



## The Role of the European Parliament in the Development of the EU-USA Transatlantic Relations

AB-ABD Transatlantik İlişkilerinin Geliştirilmesinde Avrupa Parlamentosu'nun Rolü

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the scope and evolution of the European transatlantic policy with the United States of America (USA). Our research questions are related to the number and content of the texts adopted by the European Parliament (EP) and the role of the EP and its Committees in shaping the European transatlantic policies. We examine which are the committees that lead and guide the EP transatlantic conclusions. Within this context, this research paper highlights the substance of the European Union (EU) and the USA relations over the last 25 years and the major areas in which the EU cooperates with the USA. We have built our research on the European Parliament since it has legislative authority in shaping and guiding EU's external policy. Therefore, our study brings a new perspective to the current literature on transatlantic relations by assessing the EU-USA relations from the EP conclusions and adopted legal texts. A document and policy analysis are conducted between 1999 and 2024, to assess each of the last five Parliamentary Terms and through the entire current EU laws in force. We conclude that despite studies asserting the weakening of the EU-USA relations, EU's relations have been consistent since 1999 and even increasing in the last decade, from technical and legal achievement, based on the quantitative and contentive analysis of our research.

### MAKALE BİLGİSİ

#### Makale Türü

Araştırma Makalesi

#### Anahtar Kelimeler

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### ÖZ

Bu makale, Avrupa'nın Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) ile olan transatlantik politikasının kapsamını ve gelişimini incelemektedir. Araştırma sorularımız, Avrupa Parlamentosu (AP) tarafından kabul edilen metinlerin sayısı ve içeriği ile AP ve Komitelerinin Avrupa transatlantik politikalarını şekillendirmedeki rolü üzerinedir. Çalışmada hangi komitelerin AP'nin transatlantik kararlarına yön verdiği ve öncülük ettiği incelenmekte olup, Avrupa Birliği (AB) ile ABD'nin son 25 yıldaki ilişkilerinin içeriği ve AB'nin ABD ile işbirliği yaptığı başlıca alanlar ortaya konmaktadır. AP'nin Avrupa dış politikasını yönlendirme ve şekillendirme konusunda yasama yetkisine sahip olması nedeniyle araştırmamız AP üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Çalışmamız AB-ABD ilişkilerini AP'nin onayladığı karar ve hukuki metinler üzerinden değerlendirmekte olup, transatlantik ilişkiler konusundaki akademik literatüre yeni bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, AP'nin 1999-2024 yıllarını kapsayan beşer yıllık periyotlar halinde yirmi beş senelik görev dönemi içinde onaylanan karar ve yasal metinler üzerinden ve mevcut AB kanunlarının bütünü taranarak belge ve politika analizi yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda, AB-ABD ilişkilerinin zayıfladığını öne süren çalışmalara rağmen, araştırmamızın nicel ve içerik analizine dayanarak, AB'nin ABD ile ilişkilerinin 1999'dan bu yana istikrarlı olduğu ve hatta son on yılda teknik ve hukuki açıdan arttığı sonucuna varılmaktadır.

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## 1. Introduction

The United States of America (USA) played a significant role in the reestablishment and recovery of the European countries after World War II, by granting funds and aid packages, namely known as the Marshall Plan but also by supporting European countries politically. This financial assistance and political collaboration brought also a military alliance between the USA and the European Union (EU), forming thus the transatlantic cooperation and the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The establishment of international institutions and collective security forged and empowered this partnership. The USA assistance to the European continent also provided commercial, economic, and political benefits to the USA in return. The USA became a strong actor, shaping the new world order after World Wars.

However, despite American and European relations have been based on a mutual share of interests, many publications and studies have argued that the USA and the EU have drifted apart in the last decade, after the election of Trump. Other studies have also reflected the weakening of transatlantic relations during Bush administration and the American war in Iraq. This article aims to analyze whether the substance of the EU-USA relations have really changed over the years or not and in which areas did the EU cooperate with the USA, in the last 25 years. Hence our research questions are what are the texts adopted by the European Parliament (EP) and what are the roles of the EP committees in shaping the European transatlantic policies? Which are the committees that lead and guide the EU-USA relations?

We chose to evaluate the substance of EU-USA relations over the European Parliament especially because it has the authority along the European Council to take decisions and thus contributes politically and legislatively to EU's foreign policy. Since the role of the EP has been strengthened with the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the EP is on equal legislative power with the European Council. In order to answer our research questions, EP conclusions would be analyzed, through a "*document analysis*" and "*policy analysis*", by numbers and by content, reflecting both data and content analysis. Second analytical research would be conducted through the Eur-Lex database by the author in order to reflect and assess the entire amount and substance of the EU-USA relations from the total EU laws that are in force.

Our study brings a new perspective to the current literature on transatlantic relations by assessing the EU-USA relations from the EP conclusions and adopted texts. Within this context, we will present first the relevant academic literature review on transatlantic relations. The second part of our study would comprise the framework under which the current EU-USA relations are conducted. We will present in the third part the role of the EP and the importance and tasks of EP Committees under the decision-making process. The fourth part evaluates the EU-USA relations between 1999 and 2024, based on the EU Parliamentary Terms, with "*Document and Policy Analysis*" and through Eur-Lex analysis as well, to assess and include other EU legislative institutions along with the EP, such as the Council of the European Union, the European Commission or the European Court of Justice, etc.

