and stability.

However, while this is true regarding the Balkans, many other international peace and security issues have not been dealt with by the transatlantic allies with the same degree of bilateral success. Since Kosovo is in the EU's backyard and has potential for future EU membership and it faced a relatively contained conflict, the US was prepared to allow the EU to play a larger coordinating role in the region and to engage in much greater consultation regarding post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Conversely, the Middle East is an issue area where, although the main interests of the transatlantic allies, namely the desire for peace and stability, converge, other factors remain more influential and thus render bilateral cooperation between the two much more complicated. For example, the US and the EC/EU have sought to influence and participate in the peace plans for Israel and Palestine since their very inception.[24] Due to several different factors, such as greater US capability and willingness to use military power, the higher level of EU and Middle East economic interdependence and proximity, and disagreements over the assessment of threats and the appropriate means to deal with them, the EU and the US have frequently been in competition rather than convergence regarding the MEPP.[25]

Based on these two examples, it is fair to conclude that, firstly, the convergence of EU and US interests can indeed make a great difference and result in effective bilateral cooperation in the field of international peace and security. The second conclusion, which will be demonstrated below, is that such potential for cooperation can nevertheless be minimized by other, more influential factors such as issues regarding internal EU unity.

(3) EU Unity

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[24] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.,* pp. 43-44.

[25] P. Marr, "The United States, Europe and the Middle East: Cooperation, Co-optation or Confrontation?", in B.A. Roberson, (ed.), *The Middle East and Europe: The Power Deficit,* London, Routledge, 1998, pp. 83-84.

The most important consideration to bear in mind concerning internal EU unity in relations with the US are that the EU frequently struggles to come up with a single position in the face of the different interests of its member states. The dangers of EU member state disunity can be brought out in perhaps the clearest way through the example of the Iraq war of 2003. As Howorth argues, the question revolved around "diametrically opposed approaches to US policy and the transatlantic relationship: noisy contestation [by countries such as France] was pitted against over-zealous solidarity [of the UK and many of the EU candidate countries at the time]" to the US invasion of Iraq.[26] Due to such painful disagreements inside the EU, the war in Iraq was not only a crisis in the transatlantic relationship, but a damaging split inside the EU as well, especially bearing in mind the Union's aspirations towards greater power in external affairs.[27] In this sense, the position of the EU was undermined in the eyes of the US, but more importantly for this discussion, it also meant that the bilateral EU-US channels of cooperation were effectively shut down, and new ways had to be found to deal with the international security issue. The NTA in the lead up to the Iraq war was ineffective in helping to bring about a concerted solution to the problem because EU-US bilateral cooperation did not exist.

It is only in the post-conflict reconstruction phase that the EU was able to act coherently in concrete transatlantic projects, such as the promotion of the reduction of Iraq's external debt and improvements to its economy, conceived and run through bilateral EU-US dialogues.[28] The lack of internal EU *ex ante* strategic discussions on issues such as Iraq undermines the EU's efforts to become a credible international partner to the US and complicates the potential outcomes of bilateral EU-US cooperation.[29] Another consideration is that the US still pursues relationships of differentiated importance with individual member states, but a discussion of this tendency is beyond the scope of this paper.

(4) US Administration

According to several interviewed officials, there is a general sense of continuity across administrations in that, for example, even under the first Bush administration and the crisis in transatlantic relations resulting from the war in Iraq, the US and the EU were nevertheless still working together, particularly at the working group levels.[30] While every administration is important because it places emphasis on different

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[26] J. Howorth, "France, Britain and the Euro-Atlantic Crisis," *Survival,* vol. 45, no. 4, 2003/04, p. 188.
[27] Interview with an official (a), DG RELEX, *op.cit.*
[28] Council of the European Union, *EU-U.S. Declaration of Support for the People of Iraq*, 10001/04 (Presse 187), Dromoland Castle, 26 June 2004, p. 3.
[29] C. Grant & M. Leonard, "What New Transatlantic Institutions?," *Bulletin,* issue 41, London, CER, April/May 2005, p. 2.
[30] Interview with an official (c), DG RELEX, *op.cit.*

issues, with Obama's willingness to return to the global arena to discuss issues of 'soft' security such as climate change, many officials tended to note the greater number of similarities rather than differences in the broad policies of each administration. By contrast, critics have argued that a change in the US administration can curtail the convergence of interests of the EU and the US alongside their potential for cooperation. Pollack claims that under the Clinton administration, the EU and US interests under the NTA often converged, therefore rendering the transatlantic relations considerably successful.[31] On many issues such as Iraq "the transition from Clinton to Bush has indeed shifted the preferences of the US executive from dovish to hawkish, making transatlantic agreement more elusive and placing obvious strains on the relationship".[32]

Even so, it appears that, at least regarding EU-US cooperation in bilateral fora since the inception of the NTA, in long-term hindsight the change in US administration will not prove to have been too significant of a factor. There is little evidence that a different US administration would significantly impact EU-US relations in bilateral fora.

