Transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift

A discourse analysis of the Iranian nuclear weapons program and its effects on transatlantic relations

Elin Schiffer

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Supervisor: Ronnie Hjorth

Abstract

This study offers a glimpse into how the transatlantic relationship between the European Union (the EU) and the United States of America (the US) has developed during the last three presidential administrations, including the Trump administration. To do this, the study has developed a framework on transatlantic convergence, divergence, and drift, which it uses to analyses similarities and differences within the different parties' discourses on the Iranian nuclear weapons program. The study concludes that while there has been some divergence with all three U.S administrations, however there has been far more convergence with the Bush and Obama administration than with the Trump administration. Moreover, this study argues that Trump administration represents in some ways a 'transatlantic drift', since the parties have opposing views on the Iran deal (JCPOA) and cherish widely different fundamental security values.

Key words: Transatlantic relations, EU foreign policy, U.S foreign policy, convergence, divergence, drift, Iran, JCPOA.

Word count: 14991

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The transatlantic relationship has since the end of the second world war been a cornerstone of American foreign policy. U.S engagement in Europe the last half-century has been comprehensive. The two parties have shared the same values and by extension, partly the same identity. Shared values have contributed to extensive cooperation within the area of foreign and security policy. In a briefing paper on transatlantic security and defense cooperation from a think tank associated with the European Union (the EU), the relationship is expressed in these terms:

> "The EU and the US are natural partners in cooperation in security and defence, as evidenced by their cooperation within international organisations, including NATO, by their shared values and by the perception of shared threats. […] They also share security concerns in regions […] and on issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, […]"[1]

In spite of the positive description above, the transatlantic relationship has had its ups and downs since the turn of the millennium. President George W. Bush's foreign policy agenda based on unilateralism, where the U.S opposed several international treaties, bothered European allies since the U.S policies countered many of the values and goals Europe believed in. After 9/11 Europe for a brief time declared solidarity with the U.S. However, when it became clear that the Bush administration would intervene in more than one country in the Middle East, the divide grew immensely both between the parties and within Europe itself. The political relationship was at an all-time low[2].

With the inauguration of President Obama, it seemed like a match made in heaven. Finally, the U.S had a president who was " […] a defender of multilateralism and a law-based international order, a critic of unthinking American interventionism espousing a coolly dispassionate, quasi-European perspective on American power, its pitfalls and limitations. "[3] However, Obama has been widely criticized by leaders in the EU member states for doing his 'pivot to Asia', where the relationship has been described as "a disappointing love affair."[4] Moreover, analysts have seen a trend in the relationship between the EU-U.S under the Obama administration where Europe still mattered, but not as much as before[5]. However, in spite of some turbulence, the parties shared the same

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[1] European Parliamentary Research Service. *Security and defence: Achieving efficiency and resilience.* September 2016. (Retrieved 2017-11-15)
[2] Cowles, Maria G, & Egan, Michelle. *The evolution of the transatlantic partnership.* Transworld. 2012-10-01. http://www.transworld-fp7.eu/?p=665 (Retrieved 2017-11-15)
[3] Conley, Heather. *What's Obama's European Legacy?* Politico. 2016-04-21. https://www.politico.eu/article/what-will-define-barack-obamas-european-legacy-eu-us/ (Retrieved 2017-11-15)
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

values and the same goal. This identity is what made the transatlantic relationship stay a priority for both the EU and the US under the Obama administration; they wanted the same thing.

The blockquote from the briefing paper above was published in September 2016. Since then, there have been several fundamental changes that have come to put the transatlantic relationship to the test. The inauguration of President Donald Trump caused great worry across the Atlantic, and the fact that he didn't mention Europe in his inaugural address was perceived as adding fuel to the fire.[6] A few months later, after a G7 and NATO summit, Angela Merkel uttered these, now famous words:

> "The era in which we could fully rely on others is over to some extent […]
> That's what I experienced over the past several days. […] "We Europeans
> truly have to take our fate into our own hands — naturally in friendship
> with the United States of America […]" [7]

For many, this statement seemed to indicate a stark shift in transatlantic relations, where the relationship between Europe and the US would hit another low point. The confidence in each-other to do the right thing had plummeted, and the feeling of collective identity has diminished during the first year of the Trump presidency. Even though the transatlantic relationship has been through several 'rough patches' before, this time seems different due to the unusually large amount of criticism against Trump from across the Atlantic.

During the first year of Trump's presidency, there have been significant developments in the EU's own foreign and security policy. In November 2017, 23 member states signed a notification activating PESCO, a permanent defense cooperation structure. EU High Representative (HRVP) Federica Mogherini said that "This is a historic moment in European defence, which just one year ago, most of us and most of the rest of the world considered impossible to achieve."[8]. This achievement for the EU is part of a bigger picture where the EU is standing up more for itself in times of unreliable strategic support from the U.S.

Even though the EU, its member states, and the U.S cooperate extensively on an operational/practical level in foreign and security policy[9], dialogue and cooperation on a strategic level between

[6] Karnitschnig, Matthew. Donald Trump leaves Europe in the Cold. Politico. 2017-01-20. https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-leaves-europe-in-the-cold-in-inauguration/ (Retrieved 2017-11-21)
[7] Paravicini, Giulia. *Angela Merkel: Europe must take 'our fate' into own hands*. Politico. 2017-05-29. https://www.politico.eu/article/angela-merkel-europe-cdu-must-take-its-fate-into-its-own-hands-elections-2017/ (Retrieved 2017-11-21)
[8] EEAS. *Defence: 23 EU member states sign up for permanent structured cooperation*. 2017-11-13. https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/35496/defence-23-eu-member-states-sign-permanent-structured-cooperation_en (Retrieved 2017-11-21)
[9] European Parliamentary Research Service, *Security and defence: Achieving efficiency and resilience*.

leaders are in flux more than ever with President Trump. A briefing paper on transatlantic relations points out that "The solution to most challenges lies in building trust and confidence."[10] If there is a lack of trust and confidence in the relationship, cooperation becomes a lot harder.

In his chapter about the relationship between EU and the U.S, Smith briefly mentions three 'schools' that are used to describe and predict the future of the transatlantic relationship; these three 'schools' are convergence, divergence and drift.[11] Smith only mentions these 'schools' in passing, thus leaving room for further research. This is an opportunity which this study will feed upon, by providing a start to a framework for the study of convergence, divergence, and drift in the transatlantic relationship.

1.2 Research problem

During the last year, we have on the one hand seen President Trump, through an aggressive tone, encouraging European allies to do more 'burden-sharing' and an EU which in a rapid pace have developed a permanent structure for defense cooperation. On the other hand, endless amount of research points to the importance of the transatlantic relationship and history shows us how the transatlantic relationship have endured hardship and disagreements before. But, is it different this time with President Trump? Is the degree of divergence we see today abnormal or normal? Are we really at risk of the transatlantic relationship drifting apart? This begs for further research to develop a framework the study of convergence, divergence and drift in the transatlantic relationship, to which this study will contribute theoretically, by providing further research on what Smith calls the 'three schools' of transatlantic relations.

This study also makes an empirical contribution. President Trump has soon been in office for a year, and during this year he has outlined a foreign policy seemingly fundamentally different from the one his predecessor had. During the last year, the EU has also taken extensive steps to deepen defense co-operation, by activating PESCO in November 2017. This study will, therefore, fill an empirical gap in studying statements from the leaders in the Trump administration and the EU. Moreover, this study will also fill an empirical gap by providing a new discourse analysis on comments from the Bush and Obama administrations and the EU, and compare them to the Trump administration on one international security challenge.

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[10] Ibid.
Smith, Mike. "The USA and the EU". In: *US Foreign Policy*, Cox, Michael, and Stokes, Doug (ed.), 219-238. 2nd ed. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. p.234.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the relationship between the European Union (the EU) and the United States of America (the U.S) has evolved during the last three U.S presidential administrations, and examine if the Trump administration represents a drift between the two actors. Building on an analysis in three different time periods and one international security challenge (the Iranian nuclear weapons program), this study offers a comparison that can illustrate similarities and differences in the discourses, aiming at refining and exploring the theory of transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift.

The research questions are thus:

- How has the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the U.S unfolded during the last three U.S presidential administrations?
- What does the Trump administration mean for the future of transatlantic relations?

1.4 Delimitations

In the EU, this study will examine statements from the Commission, the Council, the EEAS and its leaders. By limiting the comments to the EU representatives, this study will be able to more clearly outline how the EU perceives the U.S and the transatlantic relationship. This study could have taken statements from leading member states, such as France and Germany, into account but to figure out what the EU thinks, but only comments from the EU institutions will be analyzed since it will get closer to the core of what the 'EU' thinks and says.. However, it's important to keep in mind that the EU leaders are representatives and may not at all times make statements that entirely corresponds with each member states public view.