## 2. Literature Review on EU-USA Transatlantic Relations

The EU-USA relations have been analysed through various studies, from different perspectives and topics. In the era of globalization, transatlantic relations are undergoing a process of transformation, but they also retain elements of the past. However, continuity is also accompanied of discontinuity in certain circumstances; for analysts of transatlantic relations; there are pessimists as well as optimist views (Kotzias and Liacouras, 2006). Since the end of the Cold War, a multipolar world has replaced the dual economic and political power previously shared by the USA and Russia. Amid the shift in power politics, the transatlantic partnership between the

USA and Europe has retained its importance in shaping the outcome of future global developments (Roy et al, 2014).

Germanovich et al (2021) examined the meaning of European strategic autonomy in defence and its implications for the USA, NATO and EU-USA relations. For Krenzler and Wiegand (1999), the EU-USA relations are not limited to trade disputes, that dominated the 1980s. The revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe and Russia and their implications led both sides to the conclusion that transatlantic bonds should be strengthened beyond the security arena and the NATO.

Burghardt, who has worked in the European Commission for almost 40 years, presented the EU-USA relations in his article (2015) from 1968 to 2014, by focusing on some major events from the EU side such as its enlargement, completion of the internal market, trade relations with the USA, Maastricht Treaty, the Treaty of Lisbon and the Treaty on Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). He presented the EU and the USA as “*indispensable partner*” and as “*two sides of one medal*”. He defined EU-USA relationship as the most powerful, comprehensive and strategically most important relationship in the world, despite the rise of new power centres on other.

With the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States of America in 2016, the transatlantic relations entered a period of crisis. Trump challenged two important international norms at the core of the EU’s identity, the norm of multilateralism and norms of diplomatic communication among allies (Blanc, 2024).

Europeans worried about Trump’s isolationist and protectionist policies and most European diplomats lost their belief in the USA political dialogue and European trust in long-term USA global leadership has been damaged (Brattberg and Whineray, 2020).

The EU-USA trade relations also deteriorated under Donald Trump, who followed a trade-protective policy for the USA, and thus marginalized the European countries (Wirtz, 2020). In 2018, Trump introduced high taxes on imports of steel and aluminium and quit the TTIP negotiations which were initiated in 2013, and even threatened to leave the World Trade Organization (WTO) and NATO. Trump’s actions and discourses led to many crises and challenges in transatlantic ties (Gasparini, 2021: 2). Following the end of Trump’s mandate, Biden seemed more cooperative for the Europeans and his election was seen as a possibility to revive the Transatlantic relations.

Despite periodic crises in the past, Trump’s “*America First*” foreign policy on transatlantic relations and his approach to allies created a crisis of trust unlike any seen before (Nielsen and Dimitrova, 2021). Although the USA and the EU remain each other’s largest trade and investment partners, a major source of friction have been the US tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium, introduced by the Trump administration in the name of national security, and the EU’s retaliatory tariffs (Schneider-Petsinger, 2019)

Indeed, it is true that many disagreements took place between the USA and the EU even before Trump’s election, some of them were on military interventions, such as in Vietnam or Iraq. On the top of these, Trump’s policies have been perceived as a big danger in the transatlantic relations (Barnes and Cooper, 2019). For Kahler (2008) the 1990s demonstrated that political dynamics in the USA can quickly undermine the foreign policy center, a polarized outcome that threatened severe consequences for transatlantic relations.

For Hofman, Trump’s “*America First*” approach alarmed Europeans to the point that some of them feared that a second Trump administration could mean the end of NATO. However, Hofman used the concept of “*institutional elasticity*” to argue that the transatlantic relationship is able to withstand many crises because it is elastic. The elasticity means here the capacity to restore the relationship after major crises (Hofman, 2021).

Smith (2011) analysed the contrasting diplomacies of the USA and the EU, depicting the USA as a “*warrior state*” and the EU as a form of “*trading state*” in which a complex and hybrid form of diplomacy is produced through the interplay of European and national foreign policies.

Peterson (2016) argued that America’s attitude toward European integration often reflects a mixture of ambivalence and ineffectuality. The USA has at times viewed the emergence of what is now the European Union (EU) with suspicion and even hostility, although it has mostly supported European integration.

Blockmans (2021) claimed that with Biden’s victory, there was at least a four-year window to revive “*an alliance of democracies*” and shape those parts of multilateralism that serve transatlantic interests.

Energy and climate related issues were also an area of disagreement between the EU and the USA during Biden’s term. Even though Biden has worked to repair damages done to the transatlantic relationship under Trump’s term, the USA Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 put protectionist subsidies for USA clean-energy industries, which has re-started tensions between the EU and the USA (Crawford, 2023: 75).

In foreign security and defence issues, transatlantic relations have also followed turbulent times. The EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was initiated in the early 1990s to guarantee a certain autonomy to the EU, besides NATO. However, within the EU there have also been some fractures and the relations with the USA have always been vulnerable. President Clinton was more supportive of the European CSDP; whereas George W. Bush was not. President Obama launched USA leadership more diplomatically, but President Donald Trump argued that NATO was obsolete (Howorth, 2018: 523).