Preliminary Conclusion: NTA and Bilateral Dialogues

Based on the evaluation of the four variables and other general trends in EU-US bilateral cooperation under the NTA, it can be concluded that bilateral dialogues are, firstly, valuable fora because of their open and flexible nature in which both sides can express their concerns more freely and begin to work through issues at hand before they are discussed at the multilateral level. Secondly, the dialogues under the NTA are limited in terms of their achievements and, while being constructive to reinforcing EU-US cooperation in the long term, often represent little more than watered-down agreements acceptable to both sides, at least regarding international peace and security cooperation.

The value of the bilateral framework, then, indeed rests in the current formalised and institutionalised permanent dialogue with a "greater sense of unity and substance" than would exist without the NTA.[33] The bilateral dialogues are often little more than a general discussion about a laundry list of international security issues with little concrete action as an outcome.[34] They serve to seek out the areas in which EU-US cooperation is feasible.[35] As Gardner argues, the NTA has led to the "widening" and "deepening" of contacts between EU and US officials, particularly at the lower levels,

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[31] M.A. Pollack, "The New Transatlantic Agenda at Ten: Reflections on an Experiment in International Governance", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 43, no. 5, 2005, p. 904.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Frellesen, *op.cit.,* pp. 345-346.
[34] Steffenson, *op.cit.,* p. 40.
[35] *Ibid.*

changing the "*tone* and *substance* of transatlantic contacts".[36] Therefore, the NTA "does not replace the need for communication through existing multilateral institutions" such as NATO, but it seeks to "establish a common threshold of cooperation between the EU and the US" with more "shape and direction".[37]

Multilateral Dialogues: United Nations

The UN as a forum is significant because it offers a different type of setting than the NTA in which the transatlantic partners can meet to discuss issues of international security.

(1) Power Balance

In terms of power, the EU as an institution often does not appear to have much leverage, particularly regarding issues of international peace and security. While the EU is effective in coordinating, for example, post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Iraq,[38] it was, significantly, unable to present a unified position in the lead-up to the war. It would be correct to say, therefore, that the power of the EU at the UN depends largely on its ability to present a unified position, as discussed in the next section. Even then, this may not always be enough to assure a satisfactory outcome. This is determined by the possibility of the EU, even with the US on board, either being outvoted in the General Assembly or its proposals in the Security Council being vetoed by China or Russia. Similarly, the US proposals, despite the country's less volatile position, can also be vetoed in the UNSC, and it seems to enjoy even less support in the UNGA than the EU.[39] Therefore, the amount of power which the EU and the US possess in the UN in absolute terms and in relation to each other may change depending on the specific issue.

(2) Convergence of Interests

As an official at the Commission argues, unless the views and interests of the EU and the US happen to totally coincide, as they did, for instance, regarding action in Darfur, the UN is not the place for the transatlantic partners to discuss issues of international security.[40] The reasons for such a reality spring from two very different

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[36] Gardner, "From the Transatlantic Declaration to the New Transatlantic Agenda", *op.cit.,* pp. 97-98.
[37] Steffenson, *op.cit.,* pp. 41-42.
[38] NATO Parliamentary Assembly, *161 EC 04 E – Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development: The Challenge in Iraq and Afghanistan*, 2004, pp. 11-12.
[39] M.P. Karns & K.A. Mingst, "The United States as 'Deadbeat'? U.S. Policy and the UN Financial Crisis", in S. Patrick & S. Forman (eds.), *Multilateralism & U.S. Foreign Policy: Ambivalent Engagement,* Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, pp. 282-283.
[40] Interview with an official (b), DG RELEX, European Commission, Brussels, 17 February 2009.

starting points. The EU is dedicated towards promoting "effective multilateralism",[41] of which the most fundamental part is working through the only universally legitimate authority, the UN. The EU will therefore, in principle, be reluctant to engage in any action against a sovereign state which is not authorised by the UN. For the US, however, the UN is only one forum through which it can achieve its international security objectives. A prominent example of such a tendency is its circumvention of the UN regarding the Iraq war in 2003.

