

## US Relations with Europe under the Trump Administration

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An Atlantic Council young leader (2012), Global Shaper with the World Economic Forum (2014) and William H. Donner Human Rights Fellow (2007), Iveta has been cited in media such as *TIME*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *The Economist*, *Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *Euronews*, *El Pais*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Al-Jazeera*, *Radio France*, *ELLE* and *USAToday*. Her articles appear in peer-reviewed academic journals such as *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, *Essex Human Rights Review*, *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review*, the *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review*, and *Broadening the Scope of Human Trafficking*. Iveta has advised President Obama's action plan on business and human rights, and testified before the UN Working Group on business and human rights. She has been commended for leadership by NATO Secretary General and US Congressman Chris Smith.

## Introduction

If there is an image that remains in the back of the mind from Mr. Donald Trump's Presidential Inauguration in January 2017, that is a photo that came on the day of the occasion from across the Pond rather than from Washington DC. It was German Counsellor Angela Merkel looking at a painting in a museum instead of watching the Inauguration.<sup>1</sup>

Behind this signal of casual disinterest, at first sight, is a story of a waning transatlantic bond and disappointment in a relationship that traditionally has been strong and one of the backbones of contemporary US foreign policy. Barack Obama's speech in Berlin in July 2008, just months before he was elected US President<sup>2</sup>, could not provide a starker contrast about the way that US-German relations were about to unfold under these two radically different Administrations in their approaches to long-time European partners.

Creating immediate shifts to long-lasting partnerships and often bringing about confusion about the shape that rarely questioned relationships were about to assume, Mr. Trump's comments bring a flair and space for debate to a field which for a long time has been taken for granted almost as a mathematical constant.

Transatlantic relations are one of the backbones of US foreign policy. If frictions, debates and uncertainties around policy topics such as the US engagement in Latin America, the US view on interventions in the Middle East and African conflicts, China, Georgia, North Korea, Taiwan, and others, were taken to be exactly this – uncertainties, then the certainty of the transatlantic partnership, on the other hand, has almost invariably been one of the solid pillars of US foreign policy to the extent that in the past it has rarely been questioned, apart from recurring calls that Europe needs to step up on its security and defense contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> "[Angela Merkel went to an art museum instead of watching President Trump's inaugural address](http://theweek.com/speedreads/674767/angela-merkel-went-art-museum-instead-watching-president-trumps-inaugural-address)", The Week, 20 January 2017: <http://theweek.com/speedreads/674767/angela-merkel-went-art-museum-instead-watching-president-trumps-inaugural-address>

<sup>2</sup> "Obama's Speech in Berlin", *The New York Times*, July 2008: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/us/politics/24text-obama.html>

The value of the transatlantic partnership itself was rarely a question, in its own right.

With Mr. Trump, this long-standing unquestionable premise of US foreign policy is about to be shaken.

In times of political uncertainty, Mr. Donald Trump's shifting attitudes define the aspects of US foreign policy towards European allies. A subject to long-lasting commitments, agreements and special historic bonds, US-European relations are now at an exciting crossroad. These are stimulating times for the scholar of transatlantic and security relations. Sudden twists in decades-long policies, new allies at the expense of old-time alliances and partnerships, and unexpected statements and tweets make the topic of transatlantic relations in the Trump Era a theme that excites, puzzles and stimulates many in the security studies field, as well as among the general audience.

In the background of current US relations with Europe, are several underlying factors: the US pivot to Asia in relation to finding new partners and strengthening relations with Asian allies; the hawkish attitudes and new appointments in the Trump administration; the sensitive and special relationship which Mr. Trump cultivates with Russia; along with leanings towards populism in hope to influence Europe in the same populist direction. These sub-themes invariably will influence the US-European relations for the duration of the Trump Administration around the main bones of contention.

Against this background, this article reviews the most recent developments in US relations with NATO, and its commitments under the NATO framework and NATO alliances; the Iran deal and the rifts it will cause between the US and Europe; the US attitudes towards Europe's Common Defense and Security Policy; and trade pacts and shifting trade relations.

We also take a look into the shifting – and some stable – features of the partnerships with the EU as a whole, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Eastern European countries, and other European states.

This article is intended to serve as a reflection of current developments and a road map to US relations with European partners, rather than a historic or theoretical account. It intends to answer the question "what is going on in the relationship between the US and Europe under Mr Trump?".