Riddervold and Newsome (2018) analysed how EU-USA relations have been impacted by multiple crises and a change in USA policies. They focused on the divergence of their perspectives and concluded that the crack in the transatlantic relations would continue in the short and medium term. Transatlantic relations have also been affected by emerging powers and growing connectedness, where neorealist, constructivist and liberal theories served as tools to understand the conditioning factors of transatlantic relations (Tocci and Algaro, 2014).

Smith (2019) explored the crisis of contemporary multilateralism in terms of three core elements: institutions, norms and negotiation. He argued that the EU and the USA occupy ambiguous positions and roles, and that internal crises as well as external forces, pervaded their changing roles in the multilateral system. Smith put forward the divergences of the transatlantic relations and concluded that the EU-USA relations are weakening. However, Aggestam and Hyde-Price (2019) asserted that the transatlantic relations were already worsened before Trump, that the EU and USA drifted apart three decades ago, when the USA stopped providing security guarantees to Europe with the end of the cold war.

Oliver and Williams (2016) outlined developments in the UK, Europe and the USA and explored the effects of Brexit for USA’s approaches to transatlantic relations. Csernatoni (2021) brings a different perspective to the EU-USA relations, by considering the challenge to transatlantic relations posed by technological innovation, both as a driver of cooperation and a cause for further rivalry. Csernatoni asserted that technology should be at the heart of a revived phase in EU–USA cooperation and trust.

Polyakova and Haddad (2019) also evaluated the deterioration of transatlantic relations caused by Trump’s policies and argued that Biden fixed only some of the problems partly, by removing tariffs in European steel and aluminium and by rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement. However, they asserted that the roots of the problems were not solved because the real problem has

always been the “*power asymmetry*” between the USA and Europe, and both sides accepted this imbalance and even “*cultivated*” it, Europe has been passive and submissive.

Olsen, (2022) pointed that after Trump and Biden’s elections, a significant part of the literature pointed a weakening of the cooperation across the Atlantic. However, Olsen argued that despite Trump and his policies, the relationship has strengthened in recent years, he used four cases for his arguments: “*NATO, the USA pivot to Asia, the sanctions policy towards Russia, and the Afghanistan debacle*”.

Scheffer, Quencez and Weber (GMF, 2023) evaluated the transatlantic trends in the public opinion survey conducted by the German Marshall Fund in 2023, where the overall perception of USA reliability remained stable in Europe, between 2022 and 2023 (65%), but national results show variations. In Poland, the USA is seen as reliable by 79% of respondents. Regarding the future of USA-EU relations, the majority of respondents (55%) predicted the relations will become neither closer nor more distant in the next five years. Those who anticipate closer relations fell from 27% in 2022 to 22% in 2023.

A weakening transatlantic relationship had also impact on the European defence cooperation and integration. The EU had to build a stronger and more coherent security and defence policy. For Kutsen, the EU security deficit is mainly due to differing perspectives among member states on how the EU process should relate to NATO (Knutson, 2022).

A major development in the EU-USA relations was marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, as Europe and the USA quickly joined in a strong and coordinated response, involving all means except direct military confrontation with Russia. NATO and the EU have been well coordinated (Riddervold and Newsome, 2022).

On the USA side, despite periodic tensions between the EU and the USA, successive USA Administrations and many Members of Congress have supported the broad transatlantic relationship, viewing it as enhancing USA security and stability and magnifying USA global influence and financial clout (Archick et al, 2021).

On the European side, the EU should propose a transformed partnership based on credibility in two key strategic areas: trade and security, which constitute the core pillars of a “*geopolitical Europe*” (Brice, 2021).

Our study aims to research and expose the situation of the EU-USA relations based on the European Parliament’s conclusions and texts adopted in the last five Parliamentary Terms, between 1999 and 2024. Based on our research, we will reflect the actual discussions at the political and practical levels, the actions and the legal texts taken on the ground, in the heart of the European law-making body. The EP is analysed especially because it has the authority to take decisions in EU foreign policy, therefore the data obtained and analysed come directly from the European decision-making process, which makes our research and data primary source.

The scope of our research brings a new contribution to the current literature on the EU-USA transatlantic relations, comprising “*documents*”, “*policy*” and “*content analysis*” based on the European Parliament’s adopted texts on transatlantic topics, as well as the Eur-lex data base analysis.

### **3. The Framework of the EU-USA Relations**

#### **3.1. The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations**

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established with the Treaty of Paris in 1951, with the six founder European countries: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Soon later, the diplomatic relations between the European Union

and the United States of America started in 1953, with the visit of American diplomats to the ECSC and to the national governments of the above mentioned six founding countries.

The Delegation of the European Commission (EC) to the USA was opened in 1954 in Washington, while the USA Mission to the ECSC was formally opened in Luxembourg in 1956. Later, the United States Mission to the European Union, was established in 1961 in Brussels (USA Mission to the EU, 2024). The USA has formal embassies in the 27 EU member states countries.

### 3.2. NATO and the EU

NATO was founded in 1949 by 12 countries from Europe and North America. Since then, NATO has enlarged 10 times and has in total 32 member states as of September 2024 (NATO, 2024a).

Initial steps to forge relations between the EU and NATO were taken in the 1990s with the aim of enhancing European responsibility in defence related issues, and these relations were institutionalized in the early 2000s, to promote greater European responsibility in defence matters. The EU and NATO collaboration is seen as essential to maintain stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area (European Parliament, 2024a).