On the other hand, the war in Kosovo in 1999 was a case in which transatlantic interests did converge. Both the EU countries and the US seemed to realise that their involvement was necessary. However, a formal resolution for an intervention against Serbia was never taken to the Security Council in the fear that it would be vetoed by Russia;[42] therefore, the UN was, in effect, circumvented as well. The main difference compared to the war in Iraq is that this convergence of interests regarding Kosovo was transported to another setting, namely NATO, meaning that the European-US cooperation was nonetheless run in a multilateral setting. Therefore, for the US, the UN is thus in a way an opportunity assessment,[43] and its willingness to move its interest convergence with the EU to the UN as a setting varies depending on the issue area.

(3) *EU Unity*

The section on power balance at the UN concluded that the EU's power varies with its ability to present a unified front to the US and to the UN in general. In the UNGA the EU is relatively tight as a group both because of Treaty obligations[44] and also due to a more inherent convergence of positions, except in cases when the US has a particularly strong position regarding an issue which goes against the convictions of one or more of the member states; this is also true in the UNSC.[45] When the US presents a 'join or oppose' attitude to its allies, as was the case regarding the war in Iraq, this sows particularly damaging seeds of split inside the Union.[46] The hardest task of all is often developing an EU position in the first place rather than questions of cooperation with other countries.[47]

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[41] Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, p. 9.

[42] T. Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 183-185.

[43] D.W. Drezner, "The Realist Tradition in American Public Opinion", *Perspectives on Politics,* vol. 6, no. 1, 2008, p. 57.

[44] Individual member states, under article 19 of the Treaty on European Union, are obliged to coordinate their positions and to keep the non-members of the Security Council fully informed.

[45] Interview with an official (b), DG RELEX, *op.cit.*

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Interview with an official (b), European Union, *op.cit.*

On the other hand, a notable nuance of transatlantic cooperation is that the US seems not to realize that EU positions in the UN, especially in the UNGA, have been converging over the years.[48] This is partially a manifestation of the fact that "[m]aintaining and expanding the authority of the United Nations remains a key priority" for the EU,[49] meaning that increasingly EU members choose multilateralism wherever possible. The combination of US short-sightedness about such EU priorities and a traditional low-level of importance placed on multilateral diplomacy means that the US is 'continually' on the defensive in the UN, thereby negatively impacting any potential for successful cooperation.[50] As Lebl argues, the US does not have a strategy of dealing with the EU at the UN and other multilateral institutions, and needs to develop one in order to correct this problem.[51]

(4) US Administration

A lack of strategy in approaching the UN may, arguably, be indicative of the overall problematic US relationship with the organisation. The history of US relations with the UN, including the former's gradual disillusionment with the latter, the impact of the different administrations and the more general debate about what role the US should play in the UN have been sufficiently covered in numerous debates elsewhere, as have arguments about US unilateralism versus multilateralism.[52]

A further consideration is the role that the US Congress plays in shaping the overall US foreign policy in regard to the UN. As Everts argues, Congress in the 1990s had become "increasingly important" in pushing US foreign policy in a more confrontational and unilateral direction and had become increasingly sceptical of multilateralism.[53] On the other hand, he also emphasises the importance of the changeover from the Clinton to the first Bush administration, which arguably also altered US attitudes towards being more hawkish and unilateralist.[54]

However, even though it may be true that the Bush administrations were to an extent more unilateralist and confrontational and had less regard for the UN than the preceding Clinton or the current Obama administrations, several of the interviewees

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[48] L.S. Lebl, "Advancing U.S. Interests with the European Union", *Atlantic Council of the United States,* Washington D.C., January 2007, p. 46.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.,* p. 47.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] See, for example, D.H. Allin, "Uneasy Triangle: Transatlantic Partnership and UN Governance", in H. Gardner & R. Stefanova (eds.), *The New Transatlantic Agenda: Facing the Challenges of Global Governance*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 153-173.
[53] S. Everts, "Unilateral America, Lightweight Europe? Managing Divergence in Transatlantic Foreign Policy", London, CER, February 2001, p. 7.
[54] *Ibid.*

stressed the importance of looking at the greater picture of US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War rather than concentrating on changes from administration to administration.[55] Comparably to the findings about the NTA, the emphasis was placed on the broad continuities rather than differences. Many of the interviewees suggested that it was too early to determine the possible impact of different administrations on EU-US cooperation in the UN.