These are exciting and trying times.

For the first time since the end of World War II a U.S. President is open to radically challenging the American approach toward Europe and the transatlantic alliance.<sup>3</sup>

## **Methodology**

This paper offers a first-hand source analysis of documents, speeches, policy briefs, and statements. In addition, over the course of June 2018, the author interviewed a number of policy makers, diplomats, think tank and legal experts in Washington DC and in Europe.

The article also offers a review of secondary sources such as media commentary, online articles and academic articles that analyze the issues. It is intended to read as a current analysis of the state of affairs, as they take place, rather than as a theoretical or historic account of transatlantic relations' comparisons.

Europe here is defined in traditional political terms. The article is mainly intended to look at EU and NATO allies as "European countries", in terms of the political definition of the geographic region. The analysis omits US relations with the wider-Europe states such as Turkey and Ukraine, the relations with which would merit a different framework and should be separate subjects in their own right. Relations with wider-Europe countries invariably are nevertheless included in the analysis, as far as they relate to US relations with traditionally-defined European countries.

## **Is Trump undoing the transatlantic partnership?**

With new key appointments and swift moves, the Trump Administration signaled that things will be changing for Europe. From the appointment of Mike Pompeo as the new Secretary of State to imposition of tariffs on aluminum and steel imports from European countries, to statements about European NATO partners' dues, to the US position on climate and the Iran deal, the shift is underway.

With new appointments came new moves and the shocks were felt in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> "The Trump Era or Interregnum? The Changing View of Europe in the United States", Stephen F. Szabo, 21. November 2017: <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/11/21/trump-era-or-interregnum-changing-view-europe-united-states>

One senior EU diplomat, speaking to EUObserver, said that the harm done to EU-US diplomacy was already real: "Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Rome, and Madrid are unwilling to work with Washington on a number of crucial international issues," he said, mentioning NATO spending, Iran, Syria, climate change, and energy security.<sup>4</sup> Whether the EU being patient and showing trust would bring about a change in the course of the deteriorating relations is doubtful. The diplomat underlined that the EU had to show trust in the institutions such as the "State Department, Pentagon, and intelligence agencies".

Steven Pifer, a Nonresident Senior Fellow at Brookings is convinced that Mr Trump is undoing the transatlantic partnership which over the past decades prevented another war in Europe. "A big part of the reason was the continued engagement of the United States in Europe after World War II, its launch of NATO, and support—albeit at times half-hearted—for the European Union's development. Those actions have helped keep peace and stability in Europe for 70 years. Donald Trump is undoing that."<sup>5</sup>

A Guardian columnist went as far as to say that Donald Trump "does mean Europe harm"<sup>6</sup> and that the US President was creating conditions for the EU to split up, in a "mixture of hostility and indifference" to the European Union. Nougayrède foresees the risks for Europe if the Iran deal unravels; the costs of a trade war; and Mr Trump's indifference to Russia's apparent use of a chemical weapon in Europe. She too believes that the add-up on the Iraq.

Andrew Rettman remains more positive: "the foundations of the transatlantic relationship are still intact", he says in a piece for the EUObserver.<sup>7</sup> But Trump's harm to America's international reputation, which underpins the legitimacy of its superpower status, is another matter and could be harder to heal, he adds.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139870>

<sup>5</sup> Steven Pifer, "Is Trump undoing trans-Atlantic relations?", May 2017, Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/05/31/is-trump-undoing-trans-atlantic-relations/>

<sup>6</sup> [Natalie Nougayrède](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/13/donald-trump-europe-eu-sergei-skripal-rex-tillerson), "The harsh reality: Donald Trump does mean Europe harm", March 2018, The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/13/donald-trump-europe-eu-sergei-skripal-rex-tillerson>

<sup>7</sup> "The EU and US in the age of Trump", [Andrew Rettman](https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139870), BRUSSELS, 28. Dec 2017 <https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139870>

The divergence and reorientation away from European countries is a trend that began even before Mr Trump stepped into power. The US pivoted foreign policy from Europe to Asia in a withdrawal from the Old Continent. But this is different.

US Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned in June 2018<sup>8</sup> that Trump had roiled the transatlantic relationship and strained ties with many of the United States' longstanding friends and allies by his dogged pursuit of an America First policy. Coats warned that these actions have increasingly left the United States alone on the world stage.

### **New Trump Administration Appointments**

A wave of concern came across Europe with Mr Trump's key Administration appointments.