Regarding the U.S administrations, this study will analyze statements from mainly the White House (WH). Statements by the President (POTUS) and the Vice President (VPOTUS) are prioritized, but statements from the White House Press Secretary (WHPS), and from the National Security Adviser (NSC advisor) may be included. Moreover, to be able to assure this study analyzes the discourse, statements coming from the Department of State (DoS) and the Department of Defence (DoD) will also be included in the analysis. One could only analyze statements from the WH to get closer to what the 'core' of U.S leaders think about global challenges. However, to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of what the U.S discourse is statements from several U.S institutions will be included. Nonetheless, it should be made clear that the statements that will be analyzed only serves as an indication of the U.S discourse and should not be interpreted as being representative for the whole U.S government or the United States of America.

Transatlantic relations are ever-changing, and current developments can both make a large and small impact on current and future affairs. Therefore, this study is limited in its capacity to guarantee that it stays relevant for a more extended period, especially when it comes to the analysis of the foreign policy of the Trump administration. However, this study contributes with a framework for the study of transatlantic relations, which will remain relevant for a long time and can be used on transatlantic relations in the future.

2. Theoretical framework

The study of the transatlantic relationship is not something new. It's a topic that has been researched for many decades and from an array of perspectives. However, this study contributes both empirically and theoretically to the research of transatlantic relations, which will be explained below. This section contains a brief theoretical overview of transatlantic relations, the Trump administration, and the three 'schools' convergence, divergence, and drift.

2.1 Review of transatlantic relations

Beginning with the Bush administration, there has been a lot of research done on the perceived 'damage' his policies caused on the transatlantic relationship. Dunn talks in his article about the transatlantic divergence and drift, caused by factors such as demographic change, a 'values gap' and different military and power capabilities; together with the Bush doctrine and the war in Iraq, its impact was:

> "[...] more acrimonious and fundamental in its nature than any previous inter-alliance dispute, and one which brought the whole nature of the relationship between the United States and its European allies into question."[12]

In a report from Transworld[13], the authors point to that Obama was met with open arms by the EU since it signaled a shift from a unilateral to a multilateral and internationalist approach. However, over the years of the Obama administration, it became clear that Obama was not much different from his predecessor; he still caused and faced disappoint in Europe due to his inability to get some action done. Nonetheless, this disappointment is not uncommon:

> "This sentiment, however, is hardly a sign of an alliance adrift. The history of the transatlantic partnership reveals numerous occasions when well-regarded American presidents disappointed their European counterparts [...]"[14]

> "[...] there has never been a golden age of US-European relations. And there never will be. The transatlantic partnership has been, by definition, one rife with conflict and asymmetries."[15]

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[12] Dunn, David Hastings. *"Assessing the Debate, Assessing the Damage: Transatlantic Relations after Bush." British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2009), p.21
[13] Cowels & Egan. *"The evolution of the transatlantic relationship."* p.18-20
[14] Ibid. p.20
[15] Ibid. p.21

These quotes above raises interesting points for this study. One could argue that President Trump is not a well-regarded president by the EU,[16] and if he is not well-regarded, would this be a cause for a possible 'alliance drift'? Furthermore, even if the transatlantic relationship has endured conflicts before, does Trump represent such a conflict of ideas that it may cause an unprecedented divergence or drift in the relationship? The Iran nuclear deal, which is the international security challenge analyze in this study, is described as 'breaking point' for the relationship[17], since it is a deal the Europeans believe very profoundly in. Any U.S opposition to the deal might have enormous consequences; this is what this study will explore.

Furthermore, even if there is a lot of previous research on transatlantic relations, there has been little attempt to try to apply a theoretical framework that is connected to the idea of transatlantic convergence, divergence, and drift on the relationship. This study will be able to make an application of such a framework on the relationship, by analyzing the discourse on one international security challenge and from three different U.S administrations and the EU in three points in time.

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[16] Collinson, Stephen and Gaouette, Nicole. *Trump and Europe don't mix, and that will have lasting consequences*. CNN. 2017-06-01. http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/01/politics/trump-europe-alienation/index.html (Retrieved 2017-12-18)
[17] DeYoung, Karen and Morello, Carol. *Trump's decision on Iran nuclear deal could cause major breach with allies in Europe*. Washington Post. 2017-10-05. http://wapo.st/2xXfawp?tid=ss_mail&utm_term=.16bf68f289a5. (Retrieved 2017-12-18)

2.2 The Trump Administration & US foreign policy on Europe

Furthermore, this study will contribute to the limited existing research on the relationship between the Trump administration and the EU. A recent report published by the ECFR discusses the transatlantic meaning of President Trump, by looking at three different kinds of effects that have been visible in European leaders response to his policies; the regency, messiah and antichrist effect. The overwhelming majority of European leaders have responded to Trump by the regency effect, which hopes that "[…] Trump will be governed by his advisers, the Congress, the courts and America civil society generally."[18]

While Trump continued to criticize Europe, Trump's advisers have made several trips to Europe where they have put forward a clear message; don't look to Trump for the direction of U.S foreign policy.[19] In light of this, we can sense that European leaders are wary of criticizing Trump since they cherish their longterm relationship with the U.S. However, even if EU leaders remain vigilant, they have issued statements distancing themselves from some of Trump's policies, which can be seen as a sort of divergence manifesting itself. This study will be able to contribute with a nuanced analysis of the EU and U.S discourse over the last 17 years, and expectably provide insight into if the disagreements with Trump is something unprecedented or a frequent appearance of divergence in the transatlantic relationship.

It's also worth mentioning one of the other effects discussed. The Antichrist effect, which only a minority of European countries holds (such as France)[20], can be summed as seeing "Trump's election is […] only the latest in a series of moral and strategic failings by the US […]."[21] Even if there have been events leading up to this sharp uprise of a negative view of the U.S, the election of Donald Trump could represent the possibility of a 'new European reformation'[22], where "[…] the EU has begun to take over the role of the moral example to follow, or is seen to be making a last stand in a formerly joint project of spreading liberal values."[23] The antichrist effect is undoubtedly something that could have its roots in different discourses between the EU and the U.S. This study will be able to provide a discourse analysis that will give insight to what degree there are differentiating discourses on one security challenge and by extension discuss what this means for the transatlantic relationship.

[18] Shapiro, Jeremy and Pardijs, Dina. *The transatlantic meaning of Donald Trump: a US-EU Power Audit.* European Council On Foreign Relations. 2017-09-21. http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_transatlantic_meaning_of_donald_trump_a_us_eu_power_audit7229. (Retrieved 2017-11-27) p.3
[19] Ibid. p.4
[20] Ibid. p.4
[21] Ibid. p.6
[22] Ibid. p.6
[23] Ibid. p.7

In a collection of articles edited by Fägersten, Hamilton has written an essay tracing back Trump's foreign policy to one of four American political traditions - Jacksonianism[24].

> "A Jacksonian foreign policy puts America first. It is unilateral at heart. It favors hard power of soft power. It seeks to shed burdens, not to share them. Jacksonians are not interested in the promotion of democracy or multilateral processes"[25]

It is important to highlight that Hamilton argues that the four traditions (Jacksonians, Wilsonians, Hamiltonians, and Jeffersonians)[26] share a core consensus about what the U.S interests are in Europe; they have just different ways of upholding those interests. Firstly, all of the traditions agree that the U.S has a permanent interest in a "[…] Europe that is hospitable to freedom and open to American goods, investments, and ideas."[27]. Secondly, the U.S has an interest in a Europe that consume as little as possible resources from the U.S; in other words a Europe that is free from conflict. Thirdly, all traditions agree that it lies in the U.S interests to have a "[…] a confident, capable, outward-looking Europe with which it can work to address a range of challenges that no nation can tackle effectively alone.".[28]

The arguments presented above may be able to, depending on the result of this study, explain why the challenges posed by the Trump administration are not unprecedented. Instead, the might be a part of a bigger picture where the U.S. demands on a more independent Europe 'at last' has materialized itself if the form of the Trump administration. So, even if President Obama and President Bush have belonged to other traditions than Jacksonianism, this consensus has always been there. This study will able to provide research in this area by looking at the discourse of three presidents and the EU in three different points in time, therefore providing insight to if the transatlantic relationship is drifting apart or if its part of 'normal divergence.'

