



## The EU's relationship with the United States of America

This series of Briefing Papers aims to outline the work of the European Union (EU) in the field of Peacebuilding, how it is involved in Conflict Zones and International Actors (illustrated by Case Studies). The papers are intended to act as an introduction to this topic and to help provide understanding of the EU's work in this field.

This paper looks at the relationship of the EU and the United States of America (USA) as International Actors and briefly compares their external/foreign policies.

### EU & USA Foreign and Security Policy

The EU and the USA as international actors formulate their foreign and security policies in different ways. The USA policy is developed at the national level while the multi-level and inter-governmental nature of EU decision-making can result in *“two sometimes complementary but often different sets of security perspectives in which the interests, needs and agreed upon rhetoric of security at the EU level are not necessarily identical with those of individual member states”*<sup>1</sup>.

### The EU's view of the USA

The European Commission website states that the EU and the USA share common interests in promoting peace and stability and have close security ties<sup>2</sup>. In the European Security Strategy (ESS) the ‘transatlantic relationship’ is identified as a key element of the international system. It expresses the view that the EU and USA can be a *“formidable force for good in the world”* and that there should be *“an effective and balanced partnership with the USA”*<sup>3</sup>.

### The USA's view of the EU

In its National Security Strategy (NSS) the USA states that it needs the *“sustained co-operation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe”* in order to achieve its goals. The National Security Strategy goes on to describe Europe as *“the seat of two of the strongest and most able international institutions in the world”*: the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the EU<sup>4</sup>.

### The Relationship between the EU & the USA

The current involvement of the USA in Western Europe originates from the Cold War between the Western and Soviet blocs. During this period the USA was actively involved in European security issues through the NATO alliance. Since the Cold War however there has been a shift in the USA's foreign policy interests and less of a concern with security issues within the European Region.

The development of the EU Common Foreign & Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security & Defence Policy (ESDP) can be viewed as a shift away from reliance on the USA. It can be argued that the EU's growing independence from USA is demonstrated by the disagreements over the

<sup>1</sup> *Defining the Enemy: EU and US Threat Perceptions After 9/11*, Susan E. Penska, in *European Security after September 11 and the War in Iraq*, Heinz Gartner and Ian Cuthbertson, 2005

<sup>2</sup> *The EU's relations with the United States of America – Overview*, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/us/intro/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/us/intro/),

<sup>3</sup> *A Secure Europe in a Better World – European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, [http://ue.eu.int/cms3\\_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g](http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g)

<sup>4</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol and Iraq as well as highlighting what can be considered a “*value disagreement*” between European governments and the Bush Administration<sup>5</sup>.

## Comparison between the EU & USA Security Strategies

By comparing the ESS and the NSS we can gain an understanding of the differences and similarities between the foreign and security policies of the EU & the USA.

### Overview

The introduction to the ESS starts by noting that there is currently “*a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history*”, but “*Europe still faces security threats and challenges*”. Recognising that the EU is a key international actor “*Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world*”.

In its introduction the NSS identifies defending the USA from its enemies as “*the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government*”. It also emphasises the importance of freedoms, both political and economic and views freedom as “*the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person*”. In its ‘Overview of America’s International Strategy’ it states the goals are “*political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity*”.

### Key Threats

Recognising that “*large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable*” the ESS identifies terrorism<sup>6</sup>, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), regional conflicts, state failure and organised crime as the main threats to Europe. It regards these new threats as “*more diverse, less visible and less predictable*”.

The NSS, while recognising threats such as WMD and regional conflicts emphasises terrorism as the key challenge. It takes the view that the USA is “*less menaced by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few*” and that “*the enemy is terrorism - premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents*”. In relation to WMD it refers to the threat of terrorism and that the USA; “*must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction*”.

### Responses to these threats

The ESS states that “*none of these new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means*”. It goes on to say that each threat “*requires a mixture of instruments*” to be addressed. For example, terrorism may need to be addressed through “*a mixture of intelligence, police, judicial and military means*”.

In comparison the NSS takes the view that the USA “*is fighting a war against terrorists of global reach*”. The NSS advocates pre-emptive action against terrorists “*to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country*”. The NSS argues that international law recognises that a state has the right to defend itself if it is in danger of being attacked. It goes on to argue that this concept needs to be adapted “*to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries*” and states that to “*prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries the United States will if necessary act pre-emptively*”. While the USA will not use force in all instances the NSS goes on to say that “*where the enemies of civilisation openly and actively seek the world’s most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather*”.

<sup>5</sup> *EU Security Cooperation and the Transatlantic Relationship*, Susan E. Penska and Warren L. Mason, in *Cooperation and Conflict – Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Volume 38 No. 3, September 2003

<sup>6</sup> Paper number 7, ‘*The US-EU Joint Actions*’, of QCEA’s series of Briefing Papers on the EU’s Response to the Threat of Terrorism examines the developments in cooperation and coordination in the area of terrorism between the EU and the US. The paper is available online at: <http://quaker.org/qcea/briefings/terrorism/terrorismbp7.pdf>

## Relationships with other International Actors

The ESS states that “*no single country is able to tackle today’s complex problems on its own*”. The ESS advocates the need for “*effective multilateralism*”, defined as the organisation of international relations through “*strong, negotiated and enforceable multilateral regimes*”<sup>7</sup>. The ESS objective is for “*a stronger international society, well- functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order*”.

The NSS while recognising “*that to defeat terrorism in today’s globalized world we need support from our allies and friends*”, in contrast to the emphasis the ESS places on existing international institutions and law, the NSS takes the view that “*America will implement its strategies by organizing coalitions - as broad as practicable - of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favours freedom*”.

## The Role of NATO

The ESS notes how the US role in European Security has been largely conducted through NATO. In the NSS NATO is described as “*the fulcrum of transatlantic and inter-european security*”. It is important to note that while the EU has developed as an international security actor through the CFSP and ESDP these developments are not intended to replace NATO.

*For more information paper number 8, ‘The EU and NATO’, of QCEA’s series of Briefing Papers on the EU’s Response to the Threat of Terrorism provides a brief outline of the relationship between NATO and the EU. The paper is available online at:*

<http://quaker.org/qcea/briefings/terrorism/terrorismbp8.pdf>

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<sup>7</sup> *Effective Multilateralism: Europe, Regional Security, and a Revitalised UN*, December 2004, <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/350.pdf>