When Donald Trump appointed the Central Intelligence Agency Director Mike Pompeo as the new US Secretary of State to succeed Rex Tillerson in April 2018, commentators saw this as a "victory for hardliners".<sup>9</sup> Rex Tillerson was largely seen as a diplomat who generally sided with European partners on issues such as Iran, and one who placed importance on diplomacy over the use of force. Tillerson was one of the very few in the Trump Administration to go at great length to assure Europeans that the transatlantic relationship remained intact and strong as ever. With his replacement, many in Washington and beyond, sensed the hawkish mood which was to replace that in the relations with Europe over the hot issues.

Louis Golino sees the Pompeo appointment as one to signal trouble for US relations with European partners in an opinion piece<sup>10</sup> published at the Atlantic Council -- a Washington DC-based think tank, a

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<sup>8</sup> Ashish Kumar Sen, "Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats: Russia is Attempting to Influence US Midterms, Divide Transatlantic Alliance", June 9, 2018, Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/director-of-national-intelligence-dan-coats-russia-is-attempting-to-influence-us-midterms-divide-transatlantic-alliance>

<sup>9</sup> "Mike Pompeo confirmed as Secretary of State in victory for hardliners", Jeremy White, 26 April, The Independent: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/mike-pompeo-secretary-of-state-confirmed-senate-vote-a8324256.html>

<sup>10</sup> "A Storm is Brewing in Transatlantic Relations", Louis Golino, March 2018, Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-storm-is-brewing-in-transatlantic-relations>

staunch supporter of transatlantic relations. The occurring shift, Golino stated, might be the “worst divergence” in transatlantic relations comparable only to the rift over the 2003 Iraq war.

The Atlantic Council piece’s caution came just in time. Pompeo has been known in the past for statements favoring regime change in Iran and North Korea. Pompeo and Trump jointly share a hawkish stance towards Iran, especially in Trump’s call to shred the 2015 Iran nuclear deal negotiated under Barack Obama which the EU helped broker and European allies such as France and Germany will defend. Pompeo’s appointment was not good news for the Iran deal supporters in Europe.

Other Trump Administration appointments seemed to signal trouble for the US – European partnership. Another such appointment was that of John Bolton, the former US Ambassador to the UN who was at the center of the 2003 Iraq crisis that brought the worst rift in US-European relations. John Bolton, now part of the Trump Administration as National Security Advisor, has openly advocated military strikes on Iran and North Korea. Like Trump and Pompeo, Bolton has called for the US to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal and, like Pompeo, has advocated immediate regime change in Tehran.

### **Trump’s relationship with Russia and consequences for the transatlantic partnership.**

Russian meddling in the US President election came to the fore, especially with US Department of Justice’s appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel into obstruction of justice and potential collusion between Mr Trump and his camp and the Kremlin.

The relationship with Russia began showing signs in US conduct of its relations with European partners. Memorable is the episode of the nerve agent positioning in the UK.

While Rex Tillerson, Trump’s former Secretary of State, unequivocally expressed his horror about the nerve agent poisoning in the UK and openly pledged solidarity with a European ally, Mr Trump’s reaction was different.

Then British Theresa May stated that it was “highly likely” that Russia was responsible for the attack, and in the same time several European governments were closing ranks with the UK<sup>11</sup>. Trump, by contrast, remained silent. And this made many realize just how different relations would be from now on.

“The Administration is talking out of both sides of its mouth on Russia.”, said Kristen Silverberg, managing director at the Institute of International Finance in February 2018.<sup>12</sup> This largely shows the diverging messaging that used to come from Secretary Tillerson and the President himself.

The aim on the side of Russia is clear, according to Washington officials. “Russia is attempting to divide the transatlantic alliance,” US Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats warned at a meeting co-hosted by the Atlantic Council in Normandy, France, on June 8 2018.<sup>13</sup> “[Putin’s] actions demonstrate that he seeks to sow divisions within and between those in the West who adhere to democratic norms,” he added.

Coats, a former US congressman and senator, rang the alarm when it came to Russian attempts to split the transatlantic alliance.