Four EU countries are not member of the NATO, due to their traditional neutrality on defence issues; these are Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, and Malta. The EU has in total 27 member states, 23 of them are NATO members. Besides, another four NATO members are candidate to EU membership: these are Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Turkey.

The EU-NATO increased their cooperation through joined declarations issued in 2016, 2018 and 2023. Since 2022, the EU and the USA collaborated closely on the Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the European Commission stated in May 2024 that:

*"A stronger and more capable European defence also strengthens NATO. EU-NATO cooperation is crucial for European, transatlantic and global security. Making this cooperation even deeper will remain at the heart of the EU's defence efforts."*

The EU-NATO Joint Declarations expanded their cooperation in seven areas:

- Hybrid threats
- Operational cooperation including maritime issues
- Cyber security
- Defence Capabilities
- Defence industry and research
- Parallel and coordinated exercises
- Capacity-building
- Strengthening political dialogue between EU and NATO

Additionally, NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept is considered as the Alliance's core policy document, setting NATO's strategic direction for the coming years. It describes the EU as a "unique and essential partner" for NATO and calls for an enhanced strategic partnership (NATO, 2024b).

Another important document is the EU's Strategic Compass that was adopted in 2022. The main objective is to make the EU a stronger and more capable actor in security and defence issues. It provides a shared assessment of the EU's strategic operating environment and of the threats and

challenges that the EU faces. The objective is to improve the EU's ability to act decisively in crises and to defend its security and its citizens. The Compass covers all the aspects of the security and defence policy and is structured around four pillars: act, invest, partner and secure. The Strategic Compass also underlines and strengthens EU's partnership with the NATO, as specified by the European External Action and Service (EEAS), "*NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its members*" (EEAS, 2024).

### 3.3. From the 1995 New Transatlantic Agenda to the 2020 Transatlantic Agenda

The European Commission (EC) formalized its relations with the USA in 1990, by adopting the "*Transatlantic Declaration*", which allowed regular political dialogue between the USA and the EC. This dialogue was performed in various areas, such as cooperation in economy, education, science and culture.

It was formally announced on the EU's official external relations website that NATO remains the core of transatlantic security, providing the vital link between North America and Europe. Indeed, Europeans are aware that for over more than fifty years, the transatlantic partnership has provided peace in Europe. Consequently, the transatlantic partners have decided to reinforce their annual consultations forged by the "*1990 Transatlantic Declaration*" and the 1995 Summit by adopting the 1995 New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA). This agenda had four major goals (European Parliament, 1995: 2-3), which are presented below.

- Promoting peace and stability, democracy in the world: Collaborating for a stable and prosperous Europe, enhancing democracy and economic reforms,
- Contribute to fighting global challenges: such as terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking, assisting refugees and displaced persons,
- Increasing global trade: Enforcing multilateral trade and taking measures that would expand EU-USA commercial ties, and
- Forging partnerships across the Atlantic: Working together within economic, business, scientific, and education fields.

The new agenda allowed the reassurance and reinforcement of the transatlantic relations indeed. The formal official relations have been carried out with more extensive consultations and "*Summits*" with high-level political and diplomatic participation between the EU and the USA. While the 2005 NTA provided a boost in EU-USA relations, it has also allowed the USA and the EU to become more active for peace in various conflicts from the Balkans to the Middle East.

The European Commission meanwhile worked for the continuation of the development of transatlantic relations and started the 2020 EU-USA Transnational agenda, aiming to foster these relations under the new Biden administration. The agenda focused on several collaboration areas from a principled partnership to working together on technology, trade, standards, and world prosperity (European Commission, 2020).

### 3.4. EU-USA Summits

The EU-USA Summits started in 1995 and are hold since then every year between the United States of America and the European Union policy makers. When the Summits are hold in Europe, they take place in the country that holds the rotating presidency of the EU. During the 2007 EU-USA Summit, the "*Transatlantic Economic Council*" (TEC) was established as a bilateral forum for economic cooperation between the EU and USA. The Council meets since then at least once per year.

The latest EU-USA Summit was held in October 2023, where the EU leaders, including the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and

Security Policy, Josep Borrell, met with the USA President, Joe Biden, and the USA Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, in Washington. The EU and USA adopted a joint statement at the end of the summit, which included a roadmap to further strengthen the relationship for years to come.

The European loyalty to the transatlantic relations was expressed by the President of the European Council Charles Michel:

*“Representing nearly 800 million citizens, united by our values and bound together by the most dynamic relationship on earth, we reaffirm our commitment to a transatlantic partnership that delivers for all our peoples”.*

The 2023 Summit joint statement emphasized on effective multilateralism and building prosperity and further developing their cooperation on security and defence. The leaders recognized the value of a stronger and more capable European defence (European Council, 2024).

#### **4. The Role of the European Parliament and the Procedure in the Adoption of Decisions**

Since 1979, the Parliament has been directly elected every five years by European citizens. As the EU's directly elected body, the European Parliament was given more powers with the Lisbon Treaty, that entered into force in 2009. Together with the European Council, the Parliament is responsible for adopting EU legislation. Under the ordinary legislative procedure, both institutions act as equal co-legislators. The EU Parliament has three main functions: adopting and amending legislation on an equal footing with the Council of the EU; supervising the functioning of all EU institutions, bodies and organisms, in particular the Commission.

