



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES II

### US-EU Relations Update

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#### Introduction

Relations between the United States and the European Union (EU) have long been characterized by both intense disagreements and harmonious cooperation. Their relationship has also been called “the strategically most important” in the world, and must be maintained not only through diplomacy but also through legislation and other binding policies. As such, it is your job as members of the House of Representatives to evaluate how to best renew and facilitate positive interactions between these two great powers.

#### Summary of the Problem

Since the EU was created in 1951, the community has expanded from just six members to include 27 nations. Many changes have been made over the last few decades in how the EU is organized. Following several structural developments, such as the elimination of borders between its members during the 1990s, the EU has become a “**top-down**” governing system, meaning that the **European Commission** has taken the bulk of the decision-making power as individual nations have conversely lost some of that power.

US-EU relations have changed as well over the past few decades. Some of the issues straining and strengthening relationships over the past few years include environmental sustainability, especially with regards to the Kyoto Convention; the Iraq War; the market downturn in the US and its implications for European economies; tension between Russia and Georgia; and some limited trade disputes, most prominently that over President Bush’s proposed steel tariffs. US foreign policy is often accused of being too unilateral by EU member nations, though the US has worked to further include the EU in its policy decisions, even going so far as to ask the EU to take the lead in negotiations with Iran.

**Top-down**—*approach that breaks down a system to gain insight into individual sub-systems.*

**European Commission**—*executive branch of EU that proposes legislation, implements decisions, and upholds treaties.*

#### Recent Developments

The most important recent development that has occurred in the past few months as far as transatlantic relations are concerned was undoubtedly the election of Barack Obama as the new President of the United States. Various media outlets in the EU and US seem to believe that a new era for EU-US relations has dawned with Obama’s inauguration, an era of “reinventing global politics”, according to US foreign

policy expert, David J. Rothkopf. Political pundits believe that US-EU relations will significantly improve, with Obama likely taking a second tour of Europe in the first months of his administration. Among the issues that will arise is undoubtedly the financial crisis that has recently emerged, as well as the role of EU member nations in the NATO operation in Afghanistan, where Obama has just committed 17,000 more troops. Delegates must undoubtedly take into consideration the new realities of the US government. The presidency is ostensibly taking a new direction of greater collaboration and communication with international powers, and fair or not, the fact that he is not President Bush, who is extremely unpopular in most of Europe, can only help improve transatlantic relations.

The EU has high expectations from the Obama presidency, most notably in the US maintaining a more multilateral approach to international affairs. This is important as the EU has grown wary of Russia's role in both Eastern Europe and the Middle East and would like US cooperation on this issue. Relations with China will also be a central part to discussion in the next few years, with the EU publicly proclaiming an interest in deepening relations with China.

## Focus of Debate

### *Conservative View*

Conservatives generally believe that EU and US have strong ideological and strategic differences. More specifically, they contend that the unilateral strategies that the US sometimes employs are justified and effective in many cases. Conservatives additionally feel that US foreign policy has often been unfairly accused of being too unilateral and that the US's place as the world's lone superpower will guarantee such criticism no matter what foreign policy it pursues. Conservatives do believe in building transatlantic ties and strongly value the NATO alliance, but do not believe that EU interests should determine US domestic policy, and vice versa.

### *Liberal View*

Liberals typically promote further cooperation between the two powers and are the most vocal proponents of multilateralism, especially in light of intense international turmoil. Liberals view EU's **multilateral** strategy as an appropriate method for responding to crises, and wish to limit the use of force only to absolutely necessary situations. Europeans also tend to hold more liberal views, making them natural allies for liberals in the United States. Many liberals wish to increase US cooperation with the EU on issues like climate change and adopt more European economic models, especially with regards to healthcare.

**Multilateral**—multiple countries working in concert on a given issue in international politics.

### *Presidential View*

President Obama's attitude towards US-EU relations has inspired great optimism both domestically and abroad. Obama's administration seeks to restore an image of respect and admiration for the US abroad by working more closely with our allies. The new Administration promises to resolve the situation in Afghanistan with international help and increase the contribution of US European allies. Furthermore, Obama wants to implement new methods to address climate change, such as a **cap-and-trade** program. According to Obama's agenda, the United States has an interest in a strong, united, and peaceful Europe as a partner in global affairs. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will continue to work towards more cooperation between the US and the EU, having stated their goal "to renew American leadership in the world, to rebuild the alliances, partnerships, and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security. Needed reform of these alliances and institutions will not come by bullying other countries to ratify changes we hatch in isolation. It will come when we convince other governments and peoples that they, too, have a stake in effective partnerships."

**Cap-and-trade-**  
*approach used to control pollution by providing economical incentives for achieving reductions in the emissions of pollutants.*

### **Questions for Policymakers**

The most important questions that a bill should address concern the extent of involvement that the US should have in EU's domestic concerns and vice versa. What strategies should the US follow to deal with new diplomatic issues? Is Obama's multilateral approach the desirable future for US foreign policy, as far as the EU is concerned, or did the more unilateral methods of the previous administration cater more successfully promote the needs of American security and development? Can the need for the United States to protect its own interests be successfully reconciled with an increase in multilateralism? How will economic concerns on either the European continent or in the United States affect transatlantic relations? Should protectionist policies be allowed in trading with the EU, for example, or should there be a more extensive and open market policy between the two superpowers? In answering all these questions, you must consider not only the interests of the United States, but the implications of global security and international economic prosperity.

### **Conclusion**

Without a doubt, cooperation between the US and the EU is necessary for the stability and prosperity of the global community. Both superpowers must find the proper diplomatic means of achieving efficient cooperation in order to solve both domestic and international con-

flicts and problems. With a new US administration and rising financial and political problems domestically and abroad, the nature of this partnership must be redefined. Either way, there is an opportunity for policymakers to create a framework that will not only benefit the US and its citizens, but also the entire world.

### **Bibliography**

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