“The Russian threat in particular has awakened Europe to the need to reinvigorate NATO and bolster our collective defenses,” Coats said. “The Russians are actively seeking to divide our Alliance, and we must not allow that to happen.” While firm on the threat posed by Russia, he underscored the importance for the United States to have enduring relationships with its European allies to stand up to that challenge. “Invading Ukraine, seizing Crimea, attacking individuals in the UK with nerve agent, conducting cyber-attacks against multiple EU countries, and undermining the energy resources of Eastern European countries do not strike me as unifying actions,” he asserted.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid Guardian article

<sup>12</sup> Ellen Scholl, “Taking Stock of the Transatlantic Relationship After One Year of Trump”, Feb 2018, Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/taking-stock-of-the-transatlantic-relationship-after-one-year-of-trump>

<sup>13</sup> Ashish Kumar Sen, “Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats: Russia is Attempting to Influence US Midterms, Divide Transatlantic Alliance”, June 9, 2018, Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/director-of-national-intelligence-dan-coats-russia-is-attempting-to-influence-us-midterms-divide-transatlantic-alliance>



Speaking to EU Observer anonymously, a senior EU diplomat warned: "The biggest danger for Europe is a paralysis with regard to the question of Russia ... the US is emerging as the weakest point of the Western alliance", he said.<sup>14</sup>

Many look to Congress for a check and balance on Mr Trump's Russia leanings.

US Congress has been passing new packages of even harsher Russia sanctions in the face of the Trump White House. In June 2017, the Senate approved new sanctions of Russia for meddling into the 2016 US presidential election.<sup>15</sup> It further established a process for Congress to review any attempt by Trump to relax, suspend or terminate the sanctions on Russia. Sanctions were also imposed on Russians who have been found guilty of human rights abuses, have supplied weapons to the Assad regime or have conducted cyber-attacks on behalf of the Russian government, among other categories.<sup>16</sup>

US Congress showed the limits of Trump's foreign policy powers when it came to Russia.

### **Trade Pacts and Imposition of Trade Tariffs**

It was not a surprise when in June the EU hit back at Donald Trump with billions in tariffs on Bourbon whiskey, jeans and motorcycles, in response. The move was provoked by Trump's decision to impose tariffs of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminum on EU exports. Notably, there was no exemption for Europe as there was temporarily for Mexico and Canada. Brussels Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmström, asking "are Europeans not US allies, rather than threats to American national security?"<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "The EU and US in the age of Trump", [Andrew Rettman](https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139870), BRUSSELS, 28. Dec 2017  
<https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139870>

<sup>15</sup> Lauren Gambino and Julian Borger, "Senate approves new Russia sanctions as punishment for meddling in election", Wed 14 Jun 2017: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/14/senate-proposes-new-russia-sanctions-meddling-election>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid Gambino and Borger.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid Gambino and Borger.

So when on 20 June 2018 The European Union announced<sup>18</sup> it will be imposing 25 per cent import tariffs on a range of American products, including Bourbon whiskey, cranberry juice, motorcycles, jeans, as well as metals, the trade war started.

But the EU did not start this.

In a statement to reporters the same week, Mr Trump complained that the EU was “particularly tough” on the US. “They make it almost impossible to do business with them... The European Union has not treated as well”, he added.

“We did not want to be in this position. However, the unilateral and unjustified decision of the US to impose steel and aluminum tariffs on the EU means that we are left with no other choice,” Trade commissioner Cecilia Malmström said on the same day.

Trump has already suspended the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) talks and it is unlikely that talks would reopen although many in the Administration would like to see these talks reopen. During the Obama days, President Obama had advanced the EU-US free trade treaty designed to deepen transatlantic relations. Trump brought an end to that. In March, European Council President Donald Tusk urged Trump to reopen the TTIP, rather than begin a trade war on steel and aluminum.

On the occasion of the G-7 Summit in Canada in June 2018 and en route to Singapore for the North Korean summit, Trump had warned European countries not to retaliate against US tariffs on the imports of steel and aluminum. “If they retaliate, they’re making a mistake,” Trump said.

And now the EU has hit back in areas where the US will feel the pain. The US effectively started a trade war in June 2018.

In general, Mr Trump has a fixation on bilateral trade balances, and it is up to US Congress to exercise some supervision over trade policy to prevent further harm to transatlantic relations.

### **The Iran Deal**

An additional transatlantic rift point is brought by the Iran Deal which Mr Trump<sup>19</sup>. Both the president and Secretary Pompeo showed disdain for the agreement. The US President told reporters in January

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/eu-donald-trump-tariffs-trade-war-billions-bourbon-whiskey-jeans-motorcycles-steel-aluminium-a8408566.html>

2018 that he was agreeing to waive some sanctions “only in order to secure our European allies’ agreement to fix the terrible flaws of the Iran nuclear deal”.