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[24] Hamilton, Daniel S. "Trump's Jacksonian Foreign Policy and its Implications for European Security". In *Transatlantic turbulence and European security: Effects of President Trump's foreign policy agenda and Brexit,* Fägersten, Björn (ed.), pp.6-14. Stockholm: Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 2017. p.7
[25] Ibid. p.9
[26] Ibid. p.6-8
[27] Ibid. p.10
[28] Ibid. p.11

2.3 Transatlantic convergence, divergence & drift

In his chapter on the USA and the EU, Smith[29] explores the transatlantic relationship from 1945-2010 by looking at each actor's images of each other and what the tensions have been over the years. Smith's[30] research shows interesting elements of the transatlantic relationship, for instance, the issue of hard vs. soft power and unilateralism versus multilateralism. Also, Smith showcases how economic and social cooperation have persisted in spite of other substantial international disagreements. Smith concludes that there exist three schools of thought regarding the future of transatlantic relations:

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> **"[…] convergence, and the development of a new and more integrated 'transatlantic bargain'; divergence, and the growth of tensions and contradictions; and drift, implying the growth of indifference and unevenness."[31] [32]**

Smith initial research into the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the U.S is thorough and vital, it doesn't say something substantial about the three 'school's nor does it explain what the three 'schools' really mean. Therefore, this study's development of a framework is needed to structure the three 'schools,' thus facilitating the study of transatlantic relations through the lens of these three 'schools.'

Even if previous research by Smith discusses U.S foreign policy and the relationship with the EU, there are two areas which this study can help to develop further. Firstly, Smith's research only explores the period between 1945-2010, and since 2010 there have been several critical and formative international events that could have changed the dynamics in the relationship. Here, this study can contribute empirically by offering an up-to-date analysis by exploring the EU-US relationship under not only two former administrations, but also one current U.S administration. This highlights the interdisciplinary relevance of this study since it's of interest for the research on transatlantic relations to explore how the convergence, divergence, and drift have evolved since the turn of the millennium and how it has affected the relationship.

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[29] Smith.*"The USA and the EU".* p.219
[30] Ibid. p.232.
[31] Ibid. p.235.
[32] The text was made bold in the study. The original text by Smith uses normal text.

Secondly, Smith only briefly mentions the three schools of thought. He doesn't explain in great detail what characterizes the schools and what indicators could be used to detect the current and future state of the transatlantic relationship. Here, this study can make a theoretical contribution to the research field by operationalizing the three schools by creating indicators and make a modest contribution towards a framework for these three schools. This highlights the interdisciplinary relevance of the study as a contribution towards the development of a structure of these three schools are of importance for current and future research in transatlantic relations.

In his chapter on transatlantic relations, Duffield uses three different international relations perspectives to analyze what the future might be for the transatlantic relationship; the realist perspective, the liberal perspective and the transformational perspective[33]. Duffield's research is interesting for this study since it can be partially related to the convergence, divergence and drift debate. The liberal perspective, consisting of institutional and liberal democratic theory in Duffield's analysis[34], could be related to convergence and close cooperation. The realist perspective, consisting of a balance of power and hegemonic stability theory[35], can be connected to the more negative process of drift and divergence, which can result is a declining degree of cooperation. Moreover, Duffield specifies three specific kinds of cooperation when there are diverging policy views:

> " • Making an effort to address common challenges or problems jointly,
>   rather than acting independently. […]
> • Exhibiting a willingness to compromise one's preferred course of action
>   in order to achieve common policies. […]
> • Faithfully implementing common policies, even where this involves
>   some cost or inconvenience in comparison with unilateral action. […]"[36]

These three kinds of co-operation which exist when there are diverging polices, can be seen as a draft of a framework concerning the 'divergence school' that Smith mentioned in his book. However, since neither Duffield nor Smith develop a holistic framework for all three 'schools,' this study will develop a more comprehensive framework where all three schools are included. This is in the interest of both the research field and the purpose of this study, which is to study convergence, divergence and drift in transatlantic relations.

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[33] Duffield, John S. "Transatlantic Relations after the Cold War". In: *The Real and the Ideal: Essays on International Relations in Honor of Richard Ullman,* Lake, Anthony and Ochmanek, David (ed.), New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.p.240-48.
[34] Ibid. p.244-246.
[35] Ibid.p.241-243
[36] Ibid. p.250

Moreover, Germond[37] points out three general 'issue areas' that have existed over the years. This study will use these issue areas in its development of a framework for the study of convergence, divergence and drift in the transatlantic relationship. These issues are as follows:

- The representation of the world
- The perception of threats
- The use of force

In light of Smith's, Duffield's and Germond's research, and the perceived need for a more extensive framework on convergence, divergence, and drift; this study has attempted to develop a framework for the three 'schools' Smith pointed out in his chapter. This three schools/categories all deal with the presence or absence of transatlantic co-operation between the United States and the EU, which in turn can vary in degree. Below follows the definition of this three schools, which is developed upon the research of Smith, Duffield and looks at what a threat assessment and view on values would look like in the three different schools.

However, the framework below should be seen as 'laying the groundwork' for the establishment of a framework, and future research should try to develop it in, even more, detail, built upon a greater review of previous research.

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[37] Germond, Basil. "Venus Has Learned Geopolitics: the European Union's Frontier and Transatlantic Relations". In: *The Routledge Handbook of Transatlantic Security*. Germond, Basil; Hanhimäk, Jussi M.i and Soutou, Georges-Henri (ed.). London ; New York: Routledge, 2010. p.206

CATEGORY	Definition	Threat assessment	Goals and values
Transatlantic convergence	The development of a new and more integrated transatlantic bargain.[38]	Defines a shared challenge/problem & have an overall positive tone to bi- and multilateral COA. Both partners are making an effort to address the issue jointly, & may use existing institutional fora to cooperate.	Common values and policies, both on a strategic and operational level. The overarching goals are the same, and the partners try to protect the values together.
Transatlantic divergence	Growth of tensions and contradictions.[39]	Joint assessment of the threat, but may have a different preferred COA, which could hamper a common approach. This could manifest itself through possible unilateral action, which can be both military, diplomatic or economic.	The partners have roughly the same goals and values. However, policies may differ. This is especially visible on the operational level, where different COA will cripple a joint approach. On the strategic level, the partners maintain the same ultimate objective in spite of diverging policies that may contradict each other.
Transatlantic drift	The growth of indifference and unevenness.[40]	Clashing assessments of threat and its importance for international security. Partners are mismatched both on a strategic and operational level.	Few common policies, and values are notably different. Cooperation is not viewed as necessary, due to the divergent views on the posed threat and preferred COA. The partners may have different objectives and cherish other values than the other.

Figure 1. Framework for and definition of transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift.

[38] Smith. *"The USA and the EU"*. p.235
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

3. Methodology & material

3.1 Research Design

This study will use a qualitative case study design, which will also include a comparison to determine the degree of convergence, divergence and drift in the different discourses. The units of analysis are the different discourses by the Bush, Obama, Trump administrations and the EU on one international security challenge Statements from these actors will be analyzed by doing a discourse analysis, identifying signifiers chained to the master signifiers (mSig) 'threat' and 'security values.'

Owing to this, the focus on variables are nonessential to this study since it will not try to identify a cause-effect relationship. However, it is worth mentioning something brief about variables in that sense that they are existent. Determining what the independent and dependent variables in this study are is tricky since it can be both ways: we can argue that the U.S administrations are the independent variable that affects the dependent variable which is the relationship with the EU, and vice versa. George and Bennett say in their book that "Case studies are much stronger at identifying the scope conditions of theories and assessing arguments about causal necessity or sufficiency in particular cases [...]"[41], and this study will be able to determine how much three different U.S. presidential administrations have affected the level of converging discourses with the EU.

The case study design this study will use is "plausibility probe" which is commonly used to explore and refine theory. The theory in question in this study is the framework on the three schools of convergence, divergence, and drift. This form of a case study is handy and essential when the researcher deals with new theories or hypotheses[42], such as this study do in the way that there is limited work on the three schools before. Furthermore, Kaarbo and Beasley says that a plausibility probe benefits the analyst

> "[...] by examining certain aspects of the theory at stake within the confines of an empirical instance. It is an inductive feedback device within the context of the particular empirical domain to which the analyst's theory speaks."[43]

[41] George, Alexander L, Bennett, Andrew and Belfer Center for Science International Affairs. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005. p.25
[42] Kaarbo, Juliet & Ryan, Beasley. "A Practical Guide to the Comparative Case Study Method in Political Psychology". *Political Psychology.* Vol. 20, No. 2, 1999, p.375
[43] Ibid.

The validity, reliability and generalizability of this study is something that needs to be discussed. Reliability, defined as the absence of unsystematic measurement errors and which sometimes may create a fluctuating picture[44], will try to be avoided in this study by creating, as high as possible, unbiased selection criteria in the discourse analysis. Achieving good validity, defined as the absence of systematic measurement errors[45], in this study will be done by doing a detailed discourse analysis and relating the results to the framework developed on transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift.