Preliminary Conclusion: the United Nations

The UN thus appears to be less than successful as a forum in which to pursue EU-US cooperation in the field of international peace and security. Transatlantic initiatives may be effectively blocked in the UNSC by a veto power, thereby rendering the US more willing to act outside of the UN system in the first place. The General Assembly has even less capabilities of coming up with tangible initiatives regarding security matters. On the Middle East issue, it often offers little more substance than a mere collection of speeches.[56] The Security Council, on the other hand, offers a very intense exchange between Europe and the US with much clearer discussion of what both want to achieve.[57] However, the EU, on its part, is often unable to present a unified position through its permanent members in the Security Council, namely the UK and France. This undermines its negotiating power and often renders it more practical to move outside the UN forum towards fora characterised by stronger bilateral transatlantic influences, such as NATO.

Based on the evidence from the three examples, the UN did not prove to be truly effective in any of them. Nevertheless, despite the general lack of satisfactory outcomes, the UN is a valuable forum for discussion, not only between the transatlantic partners, but also with other countries and international actors. Without the UN as a forum, the EU and the US would still continue to pursue bilateral dialogues. However, the UN allows these dialogues to be transferred onto a higher level, where considerations of international legitimacy and collective international action trump discussions about merely the capabilities and willingness of two of the world's biggest powers to engage in issues which they find important. Even though discussions at the UN may not always render results, they are still valuable as a normative tool with which to put the position of the US in a global context. The EU can also employ the UN in seeking to contain its ally within the framework of multilateralism.[58] Lastly, the UN is even more valuable for 'soft' global issues which are

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[55] Please note that it is not possible to provide references to specific interviews in this case due to anonymity requests from the interviewees.
[56] Interview with an official (c), European Union, Brussels, 25 March 2009.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] Everts, *op.cit.,* p. 10.

beyond any one state's reach, such as climate change, poverty and global development.[59] How does NATO as a forum compare to these findings?

Multilateral Dialogues: NATO

Firstly, it is important to bear in mind that the 'EU' acts even less as a unified actor in the NATO setting than it does at the UN. Although it is often the same people who discuss strategic political issues in the EU setting and then at NATO,[60] the EU has no formal coordination mechanisms or requirements for its member states to adopt common positions at NATO. Therefore, the term 'EU' must be used with caution when discussing 'EU-US' relations in the NATO framework, as country-to-country mechanisms remain strong and important. This will be elaborated on under the section on EU unity.

Secondly, NATO is much more focused towards one-dimensional and largely military issues than is the UN. Furthermore, if the issue at hand is not a question of peacekeeping, as for the example the MEEP, it is automatically excluded from the agenda of EU-NATO negotiations because there are no formal arrangements for a broader dialogue.[61] Therefore, issues such as Afghanistan have to be dealt with under sections such as 'any other business', which does not reflect the importance of the issue to both of the partners.[62] This, again, means that the main discussions about crucial issues of international security continue to take place as negotiations between the individual members of NATO, not as discussions between the EU and its partners.

(1) Power Balance

At least in theory, NATO is a consensus-based organisation where one country is free to block proposed decisions if it does not feel comfortable with them. However, as several critics have emphasised, this often is not true in reality since the US remains the dominant player in the organisation.[63] If a country threatens to block a decision which is important to the US, the US can either leave the issue blocked or put pressure on that specific country.[64] It does so either publicly, for example, through speeches criticising the alleged lack of unity in and commitment from some members of NATO, or internally, particularly on smaller countries for whom the US is a

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[59] Interview with an official (c), DG RELEX, *op.cit.*

[60] J. Shea, Director of Policy Planning at NATO, "EU-NATO Relations", Bruges, College of Europe, 15 November 2008.

[61] Interview with an official (b), NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 20 March 2009.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Lebl, *op.cit.,* p. 34.

[64] Interview with an official (a), NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 20 March 2009.

strategic partner and with whom they wish to keep the best possible relations.[65] In the last instance, if the issue is especially significant to the US, it can proceed with its actions outside of NATO.[66] On the one hand, as with the UN, the US "needs partners, not only because even superpowers hate to feel lonely, but also because, militarily, the United States [arguably] cannot do everything and welcomes the self-generated authority and legitimacy of a multilateral operation".[67] It therefore "expects partnership" and a considerable degree of dedicated burden-sharing in the organisation.[68]

This means that any talk of the possible equality of power between the EU and the US in NATO depends, firstly, on the specific issue at hand and the degree of convergence of interests and, secondly, on getting as many EU member states together to be able to present a unified position. This rarely happens, for even in the 'safe territory' of discussions about the Balkans, the EU is unable to come up with a unified position, for instance, regarding Kosovo's declared independence.