Later, during a visit to Washington in April 2018, French president Emmanuel Macron worked to persuade Donald Trump to preserve the deal. But Mr Macron conceded he faced slim odds of succeeding. “My view – I don’t know what your president will decide – is that he will get rid of this deal on his own, for domestic reasons,” Mr Macron told reporters. As of the time of writing, the Iran deal is still in force.

In early May, Mr Trump withdrew from the Iran deal. In that context, there is a threat of US sanctions on European companies continuing to do business with or invest in Iran and this is further complicating transatlantic relations.

### **ATO Commitments**

Few remember that back in 1987, Mr Trump paid \$100,000 for an ad published on September 2, 1987 in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe*. 'There's nothing wrong with America's Foreign Defense Policy that a little backbone can't cure,' was the ad's headline as 'an open letter from Donald J. Trump' - addressed "To The American People" - 'on why America should stop paying to defend countries that can afford to defend themselves.'<sup>20</sup>

It is no surprise, therefore, that one of the first comments Mr Trump made was targeted against NATO European allies not paying their dues to the organization. NATO is the bedrock of the transatlantic relationship and Mr Trump has continuously bashed NATO allies to step up their contributions to the organization. What is more, Trump has used the word “obsolete” to describe NATO.

During Trump’s trip to Europe in May 2017 for the NATO Summit in Brussels, Mr Trump showed an initial reluctance to endorse the NATO mutual defense clause under Article 5 which posits that an attack on one is an attack on all.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44045957>

<sup>20</sup> Cited in “The Trump Era or Interregnum? The Changing View of Europe in the United States”, Stephen F. Szabo, 21. November 2017: <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/11/21/trump-era-or-interregnum-changing-view-europe-united-states>

Steven Pifer, Nonresident Fellow at Brookings underlined the President’s mishandling of the May NATO Summit in Brussels: “most strikingly, he declined to publicly reaffirm Article 5, the heart of the 1949 NATO treaty in which allies agreed, “an armed attack against one or more of them...shall be considered an attack against them all.”<sup>21</sup>

Steven Pifer is firm that “every American president, up until Mr. Trump, has given a robust and unqualified support for Article 5—to ensure that no potential adversary would believe it could attack a NATO member and not face an overwhelming response”, including from the largest military power, the United States. “We want a potential adversary to believe that if it steps one foot into NATO territory, that means war. That will keep it from taking that step. Mr. Trump’s decision not to support Article 5 publicly undercuts that certainty of U.S. response. That brings risk. In a crisis, might the Kremlin miscalculate and decide on a military action against a NATO member, believing that the United States would not respond? With U.S. troops deployed in Poland and the Baltic states, such a miscalculation would put their lives in jeopardy”, Pifer adds.<sup>22</sup>

Trump’s comments that NATO allies are not paying their share in contributions to NATO collective defense, depicting Europe as military free riders who take advantage of the US, again receives a strong critique by Steven Pifer, who believes that Mr Trump “erred in his handling of the defense-spending question.” While the President is right that NATO allies should increase their spending, following Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, allied leaders at their September 2014 summit reaffirmed the target of two percent of gross domestic product, to be achieved no later than 2024. Most NATO allies have begun increasing their spending even before Mr. Trump took office. Pifer asks, however, if “hectoring NATO counterparts in public is the smart way to advance his goal, especially against the backdrop of the Article 5 memorial, a jagged piece of steel from the north tower of the World Trade Center? That commemorates the only time that NATO has invoked Article 5—to defend the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.”<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the only time Article 5 was evoked was to support the military action post-September 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr Trump owed at least a mention of the fact that Article 5 has served US military and national security objectives. As a result, more than 1,000 European and Canadian soldiers have died fighting in

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid Steven Pifer.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid Steven Pifer.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid Steven Pifer.

Afghanistan alongside their American counterparts. Pifer concludes: “Does it make sense for Washington to say, “you’re on your own no matter what—particularly if you don’t pay us ‘back dues?’”<sup>24</sup>

According to Julianne Smith, a senior fellow and director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, European allies went into the 2017 NATO Summit anxious to hear “an unwavering US commitment to Article 5 and to NATO as an institution—and they didn’t quite get that.”<sup>25</sup>

It was not until after the Summit that Trump affirmed US commitment to NATO’s collective defense clause.