However, to achieve a higher validity, this study would need to look at more than two international challenges to draw any conclusions and generalizations when it comes to the presence of transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift during the last three U.S administrations. Moreover, qualitative studies have "[…] a relative inability to render judgments on the frequency or representativeness of particular cases […]"[46]; therefore this study will strive to achieve a high conceptual and contextual validity, which in the end will mean that the generalizations will be more narrow[47]. This study instead hopes to provide insight and attempt at some theory development to the concept of transatlantic convergence, divergence, and drift; as called for by previous research, as well as exploring the EU-US relationship in more detailed.

3.2 Method

The method used in this study is qualitative text analysis. In turn, this means asking detailed and structured questions to the research material, thus honing in on the 'true message' of the text. Moreover, this can also be described as conducting a discourse analysis, since this study will analyze statements from a different set of actors. Discourse analysis can best described as focusing on the language, where the main claim is that language doesn't simply represents reality. Instead language contributes to from reality and how we see it.[48] Laclau & Mouffe claims that all social phenomenas are discursive, hence the statements people make contributes to the construction of the social world and how we understand it[49]. Consequently, this means that the statements that leaders on both the sides of Atlantic do matter greatly since they at the same time construct the relationship and how we see it. For that reason, it's important to analyze the discourse to investigate how the relationship has evolved.

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[44] Teorell, Jan, and Torsten Svensson. *Att Fråga Och Att Svara : Samhällsvetenskaplig Metod.* Stockholm: Liber, 2007. p.55-56
[45] Ibid. p.55
[46] George & Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences.* p.22
[47] Ibid. p.20
[48] Bergström, Göran and Boréus, Kristina. "Diskursanalys". In: *Textens Mening Och Makt: Metodbok I Samhällsvetenskaplig Text- Och Diskursanalys,* Bergström, Göran and Boréus, Kristina (ed.). 3rd ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur; 2012. p.354
[49] Ibid. p.364.

This study will try to identify signifiers chained to chained to one or more master signifiers when conducting the analysis; Hence, master signifiers (mSig) and signifiers will work as analytical tools. A master signifier plays an identity-enhancing role[50] and is therefore of utter importance for this study. Hagström & Hanssen describes and defines these concepts in their article on 'peace' in the Chinese and Japanese discourse:

> "A discourse is a system in which every signifier (word) derives its meaning from its differential relation to other signifiers. A discourse revolves around one or a few master signifiers (for example, 'peace'). Although these master signifiers carry little meaning by themselves, they temporarily fix the meaning of other signifiers in the discourse by binding together 'different elements that are seen as expressing a certain sameness'."[51]

This study will try to identity signifiers connected to the mSig's 'threat' and 'security values.' This study's approach has chosen to set out two mSig's before conducting the analysis, to achieve a structure and make it easier to compare how the signifiers have changed over the years and how much the different actor's signifiers converge, diverge or drift.

The reason behind the selection of the two mSig's are connected to the definition of transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift in section 2.3 of this study. By looking at 'threat,' this study will be able to see what constitutes 'the threat' according to the different presidents and the EU leaders, thus facilitating a more desirable comparison later on. Furthermore, by looking at 'security values,' this study has an opportunity to explore what the different actors identify as security and what means should be used to achieve the goal of 'security'. Both of these chosen mSig's are intentionally broad to allow this study's some 'freedom of maneuver' while analyzing the material and allow for the possibility to make conclusions which are more well-founded.

A text analysis exists of five elements "[…] the text, the social context in which the text was produced or consumed, the sender, the receiver and the interpreter."[52]. In light of these five elements, it's important to point out the weaknesses with doing a text analysis, especially when studying political statements. As a researcher, I will probably not interpret the statements the same way as the sender or another receiver would do[53], which in turn is affected by my prejudices of the context and understanding of the sender's thoughts. This study will use an inductive and interpretive

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[50] Bergström & Boreús. *Diskursanalys.* p.367
[51] Hagström, Linus & Hanssen, Ulv. "War is peace: the rearticulation of 'peace' in Japan's China discourse". *Review of International Studies.* Vol. 42, No. 2, 2015. p.273
[52] Bergström, Göran and Boréus, Kristina. *Samhällsvetenskaplig teori- och diskursanalys.* . In: *Textens Mening Och Makt: Metodbok I Samhällsvetenskaplig Text- Och Diskursanalys,* Bergström, Göran and Boréus, Kristina (ed.). 3rd ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur; 2012. p.30
[53] Ibid. p.30-31

method. Thus the dilemmas mention above should be kept in mind when reading the analysis conducted in the study.

3.3 Analytical framework

This study will look for evidence for co-operation and conflict on one international security challenge, and then account for it in convergence/divergence/drift categories, and later on, compare the different discourses. Below follow this study's operationalization.

Framework A presents the operationalization of the discourse analysis, which on the one hand is separated into signifiers and master signifier, and on the other hand three U.S presidential administrations and the EU. This study intends to locate signifiers representative of the different actor's policies on one international security challenge, and the mSigs will represent the main narrative and identity in the actor's discourses. Important to notice here is that the EU category will need to be split into three parts, due to the three different time periods the U.S presidents have governed in.

	BUSH ON IRAN	OBAMA ON IRAN	TRUMP ON IRAN	EU ON IRAN
SIGNIFIERS CHAINED TO 'THREAT'				**2001-2009:** **2009-2016:** **2017-present:**
SIGNIFIERS CHAINED TO 'SECURITY VALUES'				**2001-2009:** **2009-2016:** **2017:**

Figure 2. Framework A

Framework B presents the operationalization of the theoretical framework on transatlantic convergence, divergence, and drift. The definition of these three categories that this study uses are identified in the theoretical section of this essay. However, the purpose of framework B is to facilitate a comparison between the different U.S presidential administrations and the EU at various points in time, by looking at the discourse of one international security challenge and how well each administrations discourse corresponds to the discourse of the EU. By doing this comparison, this study will be able to say something about if president Trump represents something unprecedented or if it is just a 'normal' divergence or drift the EU is experiencing.

	CONVERGENCE	DIVERGENCE	DRIFT
BUSH-EU ON IRAN			
OBAMA-EU ON IRAN			
TRUMP-EU ON IRAN			

Figure 3. Framework B

3.4 Research material

The primary data of this study is official statements and documents which are published on U.S government websites and the EU official websites, which are considered to be reliable sources. These sources will be the backbone of this study's discursive text analysis, however sometimes secondary material, such as interviews published in a newspaper, will also be subject to the discursive text analysis. Other secondary sources may be used to give a context to the primary material. This material will be presented and analyzed in part four of this study.

The data selected for this study has been chosen with a strategic method, where the aim has focused on enabling a comparison later on. Made possible of the time span of the material and three presidents from both U.S political parties, this study embraces some of the aspects of what authors call a 'general population'[54]; in this study's case, the population is those included in the transatlantic relationship.

3.4.1. The reason for the selection of Iran's nuclear weapons program

To do a discourse analysis from the different actors, we need a discourse to analyze. This study will look into the discourse of the international security issue which is the Iranian ambition for a nuclear weapons program. This challenge has followed the EU and the three administrations, thus facilitating a comparison that in the end will help achieve the purpose of this study.

Moreover, another reason for selecting Iran's nuclear weapons program as the international security challenge to analyze is that it is a challenge at crossroads between 'hard' and 'soft' security. It encompasses both nuclear weapons (hard), economic isolation (semi-hard) and diplomatic negotiations (soft), therefore making it far more interesting to see what each actor's discourse has emphasized. Furthermore, there has been a great debate on this challenge over the years, which in turn generated a lot of material which is available for this study to analyze.

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[54] Teorell & Svennson, *Att Fråga Och Att Svara : Samhällsvetenskaplig Metod.* p.230

However, the implications for choosing the case shouldn't be ignored. As with all security challenges, the nature of the threat will change over time due to a complex set of actors, including former actors decisions. This could be seen for example in comparison with the threat of climate change, which is a threat that is somewhat 'similar' overtime and where human decision making has a lot longer response time than it has on security issues on the ground.

This leads us into our second implications: Iran is also in its own an actor, and this study has chosen not to analyze their discourse since this study focuses on the relationship between the U.S and the EU. Climate change, however, is a phenomenon which is asymmetrical and antagonistic in its threat, and which is unable to represent itself in the way Iran does.

However, this study chose Iran instead of climate change as an international security challenge, since it encompasses interesting aspects of foreign policy and the material available facilitates a better analysis. Finally, the case of the Iranian nuclear program cannot be claimed to be representative for the whole security and foreign policy discourse in and between the EU and U.S; but it gives some insight into an important security challenge of the 21st century and how each actor has talked about it.