The competences of the EP are three folded: legislative, budgetary, and supervisory powers. However, we will focus in our study on the legislative power, in relevance with our research topic.

Regarding the legislation authority of the EP over EU's foreign policy, article 36 of the Treaty on EU (TEU) requires the High Representative to consult the Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.

The EP's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP was further strengthened by the High Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010, attached to Parliament's resolution on the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Since then, the EEAS became the diplomatic service of the EU and it carries out the EU's CFSP.

Therefore, even though member states maintain their national sovereignty over CFSP, the EP is donated with significant powers over EU's external policy. Indeed, the role of the EP over EU's foreign policy is implemented through various instruments. While *“informing”* and *“consulting”* the EP is the first step of this instrument, EP's authority to *“approve”* or *“reject”* the proposals of international agreements forms the second step of EP's legislative authority.

The legislative process within the EP starts when a member of the EP, working in one of the parliamentary committees, prepares report on a proposal for a 'legislative text' presented by the European Commission. The parliamentary committee votes on this report or can amend it. When the text has been revised and adopted in plenary session, the whole Parliament adopts its position (European Parliament, 2024b). There are currently 720 members and 20 permanent committees in the European Parliament.

These committees are: Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Security and Defence, Development, International Trade, Budgets, Budgetary Control, Economic and Monetary Affairs, Tax Matters, Employment and Social Affairs, Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Public Health, Industry, Research and Energy, Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Transport and Tourism,



Regional Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Culture and Education, Legal Affairs, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Constitutional Affairs, Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and Petitions.

**5. The Analytical Framework of the EU-USA Transatlantic Relations: Document and Policy Analysis**

This part of our analytical framework is based on the research and analysis of the conclusions and texts adopted in the European Parliament plenary sessions. Within this part, the number of texts including the terms “*Transatlantic*”, and “*United States of America*” were researched, in the last five parliamentary terms, from 1999 to 2024. We have explicitly searched for both terms in the EP texts and laws, because they both relate to EU-USA partnership.

This methodological research is of special relevance to our study as it reflects the sensitivity, the discussion areas, European policy orientations and the resolutions coming from the Parliament committees that were voted in the EP plenary sessions, and the final texts that were adopted, published, and transmitted later to the relevant authorities (European Council and the European Commission).

Table 1 comprises the number of texts including the terms “*transatlantic*” and “*United States of America*”, in the last five Parliamentary terms, from 1999 to 2024.

**Table 1: Document Analysis Based on the EP Plenary Sessions for “Transatlantic” and the “USA”**

European Parliamentary Term	Number of Texts Including the term “Transatlantic”	Number of Texts Including the term “United States of America”
2019-2024	73	38
2014-2019	58	33
2009-2014	65	54
2004-2009	77	62
1999-2004	28	17

**Source:** Compiled by the author from EP Plenary Sessions

As can be seen from Table 1, the word “*Transatlantic*” was used intensely, and with increase from 1999 to 2009, although with a slight decrease in 2009 and 2014, (still with significant numbers) and with an increase again between 2019 and 2024. The term “*Transatlantic*” was used in average in 60 texts in each parliamentary term.

We can see a similar pattern with the word “USA” that was used in 17 texts between 1999 and 2004, had an increase in the 2004-2009 period, but was marked with a slight decrease between 2009 and 2014 and another decrease between 2014 and 2019, while it increased again between 2019 and 2024. The term “USA” was used in average in 40 texts in each parliamentary term.

Our general assessment from this table is that “*Transatlantic*” and “USA” related topics have been discussed increasingly at the European Parliament and voted as legal texts, over the last decade. The number of texts adopted with these terms are quite significant, as they indicate us the high level of European willingness to further increase and enhance its collaboration with the USA. We hereby understand the relationship between the EU and USA are not weakening, they are expanding to the contrary.

Mostly discussed topics within the EP including the term “*transatlantic*” were on the following policies:

- The future of EU-USA relations
- EU-NATO cooperation in the context of transatlantic relations
- Supply chains of critical minerals

- Common Foreign and Security Policy
- COVID-19
- Adequacy of the protection afforded by the EU-USA Data Privacy Framework
- Effectiveness of the EU sanctions on Russia
- Investigation for the use of the Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware

Mostly discussed topics within the EP including the term “USA” were on the following policies:

- EU-USA air transport agreement
- EU/United States Agreement: modification of concessions on all the tariff rate quotas included in the EU Schedule
- EU/USA Agreement on the allocation of a share in the tariff rate quota for imports of high-quality beef
- EU/USA agreement for scientific and technological cooperation
- Agreement EU/USA/Iceland/Norway: Time Limitations on Arrangements for the Provision of Aircraft with Crew
- Extension of the Agreement on the promotion, provision and use of Galileo and GPS satellite-based navigation systems and related applications
- Opening of negotiations of an agreement with the United States of America on strengthening international supply chains of critical minerals
- Adequacy of the protection afforded by the EU-USA Data Privacy Framework

Table 2 below indicates the total number of European laws including the terms “*Transatlantic*” and “USA” in the last 5 years.