(2) Convergence of Interests

As has been mentioned before, the convergence of interests between the EU and the US at NATO is difficult to discuss because the EU finds it virtually impossible to come up with a unified position. Most notably, the war in Iraq in 2003 proved to be the case where the interests and views of several EU member states converged far more with the US than they did with their European allies. Therefore, perhaps it is more appropriate to consider EU unity rather than transatlantic unity as a potentially more significant factor in the NATO framework.

(3) EU Unity

As an official at NATO argues, in the recent past there often used to be a block of two separate countries with distinct views regarding a particular issue: a European one, such as France, and the US.[69] Other NATO members associated themselves with one side or the other in a process based on their historical experiences and political realities as much as short-term considerations.[70] Even though this sometimes tended to be escalated too much,[71] it is indicative of the fact that there can sometimes be very little EU unity in NATO, and that particularly the smaller Central and Eastern

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[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] P. Cornish, *Partnership in Crisis: The US, Europe and the Fall and Rise of NATO,* London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997, p. 89.

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] Interview with an official (b), NATO Headquarters, *op.cit.*

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Ibid.*

European countries can, to an extent, find some space in NATO to side with their transatlantic ally more freely than is possible in a strictly EU setting. Although one critic claims that "European allies sometimes delay a decision in NATO until a common position has already been reached at the EU – thus introducing a *de facto* EU caucus into NATO deliberations",[72] others have emphasised the dangerous rift among EU members as a primary source for concern.

For example, Howorth argues that only if the UK and France "make a conscious and concerted effort to reconcile their differences will there be any chance of finding the ideal profile either for NATO or for ESDP" (European Security and Defense Policy).[73] Even so, it is less than clear whether enhanced EU unity in NATO would help to bring about more effective outcomes of EU-US cooperation. If, theoretically, the EU had, through a unified position, blocked the US proposals in the lead-up to the Iraq war in 2003, this would have still forced the US to look for other fora and other coalitions outside of NATO or indeed the UN framework. The most significant consideration in terms of outcomes therefore remains whether the US can find enough support from European partners rather than whether the EU can present a unified front or not.

It is perhaps for this reason that the US arguably tends to place greater importance on bilateral dialogues with separate states, sometimes even in the NATO framework.[74] As Lebl argues, "this approach is inadequate, if not inherently unstable, as it undervalues the EU's role"[75] and obscures the potential of dialogues through the NTA, particularly because the latter could sometimes be much more effective, wider-ranging and constructive for future cooperation. The approach also adds to the member states' internal disunity, as they tend to downplay the importance of the EU when pursuing bilateral discussions with the US and thus create false awareness of the true weight of the Union in shaping member state policies and capacities.[76]

(4) US Administration

It may be too early to be able to tell whether the US administration is an important factor regarding NATO,[77] at least since the end of the Cold War. So far, changeovers in US administrations seem to be accompanied largely by continuity rather than significant ruptures.[78] As mentioned above, the US is 'trapped' in the perception of

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[72] Lebl, *op.cit.,* p. 28.
[73] Howorth, "France, Britain and the Euro-Atlantic Crisis", *op.cit.,* p. 186.
[74] Lebl, *op.cit.,* p. 16.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] Interview with an official (c), NATO Headquarters, Brussels, 20 March 2009.
[78] *Ibid.*

NATO as one of the most important, if not the most important, frameworks for cooperation with its European allies on matters of international security,[79] and this tendency seems to have remained largely intact throughout the changing US administrations. Although, as has been discussed before, US leaders began to attach more importance to political and strategic dialogues with the EU even during the second Bush administration, in terms of importance these appear to have been carried through in a parallel manner to dialogues in NATO. It remains to be seen what the new Obama administration will add to the US relations with NATO.

Preliminary Conclusion: NATO

It can be concluded that NATO is a potentially extremely useful and effective forum for cooperation in terms of outcomes, but only if there is a sufficiently strong convergence of interests not only across the Atlantic, but also in terms of unity among the European allies. This was the case regarding the war in Kosovo, where even the member states which were most concerned with gaining international legitimacy through the UN were able to put their unease aside and successfully carry out a NATO campaign in Serbia and Kosovo. On the other hand, the Iraq war clearly brought out the other end of the spectrum, where major differences among the European members effectively paralysed NATO and resulted in action being carried out through an *ad hoc* coalition of the willing. It is to *ad hoc* fora that the paper now turns.