4. Discourse on Iran's nuclear weapons program

4.1 The George W. Bush Administration

> "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. […] They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States."[55]

In sum, we can see that the signifiers circulating the mSig 'threat' are 'world peace,' 'attack' and 'blackmail,' which all are negatively associated with 'threat.' In the quote above, we can see that the U.S try to differentiate itself from 'states like these,' i.e., authoritarian states, which in itself is a threat. When these kinds of states try to acquire a nuclear weapon, they pose even a graver threat - both to the U.S and their allies. By relating the 'threat' to large overarching strategic goals for the U.S, Bush can tie signifiers that both the U.S and other countries can relate to, and therefore rally around.

> "[…] I believe they want to have the capacity, the knowledge, in order to make a nuclear weapon. And I know it's in the world's interest to prevent them from doing so. I believe that the Iranian -- if Iran had a nuclear weapon, it would be a dangerous threat to world peace."[56]

Central throughout Bush speeches is the signifier 'peace.' Peace is something that is negatively associated with Iran's nuclear program since peace appears to be at stake if Iran tries to develop a nuclear weapon (NW). Moreover, this has something to do with the differentiation process Bush does in his speeches. Iran's NWs are a threat since they are an authoritarian regime that the U.S does not trust, but the discourse about their own and others, particularly allies, NWs are not as negative as the discourse is about Iran's possible NWs. In sum, one could say that 'peace' is threatened by the very idea of Iran acquiring a NW, therefore connected to the mSig 'threat.'

> "So I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them from have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. I take the threat of Iran with a nuclear weapon very seriously."[57]

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[55] The Bush White House, 2002-01-19. *State of the Union*. (Retrieved 2017-12-22)
[56] The Bush White House, 2007-10-17. *Press Conference by the President*. (Retrieved 2017-12-22)
[57] Ibid.

Furthermore, the quote above shows that president Bush links the mSig 'threat' with a signifier such as 'war.'" War and peace are each other opposite, and for Bush, the risk of war increases with both Iranian knowledge or/and possession of NW. The signifier 'war' is naturally negatively associated with the mSig 'threat,' since it would jeopardize U.S interests and world stability. Moreover, together with the signifier 'peace' discussed earlier, President Bush can make a case for an existential 'threat,' where both 'peace' and 'war' is at stake.

> "Despite what the regime tells you, we have no objection to Iran's pursuit of a truly peaceful nuclear power program. We're working toward a diplomatic solution to this crisis. And as we do, we look to the day when you can live in freedom -- and America and Iran can be good friends and close partners in the cause of peace."[58]

When it comes to the mSig of 'security values', President Bush talks about talks in depth about it. If we begin by looking at what security is, we can see above the signifiers 'freedom' and 'peace.' For Bush, security is a democratic Iran that respects the same values as the U.S, but the current situation causes insecurity since the U.S nearly has no interaction with Iran. Therefore, the signifier of 'freedom' becomes something positive that is connected to security; this is if Iran can agree only to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Where 'peace' before was negatively associated with the mSig 'threat, it is here positively associated with the mSig 'security values' since it can bring about 'freedom' and in the long run, a deepening relationship between the two countries.

Moreover, we can also see something in the statement above about how Bush wants to achieve security. He talks about a 'diplomatic' solution to a crisis; however, it remains unclear if the diplomatic solution is a solution for the long run also.

> "My point is, is that there is a better way forward for the Iranians. There has been a moment during my presidency in which diplomacy provided a way forward for the Iranians. And our hope is we can get back on that path again."[59]

The discourse about 'a better way forward' is something that keeps coming back in Bush speeches, and can be seen as a signifier linked to 'security values.' This signifier can be seen to be linked to the previously discussed differentiation between authoritarian and democratic states, where a more

[58] The Bush White House, 2006-09-19. *President Bush Addresses United Nations General Assembly.* (Retrieved 2017-12-22)
[59] The Bush White House, 2007-12-04. *Press Conference by the President.* (Retrieved 2017-12-22)

liberal Iran would benefit U.S interests. Moreover, this 'better way forward' is something positive linked to 'security values,' where the U.S would be able, through diplomacy, help Iran find this better way and therefore facilitate security in several ways.

4.2 The Barack Obama Administration

> "My administration will seek engagement with Iran based on mutual in-
> terests and mutual respect. We believe in dialogue. [...] We want Iran to
> take its rightful place in the community of nations, politically and econom-
> ically.. That's a path that the Islamic Republic can take. Or the government
> can choose increased isolation, international pressure, and a potential nu-
> clear arms race in the region that will increase insecurity for all. So let me
> be clear: Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile activity poses a real threat, not
> just to the United States, but to Iran's neighbors and our allies."[60]

Starting with the mSig 'threat,' we can see two sets of signifiers that are both negative in its tone. First of all, Obama talks about 'arms race' and 'nuclear missiles,' which are physical and short-term threats that the U.S actually can help prevent through various means. Second of all, Obama mentions 'regional insecurity' and 'allies.' These could be seen to be a long-term threat, that will pose a danger not only to the U.S but its international partners. For Obama, the signifiers coupled with the mSig 'threat' is therefore twofold; short-term and long-term.

Furthermore, in the quote above we can also see Obama talk about various 'security values.' For Obama, security is not only an Iran without NW, but an Iran that will have its place in the 'community of nations.' Here we can see how Obama differentiates between isolation and integration, where if Iran complies with U.S demands can join the international community and claim its rightful place, whereas if they ignore the demands will face even more isolation. Moreover, security for Obama is based on 'mutual interests' and 'mutual respect,' and these can be achieved through 'dialogue' and an Iran which will rejoin the 'community of nations.' In sum, 'security values' for Obama is intensely linked to what we would see as multilateralism, where we can see signifiers such as 'dialogue,' 'mutual respect' and 'community,' which are overwhelmingly positive signifiers.

> "Through the power of our diplomacy, a world that was once divided
> about how to deal with Iran's nuclear program now stands as one. The
> regime is more isolated than ever before; its leaders are faced with crip-
> pling sanctions, and as long as they shirk their responsibilities, this pres-
> sure will not relent. Let there be no doubt: America is determined to pre-
> vent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and I will take no options off the
> table to achieve that goal. [...] But a peaceful resolution of this issue is still

possible, and far better, and if Iran changes course and meets its obligations, it can rejoin the community of nations."[61]

As can be seen in President Obama State of the Union speech in 2012 above, the signifiers we saw in his 2009 is still pervading in this statement four years later. The central 'threat' is both the 'nuclear program' and the possible, future 'nuclear weapons' that Iran might develop. Here, Obama talks about these 'threat' as if the U.S is already countering them, and the sanctions that are in place appears to be something positive. Obama also mentions several security values that we have seen before ('diplomacy' and 'community'). However, he also mentions that he will take 'no options off the table,' which can be seen as negative mean to bring about change. The positive signifiers of 'diplomacy' and 'community' that we have seen before can appear to stand in stark contrast to the negative signifier 'no options off the table.' However, it is important to remember that Obama emphasizes a peaceful resolution, where there will be a positive outcome of 'community' with Iran.

> "Among U.S. policymakers, there's never been disagreement on the danger posed by an Iranian nuclear bomb. Democrats and Republicans alike have recognized that it would spark an arms race in the world's most unstable region, and turn every crisis into a potential nuclear showdown. […] More broadly, it could unravel the global commitment to non-proliferation that the world has done so much to defend."[62]

If we look again at the discourse surrounding the mSig 'threat,' we can see a constant theme regarding the signifiers: 'arms race,' 'nuclear bomb' and 'instability' which all are scenarios that can be prevented. However, in this quote above we can also see Obama talk about 'non-proliferation' and how it is threatened by Iran nuclear program. This could be interpreted to be apart of the multilateralist approach Obama seems to emphasize in his speeches, with previous signifiers such as 'community.' If Iran were to join the 'community,' then they would need to respect global commitments such as 'non-proliferation,' a signifier which is in danger if another state gets a hold of NWs.

> "For decades, your government's threats and actions to destabilize your region have isolated Iran from much of the world. And now our governments are talking with one another. Following the nuclear deal, you -- especially young Iranians -- have the opportunity to begin building new ties

[61] The Obama White House, 2012-01-24. *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address.* (Retrieved 2017-12-22)
[62] The Obama White House, 2015-08-05. *Remarks by the President on the Iran Nuclear Deal.* (Retrieved 2017-12-22)

with the world. We have a rare chance to pursue a new path -- a different, better future that delivers progress for both our peoples and the wider world. That's the opportunity before the Iranian people. We need to take advantage of that."[63]

When Obama made the speech above in January 2016, the Iran deal (JCPOA) had just been implemented, and the President was reflecting on what the deal would mean for the future. The 'threat' of 'destabilized region' had been diminished since the Iranian and U.S governments were now talking to each other and a deal had been reached. So, the signifiers linked to the mSig 'threat' was now practically gone. Nevertheless, Obama talks a lot about 'security values' such as a 'better future,' 'progress' and 'building new ties with the world.' These positive signifiers are all linked to the 'threat' diminishing, thus a 'better future' appearing. In sum, President Obama has talked about the two different mSig's pretty consistent throughout the years, and in the end, achieved a substantial goal with the JCOPA where all his essential signifiers were included.