**Table 2: Eur-Lex: The Terms used By Year of Documents**

Number of Documents in→	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Term searched↓					
Transatlantic	12	66	51	100	41
USA	372	730	706	776	564

**Source:** Compiled by the Author from the Eur-Lex

As can be seen from Table 2, the number of laws including the term USA exceeded largely the number of documents including the term transatlantic; and an increase can be observed throughout 2020 and 2023, with a decrease in 2024. However, the number is still significant, it reflects the wide area of collaboration with important number of European regulations and legal texts stemming from the European and American partnership, ranging from specific trade issues to various sectors of collaboration. We have explicitly searched for both terms in the EP texts and laws, because they both relate to EU-USA partnership as they both needed to be analysed.

Table 3 reflects the types of acts including the term “*Transatlantic*” and “USA” as of September 2024. We can see again that the number of EU laws and legal acts comprising the term “USA” out passes the ones with the term “*transatlantic*”. Nevertheless, combined together, they both reflect the important amount of EU law adopted by the EU in order to enhance EU-USA partnership.

**Table 3: Eur-Lex: The Terms Used by Type of Act as of September 2024**

Number of Documents in→ Term searched↓	EU Law and case-Law	Legal Acts	Consolidated Texts	Treaties	International Agreements	Parliamentary Questions
Transatlantic	1379	115	37	2	1002	151
USA	23611	7138	2512	18	612	5341

**Source:** Compiled by the Author from the Eur-Lex

Table 4 is a substantial part of our research as it is crucial in understanding which institutions were the most active and leading actors in initiating and shaping EU laws to increase collaboration with the USA. The European Parliament comes first among these actors, followed by the European Commission, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 4: Eur-Lex: The Term Transatlantic Used by Institution as of September 2024**

Number of Documents Term searched in→ Name of the Institution or Committee↓	Transatlantic
European Parliament	808
European Commission	665
Committee on Foreign Affairs	115
European Economic and Social Committee	103
Council of the European Union	77
Committee on International Trade	49
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy	37
Directorate General for Competition	37
Court of Justice	32
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	34
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs	18
Committee on Constitutional Affairs	18
Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	18
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs	17
Committee on Transport and Tourism	15
Committee on Budgets	15
Committee on Culture and Education	14

**Source:** Compiled by the Author from the Eur-Lex

Another valuable part of this research is that it shows us as which committees of the EP have been most involved in shaping EU laws for transatlantic affairs. These committees are listed below:

- Committee on Foreign Affairs,
- Committee on International Trade,
- Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

Table 5 below reflects in the same way, the most important actors in legislating EU laws including the term “USA”. In this analysis, other legislative institutions and actors contributing to

<sup>1</sup> The European Economic and Social Committee shouldn't be confused with EP Committees, as it is an advisory body comprising representatives of workers' and employers' organisations and other interest groups. It gives opinions on EU issues to the European Commission, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament.

the European legislation have been included, to show the importance and share of the EP in terms of the total number of acts.

The research reveals that the European Commission that has the authority to propose new legislation comes here at the first rank, which is followed by the European Parliament that has approved 7156 acts in total, followed by the Council of the EU and the Directorate General for Competition, the Court of Justice, the General Court and the Court of First Instance. This analysis clearly indicates and concretizes EP's important role in shaping and leading the European transatlantic regulations.

Among the EP Committees, the most involved committee has been the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The major framing topics of the EU-USA legislation are trade related issues, health and food safety, agricultural, environmental and finance.

**Table 5: Eur-Lex: The Term USA Used by Institution as of September 2024**

Number of Documents Term searched in→ Name of the Institution - Committee↓	USA
European Commission	11853
European Parliament	7156
Council of the European Union	2565
Directorate General for Competition	1073
Court of Justice	810
General Court	341
Court of First Instance	324
European Economic and Social Committee	307
Directorate General for Trade	247
United States	205
Directorate General for Health and Food Safety	205
Committee on Foreign Affairs	129
European Union	127
European Court of Auditors	114
Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development	113
Directorate General for Environment	108
Directorate General for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union	103
Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	94

**Source:** Compiled by the Author from the Eur-Lex

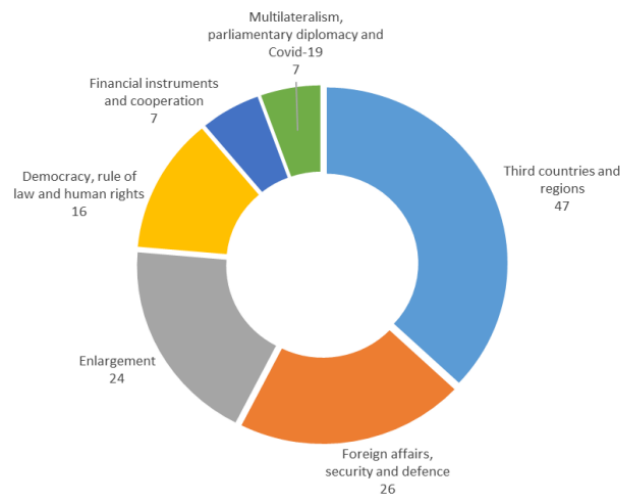
As indicated above, the most active committees in the development of the EU transatlantic relations with the USA are the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. Therefore, it is of great significance to analyse the activity reports of these committees. This in-depth content research is essential in understanding the areas of interest of the European Parliament and also in understanding how the committees work and influence the EP and the EU in from shaping to the implementation of the EU's external policy.