Multilateral Dialogues: *ad hoc* Fora

Ad hoc fora here are defined as frameworks which have been created in order to address a specific issue, usually for the purposes of practicality. Examples of such fora, in which both the US and at least several European countries have participated are, notably, the Middle East Quartet and the EU 3 + 3 arrangements of talks with Iran. Such frameworks are often outside any formal institutional arrangements, but can nevertheless be highly useful in not only engaging sides to a conflict in discussion which could not have happened under the auspices of another forum, but also in creating selective degrees of multilateralism to address a particular issue.

It would, of course, be imprudent to make generalisations about all types of *ad hoc* fora. Nonetheless, it is useful to look at one example of an *ad hoc* forum, namely the Middle East Quartet, to give some level of indication about how the four variables play out, and whether there have been any positive outcomes from the deliberations.

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[79] Lebl, *op.cit.,* p. 35.

(1) Power Balance

The most powerful participant in the Middle East Quartet appears to be the US, which not only has had a strong interest in the region and very close ties with Israel for decades, but which had also 'touted' the Quartet "as a sign of the Bush administration's willingness to embrace multilateralism where it could be put to good purpose".[80] However, the added value of the Quartet has been the fact that it somewhat institutionalises the dialogues about the MEPP between the transatlantic partners that have been taking place in the UN and other types of fora for years.[81] On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that the US has also pursued unilateral action outside of the Quartet, with the result of undermining the latter's effectiveness, such as unilaterally signing an agreement on movement and access to Gaza between representatives of Israel and the Palestinians outside the framework of the Quartet in 2005.[82]

(2) Convergence of Interests

There is an obvious convergence of the main interests of all four parties participating in the Quartet, namely the successful implementation of the 2002 Road Map which would create a permanent two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.[83] It could be maintained that such *ad hoc* fora are virtually always created because of a strong convergence of interests and in order to achieve a specific goal.

(3) EU Unity

EU unity can also be interpreted as being virtually a constant, as not only has the Union been able to achieve a considerably high degree of coherence when talking about the Middle East, but it is also represented by the Secretary General/High Representative (SG/HR) for the CFSP, Javier Solana.[84] This means that the EU does indeed 'speak with one voice' during the negotiations.

(4) US Administration

Finally, since the Quartet was created in 2002, it is still too early to be able to tell whether the US administration is an important factor. Based on conjecture from previous analysis, it would seem that the Obama administration will be less of a hard-

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[80] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.*

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[82] Interview with an official (c), European Union, *op.cit.*

[83] Lebl, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

[84] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.*, p. 44.

liner than the Bush administrations have been, but it is likely to keep up its special relationship with Israel. Therefore, more continuity than change can be expected.

Preliminary Conclusion: Multilateral ad hoc Fora

The Quartet, although valuable as a forum for discussion and a welcome addition to the other dialogues which take place regarding the Middle East, has not been able to successfully address the Israel-Palestinian conflict and implement a long-lasting peaceful solution. This is so even despite the more or less balanced power of the EU and the US in the forum, the convergence of interests and a high degree of EU unity.

It is not possible, however, to evaluate the usefulness of *ad hoc* fora in general based on the analysis of the variables and outcomes of merely the Middle East Quartet. However, it is plausible to suggest that the success of such fora depends mainly on the specific case at hand and the context of the negotiations. *Ad hoc* fora can be extremely useful when other dialogues are stalled because of apparently insurmountable obstacles, such as US distrust of the UN General Assembly or its past policy of not holding direct talks with Iran, although this does not imply that they automatically bring about immediate, positive or any outcomes.

The EU and the US possess a variety of multilateral fora through which to approach issues of international security. The US, based on the evidence from the three examples, has been more willing to participate in specific fora depending on whether it had room for manoeuvre in them, enjoying a greater degree of leverage in, for instance, NATO rather than the UN. However, the tendency to revert back to unilateralism is ever present, and if the US feels that it is going to be blocked in a forum, it may choose to carry out actions outside any institutionalised framework. To some degree, the US engages in 'forum shopping' on the multilateral level.[85]

The EU, despite its frequent convergence of interests with the US, possesses in addition a strong interest in promoting effective multilateralism, which guides its choices of fora. It would be true to argue that the EU would prefer to go through the UN whenever possible in order to enjoy international legitimacy. However, as an official at the Commission argues, 'effective multilateralism' means that the EU has to necessarily try to secure UN approval, but must not remain paralysed if it does not receive it.[86] In other words, the EU should not become constrained by its dedication to multilateralism, as it too recognises that the UNSC is both flawed and outdated and hence not always effective.[87] Therefore, there is sometimes a fine line between multilateralism and effectiveness, which allows the EU to also engage in a degree of forum shopping at the expense of the former in order to promote the latter.