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[63] The Obama White House, 2016-01-17. *Statement by the President on Iran.* Retrieved 2017-12-22)

4.3 The Donald Trump Administration

> "We cannot let a murderous regime continue these destabilizing activities
> while building dangerous missiles, and we cannot abide by an agreement
> if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program.
> […] The Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions
> the United States has ever entered into. Frankly, that deal is an embar-
> rassment to the United States […]"[64]

If we begin by looking at 'threat,' the signifiers linked to the mSig are 'destabilizing,' 'murderous
regime,' 'missiles' and 'nuclear program.' Apart from that, all these threats are 'negative' in its terms;
they also appear to fairly short term since they all relate to the Iran deal, which is already in place.
What is central in President Trump's discourse on Iran is the Iran deal itself, which he continuously
place in opposition. For him, the Iran deal represents something negative that needs to change.

> "Since the signing of the nuclear agreement, the regime's dangerous ag-
> gression has only escalated. […] That is why I am directing my administra-
> tion to work closely with Congress and our allies to address the deal's
> many serious flaws so that the Iranian regime can never threaten the world
> with nuclear weapons."[65]

Furthermore, if we continue to look at the 'threat,' we can see that President Trump continues to
talk about 'regime,' 'aggression' and 'nuclear weapons'. What becomes clearer with the quote above
is that for Trump, the threat is not only coupled to 'nuclear weapons' but part of a bigger picture
where "[…] the Iranian regime continues to fuel conflict, terror, and turmoil throughout the Mid-
dle East and beyond. Importantly, Iran is not living up to the spirit of the deal"[66]. The central part
of Trump's discourse appears to be that Iran can not be trusted at all, even if other parts of his
administration think that Iran is in 'technical compliance' with the deal.

> "We hope that our actions today will help bring about a future of peace,
> stability, and prosperity in the Middle East […] We pray for a future where
> young children […] can grow up in a world free from violence, hatred, and
> terror. And, until that blessed day comes, we will do what we must to keep
> America safe."[67]

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[64] The White House, 2017-09-19. *Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)
[65] The White House, 2017-10-13. *Remarks by President Trump on Iran Strategy.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

When it comes to the mSig of 'security values,' President Trump and his administration are quite vague about what security is for them and how they want to achieve it. If we start with looking at what security is, we can see in the excerpt above that Trump talks about 'peace,' 'stability,' 'respect' and 'freedom from violence.' These are positive values that Trump is more achievable in the long term, due to his decision to decertify the Iran deal. Nevertheless, it all comes down to 'keeping America safe' for Trump; there is not much talk about Iran's future or international security as a whole when he speaks about 'security values.'

> "[…] there was clearly an expectation, I think on the part of all the parties
> to that agreement, that by signing this nuclear agreement Iran would begin
> to move to a place where it wanted to integrate – reintegrate itself with its
> neighbors. And that clearly did not happen. In fact, Iran has stepped up
> its destabilizing activities in the region, and we have to deal with that, and
> so whether we deal with it through a renegotiation on nuclear or we deal
> with it in other ways."[68]

The quote above is the most clear-cutting answer there is on what view the Trump administration has on 'security values.' It appears that they hope for a 'reintegration' for Iran, which is a positive signifier, even if they do not seem to talk more extensively about long term effects. Moreover, when it comes to how to achieve security, we can see two somewhat contradicting signifiers: 're-negotiation' and 'other ways.' A renegotiation would mean a diplomatic approach and an end which will probably look somewhat like the deal today. However, when it comes to 'other ways,' it opens up for a lot of interpretation and uncertainty. It is not clear where the line in the sand is drawn, and what changes would lead from a 'renegotiation' to 'other ways.'

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[68] The State Department, 2017-09-27. *Interview With Bret Baier of Fox News.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)

4.4 The European Union

4.4.1. The EU 2001-2009

> "The EU views with serious concern the Government of Iran's intention
> to resume suspended nuclear activities. It recalls that this and other parts
> of Iran's nuclear programme were frozen, under IAEA supervision, fol-
> lowing revelations of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities over a period of
> more than a decade. […] The EU regrets that Iran has chosen to announce
> this unilateral move at a moment when international confidence in the
> peaceful nature of its programme is far from restored."[69]

The above quote shows us that the EU ties signifiers such as 'nuclear activities,' 'clandestine' and 'non-peaceful nature' to the mSig threat. What is central here is that the EU is worried that Iran nuclear program might become 'clandestine' once more, thus facilitating concern over its 'peaceful nature.' Nevertheless, the EU does not talk about the 'threat' in ways of it being a concrete threat to the European continent; it is more an international issue.

> "Because of the significance of Iran, I have favoured - as the European
> Union has favoured - a constructive, tough-minded engagement with that
> country. That has taken a number of forms. We have tried to develop a
> political dialogue, which most recently has focused on our understandable
> concerns about whether Iran's nuclear ambitions for energy have turned
> into nuclear ambitions for military purposes."[70]

Furthermore, the excerpt above displays that the EU negatively associates 'military purposes' with the mSig 'threat,' which we can link to the previous signifier 'peaceful nature'. Underlying all of this is that is a sense of distrust against the Iranian government since there has been a clandestine program before with military purposes. Moreover, the excerpt above also shows us some of the signifiers chained to the mSig 'security values' such as 'political dialogue' and 'engagement.' These signifiers appear to be central in the EU discourse on Iran, which is not surprising coming from an IGO where dialogue is the basis for many things.

> "I repeat that if we are serious about a creative and constructive policy for
> the wider Middle East, it has to involve Iran. It is no good condemning
> Iran out of hand and regarding it as being led by Manichean forces of

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[69] Council of the European Union, 2006-01-07. *Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Iran's intentions to resume suspended nuclear activities.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)
[70] European Commission, 2004-02-12. *Reply to EP Debate on Iran.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)

wickedness and darkness. […] I hope that in the course of the next months and years we will see Iran making the difficult transition to an Islamic democracy which can play a constructive leadership role in the affairs of its region."[71]

In this quote above, we can more profoundly see the EU discourse on 'security values.' Here, the EU talks about 'constructive policy for the wider Middle East,' 'democracy' and 'leadership', signifiers that all can be seen to be very long-term and broad strategic goals for the EU. All these signifiers are chained to what the EU believes to be security in the Middle East region. For the EU, Iran is an essential actor in their long-term security policy. Therefore they must pursue a "creative and constructive policy."

> " […] we want a durable, cooperative and long-term partnership with Iran. […] We now need to work rapidly to produce a solid long-term agreement. This should on the one hand provide lasting confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and on the other bring concrete results in the area of trade, technology exchange and security, as well as in the nuclear dimension. This will not be an easy task but we have taken the first step and that is very important."[72]

The excerpt above clarifies what means the EU wants to use to achieve security. For the EU, signifiers such as 'cooperative partnership,' 'long-term agreement' and 'lasting confidence' are key to assuring the more secure future. All of these signifiers pints to a diplomatic approach, since an interpretation of the signifiers, shows that wordings are carefully crafted to facilitate the goal: security. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the EU does not explicitly need to mention signifiers such as 'diplomacy' or 'allies' since they are 'security values' that are the ground pillar for the EU's approach to the most pressing international issues. Moreover, since the EU in itself is an IGO, it is not surprising that their preferred means to achieve security is a 'cooperative partnership' with Iran. In sum, the EU's discourse on 'security values' is very coherent and continuous throughout, whereas their discourse on 'threat' is quite vague, thus making it hard to interpret what the core of the threat is.

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[71] Ibid.
[72] High representative for the CFSP, 2004-11-15. *Statement by Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the CFSP, on the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)

4.4.2. The EU 2009-2017

> "There is a third issue that affects the landscape of the wider Middle East, and indeed global security, and that is the Iranian nuclear issue. […] The fundamental problem is that we do not have confidence that the Iranian nuclear programme is purely civilian in nature. […] From our side, we reiterated that we remain committed to the path of dialogue. Our practical proposals remain on the table. If Iran were to adopt some of the transparency measures that most countries already implement, we would be starting a process that could go far."[73]

Here we can see that three signifiers that are chained to the mSig 'threat': 'global security,' 'confidence' and 'transparency.' These are both quite general signifiers. However, they are all interconnected in the way that an improvement in one area would facilitate improvement in the other. In this way, the EU's discourse of the 'threat' is coherent. Moreover, Ashton mentions the problem surrounding the nature of Iran's nuclear program, and here we can see a contrast: either Iran has a military or civilian program, one of which is only the acceptable choice, according to the EU. The quote above also briefly mentions 'dialogue' as a positive, important way forward. 'Dialogue' can in this context seen to be a signifier chained to the mSig 'security values'. More on this later on.