Activity reports revealed that the EP Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) has two Subcommittees that assist, guide and help the AFET; these are the Committee of Human Rights (DROI) and the Committee of Security and Defence (SEDE). This structure indicates and shows us how the EU tries to preserve and manage its foreign policy over important and strategic topics, namely, human rights, security and defence areas are considered as the most strategic areas. The Committee on Foreign

Affairs adopted 127 reports covering EU foreign, security and defence policy, foreign relations and international agreements with third countries, external financial instruments, the state of democracy, rule of law and human rights. These points were also raised during 34 public hearings, 36 missions abroad, 314 exchanges of views with high-level guests and 27 pieces of external expertise, between 2019 and 2024.

Figure 1. below shows the thematic breakdown of AFET reports. As can be seen, AFET works mostly focused on third countries and regions, foreign affairs, security and defense and on democracy, rule of law and human rights issues.

**Figure 1. Thematic Breakdown of AFET Reports**



Source: EP AFET Activity Report

Because the SEDE Committee is an important and integral sub-committee of AFET, assisting and advising AFET on all issues relating to the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), SEDE’s Activity Report is also analysed to expose the committee’s transatlantic works. SEDE has continued to deal with the internal and external aspects of the EU’s security and defence policy and to exercise parliamentary task of CSDP. SEDE has reinforced its scrutiny role with regard to EU legislation (including by its involvement in preparing EU legal acts), and also via regular exchanges of views with representatives of the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, Member States, NATO and the USA.

SEDE organized a multi-committee ad hoc delegation to New York and Washington, (including AFET, SEDE, and DROI, 17 members in total). The meetings included high-level interlocutors at the UN, including the UN Secretary-General, stressing the need to foster dialogue and cooperation. The leading Members of the American Congress were also visited by the European delegation in Washington. American Congress members conveyed the message that Europe is important and strong, and therefore a necessary and desirable partner for the USA.

SEDE Committee also voted a resolution regarding EU-NATO cooperation. The resolution stressed NATO's role as the heart of transatlantic security for the last 70 years. The report highlighted the need for EU-NATO collaboration on issues like climate change, cyber security, and counter-terrorism, and called for a coordinated response to threats from Russia and China. It advocated for enhancing EU defence capabilities and strategic autonomy, complementary to NATO.

SEDE members voted to increase defence spending to at least 2% of GDP and to support global cooperation, particularly with partners in strategic regions and wish for an institutionalized EU-US security dialogue.

Another very active and leading Committee in transatlantic relations is INTA, the Committee of International Trade. Trade cooperation with the USA improved further in the last five years, despite the absence of an overarching trade agreement between EU and the USA. Therefore, INTA has been at the forefront of the EU-USA Trade and Technology Council (TTC). INTA supported the opening of negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement with the USA on critical minerals (CMA) and backed the negotiations for Global Arrangement of Sustainable Steel and Aluminium (GSA). INTA Members travelled to Washington many times to meet and discuss with their trade counterparts. Table 6. Below exposes that USA represents a comprehensive part in EU's trade relations as can be seen from the INTA group meetings below.

**Table 6: INTA Monitoring Group Meetings Between 1999 and 2024**

Agreement / Negotiation	Number of Meetings
Pacific States and CARIFORUM	2
SADC (Southern African Development Community- 3)	6
East African Community (4)	2
Eastern and Southern African States (5)	9
Central Africa (6)	1
Maghreb countries	8
Tunisia	4
Mashreq and Middle East	1
Israel and Palestine	2
Eastern Partnership	3
Ukraine	4
Russia	7
EFTA	4
Turkey	1
Central Asia (11)	3
China / Taiwan/ Hong Kong/ Macao	21
Japan	4
ASEAN (13)	10
Singapore	3
South Asia	2
India	8
Vietnam	10
South Korea	7
Australia / New Zealand	18
Canada	5
<b>USA</b>	<b>29</b>
Andean Community (15)	2
Central America (16) and Cuba	1
Chile	18
Merosur (17)	13
Mexico	9

**Source:** European Parliament Committee of International Trade - INTA Activity Report

As we can see from Table 6, the INTA hold 29 meetings, which is the highest number of meetings, compared with the rest of other countries in the world. We have seen in our research that trade is among EU's most important and involved topic with the USA, and this table also clearly indicates this fact from the EP and the INTA perspective too. The content analysis of the INTA Activity Report also reveals that INTA has focused especially on trade issues with the USA involving:

- Agreement between the EU and the USA relating to the modification of concessions on all the tariff rate quotas included in the EU Schedule CLXXV as a consequence of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU

- Opening of negotiations of an agreement with the United States of America on strengthening international supply chains of critical minerals

- Amending EU Regulations on additional customs duties on imports of certain products originating in the USA

- Negotiations with the USA on the necessary compensatory adjustments resulting from the USA intended withdrawal of specific commitments on gambling and betting services pursuant to Article XXI of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Another important Committee in the development of EU transatlantic relations with the USA is the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The Committee has been engaged in and adopted a significant number of files and also organized several visits to Washington and the Silicon Valley. The Committee has initiated and achieved the EP’s consent over strategic and key transatlantic issues such as:

- EU/USA Agreement on the promotion, provision and use of Galileo and GPS satellite based navigation systems and related applications