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[85] R.N. Haass, "Conclusion", in R.N. Haass (ed.), T*ransatlantic Tensions: The United States, Europe, and Problem Countries*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1999, p. 235.
[86] Interview with an official (b), DG RELEX, *op.cit.*
[87] *Ibid.*

Bilateral versus Multilateral Dialogues: a Comparative Analysis

The table below offers an overview of the trends and importance of the four variables in EU-US cooperation on international security in the different fora, based on the preliminary conclusions reached in each section. The first keyword in the first sub-cell of each forum (for example, 'largely equal') describes the general trend in, or the frequency of, the occurrence of that variable in the forum. The second keyword (for example, 'essential') describes the importance of that variable in impacting the effectiveness and outcomes of EU-US cooperation.

Table 1: Trends and importance of variables in EU-US cooperation in different fora

	power balance	convergence of interests	EU unity	US administration
NTA	largely equal	depends on issue	largely a given, can be lowest common denominator	continuity rather than change
	essential, but moderated	essential	essential	not significant
UN	depends on issue and EU unity	depends on issue	depends on issue, growing convergence	continuity rather than change
	not essential	essential, but can be undermined by outvoting or veto	not essential, but helpful	depends on issue and other factors, not essential
NATO	US more dominant	depends on issue	depends on issue	continuity rather than change
	not essential	not essential, but helpful	not essential, but helpful	not significant
Quartet / ad hoc fora	largely equal	largely a given	largely a given	cannot be determined
	not essential	essential	essential	cannot be determined

From this table, it appears that the variable which demonstrated the most significance in aiding or hindering EU-US cooperation was the convergence, or lack thereof, of transatlantic interests or values. Convergence could be helped by greater EU unity, although not in all cases. The balance of power was a less significant variable and did not directly result in increased cooperation, except perhaps in the bilateral setting. The US administration appears to be the least influential variable of the four.

What are the more general findings which can be drawn from this analysis? Firstly, it is clear that bilateral dialogues, even ones marked by a significant convergence of interests, by themselves are not sufficient to effectively address complex international

peace and security issues. EU-US bilateral cooperation in the field can be invaluable but has not proven to be adequate by itself.

Equally, multilateral negotiations could still take place without bilateral EU-US dialogues; however, this would represent an undesirable step backwards to the pre-NTA era. The second general finding, which has also been noted by several interviewees,[88] is that multilateral dialogues can gain useful support, efficiency and a degree of legitimacy from good relations at the bilateral level.

This leads to the third general finding that *ad hoc* fora can be valuable additions which may complement both existing bilateral as well as multilateral EU-US dialogues. This is particularly so bearing in mind that the UN can be a rather ineffective forum in which to address 'hard' issues of international security, and that it is often circumvented by the world's most powerful global players. *Ad hoc* fora tend to enjoy a high convergence of influence and EU unity, which facilitates their functioning and extends their potential for successful outcomes.

Finally, it is fair to argue that the choice of forum and the potential of EU-US cooperation often depend on the issue under discussion more than anything else. Although there are general trends which help to evaluate the extent to which a particular forum can be effective based on, for example, the level of convergence of EU-US interests, the final outcomes are likely to vary depending on the context of the issue, such as its nature, the global situation, particular circumstances and actors involved. Not every international security issue can be discussed in every framework.

The overall conclusion of the paper is, therefore, that bilateral and multilateral dialogues are complementary in EU-US cooperation in the field of international peace and security. Both types of fora are necessary and cannot be easily separated either in their effects on the outcomes of transatlantic cooperation, nor in any analysis. Strong bilateral cooperation provides a good base for cooperation at the multilateral level, but cannot replace it. Furthermore, bilateral dialogues provide the added value of continuous and formalised exchanges and negotiations. Moreover, a successful outcome of overall EU-US cooperation will probably have been fostered in several different frameworks, including discussions through the NTA channels. However, based on the findings of the paper, it is not possible to claim that the effects on cooperation of bilateral and multilateral fora are interwoven in that the bilateral level necessarily acts as a sort of 'clearing house' for issues to be discussed and then sent to the multilateral framework to be negotiated at a higher

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[88] Please note that it is not possible to provide references to specific interviews in this case due to anonymity requests from the interviewees.

level. While this may certainly happen in some cases, for example in the transatlantic economic relations explored by Michael Smith, it does not appear to be a general trend in the sphere of 'hard' issues of international security. Bilateral and multilateral fora seem to impact EU-US cooperation in the field of international security in parallel, not interwoven ways.