> "The European Council reaffirms the rights and responsibilities of Iran under the NPT. The European Council deeply regrets that Iran has not taken the many opportunities which have been offered to it to remove the concerns of the international community over the nature of the Iranian nuclear programme."[74]

Central throughout the EU's discourse is Iran's rights and responsibilities. As we seen before the 'nature of the Iranian nuclear program' is of utter concern for the EU and remains the most important 'threat.' Moreover, what is interesting here is that the EU focuses a lot on what Iran's responsibilities are and what they can do to achieve better relations with the EU. Instead of focusing on what the 'threat' is against the EU, the focus is instead on what the adversary can do to achieve greater security and opportunities for themselves.

> "The aim of the EU is to achieve a comprehensive and long-term settlement which would rebuild international confidence in the exclusively

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[73] European Commission, 2001-02-08. *Address at the United Nations Security Council.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)
[74] European Council, 2010-06-17. *EUROPEAN COUNCIL 17 JUNE 2010 CONCLUSIONS.* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)

peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's legitimate rights to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the NPT. The Council recalls that the EU's objective remains to engage in meaningful negotiations about the Iranian nuclear programme and other issues of mutual concern with the ultimate goal of establishing a comprehensive relationship between the EU and Iran, involving cooperation in all fields […] benefiting both sides."[75]

In the text above, it becomes more evident what the EU's 'security values' are. First of all, security is a 'longterm settlement,' which in turn rebuilds 'international confidence' and thus enabling a 'comprehensive relationship' with 'operation in all fields.' All these signifiers signalize that the preferred means for the EU to achieve this goal is 'diplomacy' because any other means would minimize the chance of a 'longterm settlement.' Overall, the EU wants a mutually benefiting relationship with Iran, therefore are all the signifiers tied to 'security values' positively charged.

"The Iranian deal is first of all a non-proliferation agreement […] The starting point is the security of the region, the security of the neighbours […] Making sure that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon is first of all a security issue for the region and for the entire world. […] . But it is also a possibility for rebuilding trust between Iran and its neighbours, between Iran and the international community. […] the European Union is ready to play its role, to help, to facilitate this rebuilding of trust in the region […] [76]

The quote above is from a few days after the Iran deal was reached in July 2015. Here, the 'security values' becomes very explicit; Mogherini talks about signifiers such as 'regional security,' 'international security', 'trust' and 'international community'. These signifiers have been central for a long time, and with the deal, they are achieved. Moreover, it seems as the signifiers chained to 'threat' is gone with the deal, since it facilitates security in many ways. With the Iran deal, the EU got the comprehensive deal they had strived for so many years and a new relationship with Iran.

[75] Council of the European Union, 2010-07-26. Council conclusions on Iran's nuclear programme. (Retrieved 2017-12-27)
[76] Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, 2015-07-20. *Remarks by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini at the Foreign Affairs Council (Excerpts).* (Retrieved 2017-12-27)

4.4.3. The EU 2017-present

> "For those of us who took part in the negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, it is absolutely clear that peace and security are first and foremost a collective cooperative commitment. We wouldn't have reached a deal without everyone's contribution - from the European Union to Iran and the six powers at the table. It is not out of modesty, it is a deep conviction: peace is a collective cooperative responsibility. There is no other way of building peace."[77]

Since the Obama administration, what constitutes the mSig 'threat' has changed since it is now focused on the current Iran deal (JCPOA) and how to implement and preserve it. Above, we can see that that 'peace' and 'cooperation' are something negative associated with the mSig 'threat.' The lack of co-operation from the U.S is something that can be a threat since their contribution to the deal can, in turn, threaten the stability of the deal and thus 'peace.'

> "It belongs to the entire international community. […] the deal has made the region and the whole world more secure: it halted the risk of a new and more devastating conflict and opened new opportunities for cooperation in the region and beyond. The deal with Iran belongs to all those who are more secure thanks to its full implementation, it belongs to the entire international community, to the entire global population."[78]

However, the EU argues that the deal itself is not threatened by the lack of U.S cooperation since the deal belongs to the international community. What could seen to be a 'threats' are 'conflict' and 'cooperation', since it is those things the deal prevents and facilitates. Nevertheless, a U.S withdrawl could be seen to be a blow to deal since it would lose one of its previous, biggest supporters - which would bring about a lot of uncertainty about the future international relationship with Iran. Moreover, the quote above also shows us some 'security values'. For the EU, the Iran deal provides both 'regional security' and 'international security.' Moreover, it enables 'cooperation" both with Iran and within the region, which could be seen to be a long-term goal for the EU.

> "For us, it is a matter of security, it is a matter of keeping channels of engagement, dialogue and cooperation with Iran opened […] But it is also clear for us that the situation in the region could not be addressed in a

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[77] EEAS, 2017-07-20. *Speech by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at Hessian Peace Prize Award Ceremony*. Retrieved 2017-12-28)
[78] Ibid.

better way, but on the contrary in a worsened manner if the JCPOA was not in place […] "[79]

The extract above shows clearly what signifiers the EU's chain to 'security values'; 'engagement,' 'dialogue' and 'cooperation'.' These signifiers appear to be in contrast to values such as 'isolation' and 'confrontation', besides that they all are positive signifiers begging for a more profound relationship between the EU and Iran. Moreover, the means to achieve security are 'diplomatic',which seems to be central to the EU discourse on how to deal with the Iranian nuclear program.

> "The deal with Iran is ensuring the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. This is vital for our collective security – in the European Union, in the region and beyond. […] With the nuclear deal with Iran, we have established the strongest monitoring system ever set up."[80]

In the text above, we can see that the 'threat' would be a 'non-peaceful nature' of Iran nuclear program. This is something the Iran deal ensures that it is not, through monitoring (or 'transparency', which could be seen as a 'security value.' Moreover, the EU also talks about 'collective security,' which we could interpret to be a signifier chained to both 'threat' and 'security value' since its both a threat if the deal would fail and a security value since it is a goal the EU wants.

> "In Vienna we achieved security through cooperation. We built peace with multilateralism. And this is the real vocation of the European Union. We are a cooperative force for peace and security. We have a long history of violence that has taught us that our national interests are much better served through cooperation with our neighbours.. […] "[81]

The quote above summarizes the EU discourse on the Iranian nuclear program very well. We can see how positive signifiers 'cooperation', 'multilateralism' and 'peace' are naturally associated with 'security values',' which are central in the discourse. Moreover, we can also see how these values are negative signifiers chained to the mSig 'threat',' since they would be jeopardized if the Iran deal would fail.

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[79] EEAS, 2017-1016. *Remarks by Federica Mogherini on the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Iran nuclear deal).* (Retrieved 2017-12-28)
[80] EEAS, 2017-12-12. *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary session on the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA).* (Retrieved 2017-12-28)
[81] EEAS, 2017-07-20. *Speech by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at Hessian Peace Prize Award Ceremony.* Retrieved 2017-12-28)

5. Analysis: Convergence, divergence and drift

	BUSH ON IRAN 2001-2009	OBAMA ON IRAN 2009-2016	TRUMP ON IRAN 2017	EU ON IRAN
SIGNIFIERS CHAINED TO 'THREAT'	- Peace. - Attack. - Blackmail. - Nuclear weapons. - Authoritarian states. - War.	- Arms race. - Nuclear missiles. - Nuclear program. - Regional insecurity. - Allies. - Non-proliferation.	- Destabilizing. - Regime. - Missiles. - Nuclear program. - Agression. - Nuclear weapons.	**2001-2009:** - Nuclear activities. - Clandestine. - Non-peaceful nature. - Military purposes. **2009-2016:** - Global security - Confidence - Transparency - Nature of Iranian nuclear program. **2017:** - Peace. - Lack of cooperation. - Conflict. - Non-peaceful nature. - Collective security. - Lack of multilateralism.
SIGNIFIERS CHAINED TO 'SECURITY VALUES'	- Freedom. - Peace. - Better way forward. - Diplomatic.	- Community. - Mutual interests & respect. - Progress. - Building new ties with the world. - Diplomacy. - No options off the table.	- Peace. - Stability. - Respect. - Freedom from violence. - Reintegration. - Renegotiation. - 'Other ways'.	**2001-2009:** - Democracy. - Leadership. - Cooperative partnership. - Long-term agreement. - Diplomacy. - Engagement. **2009-2016:** - Iran's rights & responsibilities. - Comprehensive relationship - Regional & international security. - International community. - Diplomacy. **2017:** - Regional & international security. - Cooperation. - Engagement. - Transparency. - Multilateralism. - Peace. - Diplomacy.

