European Responses to US Diplomacy: ‘Special Relationships’, Transatlantic Governance and World Order

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Summary
This article explores the contrasting diplomacies of the United States and the European Union, drawing attention to the characteristics of the United States as a ‘warrior state’ and the European Union 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. It then pursues the argument that the interplay of US and EU diplomacies has generated an evolving EU-US diplomatic system, which in itself is hybrid and multi-dimensional. The article explores the context within which the EU-US diplomatic system has evolved and is evolving, and proposes three key patterns of diplomatic relations as the core of the system: ‘special relationships’ reflecting specific ties between the United States and key EU member states; ‘transatlantic governance’ reflecting the growth of transatlantic transactions and demands for their management; and ‘world order diplomacy’, which is centred on global governance institutions, patterns of intervention and crisis management. The article explores these patterns as they have manifested themselves during the George W. Bush and Obama presidencies, and concludes by asking whether the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in the European Union is likely to bring about significant change in the patterns of EU-US diplomacy.

Keywords
European Union (EU), United States (US), diplomacy, special relationships, transatlantic governance, world order

Introduction
This article aims to explore the ramifications of two coexisting processes, which arguably reflect ‘two worlds of diplomacy’ represented by the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). On the one hand, it examines the challenges posed by US foreign policy and diplomacy, and tries to identify some of the constants around which successive US administrations have fluctuated. In doing so, it makes the argument that US diplomacy is pervaded by the character of the
United States as a ‘warrior state’, which places a strong emphasis on sovereignty, state action and the use of force.

In contrast, European diplomacy represents a distinctive hybrid. On the one hand, there is European diplomacy in its broad sense, encompassing the diplomacy of European countries, among them some significant if secondary ‘powers’, as well as patterns of collective European action. On the other hand, there is the diplomacy accompanying ‘European foreign policy’, which is centred on the European Union and reflects the progress and limitations of the European integration project. The argument here is that both of these versions of ‘European diplomacy’ need to be taken into account, and that the hybrid characteristics of ‘European diplomacy’ are precisely the result of the interactions between these two strands of development.

The article argues that these coexisting and intersecting characteristics of US and European diplomacy have given rise to a hybrid ‘EU-US diplomatic system’ with a number of key characteristics and patterns of behaviour. This system is explored in more depth in terms of its impact during the George W. Bush and Obama presidencies, and in terms of developments in the European Union since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The article concludes by discussing the possibility that a new EU diplomatic system might transform the EU-US diplomatic system, and by linking the development of the EU-US system to broader developments in the field of diplomacy.

The United States and Europe: Two Worlds of Diplomacy?

A summary version of US diplomacy would certainly start from the central importance of strategy, and of ‘grand strategy’ in particular. US foreign policy discourse is characterized by attention to the building of a strategic framework in which vital interests are identified and strategic choices made in order to facilitate the pursuit of those interests. A long tradition exists in debates about US foreign policy of reference to the demands of grand strategy, and of the key significance surrounding the procurement of capabilities — especially military capabilities — with which to pursue it.¹ Not surprisingly, these debates lead to a focus on material capabilities and what has been termed ‘hard power’ in the pursuit of US foreign policy ambitions; indeed, it has also been argued by Joseph Nye and others that the focus on ‘hard power’ has led to a squandering of US ‘soft power’ resources, and that the need to restore balance in US policy demands a focus on ‘smart power’.² This focus on grand strategy and ‘hard power’ ultimately means

²) J. Nye Jr, Soft Power: The Means to Success in Foreign Policy (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004); R. Armitage