Conclusions: Complementary Dialogues

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that it is more appropriate to view bilateral and multilateral interactions as complementary and not readily separable in impacting the cooperation between the EU and the US in the field of international peace and security. The twenty-first century world is characterised by a wide range of increasingly complex threats to security, global and local. It is not surprising, then, that the bilateral and multilateral frameworks inevitably touch upon the same issues. In one sense, the EU-US bilateral relationship is only one drop in the sea of bilateral and regional security dialogues, all of which rest against the backdrop of multilateralism as exemplified by the United Nations.

However, the reality remains that the EU and the US are two of the world's most capable actors and, when acting in unison, present an impressive force to the rest of the world. This force is equipped with military, economic, diplomatic and indeed moral tools. Such a duet can often be an invaluable stepping stone towards tackling global threats to security, especially when embedded in the powerful base of a multilateral framework.[89] This is not to say that the transatlantic partners are or should be always ready or willing to address global peace and security issues worldwide; this would be neither feasible nor desirable. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that such transatlantic synergy of interests and capabilities should be strengthened and, furthermore, encouraged to remain within the rules of multilateralism. Run this way, the transatlantic cooperation has the potential to be an invaluable part of the global security toolbox.

In an ideal situation, the EU and the US would have at their disposal a reformed set of tools with which to approach issues of international peace and security. A more effective UN or a wieldier NATO which could not be paralysed by a single member state's veto would be welcome developments. However, the difficulties of achieving such degrees of reform are well-known and are bound to require some time and a high degree of commitment from NATO and UNSC members if they are to ever

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[89] J.M.D. Barroso, "A Letter from Brussels to the Next President of the United States of America", *Delegation of the European Commission to the USA website,* 24 September 2008, p. 4.

manifest themselves. In the face of such long-term constraints, what are the more immediate and more feasible options?

Firstly, the transatlantic partners should make more frequent and better use of *ad hoc* fora such as the Middle East Quartet. *Ad hoc* fora are particularly valuable because of their flexible nature, tailor-designed for the complexities of different issues. Furthermore, as several observers have argued, it seems that "the EU's smaller countries and non-participant institutions increasingly seem to accept such forums as useful, pragmatic ways for the Union to engage in international diplomacy" and that they are supported "almost instinctively" by the US.[90] The greater use of these fora in the future would mean that the transatlantic partners could pool their resources, material and diplomatic, into designing formats most appropriate to deal with an issue at hand.

Secondly, although the potential for the EU and the US to reform multilateral fora such as the UN is limited due to reasons mentioned above, they are, nevertheless, in a position to reform their bilateral interactions by reforming the NTA. The European Commission has already undergone an independent review which resulted in a substantial document outlining the strengths and weaknesses of EU cooperation with the US through the NTA.[91] The chief finding of the review was that the NTA should be "revamped and relaunched" instead of being discarded, meaning that it can continue to serve as a useful framework for EU-US interaction if appropriate changes are made to its format and strategic purpose.[92]

Finally, secondary factors like fostering EU unity could be addressed more productively in order to render both bilateral and multilateral transatlantic exchanges more effective. As discussed in the analysis, variables such as EU unity are often an important factor in producing more successful outcomes in both types of fora. Therefore, the EU should concentrate on developing a more coherent foreign policy, on which a "viable transatlantic relationship" is currently dependent.[93] As Vernet argues, "ne vous demandez pas ce que les Etats-Unis peuvent faire pour l'Europe, demandez-vous ce que l'Europe peut faire pour les Etats-Unis".[94] Although the opposite is also true, perhaps it is time for the EU to demonstrate to the US that it too is a capable actor and partner in the realm of international peace and security.

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[90] *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.,* p. 43.
[91] Please see *Review of the Framework for Relations between the European Union and the United States, op.cit.* for the full text.
[92] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[93] Grant & Leonard, *op.cit.,* p. 2.
[94] D. Vernet, "Les Européens proposent un partenariat d'égal à égal au prochain président des Etats-Unis", *Le Monde,* 4 November 2008, p. 1

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