Figure 4. Framework A: List of important signifiers in no particular order.

When we are to do the comparison between the differnt discourses using the list of signifiers above, using the framework on transatlantic convergence, divergence and divergence, we can see a trend develop which will help in answering the research questions.

	CONVERGENCE	DIVERGENCE	DRIFT
BUSH-EU ON IRAN	To a high degree.	To a small degree.	No sign.
OBAMA-EU ON IRAN	To a very high degree.	To a very small degree.	No sign.
TRUMP-EU ON IRAN	Very little or no sign.	To some degree.	To a high degree.

Figure 5. Framework B: Summarized analysis of discourses.
(To a very high degree/To a high degree/To some degree/To a small degree/To a very small degree/No sign.)

Starting with the discourses between the EU, the Bush and Obama administration, we can see that during both administrations the level of convergence was high or very high. Both parties seem to have a defined the same kind of the threat, and they are both very positive to doing a diplomatic approach, thus facilitating bi- and multilateral cooperation.

For example, both Bush and the EU talks about a non-peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program and a 'better way forward' and 'freedom', where the EU equivalent is 'democracy' and 'cooperative partnership'.' However, regarding Bush, there is some divergence with it comes to goals and values, since he talks about 'war' and 'authoritarian state' in a way the EU doesn't. Bush is at times much more aggressive, at times, in his tone while the EU tries to stay *en route* with a more diplomatic discourse. This could be one reason for why there was not as large of a 'diplomatic victory' when Bush was in office compared with Obama.

With Obama, the discourses align almost perfectly. Both the EU and Obama talk about 'regional security,' 'community' and 'nature of nuclear program'; which gave a coherent threat assessment and joint goals which enabled cooperation between the parties. We ought to remember that it was during the Obama administration the JCPOA was reached with Iran, which is seen as almost completely removing the threat of Iranian NW's. However, there seem to be some tensions when it comes to achieving security. Overall, Obama preferred a 'diplomacy', but out of principle he said that there's 'no option of the table'. This is seemingly similar to the divergence we saw with the Bush administration, except that Obama and the EU achieved a diplomatic deal together. This points to that the divergence may have been smaller with Obama compared with Bush; however, it's important to remember that everything is circumstantial. For example, it may have been Bush

who laid the groundwork for Obama and Obama got a significant benefit in the negotiations with the election of the somewhat liberal president Rouhani in Iran.

If we now look at the current discourse of and between the Trump administration and the EU, we can see several circumstances that point to a potential transatlantic drift. There is very little sign of convergence; the 'non-peaceful nature' of the nuclear program is still an underlying problem for both parties, but Trump sees a 'real' problem with the JCPOA where the EU doesn't. Trump's focus on 'renegotiation,' 'respect' and an Iran which is 'destabilizing', block shared goals and values with the EU, thus hampering both strategic and operational cooperation.

Moreover, the reason why this study will argue that the current discourse points more to transatlantic drift than divergence, is that we can see something more than just tensions; we can see a widely different threat assessments and different objectives on both a strategic and operational level. JCPOA is a massive achievement for the EU, and when Trump sees it as a 'threat,' it is not unexpected for the rhetoric across the Atlantic to be very different. Furthermore, Trump does not talk to the same extent at all about 'engagement' and 'cooperation' with Iran the way the EU does. It seems like that the two partiers nowadays may have clashing world-views and policies when it comes to Iran, thus obstructing any cooperation on the issue between the parties.

More evidence of a transatlantic drift appears in the way the different parties talks about 'security values.' The EU talks about engaging with Iran, while Trump talks about the opposite; how bad the regime is and demanding their respect. As shown in the framework for transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift; an indicator for drift are when the parties cherish other values than the other, i.e.; the differences are bigger than the areas of agreement. We can see this in the way the EU and the Trump administration talk about the future of Iran - they are almost complete opposites. Even though they both talk about peace and a non-military nature of Iran's nuclear program, Trump's criticism of JCPOA has killed the spirit of the deal and of the relationship with the EU.

Another indicator for transatlantic drift is when one or both of the parties don't view co-operation as necessary. On the one hand, the EU considers the lack of cooperation and multilateralism as a threat in of itself. On the other hand, President Trump talks about how bad the Iran deal is and how he might want to renegotiate or deal with Iranian NW in 'other ways'. Even if the Iran deal/JCPOA belongs to the international community (according to the EU), a U.S withdrawl would kill the spirit of the deal and probably its mark, not only concern Iran but also the EU-U.S relationship. The EU can probably deal with other policies from President Trump where there is di-

vergence, but since the EU's Iran policy and commitment to the JCPOA are rocksolid, any opposition to the deal would probably leave a mark on the relationship and hamper cooperation in other areas.

Would it be possible to have transatlantic divergence instead of drift with Trump? Even though the parties may have the same strategic goals, and the main difference is on the operational level in regards to how 'good' the Iran deal is, this study assesses that it will be hard since the fundamental values differ a lot between the EU and the Trump administration when it comes to Iran.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Research questions

- **How as the transatlantic relationship between the EU and the U.S unfolded during the last three U.S presidential administrations?**

During the last three presidential administrations, there have been ups and downs throughout the relationship. During the Bush and Obama administration, there was mainly convergence on how to deal with the Iranian nuclear program, even if there were some divergences when it came to the threat and the acceptable solutions. The reason behind the high degree of convergence and there being no sign of drift is that both the U.S administrations and the EU cherished the same security values and preferred a bi- or multilateral approach to the threat. The relationship between the EU and the U.S unfolded pretty seamlessly and there were more convergence than divergence, thus resulting in joint assessments of the threat Iran posed and a common approach to the problem.

With the Trump administration, the relationship is unfolding quite unconventionally and thus being put the test due to how widely different the discourses are regarding Iran. Trump views the Iran deal as something 'bad', while the EU cherishes it as one of its greatest achievements. We can almost talk about different world-views, therefore also different security values. Even if the ultimate objective is the same (a peaceful Iran without nuclear weapons), the way Trump is treating the Iran deal/JCPOA as a threat has affected the 'tone' in the discourse about each other and will likely compromise transatlantic relations in some ways, which can vary in its degree. It should be noted that the case of the Iran nuclear deal is not representative of the whole relationship between the EU and the U.S and this study's findings in its analysis cannot be generalized for determining the well-being of the relationship. However, since JCPOA is a perceived landmark achievement by the EU and something fundamental in its foreign policy, it can say something about the state of the relationship between the parties.

- **What does the Trump administration mean for the future of transatlantic relations?**

Even if there is a sizable transatlantic drift on Iran, it doesn't mean that the whole relationship will fall apart. The discourse on foreign and security policy challenges might become harsher and more differentiated, thus blocking cooperation and even might compromise previous joint values. Trans-atlantic drift could very well make a significant impact on the relationship if the differences out-weigh the areas of agreement. However, it's far more likely that there will still be an established relationship between the EU and the U.S; they just might not care for each other as much as before, and the consequences of that could be a whole separate study.

6.2 Further research

This study has made a sizable contribution towards the analysis of the relationship between the EU and the Trump administration, the Iran deal and its effects on the transatlantic relations, and its most significant contribution is the development of a modest framework of transatlantic convergence, divergence, and drift. However, more research is needed to develop the framework and also make greater understanding of transatlantic relations under the Trump administration.

Even if a 'transatlantic drift' in one foreign policy area is something noticeable, it's not something that can be seen as representative of the whole relationship. This study is not able to nor is it its purpose or scope to determine the 'well-being' of the relationship; it has just given the reader a glimpse into its current state. To make a more comprhensive assessment, future research should look into several international challenges and analyze more statements from both parties.

Furthermore, regarding the framework and definition of transatlantic convergence, divergence and drift; future research should do look at more previous research from both academia and think tanks. This should facilitate more detailed definitions of the different categories and enable for more indicators to categorize the discourses in. Moreover, future research should also look at possible under-categories to convergence, divergence, and drift, since it can be difficult sometimes to just put the discourses in 'one box.'

Nevertheless, with time, further research should be done on the Trump administration's policy on Iranian nuclear program and JCPOA, and how its revised policy affects transatlantic relations. This study has offered a glimpse to the effects it has had on the discourses during Trump's first year in office; however, a lot will happen in 2018, and there will be plenty more material to analyze.

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