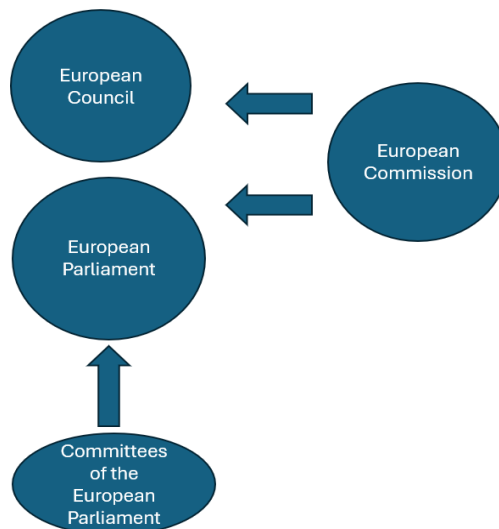
- EU/USA agreement for scientific and technological cooperation

Based on the EP Committees activity reports, we can assess that Committees are shaping and leading EP’s consent over many issues, including the external relations and the ratification of international agreements. The committees work, lead and delegate the issues to the plenary sessions of the EP and therefore undertake an initiative role in legislating power. Therefore, it is clear that these committees have a direct and important impact on the decision-making and legislative process of the EP. Within the scope of our research, these committees play an important role in shaping, developing and leading EP’s transatlantic relationships with the USA.

Overall, we can assess that the EP has a leading and guiding power within the EU’s external and transatlantic relations and that the EP also aims to protect and increase EU’s interests. The EU aims to maintain her “*balance of power*” and increase European interests within its relations with the USA, especially on issues of strategic importance for the EU. These areas reveal to be trade, foreign policy, defence and security, research and energy.

Figure 2 below reflects EP’s role in the EU’s external relations, either initiated by the EP committees, or by the European Commission.

**Figure 2. The Central Role of the European Parliament Legislative Power**



The EP plays a vital role in promoting and enhancing EU's transatlantic relations, either with:

- The Parliament Committees that initiate and prepare documents that they delegate to EP's plenary sessions for vote,
- The European Commission that initiates and prepares a draft legislation that it delegates to the EP and to the European Council for approval (or rejection).

## 6. Conclusion

The USA played a crucial role in the reestablishment and recovery of the European countries after World War II. Soon after, the six founding countries have established the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and the European Economic Community and Euratom in 1957. These institutions merged into one and became later the European Union, that has developed its foreign relations with the USA as a strong political, economic and military partner. The EU has forged and strengthened its relations with the EU, through the NATO and also with high level political dialogues held in EU-USA Summits. The European Transatlantic Agenda Document was initiated in 1990 and the New Transatlantic Agenda was declared in 1995 and later in 2020.

Law plays a significant role in contemporary transatlantic relations outside of the bilateral context which, from the perspective of EU external relations law

Basically, American and European relations have been based on mutual share of interests, nevertheless, most academic studies have been pointing a weakening of the EU transatlantic relations with the USA. However, our research reveals that despite political or mediatic contents, the EU had consistent and even increasing relations with the USA, between 1999 and 2024. By conducting EP's adopted texts, we found that "*Transatlantic*" and "*USA*" related topics have been discussed consistently at the European Parliament and voted as legal texts, increasingly over the last decade. The number of texts adopted with these terms are quite significant, as they indicate us the high level of European willingness to further increase and enhance its collaboration with the USA. Besides the EP approved legal texts, the increasing number observed through the Eur-lex data base on the EU laws related to the USA also allows us to assert that EU-USA relations are expanding, both in number and scope.

In the policy areas, we have reached the most discussed topics such as trade, finance, health, food safety, agriculture, climate, air transport, environment, security and defence measures.

We have identified which European institutions, and which EP Committees are the most active and leading actors in initiating and shaping EU laws to increase collaboration with the USA. These are the European Parliament and the European Commission, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

Our findings indicate that EP's role over EU's transatlantic relations is has "*leading*", "*guiding*" and "*protective*" characteristics. The EP aims to protect and further increase EU's interests over a wide area of external policies, ranging from trade issues to defence, security, research and energy issues.

We assert that EU tends to maintain its "*balance of power*" over strategic areas with the USA. These areas are identified through our quantitative and qualitative research; our content analysis reveals that international trade, defence and security issues, research and energy form the main strategic areas of EU's transatlantic agenda.

The EP has been especially successful in pioneering and in approving these strategic initiatives on behalf of the EU, through three leading Committees; that are the Committee of Foreign



Affairs, the Committee on International Trade and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

We assert that the EU will sustain its performance in her transatlantic relations with the USA, to protect and enhance EU's position, in trade and security areas, especially to increase European defense capabilities.

The EP and the new elected members (in June 2024) will maintain their instrumental and legislative power, until 2029:

- Through the relevant committees that have intensive and leading activities on transatlantic issues within the EP
- By approving or rejecting draft legislative works prepared on the initiative of the European Commission, during the ordinary legislative process of the European Parliament.

We conclude that despite political and temporary divergences between the EU and USA, or differences with the USA presidents and perspectives, the EU technically and legally collaborates increasingly at the highest level with the USA. The EU's vision is to preserve the Atlantic partnership and the European interests. As the next USA presidential elections are going to be held on November 5, 2024, the EU (and the EP) is most likely to increase its high level political and diplomatic dialogues and visits, as new expectations and excitement will be on the European transatlantic agenda. We expect the EU to follow and implement its strategic transatlantic policies in security, trade, research, environment and energy related issues with the USA.

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