Administration officials, including Mr. Trump’s National Security Advisor and National Economic Council director sought to affirm the U.S. commitment to Article 5 in the May 2017 [Wall Street Journal](#),<sup>26</sup> but this only partly made up for the President’s ringing public silence.

Looking ahead to the 2018 NATO conference, Smith said there is still “an open-ended question of whether or not this administration wants to be in a leadership role inside the NATO alliance.”<sup>27</sup>

### **Europe’s Common Defense and Security Policy (CSDP)**

In relation to NATO dues, comes in the Trump Administration reluctance towards Europe’s Common Defense and Security Policy (CSDP). In February 2018, a Pentagon official criticized Europe’s Common Defense and Security Policy as pulling forces away from NATO and discouraged it with caution that it would undermine European countries’ independent capabilities.<sup>28</sup> The US Ambassador to NATO objected to the clause about protecting European defense companies.

Tomas Valasek, Director of Carnegie Europe, states that most European companies reply that it’s only fair to be placed under advantage as European companies. The U.S. government protects its own

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid Steven Pifer.

<sup>25</sup> Ellen Scholl, “Taking Stock of the Transatlantic Relationship After One Year of Trump”, Feb 2018, Atlantic Council: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/taking-stock-of-the-transatlantic-relationship-after-one-year-of-trump>

<sup>26</sup> H.R. McMaster and Gary D. Cohn, “America First Doesn’t Mean America Alone”, May 30, 2017: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid Ellen Scholl.

<sup>28</sup> “European Defense vs NATO: not the right fight”, Tomas Valasek, Carnegie Europe, February 2018: <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/02/16/european-defense-vs.-nato-not-right-fight-pub-75563>

suppliers also. Valasek considers, however, that “the U.S. may have scored more visible successes selling to the Europeans than the other way around, but both markets are somewhat open, while openly favoring national champions, to protect jobs and the security of supply in times of war”. Europeans at the same time prefer to buy American because they get a security relationship with the U.S. above what NATO offers, and for Valasek those ties could be severed if European defense integration proceeds.

The EU’s new defense pact, known as [Permanent Structured Cooperation](#) (PESCO), commits participating states to using the EU’s defense agency if they want to develop new weapons jointly. But the agency prioritizes weapons needed for EU missions, not NATO ones, so US concerns are well founded.

“We’ve been here before”, notes Tomas Valasek. “George W. Bush’s first government spent four years trying to block EU defense, before concluding that it’s better to channel the initiative than to stop it.” He adds: “The U.S. would be foolish to keep attacking Europe’s defense integration.”<sup>29</sup>

As the EU now offers to pay as much as 20 percent of the total price from common budgets if the governments in question pool their orders. For Valasek, this is a promising idea that, if it takes off, will benefit both the EU and NATO and there are other similarly useful lines of work under way in Europe, which would make it easier to move military equipment across EU borders, or harmonize the standards of equipment used by its militaries.<sup>30</sup>

Valasek points out that more EU countries now support greater cooperation than back in the early 2000s, when the U.S. tried to stop CSDP from developing. “It’s not that the Europeans are blind to its shortcomings, but that they see the potential for benefits that the U.S. does not share or care about: protecting European defense industries, a chance to advance the broader case for EU integration, or a price worth paying for remaining at the innermost core of EU countries.”<sup>31</sup>

Valasek warns: “The policy is already a reality, whether the U.S. likes it or not. Enough European members of NATO are willing to stand up for it to make it pointless for Washington to try to thwart it. The U.S. should do what previous administrations have done for the past decade: Work with like-minded

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid Tomas Valasek.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid Tomas Valasek.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid Valasek.

allies to encourage the promising aspects and work the usual diplomatic channels to press back against the worrying parts. This is a policy best conducted offline — and off Twitter.”<sup>32</sup>

### **The United Kingdom**

Mr Trump has shown indifference to Brexit in the context of Trump’s indifference to the EU project as a whole. Expected empathy did not materialize. Trump, in fact, began his tenure by praising Brexit in what looked like the dawn of a new age of populism in the west.

Ties were strained and exacerbated over issues such as the US president’s initial failure to show solidarity with the United Kingdom over the Russian nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy and his daughter on March 4 2018.

Brexiters like to believe the relationship with the US is an iron-clad special relationship, and they believe they would be getting a special treatment on trade.

One State Department official said that the relationship between the US and the UK used to be so close that UK diplomats used to freely roam the hallways of the State Department at Foggy Bottom in Washington DC. It is against that backdrop that current developments are taking place.

### **Germany**

France was given the honour of the first presidential state visit of the Trump era.

As to Germany, Mr Trump, has occasionally engaged in so called German bashing. Angela Merkel, Germany’s chancellor who just began her fourth term, has seen her status within Germany and the EU diminished after almost a half a year of negotiations to form a new coalition.

Donald Trump often describes the EU as “a vehicle for Germany”. To date, Mr Trump has not named me a US ambassador to the EU.

German Chancellor Merkel drew a conclusion from Mr Trump’s lukewarm statements at the NATO 2017 Summit and from discussions at the May 26-27 G7 summit and on May 28 2017, she said, “we Europeans must really take our fate into our own hands.”

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid Valasek.

On 30 May 2018, in response, Mr Trump tweeted: “We have a MASSIVE trade deficit with Germany, plus they pay FAR LESS than they should on NATO & military. Very bad for U.S. This will change.”

This has been a part of what commentators have called “German bashing”. He has been critical of Merkel’s openness to refugees, and free trade.

Stepha Szabo believes that Trump associates the European Union and especially Germany with a form of globalization which benefits Europe at the expense of the United States. Even worse they see both the EU and Angela Merkel as promoting a form of cosmopolitanism which is undermining national identities and the idea of the West.<sup>33</sup>

## Poland

In Eastern European countries, the US moved to deploy US military equipment and troops in 2017 partly put at ease some European partners in their fears from Russian aggression.

US military chiefs have repeatedly pledged their commitment to NATO to European allies. The US is also leading a NATO battalion in Poland to deter Russian aggression.

Mr Trump commends Poland and wants Poland’s nationalist regime – the only one in Europe that he has ever lauded – to break ranks with Angela Merkel’s Germany on car exports and other deals.

Trump’s speech in Poland reaffirmed common values such as freedom, cultural and historic bonds:

*‘We have to remember that our defense is not just a commitment of money, it is a commitment of will. Because as the Polish experience reminds us, the defense of the West ultimately rests not only on means but also on the will of its people to prevail and be successful and get what you have to have. The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive. Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it? [Applause]*

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<sup>33</sup> “The Trump Era or Interregnum? The Changing View of Europe in the United States”, Stephen F. Szabo, 21. November 2017: <https://eu.boell.org/en/2017/11/21/trump-era-or-interregnum-changing-view-europe-united-states>



*We can have the largest economies and the most lethal weapons anywhere on Earth, but if we do not have strong families and strong values, then we will be weak and we will not survive.*

*Our own fight for the West does not begin on the battlefield - it begins with our minds, our wills, and our souls. Today, the ties that unite our civilization are no less vital, and demand no less defense, than that bare shred of land on which the hope of Poland once totally rested. Our freedom, our civilization, and our survival depend on these bonds of history, culture, and memory [11].'*

The fact that Trump made this speech in a Poland which is becoming increasingly authoritarian and with no mention of the erosion of liberal values by the Polish government is characteristic of his world view, namely his admiration for authoritarian values and strong leaders.

### **Looking forward**

The wide range of issues currently dividing the transatlantic allies and the new, “unleashed” approach of the US president, including the current trade wars, are contributing to a dangerous and growing rift. To address it, experts say the Trump administration should rethink its tariffs and escalation of the trade wars, either offering exemptions for Europe or aiming them squarely at China; support EU efforts to develop a European pillar within NATO; and work towards a unified transatlantic position on key issues like Russia and Iran.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the challenges and the rhetoric facing the US relationship with Europe, there remains a strong transatlantic foundation of institutions and ideas—bolstered by economic interdependence, defense cooperation, and shared democratic values—upon which to rely and remain convinced that cooperation is and will be possible.

Steve Pifer of Brookings is certain that U.S. engagement and support for building the institutions of modern Europe—including the European Union, NATO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—have helped Europe enjoy an unparalleled period of peace and stability. ‘That was and remains in the U.S. interest’, he concludes.

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<sup>34</sup> “A Storm is Brewing in Transatlantic Relations”, Louis Golino, March 2018, Atlantic Council:  
<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/a-storm-is-brewing-in-transatlantic-relations>